



the Journal

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Addiction in the
Age of Technology

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

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

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S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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

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Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

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

We need protect with special care the anonymity of every S.L.A.A. member. Additionally we try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media.

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The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.*

1. We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sex and love addicts, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

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Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader:

When I first heard of this theme, I thought all the articles would be about the evils of technology. I've been scared of technology, refusing to sign up for Facebook and shying away from purchasing smartphones or even unlimited texting capabilities (it's very difficult to text from a flip phone). I always complain about my addiction to my video games and my DVR — I'd have a lot more time for life without those inventions!

But the thing that surprised me about the articles in this issue of the *Journal* was that many of the writers pointed out the positive benefits of technology if used for recovery. They remind me that I am very grateful for the software I use to create the *Journal*, for the ability to text sponsees or sponsors whenever I need to (I finally caved and bought the smartphone and texting plan), and for the FWS and Intergroup and committee websites that help more and more people find S.L.A.A. and sobriety. Every meeting that I went to where the *Journal* rep read this question of the day ("How has technology affected your addict behaviors?") I heard laughter ripple through the room. I guess we all deal with this in one way or another. And I got so many responses and articles that there's no room for "Share Space!" I hope you enjoy reading all the responses as much as I did!

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

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

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Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

“HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY AFFECTED YOUR ADDICT BEHAVIORS?”

I had stopped acting out with others, but when I got technology, I felt I could view pictures and videos of explicit material and no one was hurt. I had to realize that I was hurting myself, my partner and those forced into exploiting themselves.

—Gordy B., Dallas, TX

Hiding behind a “digital wall” promotes fantasy/voyeurism/anorexia.

—Alan J., Dallas, TX

I was hoping that we could have some questions that focus on solution and progress in the program. I could easily spin a tale of the Internet, pornography, and my addiction.

However email and such has made it possible to do committee work at a distance. I have been on a couple of groups that have planned S.L.A.A. retreats, which have been rewarding. And, of course, I can look up a meeting schedule when I’m visiting from out of town. I am still tempted to act out, but properly used technology has its benefits.

—Dale, Santa Cruz, CA

Technology created isolation and separation from community. Now is a time for new possibilities in using technology to build community.

—Jim M., Dallas, TX

I don’t think I would have had the opportunities to act out without the Internet. I’m a shy person—so most of my addictive behavior was limited to my own mind. But with the Internet, I was able to meet and chat without the shyness limitation.

Meeting people through the Internet allowed me to engage in terribly risky behaviors in reality under a false sense of security. I think of technology as “the great enabler” when it came to my addictive behaviors.

—Andrea, VA

It gave my addict a whole new world of opportunities. Disneyland, as it were.

—P.M. “Addict City, U.S.A.”

Internet porn fed my compulsive masturbation.

—Scott W., TX

The Internet is the crack cocaine of sex and love addiction —ruined my life — smart phones are porn in my pocket 24/7.

—Anonymous, Los Angeles

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “How has technology affected your addict behaviors?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two questions are: Issue #146 — After Sober Dating: Not Losing Yourself in the Relationship — “Have you ever felt like turning a healthy relationship into a closed/enmeshed relationship? What tools did you use to stay healthy?” The deadline for submissions is 11/15/13; and Issue #147 — Fantasy versus reality, “Do you find it difficult to live in/see reality? What helps you stay out of Fantasyland?” — The deadline for submissions is 1/15/14. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

Every advancement in technology from VHS tapes to smart phones connected society to a new world of art and information. In itself, all of the advancements are wonderful and beneficial. For me as a sex and love addict, it opened up new opportunity to access my obsession and compulsivity for my drug, pornography. What could have opened me up to a new world, instead sent me into a dark world of isolation. At this moment, I have 30 days of sobriety and a new world of involvement with others is already opening up. Each time I choose people over fantasy my life is better.

— **Mark H., Little Rock, AR**

I can call or text my sponsor from anywhere in the world, at any time of the day or night.

— **Susan R., Studio City, CA**

It has made my qualifier and fantasy of qualifier more easily accessible at any time in many forms (images, video, social media — endless access).

— **A**

I have had to establish distinct boundaries around the use of the Internet in the form of a filter and my smart phone accountability.

— **Steve, Cincinnati, OH**

It has made me obsessive, anxious, and compulsive. It has made me waste so much precious time. Technology has increased drastically my need for love/approval, and my jealousy. It has mostly increased fantasy and intrigue thanks to social media.

— **Samantha, Los Angeles**

“Technically” it drives my addictive behaviors whenever I spend too much time engaging in activities. Less time on any technology means more time living in the reality of now.

— **Stephen F., CT**

Technology hasn't affected me — only in my working with others.

— **Anonymous**

Internet gave immediate access to volumes and a variation of pornography that quickly made my disease progress. However, technology also gives me contacts and tools of recovery that were previously unconceivable.

— **Fredrik L., Uppsala, Sweden**

Made Internet porn easier to access. It is really hard for me to stay away from it.

— **Mark W., San Francisco**

Technology hasn't affected my addict behaviors; in fact, I was frightened by what I thought might increase my addiction. However, when I bought my first computer in 2000 until this day technology has actually helped me in my service activities. Not only have I stayed sober, but I learned to be of service to the F.W.S. office and S.L.A.A. Board of Trustees, plus I became more “tech savvy.”

— **Rita H., Montreal**

“HOW HAS TECHNOLOGY AFFECTED YOUR ADDICT BEHAVIORS?”

Technology has helped to hasten hitting bottom in this disease. Now, I have a chance to use the Internet to feed my recovery.

— Rick B., Largo, FL

Technology helped me hit bottom faster. In an instant, I had someone to act out with, to intrigue with, to numb myself. In recovery those sites are off limits and continue to be on my bottom lines. Technology now is no longer a trigger after many years of avoidance.

