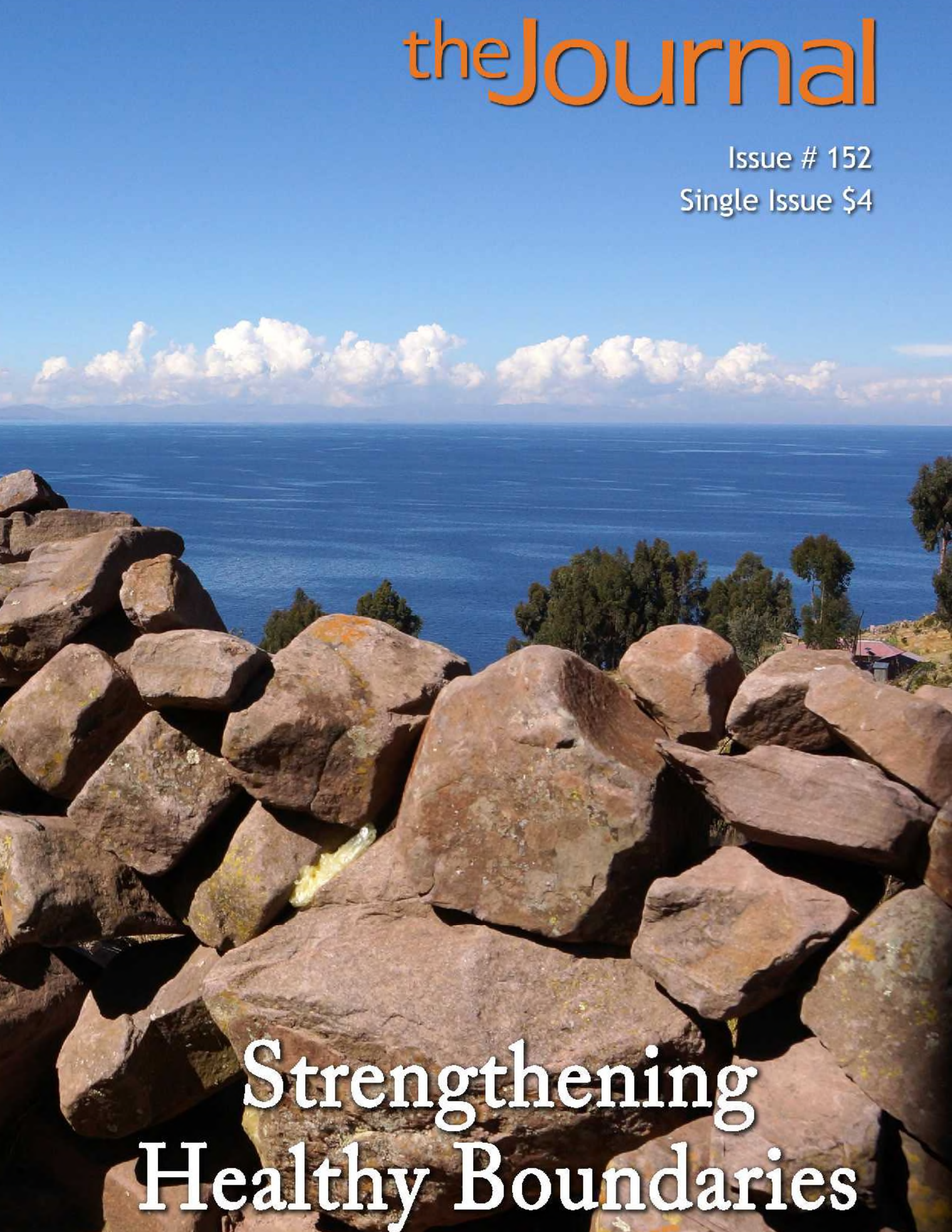


# theJournal

Issue # 152

Single Issue \$4



Strengthening  
Healthy Boundaries

# 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.

© 1990 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved

## 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.

© 1990 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved

# Table of Contents

---

**4** Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

**5** Letter From the Editor

**4** The Twelve Steps

**6** Question of the Day

## **Theme: Strengthening Healthy Boundaries**

**8** My Relationship Circles and Boundaries

**9** Boundaries

**11** The Complex Question of Boundaries

**13** Standing Up for Myself

**14** Self Definition and Setting Healthy Boundaries

**14** Getting a Different Perspective on Boundaries

**16** The Boundaries of Setting Boundaries

## **Share Space**

**18** Romantic Fantasy Addiction

**20** When the Obsession Kicks in

**21** Suffering Abuse in Order to be Helpful

**24** The Journey of Self Approval

# 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.

©1985, 2003, 2012 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

## 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.

\*©1985 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities, which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise. **THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — 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 Him. 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 Him 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 God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His 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 alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader: The theme of this issue is Strengthening Healthy Boundaries. The key word here for me is healthy. I like that that word was included. It brings to mind the unhealthy anorexic boundaries I put in place to try to control my disease when I was acting out — isolating, not talking to men, gaining weight, not wearing make-up, pushing people away, and wearing bulky clothes. I thought if I was unattractive and alone, I wouldn't run the risk of acting out. But those boundaries aren't self-esteem building.

Healthy boundaries help us in our recovery to stay safe. Many of the stories in this issue help with tips on how to find and maintain healthy boundaries. Once we find them, we work on strengthening them.

While editing one of the stories I remembered “No,” is a sentence. It was a difficult one for me to say when I first got sober. I read a self help book on co-dependency that told me to say, “No.” My family was so uncomfortable with the new person who wouldn't do everything they asked anymore. It became a four letter word at family get-togethers! It was difficult to get over the fear that they would abandon me if I didn't do what they wanted and twist myself into the person they wanted me to be instead of finding out who I really wanted to be. But we got through it and they probably love me more today, because I'm a real person now, not the actor on stage that I used to be. I also realized that “Yes,” is also a complete sentence. The question is which one am I realistically capable of in each situation in which I have to give a yes or no answer?

I hope the stories in this issue are as uplifting for you as they were for me.

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.

© January 2015. The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Stories, interviews, personal testimony, and other content contained herein are authored by members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. The opinions expressed in *the Journal* are not necessarily the opinions of The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., F.W.S. office, Annual Business Conference or any other Conference committee including the Conference Journal Committee or *the Journal* production staff. Motions adopted at the 1989, 1990, and 1991 Conferences chartered *the Journal*, but it is impractical for all of the content of a periodical such as *the Journal* to be Conference-approved. Each recovery group can determine its own position on the use of content from *the Journal* at its meetings.

The Augustine Fellowship,

S.L.A.A.,  
Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc.  
1550 NE Loop 410, Suite 118  
San Antonio, TX 78209

1-210-828-7900 Tuesday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CT  
except for holidays

(fax) 1-210-828-7922. [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)

For subscription concerns, please visit: <http://www.slaafws.org/subscriptionhelp>

Managing Editor Lisa C.

Outreach Director

Art Director Fiona

Proofreaders for this issue Andrew K.  
Beth L.

# Question of the Day

## & Answers from Yesterday

HOW HAS THE S.L.A.A. PROGRAM OF RECOVERY HELPED YOU TO STRENGTHEN YOUR BOUNDARIES?"

**It has** helped me greatly in ALL areas of my life, with my children as they have gotten older, now 19 years and 24 years. Over the past 5 years taking a vow of celibacy, not acting out on my bottom-line behaviors and not dating has helped me and them soooooo much in many, many, many ways more than 1.

They are self-supporting of themselves mentally and financially and of course, they know that I will help them if they need me to.

My relationships with my family members have increased for the better, for me.

I have no regrets in terms of spending time with my family of origin members. Over the past 4 years, after I took the vow of celibacy and to not break my boundaries with men or women, I have only prospered spiritually.

I will now begin to prosper financially, once again, as I have picked up the pieces of my past and was able to concentrate and to put them all back together again doing the spiritual footwork.

I am blessed in recovery. Recovered in so many ways.

— Kristin, New Jersey

**Once,** I started to give a shoulder rub to a coworker. It was not welcome. I stopped just short of being called up for a sexual harassment claim. One would think that since I've been in recovery for awhile, I would be very clear on this area. I still struggle with thoughts as I pass by female coworkers, but I make it a point to carry mental discipline before thoughts turn into actions.

There are some women for whom a pat on the shoulder — at the right time — is okay, other times not. With some other coworkers the question is a non-issue because I don't have as much of a collegial relationship with them. Thank God for recovery, that I can tell the difference and not have to reach out inappropriately for my own validation.

—Anonymous, Bay Area, California

**I used to**

have rigid boundaries because I was so angry all the time. Today I have softened because Higher Power is all around me and protects me. I don't have to react.

I'm not afraid. It's all going to be okay. I don't need to strengthen my boundaries today. My boundaries are all around me. They are defined by my Higher Power who is actively working in my life to navigate my protection on a daily basis. I just relax and go with the flow and trust my Higher Power. Everything works out for the good of those who love Him.

—Anonymous

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “How has the S.L.A.A. program of recovery helped you to strengthen your boundaries?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two questions are: Issue #153— Secrets Versus Privacy: How Do We Tell the Difference?— “Has S.L.A.A. helped you understand the difference between secrets and privacy? Please share your experience, strength and hope.” — deadline for submissions is 1/15/15; and Issue #154 — Ready for Sponsorship? — “When did you begin sponsoring and how did you know you were ready?” — The deadline for submissions is 3/15/15. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

**I had** no boundaries in my addiction. The program has helped me to see that I have the right and worth to decide what is acceptable behavior from those around me.

—Anonymous

**I didn't** know just how serious my issues with boundaries were (although I always suspected) until the language of S.L.A.A. infiltrated my behavior. I'm grateful for this renewed awareness.

—Madeline S., Los Angeles

**Simply** hearing others share at a meeting how they have strengthened their boundaries has helped me do the same.

—Anonymous, Seattle

**By** showing the benefits of saying, “No.”

—Melissa K., Philadelphia

**It has** given me the inner strength to be able to speak my truth and express my reality to others.

—Steve L., Cincinnati

**I have** learned about who are program supports, what to share, and how to share. I heard people's stories, which have been very useful for adopting boundaries for myself.

—Alan B., Toronto

**Boundaries** — I didn't know they existed before S.L.A.A.

—Anonymous

**It gave** me more trust in myself.

—Stephanie S., Frankfurt, Germany

**I didn't** have any boundaries prior to coming to S.L.A.A! I have since learned that I am worth it to have healthy boundaries and that it's appropriate to respect other's boundaries.

—Deborah, Sacramento, CA

**Sharing** and listening to others has increased my awareness of boundary failure which creates an awareness and sets the stage for new behavior.

—Nancy G., San Diego

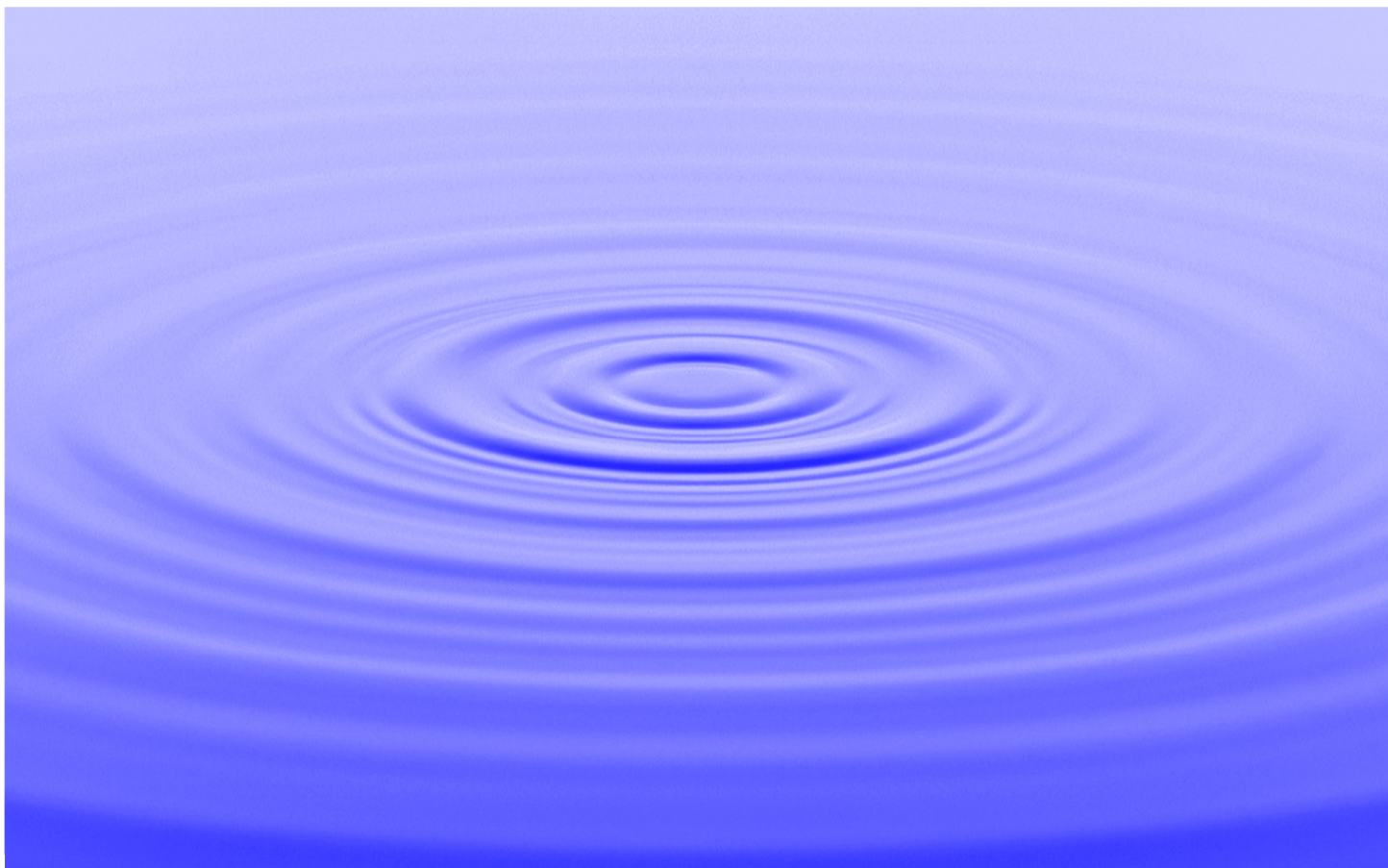
**By** going to meetings and listening to other sober recovering members discuss how they have strengthened and recovered their own boundaries has helped me see how I can possibly use and maintain and thusly strengthen my boundaries.

—Stephen F., CT

**I am** more aware of them and have a better understanding of how to express them. I also have increased my self-esteem through using them.

Denise, Ningbo, China

# My Relationship Circles and Boundaries



**I** always tell newcomers that the S.L.A.A. Fellowship is all about relationship problems — of being able to relate in a sober way while taking care of my integrity.

When I came to the Fellowship, and before doing my Step work, I didn't have the tools to put people in the right category in my relationship sphere.

Picturing my sober relationship sphere, I think of it like ripples in the water. I have to decide who will be in my inner circle, who will be in the middle

circle, and who will be in my outer circle.

In the past, people I really didn't want to be in my inner circle ended up there anyway.

I didn't signal in my attitude and behavior where I wanted them to be in my relationship sphere. But I gave them signals that made them think they were

closer to me than they actually were. I was too intimate in our conversations about the private things in my life.

On the other hand, I also didn't show my closest and dearest friends that they actually were in my closest intimate circle because they meant the most to me and were not at the same level



as other people. I never dared to show them and tell them directly how much they meant to me.

With the program, I can see how my fear of not being popular and accepted by all people controlled me. My constant Step inventories help me to see and

strengthen my boundaries.

Also in the Fellowship, there are some people I want to be more close and intimate with than others. I dare to reveal these feelings at my regular meeting where I'm safe, and also on the phone during outreach calls.

S.L.A.A. has been a training ground to allow me to try and practice these principles before I implement them in real life, outside the meetings.