I use technology for its purpose to communicate easily with my life. Today my life is built on my Higher Power's grace and with that I have no need to act out online.

— Karina, Los Angeles

Made using the computer and other electronic devices slippery places to be.

— Jack S., Seminole, FL

The availability of pornography on the Internet was an open door for my addict and kicked my addiction into a huge obsession and compulsion.

— Jay G., Philadelphia

I was addicted to anonymous gay sex, mostly through online hook-up sites. Part of my unmanageability was realizing how much time I spent each night cruising online. It was such a habit that even just turning on the computer would result in a dopamine surge of relief. Sobriety did involve withdrawal from the technology itself. And recovery has meant learning to use technology in healthy ways.

— Tom B., Los Angeles

I used to be addicted to dating sites. I met lots of men. But there was no context. Then I took five years off dating sites and I have never really trusted them since then. They take so much energy that it seems like you have to be a sex and love addict to go to the trouble. I meet people in the old-fashioned way now.

— Alice, Los Angeles

My disease progressed to a point where I found myself resorting to using webcams to have virtual sex, something I thought I would never do. It was so dehumanizing, and so unfulfilling, but I was so deep in my disease I couldn't stop.

— Anonymous

I used the Internet for acting out. It blocked my recovery and I had to put this behavior on my list of bottom lines. I have been sober from this behavior for four years.

— Anonymous

My use of the Internet can be healthy or unhealthy. In recovery, I've learned that my sobriety depends on limiting aimless surfing and blog reading because those activities are ultimately isolating and an escape from reality and the present moment.

— Anonymous, Austin, TX

The cell phone and e-mail both facilitated discrete communication with girlfriends, setting up trysts, etc. The Internet was useful with dating websites for prostitutes and for women wanting sex.

— Jim B., Dallas, TX

Technology enabled me to have instant access to my disease's favorite snack: committed observation, otherwise known as stalking. I could instantly see who was contacting my friends/partners, who was looking at me, pockets of information to research in order to talk about and appear to be that person's soul mate, etc. It also enabled me to isolate under the pretense of "networking."

— Rebecca K.P., Houston, TX

It helps and hurts. Forces me to pray for the willingness to up my recovery.

— Anonymous

I used the Internet to cyberstalk my qualifier.

— Pam M., Sugarland, TX

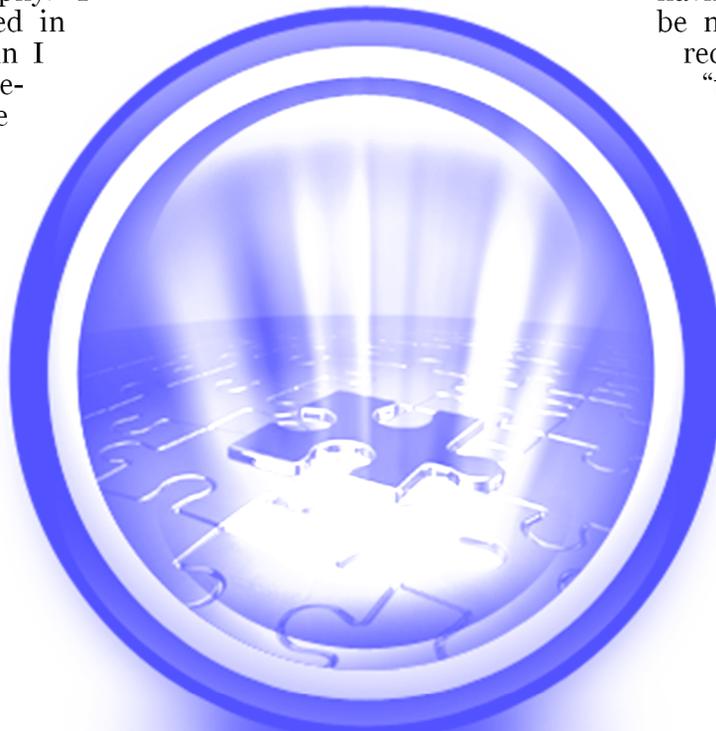
Technology Helps Recovery Instead Of Addiction

I would like to turn this Question of the Day on its head- without a doubt technology has aided my addiction, yet it has aided in my recovery in ways that I feel are important to acknowledge.

My first experience with technology and addiction was with Internet pornography. I quickly became engrossed in harder core material than I had ever found in print mediums. It was even more private than going to the bookstore. I used adult hookup sites in a vain attempt to initiate a “friends-with-benefits” or “no-strings-attached” relationship. Finally I researched how to locate brothels, and began acting out with other people.

If all of this sounds depressing, hopeless, and addictive, it is. I was caught in a lifestyle that I couldn't escape until I bottomed out and found a recovery group. Here's where the tide started to turn.

Shortly after entering recovery in 2001, I got my first cell phone. I was clearly a late adopter, but my peers had cell phones, and were keeping in touch throughout the day. I had a driving job, without a desk or a phone at the



time. The concept of program calls was introduced to me, and having a mobile allowed me to be more fluid in making it to recovery events. Recovery “texting” has become a big phenomena for me as even this point of contact can provide bookends, support, and human contact.

I eventually got a smartphone, which turned out to be another positive piece of technology.

It has a pretty good GPS that gets me to various program events — I love visiting meetings out of town and going on retreats.

Having email on the fly helped in being part of a planning committee for a couple of retreats, as I had long since disconnected my home Internet.

And I must admit that I pick up sometimes cheesy, but positive, pro-recovery quotes from a social media site.

I am saddened to say that in late August I acted out on my smartphone, though, browsing

salacious images after 3-1/2 years of sobriety. I was full of fear and devastated.

Some of my non-program friends said I should get rid of my phone altogether.

However, I finally found the answer in having a changed attitude towards the phone. It is a tool, it is not in itself an enemy. I was the one that had to take personal responsibility over my use of this device.

Even so, taking this slip was a serious matter and somewhat born out of fear.

For a week or two, I charged it at night downstairs, away from my bedroom. My slip was

around particular search terms on a social media site. My new boundary is that I have no business entering search terms unrelated to friends and family.

I am still smarting from my slip, with it being less than 30 days ago at the time of this writing. I am going through withdrawals, have down days, and all of the difficulties and sensitivities that one in my position has.

However I have to remember that I have it pretty good. I have to hang on to a faith that says, "this too will pass."

Technology, per se, is not the problem. The solution is using the recovery resources available

to me — calls, meetings, the web to find meetings, and even the coffee shop Wi-Fi from which I am about to send this article — to my recovery advantage.

As a closing, there is a quote, that I found on that social media site, that can speak to all of us in recovery.

I didn't make it up, but I pass it along here: "On particularly rough days when I'm sure I can't possibly endure, I like to remind myself that my track record for getting through bad days so far is 100% and that's pretty good."

— **D.B., California**

Geo-fencing Helps Addict Avoid Forbidden Territory

Most of the time, we think of digital technology as a way for sex and love addicts to get ourselves into trouble — Internet porn and location-based hookups for sex addicts — online dating sites for love and fantasy addicts. But there is also a new technology that offers a moment of grace when "no human power" can save us from our addiction. It's called geo-fencing.

Geo-fencing allows the user to mark an area on the map as off-limits, and then uses the GPS in their car or phone to send an alert when that perimeter has been violated. In the past, it has mostly been used by bosses (delivery companies want to see which of their vans has been

veering off route) or parents (dad worries that Suzie is heading to the wrong side of town).

You can program it yourself, however, to keep away from massage parlors and strip clubs. You can even use it to keep yourself from stalking your love object.

"Stalking" is too strong a word for you? Okay, then. How about "just sort of being in the neighborhood?" — a quick drive by the building where the love object works, and maybe a trip to the restroom while you're there. If God wants you guys to be together, you-know-who will be in the hallway.

When the obsession hits, there's no room in your brain for anything but that one insistent

thought, rolling around and around like a hamster on a wheel. Nothing can break the spell, nothing... except perhaps the BLARING HORN OF YOUR CAR. Because — guess what! — you wandered over the geo-fence into forbidden territory. Forbidden by you, yourself, when you weren't in the grip of obsession.

Geo-fencing will soon be a standard new-car feature, along with back-up cameras and voice recognition systems. So next time you're driving along, chanting "Please don't let me make that call, please don't let me make that call..." something is listening. No human power, indeed.

— **Anonymous**

Is It Really “No Contact” If I’m Following Him On Facebook?

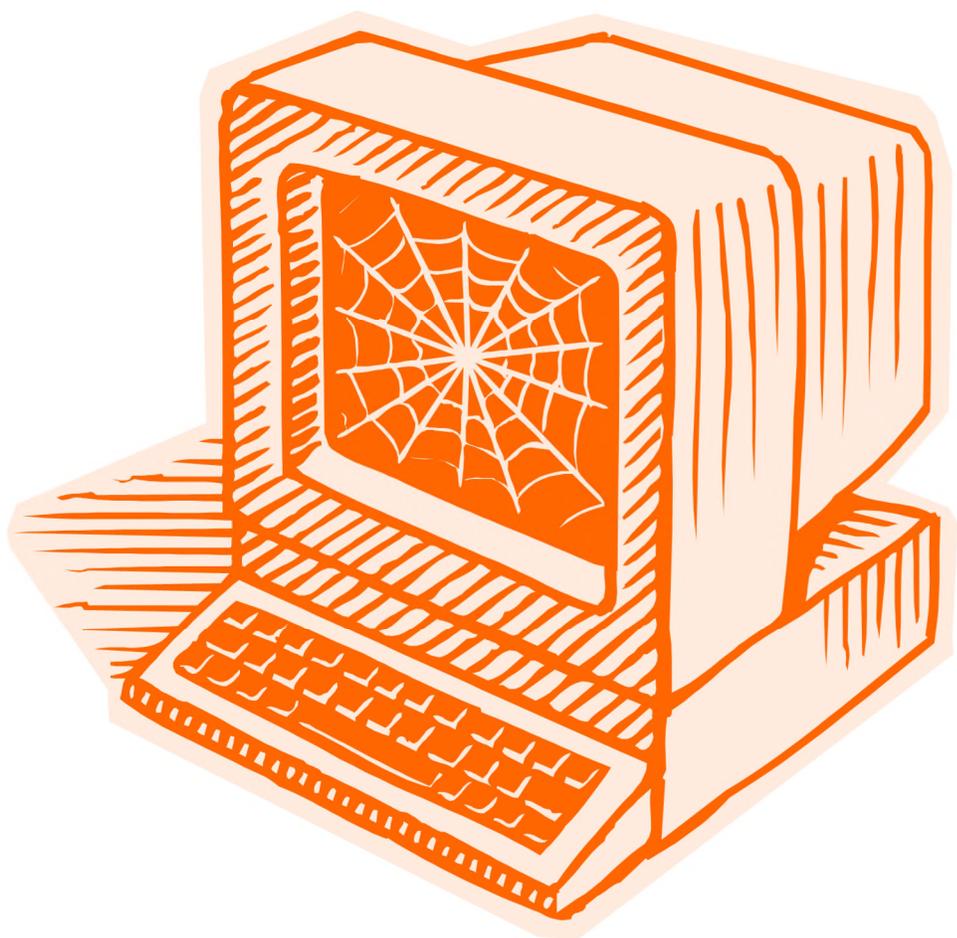
There’s an episode of 30 Rock where Tina Fey’s character is talking to a young woman about her romance problems. The girl lists off a litany of ways in which she has made an attempt to contact her boyfriend: calling, texting, IM-ing, Facebook “poking,” Tweeting...I don’t know what else (and my accuracy on these might show my ignorance about them).