Kind regards.

— Susie, Denmark.

# Boundaries

The most difficult part of setting boundaries is first figuring out who I am.

The most difficult part of setting boundaries is first figuring out who I am. One man in our meeting told the story of how his partner asked him to spray paint something for him. He replied definitively to her, "I don't do spray paint." He told about how, through prayer, he held his boundary in spite of the disappointment of his partner. This was good boundary management from the perspective of his share.

I'm not sure if I have quite the granularity of thought to know if I am a spray paint person or not. Quite frankly, if I arrived home and my wife asked me to spray paint something for her, I have no idea what I would say.

Nevertheless, this program has helped me move from my identity being dictated by the expectations of others and coming to discovery and decision about "who I am" based upon my own experience and understanding of myself. It continues to be a slow, long process.

I grew up in the 1960's with a good providing father and a

controlling mother. I learned that it wasn't *if* mom got her way but *when*. WWII fathers often tended to be emotionally withdrawn, so I had no recourse. My parents had my best interests at heart, but most of what I did or didn't do was dictated. There was no "handing over the reins" or "letting me make my choices and learning by my mistakes". This led to a great deal of internal anger along with conformity to mom's wishes.

If I had a blow up, dad just threatened to knock my teeth in (never happened). My only recourse was to be sneaky. So I learned to be creative in getting what I wanted.

I escaped this home by plunging into a communal-type church that can best be described as fundamentalism on steroids. I don't want to disparage fundamentalist beliefs because a more literal reading of Scripture is certainly an option that many have successfully embraced.

However, this move plunged me into a church-centric community where external behavior was highly monitored

and deviation from expectations was punished with rebuke and shame.

It was in these years that I conformed and embraced these expectations on the one hand, but then found myself drawn to anonymous sexual encounters in local massage parlors. This disingenuousness to self propelled me towards being sneaky and creative.

Recovery helped me identify and break off the destructive and sneaky habits that progressively grew worse in the decades that followed. But that only left me with a sobriety of saying, "No," which was not very satisfying. The difficult work was finding the "Yes" — in other words, who was I really? What was the true intimacy I craved? What did I really want to do with my life? For again, it is impossible to set up a boundary unless I know what I am setting up a boundary to protect.

This process of finding myself grew over many conversations with my sponsors and listening to many shares. I could easily identify with the Steps where I

needed to “come clean” about past behaviors. The one assignment my sponsor gave me, that I came close to refusing to do, was when he asked me, “What are things that you like about yourself?” I had little skills to answer this. I relied on everything outside of myself to define me.

Over time, I began to listen to myself about who I am and act accordingly. For example: I got it into my head that to be smart and spiritual, I need to read very important and significant books. But I gave myself permission to let that go. I can read what I want or even nothing at all. I don’t just listen to the spiritual teachers I “ought” to like. I listen to the ones that speak to me, even if it is not of my tradition. And I don’t listen to the ones that don’t work for me.

There are friends that I share things with who are my soul mates. But I don’t have to pretend I like everyone or feel obligated to make small talk. I’m not everybody’s friend.

I don’t have to like football and superhero movies just because my coworkers do. I have come to love the Rosary (many in my church tradition would equate this with pornography) and it is part of my daily exercise while jogging. I can embrace the things that are truly me and set aside the things that are not. That, to me, is a boundary.

A big turning point came around Bible teaching. From the communal church I was in (we left in 1990 because it proved abusive) I came away with the belief that the most important thing I can do is to teach the Bible. Over the years, in leading a Bible study or devotional, I would get a lot of positive feedback.

The pastor was impressed and

wanted me to lead a weekly Bible Study. At first I was very excited and prepared diligently. By the second term, it had become a burden.

What I found was not a class that wanted to grow spiritually, but one that wanted to get intellectual and discuss doctrinal facts such as: “Is this a conditional or unconditional covenant? Is this imputed grace or imparted grace?” I wanted to say, “Who cares? I’m not looking for doctrines of the head – that never kept me from acting out. I’m looking for a spirituality that works. I need a spirituality that will keep me sober!”

When it became so overwhelming, I just dropped out suddenly and completely. It was difficult to look at that and say, “Just because I can do something and do it well doesn’t mean that I should.” I’m wired in a different way. I’m tired of doing things just because people think I ought to.

To discover who I am is a difficult, ongoing process because my parents gave me no guidelines.

My acting out years stunted this process because I was willing to live a lie.

But then I would blow up and go on a binge – an even bigger plunge into the artificial me - without really understanding why. It was examples in recovery that helped me work on this progress towards my more authentic self.

Now as for the spray paint issue, learning to serve others by working with my hands is a good tool to keep me from thinking that I need to isolate and read an important book. So if I had the time, I would probably do it. But that’s just me.

— David, Boone, NC

I don’t just listen to the spiritual teachers I “ought” to like. I listen to the ones that speak to me, even if it is not of my tradition.

# The Complex Question of Boundaries



**T**his question is complex and requires some explaining. I didn't come to S.L.A.A. by the usual route. I did not realize it at the time, but a teenage coping system of reading romance novels led me down a road to love addiction.

I was lucky that my first spouse did not realize that I liked it just fine that he wanted someone to fix or complete him.

I secretly had my "romance factory" going while I focused on him. I did not have to concern myself with me!!

It worked well for decades

until I got tired of being the mommy.

Last year, I was newly separated when the anxiety struck that I was living on my own for the first time in more than 20 years.

This happened at about the same time I met a guy who knew all the romantic moves. He turned out to be a misogynist, which is just a fancy way of saying a guy who really hates women. The train wreck (as I call this very short relationship) did not last long. He tried to shame and belittle me.

I have history in another 12-Step program, so I did not stand for anyone shaming me. And whoosh, he was out of my life. I thought I had cared so much for him. With the help of several professionals, I discovered that in my family, religion covered up a long history of sex and love addiction.

Growing up, I was shamed severely about my body and my sexuality. Hiding out in the romance novels seemed to make my world seem okay. I now know that childhood compulsions become adult addictions.

The first time I went to an S.L.A.A. meeting, there was only one other female in the room. This was scary. But the reason that I went was that I had done a ton of research.

I understood the complexity of being so afraid of real intimacy. The meetings became a model, a classroom if you will, of real intimacy — of how intimacy is supposed to be.

I met another guy. We were like clones. We had the same dysfunctional patterns. The relationship started to go way faster than I could handle and the thought of being intimate still scared the hell out of me. I now (with S.L.A.A. meetings under my belt) had people to call.

I picked up the phone and started asking. What I got was SLOW this train down or STOP it all together.

Anyway, the guy turned out to be a clone, but in a different type of way. He too did not want to truly care about a person but was just looking for someone to “fix” him. Sounds familiar doesn’t it?

I had knowledge, spiritual faith in myself, and the ability to quietly put up boundaries which limited my exposure to this person. And I had the strength to maintain those boundaries, knowing that two people who weren’t fully committed to a relationship would end up in another disastrous situation.

This relationship was quickly downshifted from a “maybe” relationship to a “limited friendship,” where we see each other in a context of a 12-Step group — sharing only our experience, strength and hope. I no longer socialize with this person outside of that meeting.

This program has helped me with my boundaries by helping me see that it is okay to set limits to protect myself.

I do not need to go to the “romance factory” as much these days. I am trying to live authentically, be honest in all my dealings, and I am striving to improve my knowledge of myself.

Also, I have learned through my research that I had a pattern of choosing people who I care little about and then accommodating their needs so that I would not have to be truly “vulnerable” to anyone.

I essentially chose to not have any “wants” at all. I thought that was a solution. But all this did was give the addictive side of me more room to grow.

This journey has not been easy. What helped me is that when problems arose, I did not want to play the victim role. My focus now is my part in each situation.


Slowly, by learning more and more about myself, I can better be able to accept my whole self and not be afraid that if/when a relationship happens that I will fall apart. Boundaries are an integral part of the process — and so is respecting myself enough to end anything that appears to be a repeat performance of the past.

Also, boundaries help me know when my “addictive” self is taking over my thinking. It helps that I know how to stop those obsessive thoughts — not by resisting them, but by directing my attention elsewhere in a more concentrated way.