Tina Fey’s character says in response, (misquoted), “There are so many ways for a guy NOT to call you these days!” That’s a good example of how technology has affected my addict behaviors and the behaviors of my sponsees (especially my younger ones).

I want to concentrate my discussion to Facebook, since that’s where I have the most experience.

Facebook provides blessings for keeping connected to people, right? But it also holds a whole host of problems for a love addict of my type.

Not only does it afford the opportunity for stalking and obsession, but I, in a commitment not to call or text a certain person, find myself tempted to “check Facebook” under a false sense of “catching up with my friends” when in fact I want to see if he’s online — available for



chat. OR, what are my motives for posting on Facebook? He’s still my Facebook “friend” (a strange distinction that really blurs the meaning of that word — I have hundreds of “friends” on Facebook and I honestly don’t remember who many of them are).

If I post a picture of myself

where I look nice, or post status updates, am I trying to “tell him something?” Sometimes I am, at least in part. I almost always consider (read: make up) what his response will be when I post something, even if my motives aren’t directed at that.

I don’t even need to go on Facebook at all for this to be a

problem. My sister posted a picture of me that a friend told me about. I immediately thought “I wonder if he saw it?” Dang.

I find myself sometimes visiting his page to see what kinds of things are happening in his life, whether posted by him or about him or to him. This does not serve to move me through withdrawal and maintain my desire for “no contact.” If I’m lucky, there’s been nothing posted (in my case, this ex is not much of a Facebook person either).

If anything is there, it’s fodder for obsession and spiraling thoughts, fantasies and just plain MSU (making s&#% up). At any rate, his life is none of my business at this point and seeking information does not serve me.

Another element I’ve run into is the innocent but blind-siding post about him posted by a mutual friend.

Even if I’ve removed him from my friends list, we have mutual friends and they aren’t avoiding him that I know about. Their posts to or about him can end up in my news feed, and knock me down emotionally.

This event of surprise information can be a trigger and now I have work to do to get back to

neutral.

And finally, as I referenced in the first paragraph, there’s the deadening silence of his not calling, by whatever means. He’s not calling me. He’s not texting me. He’s not reaching out on Facebook to me. If I call or text him, I invariably feel worse than if I had chosen not to.

This is true when I use Facebook to feed the same obsession. Even when I can trick myself into believing I’m on Facebook for other reasons, if I feel worse when I get off, I know I’ve wanted something from the experience related to him that I didn’t get. It’s a dead giveaway.

All this online activity seems to serve merely to keep the attachment alive — an attachment I claim to want to break and even pray daily to be severed. In my efforts to make it through withdrawal and free myself from my addictive attachment to this person, I find Facebook to be problematic.

I’m lucky in that I’m not in the habit (and never really have been) of going on Facebook much. Now, I avoid it. Not as much because I’m afraid of what I’ll find out, but more because I doubt my own motives for being on there.

It’s rare for me to have pure motives. There’s always a little manipulation and fantasy-driven hope at least mixed in with my “honest desire to connect” with my “friends.”

My sponsor speaks of, in her obsession, driving past her lover’s house in the dead of night to see if someone’s car is in the drive.

The question she was forced to ask herself was: Do you feel better knowing that you were right? No. Do you feel better if there’s no car in the drive and you were wrong?

No. No relief, either way. It’s better not to ask questions to which the answers do not serve to improve my day or foster my recovery. Facebook is a more subtle version of the 2 a.m. drive-by. But, I always feel worse if I give in to the urge. The extreme ease of doing it does not help the situation.

I can do it from the comfort of my own bed on my very handy smart phone. I don’t even need to get up and get in the car. Nothing to stop me, but a Higher Power and my capacity to be honest.

— Anonymous, Dallas, TX

Living in a Technological World

Hello. My name is Andrew K. and I’m a sex and love addict. I’ve been in this fellowship for about four and a half years now. This is the first article I’ve ever written for *the Journal*.

I’ve been involved with the

Conference Journal Committee for a little over two years now and served as the Committee’s chair for the last year. I am always embarrassed to admit that in all that time, it took me until the beginning of this last year to actually subscribe to *the*

Journal. And that’s even with my cartoons sometimes appearing in the publication.

As soon as I subscribed, I was glad that I had done so and wished that I’d done it much sooner. I appreciate having *the Journal* with me in my car to

read when stopped in the bank drive-through and to take with me to meetings to share with others.

I decided to write an article on this topic as I feel it is one that really speaks to me. Technology has played such a huge role in my addiction. I have often joked that any time a new piece of technology comes out, or a new way to use technology becomes available, the first thing I think of is how I could use it to act out. I joke about it, but it's absolutely true. This is ingrained in me as a sex and love addict. I grew up in a family that provided me with constant access to the newest forms of technology. I hesitate to even go into the specific devices used and how they were used, but rest assured, if it could be used to act out, I would do so.

The most obvious use of technology for sexual acting out is the Internet (hell, even for acting out as a love addict). This was one of the first ways I used technology to act out and it's the one I have utilized most often. As soon as I was shown that the Internet could be used to access pornography, I was off and running.

It was too easy. And I was barely a teenager. This meant that I was exposing myself to content of a nature that left a devastating impact on me as an individual. There are some very dark corners of the Internet where one can find just about anything, and I was exploring it well before the age that it is considered legal for one to view such content. I couldn't help but be effected.

I believe that accessing this material stunted my emotional growth. It kept me isolated. I used it as a tool for changing my feelings when I felt abused and unaccepted by the outside world. I couldn't wait to get to

my room at the end of the school day, whether it was to act out or to do otherwise.

I just wanted to be away from the things that made me feel bad about myself. All of this led to some very uncomfortable discussions with my parents as I got older, when certain items were discovered on my computer. The consequences were more dire when a girlfriend found this material on my computer shortly after my senior year of high school.

After the loss of that relationship, I went through a period where I was very lost. I wanted to win her back by swearing off all pornography. Then she'd see how much I loved her! But in the meantime, I began meeting up with people through websites online for anonymous sex.

I convinced myself it was okay, because it wasn't pornography. Ultimately, I never got back together with my ex and I returned to my old ways because I figured I might as well. This continued, off and on, for years until I finally made it to the program.

I have heard many people in the program over the years talk about what one can do to keep from accessing pornography online. The way I handled it, when I was first starting out in the program, was to always leave the door to my room open when I was on my computer.

I was living with two friends at the time and I did NOT feel comfortable with the idea of either of them seeing me looking at that stuff, not to mention the idea of being caught masturbating.

As time went on, I found that I did not need to do this anymore. I had barely touched my computer for months, and returning to my PC felt strange at first. I was afraid of what I

might do. I was afraid of the familiarity of using Internet browsers and simply touching the keyboard and mouse. I did this daily at work, but it was different doing it at home again, my door closed behind me.

As time has gone on, I have been able to maintain sobriety from my very specific bottom line behavior. All pornography is not on my bottom line. It's not even listed in my danger zone. The basic text of S.L.A.A. talks about the danger of venturing out into other sexual activities because, "I never had a problem with this." I have heard some in meetings talk about being able to do certain things that I didn't think I would ever be able to do. But there came a point where I started to test this idea. I made a few costly mistakes.

Though I never broke my bottom line, I have definitely found myself stuck in my sex addiction a couple of times because I thought that I could, "just use a little pornography." I now know that this is not something I am capable of.

No matter what others may be able to do, I have to be aware of the areas that get ME into trouble. What leads me back down that slippery slope? I had to make some mistakes in order to figure this out, but the program teaches me that that's okay. I am allowed to make mistakes.

We are part of a fellowship that has as many different bottom lines as there are members. This sometimes makes it hard to relate to one another, but I learned early on that it's about relating to the feelings, not the specific acting out behavior. I try to keep my own experience in mind when I am sharing in meetings, especially when there are newcomers around, so that I don't give them the wrong idea.

I feel it is important to reinforce the idea that there are some behaviors that some of us may engage in that others cannot. I try to preface some of my shares with this statement when I think it is appropriate.

I found myself in the middle of a conversation after a meeting last night that is very much applicable to the topic of this issue of *the Journal*. There are many in our program who utilize content-blocking software on their computers.

I tried this once, but not in a very effective manner. I had the password, so I was able to disable it. In the beginning it was still a deterrent, but when I really wanted to act out, there was nothing to stop me from turning off the software. Eventually, I stopped using the software altogether, not because I was continuing to act out, but because I felt it had outlived its usefulness.

I have found that there are some tools that work for me for a limited time and then I have to try something new. That's not to say I might not try this avenue again at some time in the future, should I feel that it is necessary. I would probably give the password to my sponsor if I tried it again. But for now, it's not an issue.

Technology has been evolving

in an exponential fashion as the years have gone by. As I mentioned earlier in the article, I often joke about how new technology causes me to immediately think of how I could use it to act out. This is still true, but it is usually only a joke.

What has gotten me into trouble is when I get an idea and I don't share it with my sponsor or someone else in the program. It is important that I share that thought with someone as soon as possible, because if I don't, it remains a secret and it will pop up at some moment when I am feeling particularly vulnerable to acting out.

One last thought on the subject. Several months ago, we held a large workshop in the Dallas area where members of the fellowship shared on different topics in various breakout sessions.

I got to hear one of my sponsees lead a group on the topic of technology as it applies to this addiction. He shared with us that although technology has certainly been a huge part of his acting out, it has also proven to be integral in his recovery. I had never looked at it from this perspective.

I can use the same tools I used to act out to help me stay sober. And I do so on a regular

basis. I just hadn't thought of it that way until he put the idea out there.

We live in a world that depends on technology more and more. It is very hard to avoid. I use technology at work and I also use it regularly for my creative projects.

I cannot imagine shutting myself off from it. I think of it as being no more feasible than trying to avoid the world itself and the people in it. I can't walk through my life with blinders. Women are around me on a regular basis and I have to learn how to live as a sex and love addict in a world that does not conform to my particular sensitivities.

I have the tools of this program to help me at times when I am triggered. And if I need to avoid certain people, places and things from time to time, I will do it so that I may stay sober.

There are definitely a few things that I will probably always try to avoid. But on the whole, I do not want to live a life where I have to avoid life itself. The addiction robbed me of all things which made life enjoyable. The program has returned to me a life that is worth living.

— Andrew K., Dallas/Ft. Worth

The S.L.A.A. Basic Text eBook
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Technology Has Multiplied My Gratitude And My Humility



Technology has multiplied my gratitude and humility many times over.

I got sober in S.L.A.A. before the Internet existed, or if it did, there was certainly no common access to it. I was comfortable with computers because I got acquainted when they could only count really fast on a few hundred thousand fingers and toes and took up whole rooms. As they grew up in capacity and down in size, I was pretty late in

getting my own because the work I needed to do on it required a bigger computer than I could afford.

Then came desktops, and laptops, and satellite Internet, and I was tremendously excited by the ability it all had for communication among people at a distance, remembering how often I had isolated myself from Fellowship support with simple geography. Of course I had no idea what social and emotional

anorexia was yet! I was one of the first at my workplace in learning to use this incredible resource.

But within what seemed like no time at all, the temptations to my addiction moved from racks behind the counters at stores that I had to get up and go to, and have cash to buy, to instant availability on the desk in the privacy of my own home.

The first time I saw how pornography could be almost

instantly available, (and who would ever know?!), I remember the fear and physical tension and chill that swept through me along with – temptation, curiosity, wondering if it would give me the “hit” I used to get, a flash of one of the old memories (my fantasy had become as vivid as the magazines and movies before I got sober.) And then the chill turned to terror and I abruptly unplugged my computer.