The people in S.L.A.A. share personal stories and information. Knowing that I am not the only one with these issues helps tremendously.

I am grateful for this program. Also, I am very grateful for discovering the hidden addiction in my family that was literally buried in religion — sex and love addiction.

**— Lois T., Cincinnati, Ohio**



Slowly, by learning more and more about myself, I can better be able to accept my whole self and not be afraid that if/when a relationship happens that I will fall apart. Boundaries are an integral part of the process — and so is respecting myself enough to end anything that appears to be a repeat performance of the past.



# Standing Up for Myself



## Funny that this question should come today.

I grew up extremely conflict-avoidant; for a variety of reasons, I believed that other people could hurt me, so I didn't speak up for myself. I shied away from anyone in school who I thought might harm me. My acting out began early and was all about being in control.

The issue of standing up for myself has been forced into my face as I am suddenly evicting a very angry tenant who has promised to not go easily. Through working the program

and having a period of sobriety, I have been able to come to this moment by moment with calmness and firmness.

This drama, which is completely unpleasant and scary, has also served to foster growth. In my faith tradition, we have a longer version of the Serenity Prayer that includes a line stating, "Trusting that you (God) will make all things right if I surrender to your will."

I startled myself when I realized that for the longest time

I unconsciously believed that asserting myself was somehow against God's will. I feel that I still have to watch against this creeping back in. I also found the promises from another program kicking in so clearly. "We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us." I don't have all the answers, but Higher Power is giving them to me just as I need them. For this I am eternally grateful.

— Dale B, Capitola, CA

# Self Definition and Setting Healthy Boundaries

**F**or me, setting healthy boundaries is very much related to self definition. The messages that I received growing up related to a central theme that it wasn't OK for me to trust my own instincts, that others knew best, and to always look externally for approval.

Looking back, these messages led to my never truly adopting my own personal values and core beliefs. Due to this lack of personal identity, I became good at mimicking a chameleon; taking on characteristics that I thought would allow me to receive approval in whatever group I happened to be with at the time. Another way I have described this is floating through life and bouncing off of things instead of having a clear trajectory.

Without a clear sense of self, I went through life reacting to people and events in a way that I felt would portray me in the best light. As I worked through

S.L.A.A., I began to put the steps in place to form an idea of myself and who I wanted to become outside of how I felt I was perceived by others. This was truly the first step in me being able to exercise healthy boundaries. And what I came to find is that the more that I was able to express my true self to others, the better I felt about myself regardless of their reaction.

One recent example of this occurred with a woman that I met through an online dating site. She lived several hours away, so we spent about a month getting to know each other by phone.

We hit it off and decided to meet in person. She initially offered for me to stay at her place for the weekend (she had an extra bedroom.) The thought of spending an entire weekend with a woman that I had never met in person brought up a huge amount of anxiety for me. I

thought a lot about her offer. I talked about it with recovery friends and my sponsor. I journaled about it and prayed.

After a lot of reflection, I decided to make the drive to spend the weekend.

But I knew that for my own well-being that I needed my own space and rented a room for myself for both nights. We had a great weekend, and even though we decided not to pursue anything further, it felt great to have established healthy boundaries based on my own needs.

In the past, I would have immediately said, "Yes," to staying with her, and most likely would have had all kinds of fantasies about what might happen. Healthy boundaries, to me, represent the difference between having an impulsive reaction and being able to respond thoughtfully.

— Nathan H., Portland, OR

## Getting a Different Perspective on Boundaries

**B**efore coming into S.L.A.A., I viewed a person with boundaries as someone "stuck up" or rude. In contrast, I considered myself down to earth or real. The fact was, I had very poor boundaries.

When I met a male friend or business partner, I would observe them to see if they were as down to earth as I was. It seems some of this belief came from my upbringing in Chicago, where it seemed the message was, one

who puts on airs or is not down with the nitty-gritty, is not a genuine person and therefore could not be relied upon or trusted. In fact, in Chicago, during frigid cold winters while waiting at bus stops, people often do very intimate sharing. This, I believe, inspired my personal adoption of poor boundaries in dealing with others. When I met a woman, it was an experiment to me to employ fantasies of objectification and to survey

whether she was complicated or stuck up, and to evaluate how easy or difficult it would be to manipulate her boundaries.

If she had intact healthy boundaries, then she was not worth my time because it was simpler to find an easier target. And further, people with healthy boundaries effectively screen suitors, and I knew that with my having an active alcohol and S.L.A.A. addiction at the time, that no woman in her right mind

would give me the time of day. Similarly, when I met an attractive woman, I sought to know nothing more than how easy it would be for me to get her into bed.

The notions of friendship, intimacy, and commitment were foreign to me. I sought out wounded women who were needy, in some form of difficulty in which they needed to be rescued, and otherwise unhealthy, because I believed that's all I deserved.

I had no concept of a Higher Power and I did not love myself. But I often found myself, in the first weeks of an acquaintance, being in fantasy and telling the woman "I love you."

Further, it was always an aesthetic high for me if a guy friend would tell me: "I know this woman who likes you and is interested in meeting you." I now realize that the high that I would

feel in hearing those words was the surge in epinephrine levels in my brain, the same high I experienced when I believed I was "in love."

Thanks to the S.L.A.A. program of recovery, I am learning to be that "stuck up" person. I am no longer seeking love or a relationship with anyone but myself. I see people today, particularly women, as human beings composed of value, feelings, importance and having a legacy of motives in life to be fulfilled as destined by the Higher Power that I call God.

I am no longer seeking a woman to make me happy, nor do I desire the job description of having to make anyone else happy. When I encounter a woman who has interpersonal challenges, I offer encouragement and sincerely pray for her to find direction, but I do not take it on.

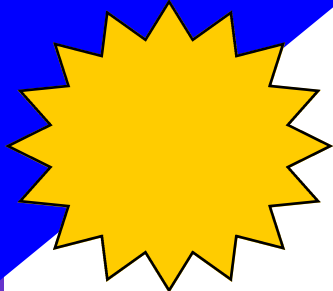
I do not seek to kiss or hold

hands with a woman that I don't know; nor wish to be emotionally attached by having sexual relations too soon and thereby becoming enslaved to the notion that I have to make the relationship work (even when there are glaring neon signs indicating that I need to cease and desist).

Today, if a friend told me, "I know a woman who likes you," I would of course be flattered, but I wouldn't be shocked. Through the S.L.A.A. program of recovery I am a likeable, interesting and desirable man with healthy internal and external boundaries.

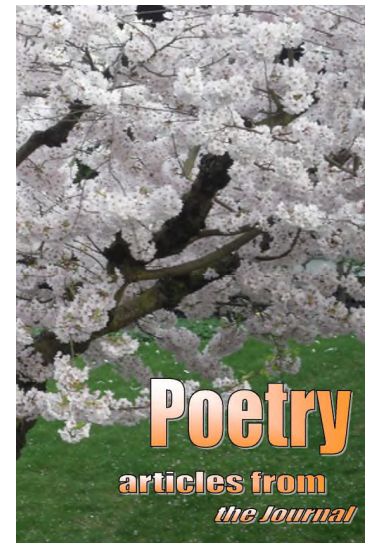
I no longer seek the sexual excitement of epinephrine surges; I seek the more stable oxytocin hormone that is indicative of a stable enduring relationship, in which love is a choice, not an emotion or feeling.

— **Ralph D.**



## A great gift for your sponsees and friends!

- 48 full color pages
- 23 poems written by S.L.A.A. members from *the Journal* archives
- Photography from S.L.A.A. members
- Only \$5. All proceeds to benefit F.W.S.



Order yours at  
[www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)

# The Boundaries of Setting Boundaries

I want the rules spelled out for me. If I'm not doing it right, I want to know why and I want to know how I can do it better next time. Show me all the blueprints. Show me how to fit the mold so that I may be the most accomplished perfectionist.

Soon there will be no way to determine who the real me is in comparison to you. I want a set of guidelines; a map that will define the borders of what normal is supposed to be. With all this desire for definition, you'd think I'd have a good handle on what boundaries are. I don't. But I'm learning.