Once again, I was reminded that my addiction was not only present in the past back when I first came to S.L.A.A. My addiction was alive and well inside me, just behind the scars left from a childhood when I learned that the only love I would get would be sexual – when I had to pretend I had no real needs, and had to do anything someone wanted me to do if they gave me any attention at all.

Those scars could break open at any time, and my addiction would flow out, drowning my soul in its muddy filth.

Now there was this wonder of technology that made temptation immediately and even accidentally available. The home that I had kept free from even mainstream magazines if they had lingerie ads, and from which I had banished alcoholic beverages and all of the books and magazines I had once used to numb myself from my guilt and shame and loneliness, that home was suddenly unsafe.

I had to learn to live recovery with the Internet, or lose the sober life I had come to love. My first withdrawal from pornography, and sex with myself accompanied by violent, sexual fantasies had been terrible, much harder than withdrawal from promiscuity or individual, unworkable romances. I knew without a

single question that it would be much worse, perhaps even impossible if I let that fantasy life into my consciousness again.

How was I going to deal with this tool which was necessary to my occupation without giving in to the temptation?

When I got my first 24 hours free from sexual fantasies, it was hard. To get to sleep I had to put on the jogging shoes I had not ever used before, three different times to jog, huffing and puffing, down the muddy dirt road to the highway and back, about a mile, and a huge effort for a middle aged, overweight, out of shape single parent.

Even with my body exhausted, I finally fell asleep only after minutes of saying the serenity prayer out loud, over and over, picturing the words on the banner so common in 12-Step meetings to keep other images out of my mind.

Soon I was able to sleep with only a mile of jogging, but it still took several repetitions of the serenity prayer, which I also used many times each day when unwanted images would flash into my mind. It was exhausting, and only my shame and fear kept me from relapse. But things really do get better.

Today, as has been true every day since the Internet came into my home, I have had to live solidly in the moment to keep my mind free from sexual and romantic fantasies.

Just in case someone might think I have gotten saint-like, everyone should know that at times my mind still entertains flirting, lying, withholding embarrassing truths, revenge, images of saying things to people who hurt me that will flatten them, quitting the things I don't want to do, but which are necessary, and on and on.

Thank God I don't have to act on them! My addiction still

peeks through the peepholes my character defects drill in my armor. But my willingness to stay sober and saying that serenity prayer out loud, even if softly with my mouth closed so no one will hear, have continued to keep those sexual images and stories out of my imagination and kept my soul safely above my bottom lines for a couple of decades.

Living in the moment is even more necessary now that I carry the Internet and temptation around in my cell phone. If I had to struggle against temptation it could easily keep me from hearing when people are saying important things, from getting work done, keep me from the nourishing exchanges with other human beings that meet my genuine, right-sized needs for love, emotional connection with others, and joy, and the courage to deal with the inevitable times of pain that are part of life.

But I can speed read that banner with the serenity prayer on it that is now so vivid and easily brought to mind in only a second or so. It blocks unwanted images from my imagination, easily within that 3-second rule we sometimes talk about.

There are also practical actions I take to keep my space as spiritually safe as I can. I don't use Facebook, because it tempts me to hunt up people I don't really know.

It makes me feel like a voyeur, and gives me too much temptation to compare myself with others, or to yield to envy, or gloating over things people “like.” Face to face contact with others is much healthier for me.

I don't go on the Internet except when I have a specific question to answer, e-mail to read, a message to send to someone I know or to check my bills and bank account. I don't use the Internet for

entertainment. TV is safer. I don't subscribe to those channels! I screen movies and books before I use them. I never open a message or a link unless I know exactly who it is from and if that person is "safe."

I never go "surfing." I only let someone I know I can trust use my computer, and even then, preferably on the kitchen table. My Skype contacts are S.L.A.A. meetings, program friends, a few family members. I am vigilant.

So technology has actually helped me stay in today, in this hour, this minute, and this

moment, because that is the only place that vigilance can really work during the inevitable bad times.

Practice has given me many moments, hours, and days remarkably free from addiction, leaving space for many, many moments of pure joy, great satisfaction, much learning, and enormous gratitude — first for sobriety, but also for technology. I can't retreat into emotional anorexia when my feelings get hurt, or I need to get done something I don't want to do, or when I give in to self-pity or laziness, using the excuse that

help is too far away!

I can see the faces of my support people, and they will see mine, and know if I am telling the truth and the whole story.

Technology has certainly multiplied the speed with which temptation can turn to acting out, and the temptations themselves. But the gifts of serenity it has brought also is almost unbelievable.

Maybe I should name my beloved computer and Internet connection. I think "Vigi Lance" is a good name.

— Anonymous

How Technology Has Affected My Love Addiction

In the fall of 2003, a few months after graduating college, my mother had first suggested to me as a way to meet new people that I try out this website called "JDate."

I had never heard of this particular website and was naturally intrigued by the notion of the Internet facilitating romantic connections.

I can't quite remember if I had gone on a few dates over the course of a month and then stopped, or just kept on renewing my subscription. Sadly, this continued for most of the next ten years. I would go through periods of 3 months on, 6 months off and vice versa. The method to my madness was at



first to see what matches JDate would send me in correlation with my preferences.

I also had to always make sure that close friends and family approved of my profile pictures and written summary. Every time a gorgeous (emphasis on the word "gorgeous") Jewish vixen popped up in my matches, I would immediately fall into a state of anxiety, adrenaline and confusion.

What made things worse for me was when I would actually contact her; if she was online, I would send her a simple "Hey, how are you?" and just eagerly wait for the instant message bubble to flash with her response (I could always feel my pulse rate jump when the sound of a butterfly came on in the form of a message bubble).