The English rock band Radiohead has a song called "Where I End and You Begin." It pops into my head every time I consider the meaning of personal boundaries. If there are no boundaries between myself and someone else, then am I an individual person?

I spent at least the first twenty-five years of my life trying to be what I thought other people wanted me to be. What's worse is that I didn't even have any idea that I was doing it. I monitored the reactions of human beings around me like a scientist examining lab rats. When I do this, they do that. They don't like it when I say this, so I'll be sure never to say it again. This kind of living left me with an incomplete sense of myself. My fear of abandonment drove an intense compulsion to please others.

Among the items available for purchase at my former place of employment was Manuel Smith's self-help book, "When I Say No, I Feel Guilty." I would eye it on the shelf from time to time. After a few years, when it went on sale, I purchased it and brought it home



where it remains unread.

I was committed enough to buy it, but not committed enough to read it or put the principles into practice. Nevertheless, the title stuck out in my mind. One day, after acceding to yet another request from a co-worker to do a task that they could have easily done themselves, my boss called me out on it. "Andrew, why do

you always do everything people ask you to do? That's not your job."

My response? "Because when I say, 'No,' I feel guilty."

Recovery changed my mindset, but it's been very gradual. No matter how old I get, progress still seems to move at the same speed; one accomplishment at a time. After a



year or two in S.L.A.A., I found myself in a meeting discussing the topic of boundaries. I still had no idea what they were or how to set them. In my share I expressed my difficulty in setting boundaries without hurting the feelings of other people.

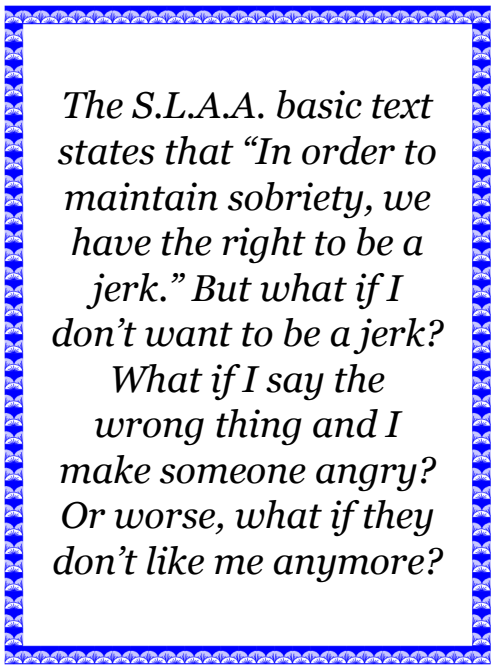
I received some helpful feedback, but ultimately I had to just start practicing the behavior without a clear idea of how to proceed. I made mistakes and rubbed people the wrong way. When the receptionist asked me to step away from my work to clear a copy jam, I took one occasion to teach her how to do it herself. From that point on I stopped clearing copy jams (unless I was in the area or had the time or just felt sorry for that co-worker spending ten minutes trying to find that mystery paper when I knew it was a simple matter of pulling out the fuser and releasing the clamps to pull out that pesky accordion-folded sheet).

The S.L.A.A. basic text states that “In order to maintain sobriety, we have the right to be a jerk.” But what if I don’t want to be a jerk? What if I say the wrong thing and I make someone angry? Or worse, what if they don’t like me anymore? Can I really run the risk of having even one person in this world who doesn’t like me? The answer is, “Yes.” Not only can I withstand the contempt of one person, I can be disliked by whole scores of individuals.

My grand-sponsor says, “What other people think of me is none of my business.” This is a difficult pill to swallow. Granted, a balance must be struck between setting boundaries and doing real harm to others. The only way I can know the proper way to set a boundary is by trying it, failing and trying again. An amends may need to be made from time to time. But one of the most important ways to respect

myself is by making sure that I do not let other people disrespect me.

Learning to practice these principles in the work place has been easier for me than when I’ve tried to implement them in relationships. My love addict is still alive and well. Who would I be more concerned with pleasing than the woman I’m dating? Whose approval do I seek more than anyone else’s? When I speak of a fear of abandonment,



*The S.L.A.A. basic text states that “In order to maintain sobriety, we have the right to be a jerk.” But what if I don’t want to be a jerk? What if I say the wrong thing and I make someone angry? Or worse, what if they don’t like me anymore?*

who is the person I am most fearful will abandon me?

Maintaining boundaries in a relationship is hard work. I have to be willing to share the reality of who I am despite the possibility that that person may not like what they hear. One thing that I try to remind myself of in these situations is that if my partner does not accept me warts and all, then they are not the right person for me in the first place.

It takes courage to say who I am and what I feel and why I feel it. It takes courage to tell you, “I don’t like being treated that

way.” One of the most difficult phone calls I have ever made was to my best friend last year after a childish, drunken argument. We’d been through a number of rough patches in our twenty-plus years of friendship. We both worked hard to overcome our hang-ups and accept each other’s imperfections. I didn’t want to have to throw that all away.

The truth is that I have rarely explained to him in rational terms how his statements or behavior have affected me. When I told him, “I don’t like being spoken to that way,” the last thing I was expecting was for him to apologize and tell me that despite our differences of opinion, he valued our friendship and hadn’t meant the words he’d said.

It’s difficult to know when to stand up for myself when I’ve been taught that it’s only my side of the street that I should be concerned with. But that ideology does not advocate letting others treat me like a door mat.

If I am to grow, I must stand up for myself and demand respect. This should be balanced with a heavy dose of humility, awareness of character defects, and the willingness to let go when my serenity is in jeopardy. I must be careful not to confuse my shortcoming of pride for setting a boundary.

The boundaries for setting boundaries must be studied through practice and occasionally adjusted when necessary. So many addicts feel like victims and so many have a deflated sense of self-worth. We strive for balance; take some from this pan and put it in the other. I am allowed to make mistakes and will continue doing so. I strive for progress, not perfection in defining where I end and you begin.

— Andrew K.

# Share space

---

## Romantic Fantasy Addiction

I can't talk about this addiction without talking about my relationship with my father.

**H**e was dark, handsome, had a deep voice, and was charming at times. I fell in love with him, which is normal when you're 5 years old. When you're 25 years old, it's a problem.

I had a romance with my father. I am the oldest of eight women. We were vying for his attention and I won. I had the king's ear. And he was very much king of the family. My mother was non-existent. She rarely stood up to him — fertile ground for maladaptation — and it flourished.

Add to this that his sister — my aunt — worshipped him unrealistically. Her husband got drunk every night in the kitchen and was also largely non-existent. I had no chance. I did what the adults were doing — either

worshipping my father or bowing down to him. Add to this a virulent food addiction that descended when I was 15 and I was not a happy person. The one bright spot in my life was my father. I got his attention and, I guess, love at great personal cost.

Anyway I want to get married, to have emotional closeness with somebody. So I moved out of the house at 28 and went out into the world. I decided I would choose three men as potential husbands. I chose them and proceeded to try to go after them, without talking to them.

I wrote a proposition note to one of them and was called into my boss's office for it. In that force field of addiction that our basic text talks about, I let them know I was available. They were all married. I tried to will

something into existence through my thoughts. I thought if I wanted it enough it would happen. I prayed. I went into my own head — where my "romances" existed. Add to this a demanding job and almost no support and conditions were ripe for psychological trouble. I got it.

I eventually became psychotic and was hearing voices, including what my therapist calls "command" voices telling me to kill myself. This all started in 1985 and continued until I decided to give it up in 2011. I lost jobs, my apartment and my sanity because of my romantic fantasy addiction.

I experienced an amazing recovery in O.A. and decided it was time to give up the romantic fantasy addiction. Withdrawal was brutal — the feelings of

sadness, the grieving, the loss. What I got from romantic fantasy was a feeling of safety. It was a little place I could retreat to in my heart. I felt I had lost that safety, that harbor. It was hard and it was long. I was willing to make the sacrifice though. Life goes on despite the fact that I'm in withdrawal. My disability income was threatened. I left one bad job situation and got a new and unfamiliar job situation. I was fearful and anxious, but I had left the romantic fantasy behind.

At the beginning of this year, after a week's stay on the psychiatric floor for suicidal thoughts, I began to get better. God began to heal me, I believe. I did a lot of footwork, but I believe finally that He does the healing. This year my life has gotten progressively better.

I rarely think about the men I wanted. I don't retreat to my "safe harbor." I am able to give my life completely to God's love and care.

I have new activities and pursuits in my life. I feel well and whole. I am able to enjoy life. I work my program rigorously, but it pays off. I am so grateful to be in recovery in 2 programs. I no longer am in love with my father.

I made an amends to my mother for moving in on her husband. God has restored me to sanity, just for today, like Step 2 says. I'm even beginning to accept myself as I am. I would like to be in a relationship, but I want to be friends first.

Who knows? Maybe God's plan for me is to have children. Wouldn't that be something! I would not like a man like my father, who is in many ways a bully. I like and enjoy contact with people. My spiritual and emotional needs are being met. I thank S.L.A.A. and you. I look forward to this journey, O.D.A.A.T. (one day at a time).

—Anonymous



I have new activities and pursuits in my life. I feel well and whole. I am able to enjoy life.

I work my program rigorously, but it pays off.



---

## Service opportunities for *the Journal*

*The Journal* is a basic recovery tool for S.L.A.A. groups and individual members, and it is a key outreach tool into areas that do not yet have an S.L.A.A. presence.

We're looking for people with writing, drawing, outreach, web design, production, and printing skills to assist in the creation of the new, deeper, more refreshing publication.

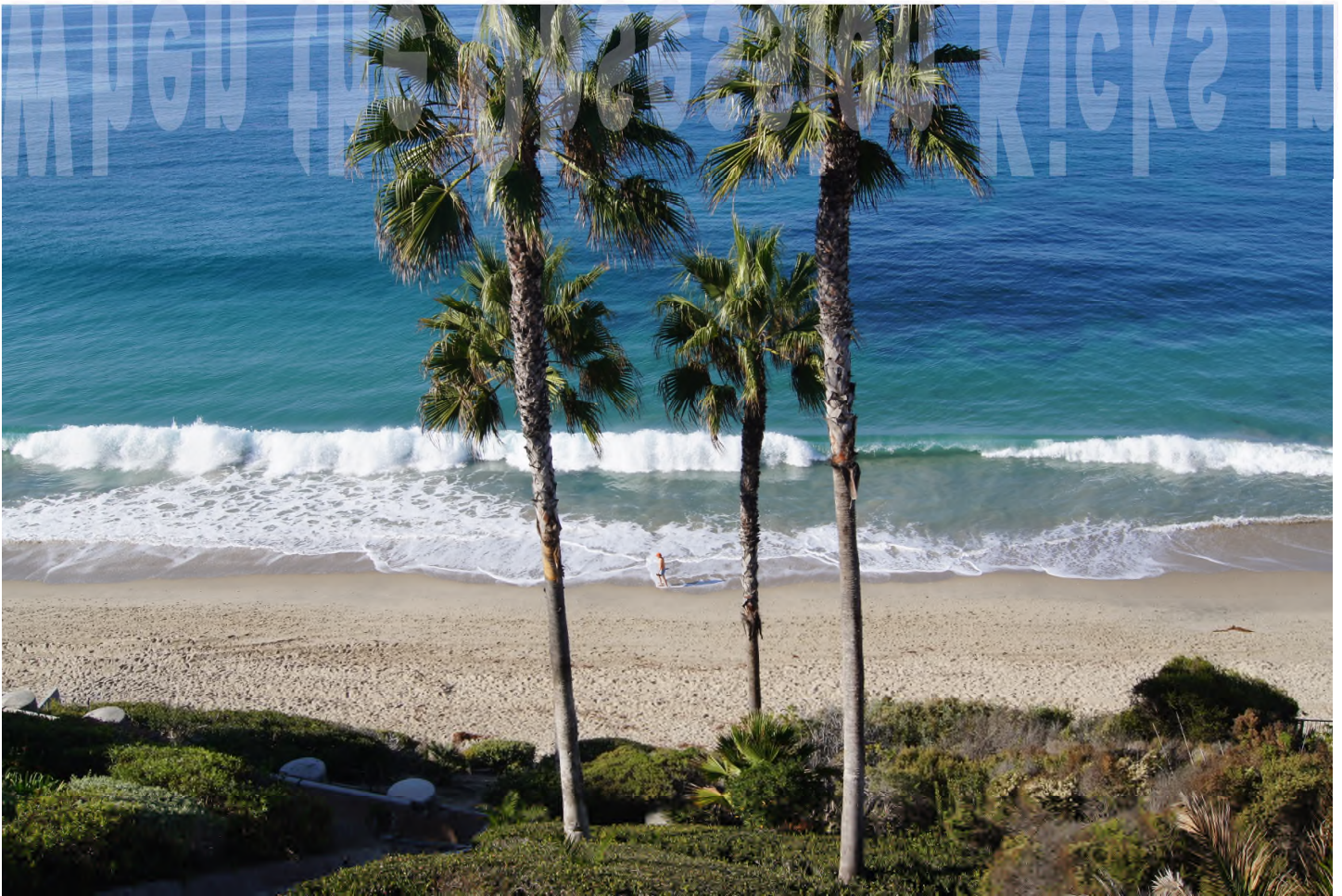
Please assist us in creatively carrying the message of recovery.

Please go to <http://www.slaa.fws.org> to submit your writing.

UNITY IN SERVICE



# When the Obsession Kicks in



I found out recently that I had to take a trip “home,” to a state I had recently left, for my employer’s annual conference. My disease reminded me instantly that my most recent “ex” lived there and it recommended we/I give her a call.

I found my obsession mounting over the few weeks prior to the scheduled flight home. And I began to talk in earnest with my sponsor about these obsessive compulsive thoughts. I found my hands typing text messages to make plans to meet for lunch so

we could “have that talk” that she’d always wanted us to have. It was all I could do to delete these messages. I found that on the flight in, I was exhausted. This did not bode well for me, as I was heading into an event that my company holds each year.

The days are long though wonderfully fruitful, as we host several hundred of our most dedicated software users. I run a user lab, which often leaves me physically and emotionally exhausted by day two. The event lasts three days.

Did I mention I’m an addict in recovery? It seems that whenever I go to an event such as this my disease, like a bad influence, sweeps into my consciousness and overwhelms me with options for acting out or checking out, so that I don’t have to be present and conscious and uncomfortable.

This user conference always makes me very nervous. And running the lab has many challenges. The users tend to be one of two kinds. The first kind is easily satisfied. These users come with a

list of questions and are quickly and easily satisfied with good training/an explanation.

The other kind of user is not easily satisfied and when they don't like the answer they receive, they will go ask someone else the same exact questions, hoping for a different answer. These are the users that make me nervous.

I'm always very careful when I know which user I am responding to. Additionally, these long events seem to bring out some very strange behaviors in my co-workers, the people I supervise in the lab. I find that I daily ask myself, "How important is it?" when they skip their lab commitments or leave for lunch and don't return.

My tendency is to make sure we have coverage for twelve hours a day. But I also try to make sure everyone gets bathroom and lunch breaks. So, this event stresses me out. Great time for a distraction right?

Wrong. Remember those clients with questions? They all deserve the correct answer, especially the ones that are going to "vet" my answer with several of my team mates. This is not the time to be in obsession about an ex-girlfriend who made me walk my dog while I was sick with the flu or didn't help me up from the floor when I fell with a torn calf muscle.

NOTHING positive will come out of me meeting her for lunch and having the "let's pretend you've changed" talk. This is not the time to start with the love addiction fantasy that she will change and be the person I dreamt she'd be.

This is not the time to check out of reality. So what did I do? Having 16+ years of sobriety in this Fellowship, I thanked my Higher Power for the pink cloud that I'd been on this past year; grateful that this obsession was a rarity. Then I made arrangements to borrow a rental car

from a co-worker and got my butt to a meeting. Then I called my sponsor as many times as I could and I talked and texted with several trusted friends.