If it were via email, I would consistently refresh the page until the message tab flashed with a shiny exclamation point. If I was really lucky, we would set up a date and I would not be able to contain any iota of emotion or anticipation, especially if it turned out that we loved the exact same food, or movies, or music, or anything else that would seem like an ordinary connection (my mind interpreted it as something much deeper!)

This combination of anxiety and curiosity would translate into instant neediness on the first date when it became clear that she just appeared awesome and my mind could not help but project the 2nd, 3rd and fourth dates...all the way up to our first romantic getaway and her eventually meeting my parents.

No doubt she would sense this and maybe she'd give it a chance by agreeing to a second

or third date, but it usually never lasted more than that. And thus began the vicious, emotional cycle that would carry me from date to date, website to website, and even city to city.

And of course, when a girl showed more interest in me than I her, I was turned off early on and didn't want to pursue things any further. Sure, I could have 3-5 dates in one week, to the point when I had 2 or 3 girls with the same first name and had to carefully label each one in my phone so as not to confuse anyone (I thought those were great problems to have)! My friends were very impressed and I would grab hold of that energy to beef up my already inflating ego.

Eventually, this anxiety and obsession found its way into my cell phone and when I had gotten a girl's number, whether it was online or in person, I had to literally fight like hell not to call too much, respond too quickly, or make jokes that could be misconstrued.

I would ignore my parents, siblings, and even good friends just to wait for a text from this person I had never even met, or barely knew at all. If I was on the phone with my father and call waiting said "Rebecca from JDate," my heart would start racing and I'm surprised I would even tell my father I had to go, when my behavior seemed for certain like I was ready to hang up on anybody who wasn't a potential date!

And even when I'd get rejected over and over, I would sign back up on the dating website for a month and immediately redo my profile and go right to who was online and start messaging girls like crazy. I was told to just throw out the

vibe to as many as possible and that I would hook a few in, but I now realize this works if you actually have confidence.

Then I'd come across a profile that seemed like it was tailor-made for me; this girl loved jazz and old movies, was a liberal and anything else I could overanalyze. One night I had such a great first date that I literally was in a trance driving home from the city and almost got lost...That one disappeared after date #2.

By the end of a month online, I had zero relationships and an even emptier wallet to show for it. I became envious of any guy with a girlfriend, even my own friends. This behavior continued with other dating websites, pick-up classes and even just being set up by friends.

And even when I thought I was done with online dating for good, I would look back at the past few months and say to myself: "Ok, it's been a few months hiatus. I think I'm ready to give it another shot and things would be different." Who was I kidding? I would alter my summary; find the best pictures I could locate on my hard drive to make myself irresistible online, and even quote movies to instantly get a girl's chuckle.

I now realize there is nothing wrong with being a serial dater if that's what you want. But what I was doing was something I was barely aware of, and even when I thought I knew, it didn't seem to matter in my mind. Technology isn't about to go backwards because I can't date properly, and I'm still keeping my smart phone, but in the meantime I know what I have to do in order to find true love.

— Scott, NYC

One Click Away From Pain



I am always one click away from pain. Each day I make a choice not to check up on him, my “Qualifier of Qualifiers,” through the power of technology. I haven’t seen or corresponded with him in over 7 months and my addict mind still has days where she feels like she would do almost anything to have the slightest crumb of information about him.

And the information is there

for the entire world to see. It’s there.

One click away.

I have been in active recovery for years and I still find a strong pull on occasion to do anything possible to feel connected to him. The key word here is “feel.”

Finding information on someone, be it photos or status updates, causes me to feel a sense of closeness to them. I feel as though I have an insight into

someone’s life when really I may have no intimacy with them at all! This is all food for thought as I consider the degree to which I find myself a consumer of the world-wide Internet and an addict.

My bottom lines have to be specific in the realm of technology because I have a tendency to camp out and play in “the grey area” of my otherwise very black and white

guidelines for my recovery.

If it's any indication that technology can be a major player in addiction, my list of bottom-line behavior hits this idea home:

No texts. No calls. No emails. No social media stalking [insert all social media outlets here]. No checking his website. No Googling him. No searching for his house on map applications. No checking the weather in his city. No listening to music that reminds me of him. No looking at pictures of him/us I may have on my phone or laptop that were missed in my big purging project when I got clean. No re-reading emails or texts I've received from him in the past.

Regardless of what I know in my spirit is best for me, I find myself wondering on any given day... What is he doing? Who is

he with? How is he feeling? What am I missing out on? These are the questions my addict demands answers for. Usually I find those questions when I'm in moments or days of insecurity, inconsistency, or unrest.

The issue is not my feelings; the issue is my behavior. When I engage my addict's demands for Internet stalking or doing anything possible to soothe the discomfort I have, it's numbing out for me. I take myself immediately out of the answer, which is to feel my feelings. If feelings come up it's for a reason and it means there is deep-rooted pain that needs to reveal itself. The pain needs to be seen, accepted, and acknowledged in order for me to move into the next phase of my life and recovery.

The feelings need to be felt and my behaviors affect how that goes down.

In the moments I've momentarily fallen off the bottom-line wagon and indulged my Internet medication, I have never once felt better as a result. In fact, I have found myself walking away with more disgust, sadness, discomfort, and questions. My indulgence didn't bring more peace, joy, or contentment. I try to remember that truth when I feel tempted to take a walk along the technological transit system attached to my laptop or phone.

Regardless of how much sober time I have in my program, I am always one click away from pain. And it's good for me to remember that.

— **Anonymous, Los Angeles**

Technology Is My Addict Behavior

I had to find her. Right then and there nothing else in the world mattered except finding Courtney. My Facebook search produced over 1000 matches. Didn't care. In fact game on. So I dove in head first and looked at profile after profile, after profile, after profile. 3 hours later, with a splitting headache and tired eyes, I was still at it.

Determined to find her, I was a man possessed — possessed to find the woman that my head told me was the only one for me. Profile number 326? Not her — close but not her. Profile 479?

Nope. How many would I have to look through? I told myself 500.

If I didn't find her by the 500th profile I would quit, cancel the search, call off the dogs and call it a night. I found her on number 498. How has technology affected my addict behaviors, you ask? Technology is my addict behavior. It's fuel for my addiction — a bottomless tank of gas which allows me to numb out on a daily basis. And numb out I do. Television...yes please. Solitaire on my phone.....don't mind if I do. Some say technology "plugs" us

into the world. I say technology turns us into mindless zombies. But this article isn't about "us." It's about me — me and my addiction. Bottom line, technology keeps me from me. It keeps me occupied and away from my feelings — keeps me numb and distracted.

By the way, I just took a break to play a game of solitaire on my phone. I won. Which of course made me feel a little better about myself. Seriously, I'll play a game of solitaire and if I win I feel good — like I'm a decent person — smart and competent. If I lose...not so

much. See, I come from a childhood of complete deprivation — no birthdays, no holidays, no doctor visits, no nothing. So my wiring is a little F'd up. My wiring tells me that everything is my fault — that just being me is wrong in and of itself. Technology helps to ease this pain. For the sake of this article I'd like to inform you, the reader, of what technology and my addiction looked like prior to program as well as today having been in the S.L.A.A. rooms for close to 3 years.

Where to start. I like to numb out, which means I don't like to feel my feelings. Wait. Let's back peddle a second. My addict behavior prior to program looked like this: I would troll online web pages and websites hourly throughout the day looking for a hit — throughout the night too. You name the website, I was on there. So right there....how has technology affected my addict behavior? I'm a sex and love addict and the Internet fueled my addiction — rocket fuel at that. Why go to a bar looking for women when I can reach out to as many as I possibly want while sitting at my kitchen table in my boxers — while doing a load of laundry — much better odds (and clean clothes too). Thanks Internet inventor guy.

That's the uber-abbreviated

version of what it looked like during my days of acting out. So what about today? Today, I checked Instagram. I checked the weather. I checked emails. I checked Instagram again. I checked in on my fantasy football team. I went back and checked the weather again. I played solitaire. I checked Instagram again. I played solitaire again. I checked text messages. I think you get the point.

By the way, the weather tomorrow will be a high of 86. All on my frickin' phone! Man that's a lot of disconnect from ME. I don't need to check emails all day long (not for the work that I do). I don't need to check Instagram all day long either. It's not a job nor does my job revolve around it. So what purpose could all this possibly serve? To numb out — even if just for a second or two (insert desire to play a quick game of solitaire here).

Let's take a closer look at Instagram. I've spent my entire life using other people to feel better about myself. If someone had something good to say about me I felt better. So how does this translate to Instagram? Well you post a picture and then wait and see if your friends comment and/or "Like" it.

I can see clearly now (yes, I know that's a song) that

Instagram breeds in me an air of codependency constantly in search of acceptance. I can't lie, I feel better about myself when I see a bunch of "likes" and or comments. Hey, people like my picture!

I feel better. Ahhhhh. Self esteem is built through esteemable acts — not through Instagram. It has to come from within not through a "like." Deep down I know this to be true. But boy does it feel good to be "liked."

Back to my F'd up wiring mentioned above. It tells me that I'm no good — that I'm not likeable or loveable. Technology is a resource to help numb my pain. It's just another way for me to get a hit — to keep my addiction alive. And, it's all around me. So unless I opt to become a Buddhist monk and live in the Himalayan mountains I'd better come up with a game plan. Can I sit still and just be me? Can I make it through an entire day without checking Instagram and or playing a game of solitaire? The answer is, "Yes." But for this fellow addict, it requires using the tools of the program. It requires keeping God close, making outreach calls and above anything else being honest with ME. Insert "Like" here.

— Zachary

Social Networking - The Tipping Point

Almost six years ago, I finally had to acknowledge that I am, indeed, a sex and love addict. I wondered about this before, and ignored it,

but this time I could not avoid facing facts head-on. I would not have been surprised if I ended up losing my wife and children.

The situation that ultimately

brought everything into the open was acknowledging that I had created a false persona on a social networking site. I was an embarrassment to my family,

and the “fantasy” me was such a horrible person. The worst part was that this profile was public for most of the ten months it existed. When confronted, this time I acknowledged all the wrong I had done.

This quickly led to finally admitting my addiction and how out of control I really was. All that time, I thought I was so much in control. What a lie! Within a day I had summoned

the strength to delete the “social” account I had and I started working on the path to sobriety.

Distance and time definitely helped. For a few years, I was involved in no social networks at all. I eventually registered in a business-oriented network which, for me is “safe” and has helped greatly in carrying out my current employment.

I know I cannot be involved

in any other type of social site. There is no need to, and I know I am not strong enough to be in such a situation and not eventually succumb to temptation. I have over five years of sobriety now.

Every day has its challenges, but I continue to move forward, knowing I am in a better place and possess a lot more knowledge that I cannot ignore.

— Joe R.

Meditation Book Project

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Resolve

Once again our hand rests upon the phone, that overwhelming urge to call our unhealthy ex-lover eating away at our resolve.

We forget that we are calling someone who isn't capable of being there for us emotionally. We are aware that this is all a part of our sex and love addiction, but still cannot rid ourselves of that urge to call and don't have the strength to stop ourselves.

What are some recovery tools that we could utilize during times like this? We could choose to phone or e-mail a program friend instead. We could pray to have the strength not to call.

We could, at that very moment, write about the urge in our journals. We could take a walk, a drive, get involved in something we are interested in.

We could do some service work and help someone else.

AFFIRMATION: Higher Power, Help me to remember the recovery tools I have available to me and to utilize them when I am not so strong.

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