Finally, knowing as much about myself as I do now — especially about myself when I'm miserable, knee-deep in obsession (I can be a REAL b###) — I made sure to say, "Thank you" to the people who coordinated and made the event happen. And when I was a jerk, I apologized. I created tickets for clients. I made notes for myself for follow up. I made introductions. In a word, I was helpful to my Higher Power and to my boss.

At the end of the weekend, I took myself home and took a day off. I did not call or text my ex.

I read some literature and I wrote a *Journal* submission with the hope that possibly, my experience, strength, and hope will help someone else.

— Tess, NY

## Suffering Abuse in Order to be Helpful

My recovery from sex and love addiction started in June 2010. My husband of 19 years discovered one of my secret email accounts, and had read letters to and from my most recent qualifier. That night I started the process of recovery, starting with sharing with my husband some of my true behavior. I didn't want to. I entered recovery, not so I could become better, but so my

husband wouldn't leave me and take our children, ages 9, 7, and 4, with him. So we spent the night, and many nights after that, talking and yelling, and name calling, and drinking, and talking. My story slowly unfolded, and the pain of it nearly broke our marriage.

I started soothing myself sexually and seeking attention sexually when I was 4 years old. I tried to get attention from my



mother by masturbating on the living room floor in front of her. She calmly told me to do that in private, in my bedroom. So I was sent away and ignored instead of receiving the attention I wanted. I continued to masturbate whenever I felt stressed. This was a pattern I continued into my adulthood, until I started recovery.

Being neglected and ignored was a common occurrence for me. My dad left when I was four. When my mom came home from work, she would need quiet. I would play in my room alone, or quietly watch television. I got so used to being quiet, now I even sneeze quietly. I learned to stifle every movement, quiet every sound in order to stay off her radar. When she did pay attention to me, it wasn't always a positive experience.

Sometimes in our interactions, I would remind her of my dad, her ex-husband. She was extremely triggered by this and would physically abuse me. One time I remember thinking that I was helping her by letting her beat me. If I could help her to get rid of all of her anger, then by all means I wanted her to use me.

She abused me in other ways: emotionally, mentally, sexually. The sexual abuse was covert. She would treat me like one of her girlfriends and share inappropriate content. She told me she was bored with me when I was a baby. She told me when I was 11 that she had an abortion. At the time, I didn't know any of this was wrong. I thought I was helping her by being there for her. This lesson of being used and abused to be helpful became a destructive mindset that led to many hurtful behaviors.

I was similarly covertly sexually abused by my father. We acted more like husband and wife than father and daughter. Much of our time together was spent

travelling.

I fetched water, collected firewood, made dinner and did other chores rather than playing. Since I did not spend much time with him, I was always trying to be perfect so I could earn his love. In my family love was something to be earned, a reward for doing something right. Consequently, love was withheld as a punishment.

Another family rule that I learned was to not have any feelings, except anger. My mom was obviously angry, and I could express this emotion to her sometimes without repercussion. All other feelings were to be suppressed. If I shared any other feelings, they were ignored.

I learned well, not to have feelings about my parents' divorce, moving and losing all my friends, or any of the day-to-day experiences of life. My mom now complains that we are not close, that I don't tell her anything.

Of course I don't. There's nothing to tell. Without feelings, nothing matters. Events don't matter. I don't matter. This core lesson, that I don't matter, was another factor which led to my active sex and love addiction.

The biggest and most important feeling that I was missing was a sense of belonging. My first friend left me when I was 6. She moved away.

My next best friend dumped me for another better friend when I was 9. And I moved away from all my friends when I was 12. I do not keep in touch or know anyone from high school or college.

I kept people at a distance because they are not to be trusted. I slowly started treating people as objects to be used, as I was being used by my mother and father. This led to extremely shallow relationships. But, I still had boyfriends. In these relationships, I would vacillate

from letting them use and abuse me, to being entitled and demanding. I was never "head over heels" in love with anyone. I never trusted anyone enough to let my guard down and be that vulnerable.

Yet, somehow I managed to get married. I liked the idea of marriage and monogamy, but had no idea of how to go about that. I didn't want to do what my mom and aunts had done. All three of them married someone that they loved completely, only to have their hearts smashe

d by their spouses' cheating. Then they would marry the "sensible" guy. So I decided to marry the "sensible" guy first. My greatest fear was that he would discover that I married him without being head over heels in love with him.

It went great in the beginning, which is so cliché, yet true. Looking back, I can see that I had tried to be vulnerable and intimate with him at times. But I had chosen a man who was emotionally unavailable for my safety. I preferred his unavailability. It felt secure and comfortable to me. Plus, it had the added bonus of creating resentment and blame for those few times I did try to create more intimacy.

This set up of blaming my husband became a huge pattern for me over the course of our marriage. I would blame him for being unavailable, for smothering me, for being sick, for wanting too much sex, for not wanting enough sex, for anything I could imagine.

This resentment drove my acting out. The first affair started shortly before our first anniversary. I had an affair about once a year, always with a different partner. The affair



would either be a one night stand, or last up to two months. I felt guilty afterwards and vowed “never again.” Soon enough I would act out, and then become sexually anorexic for about a year.

About 17 years into our marriage, I had an emotional affair online that completely accelerated my addiction. We never met, but communicated via email, texts, and phone calls. I became completely addicted to him, and did everything in my power to be in almost constant communication with him.

I had never become so close with anyone. I had a secret phone and secret email account that only he and I knew about. When he “left” me, I went into the most violent withdrawal: extreme crying, nausea, fatigue and depression. I never wanted that to happen again.

So I changed my pattern of affairs from one man to several men in various stages of grooming. In order to avoid withdrawal, I wanted to have the replacement guy ready to keep my addictive high going.

My marriage had continued with the usual events of buying a home and having children. At this point I had three children all under age 8.

I started being the martyr, doing “so much work” around the house and working full time. My martyrdom justified my acting out and created a sense of entitlement. I deserved to act out!

I became creative in my drive to seek out men. I started hunting for men wherever I could: grocery store, gas station, work, church, wherever I went. I soon had several men in various stages of grooming, from flirting to sexual acts. I used my fantasizing to drive my behavior.

I used fantasy to role play what to say, how to best entice men, to figure out exactly what I

wanted. I spent more and more time in fantasy, both daydreaming, and in masturbation.

I was growing tired of the grooming and started to fantasize about anonymous sex. That seemed so much easier. Fortunately, I never participated in that type of acting out.

At times my husband was suspicious of my behavior. At first my lies were clumsy and awkward. As my addiction progressed, my lies became more

**I told more lies than truth and I believed many of the lies I told. My view of reality had become completely distorted.**

elaborate and believable.

My lying got better and more frequent. Towards the end, most words out of my mouth were lies. I told more lies than truth and I believed many of the lies I told. My view of reality had become completely distorted.

My last affair definitely provided my biggest addictive high.

He was a co-worker who was a carbon copy of my dad. They had everything in common: mannerisms, career, habits, and the most important one, emotional unavailability and treating me with a curt distance as I tried to get closer and closer.

I used the secret email and phone I had from my other affair with this co-worker. He treated me cruelly and I loved it. He was

disgusting and I couldn't get enough. But that came to a crashing halt when my husband found an email to this coworker that I had accidentally left open.

I didn't know it then, but my recovery started that night. At first, I tried to lie my way out. But my husband had too much evidence, too much knowledge of what I had been doing, saying and planning with this other man. That night I told my husband part of the truth which he latched on to like a pit-bull going in for the kill. Once I revealed some truth, my husband kept pressuring for more and more. After hours of yelling and arguing, trying to trick, misdirect, and lie my way out of telling any more truth, he finally threatened me with leaving and taking the kids. I remember telling him that if he knew the truth he would leave me. He replied that he was leaving me if I didn't tell him the truth. So, resentfully and angrily, I began speaking truthfully because I had nothing to lose.

Later on, during those first dazed days we found an S.L.A.A. website. I clicked on the 40 questions quiz. I thought being a sex and love addict was a joke, an excuse, and a reason to act out more. We took the quiz together and shared our answers.

That's when we discovered that our thinking was VERY different. I couldn't believe his answers and he was in shock over mine. I began to realize that I might have an addiction. We found more online quizzes which revealed the same discrepancy. One online quiz recommended in-patient treatment because I was such an out of control addict. I found a women's-only S.L.A.A. meeting in my area and went the next week. I have been going to S.L.A.A. meetings ever since.

I continued my research online and discovered many books on sex addiction. I

devoured many books. I couldn't believe that the author could know me so well. So many of the books "spoke" to me. I sought out a sex addiction therapist. I began therapy and therapy homework, completing workbooks, reading more books, drawing charts, and discovering why and how I had become a sex and love addict.

Therapy was and still is hard work. It requires a ruthless commitment to honesty. It requires looking at all my sins and having compassion. It requires feeling my feelings and the vulnerability that comes with those feelings.

Not acting out was extremely difficult at first. In order to avoid flirting, I looked at my shoes whenever I went into a store. I hugged stuffed animals in my bed to avoid masturbating. I did not listen to the radio or watch TV. I would lie, and then immediately say that I lied and would tell the truth. After weeks of not lying, I started to feel like I had integrity. I started to feel honest and worthwhile.

My pattern before recovery was that of swinging from acting out to anorexia, and my recovery took this pattern as well. I was

not acting out so effectively, that I became severely anorexic. I would shudder and flinch at my husband's touch. I would cry during sex. I wasn't acting out, but I wasn't healthy either. I was so unhappy and depressed.

I began my recovery from anorexia, which was more difficult for me than my recovery from acting out. I had to take risks and initiate intimacy with my husband. I had to overcome my fear and be vulnerable.

I uncovered more family rules that kept me in fear, and kept me distant from my husband and children. Some of these rules included: 1. If you let others know what you like, they will use it against you, 2. If you compliment others, you are putting yourself down.

I discovered the reason for my anorexia was the toxic shame that I was carrying from my parents. I discovered my inner child and how I had been treating her. I started to nurture her, and in doing so found the difference between my functional adult and my inner child.

My husband and I went to couples counseling for almost two years. We had many

homework assignments to build trust and intimacy and create safe vulnerable moments between us. I was confused and afraid at first because I had told myself that fantasy and masturbation were tools of acting out, and they were. But I began to use them in a healthy way to create intimacy and find out what I liked.

Being vulnerable around my family has now spilled out on to other people. I have strong boundaries, can decide who is safe and what to share with them. I have friends. I let people in and let others nurture me. I have discovered a whole new way to be a person.

My journey is far from over. I continue to work on my intimacy, sexuality, and vulnerability. I still get triggered, and have problems. But now I have tools, I share with others; I have meetings, and program. Instead of lying and manipulating, I get to live each day and experience the love and joy of my family and friends.

— Anonymous

## The Journey of Self Approval

The road is quite painful,  
As reality sets in,  
But now I'm quite hopeful,  
That this is the end,  
Of the misery and pain,  
I've put myself through,  
By not loving myself,  
As much as I loved you.  
I've found a new friend,  
In this darkness known as  
"alone,"  
Who doesn't make me feel the  
need,

To constantly check my phone.  
The anxiety is gone,  
And the love I sought is nigh.  
Because all the love I needed,  
I've found on the inside.  
The fear of being forgotten,  
Abandoned, and unloved,  
Is no more. Now I'm free!  
I'm as free as a dove!  
Because now I love myself,  
And I know that's all that  
matters.  
No more broken hearts,

No more tears, no more tatters.  
All the love I need,  
I can firmly grasp and say,  
"If you don't love me, I don't  
care,"  
I love myself every day.  
Now I'll go into the world,  
Not needing your approval.  
I can find my own happiness,  
In a life of SELF approval...

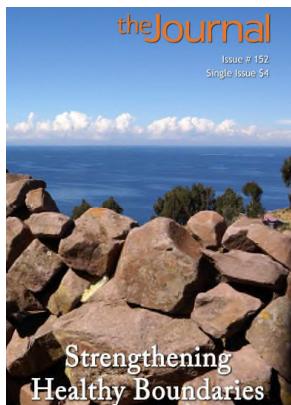
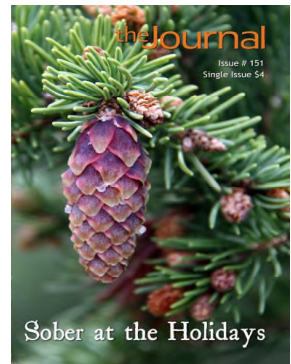
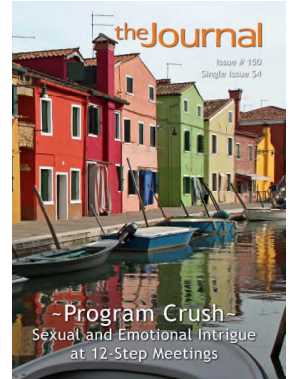
— Anonymous



# Subscribe to *the Journal*

- \$24/year for U.S./Canada
- \$33/year for International
- \$40/2 years for U.S./Canada
- \$60/2 years for International
- \$19/year for the e-journal
- \$30/2 years for the e-journal

**1 year = 6 issues**



## Subscriber Info:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

### *EXPERIENCE*

*this meeting in print.*

The official bimonthly  
magazine of S.L.A.A.

F.W.S. Suite 118  
1550 NE Loop 410  
San Antonio, TX  
78209-1626, USA

Make checks payable to The Augustine Fellowship

# Meditation Book Project

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE:

1. PERSONAL SHARES FOR MEDITATIONS.
2. POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS/PRAYERS.

PLEASE EMAIL SHARES TO THE *JOURNAL* WWW.SLAAFWS.ORG

## Self-Defined Sobriety

**“QUOTE:** “Those of us who tried to deceive ourselves in the way we defined our sex and love addiction either found ourselves slipping back into the old behavior, or getting into real trouble with our new “steps forward.” We learned the hard way that there was no such thing as half-surrender.” S.L.A.A. basic text

**SHARE:** I had been in S.L.A.A. for four years when I began a Step study with some women from my Saturday morning meeting. While reading Step One, suddenly I realized that I had been deceiving myself. My bottom lines were noble and cast a wide umbrella over a range of behaviors that I knew led me to act out — bottom lines such as “no contact with a qualifier” or “not making anyone else my Higher Power;” and “no sex outside of a committed relationship.” But these bottom lines didn’t address middle-zone behaviors such as: re-reading old texts, letters, emails, looking at photos from happier times, listening to songs that reminded me of them. Of course I had eliminated these behaviors during withdrawal to decrease my own pain and suffering. But somehow, now that I had found my way out of the old relationships, the mementos became less a trigger of pain and more a trigger of happier times that led right into fantasy. From there it was a quick hop into reaching out with a text, which started a chain of texts, which led to a phone call from my qualifier! I was able to be honest about my actions in my meeting and with my husband, but it was shocking how quickly the old feelings were reignited. While working on my steps it became clear to me that those middle zone behaviors were as much a part of my acting out as contacting my qualifier and that I needed to include them in my bottom lines. Half-surrender had led me straight back to the cheating, dishonesty that had ruined my first marriage.

---

**AFFIRMATION:** *Today, I check my bottom lines out with my sobriety circle and include even middle-zone behaviors to avoid sliding back into old addictive patterns.*

— VM, Carlsbad

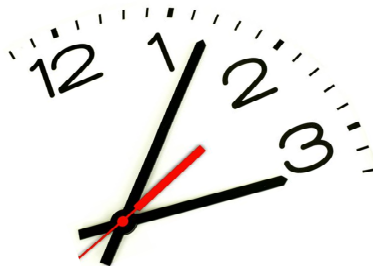
# THE INSPIRATION LINE YOUR 24/7 SUPPORT

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

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

**Did you know you can call the Inspiration Line NOW ?**

## 215-574-2120



### ▶ **How we help.....**

- Over 122,000 calls have been received since 2006, with an average of 2,226 calls a month now.
- After listening to the message, YOU have an opportunity to leave your own message for the speaker to listen to.
- You can go to <http://www.slaadvi.org/inspiration-line.html> to download a month's worth of messages, FOR FREE.

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

