

theJournal

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PRAYER

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,

In Step 11 of the A.A. Twelve and Twelve, it says, “Those of us who have come to make regular use of prayer would no more do without it than we would refuse air, food, or sunshine. ... When we refuse [these], the body suffers. And when we turn away from meditation and prayer, we likewise deprive our minds, our emotions, and our intuitions of vitally needed support. ... We all need the light of God’s reality, the nourishment of His strength, and the atmosphere of His grace.”

The articles and answers to the question of the day in this issue of *the Journal* share experience, strength, and hope around prayer. Whether praying because of true belief or out of obligation, many have found prayer to be beneficial. I hope this issue of *the Journal* gives readers support around prayer.

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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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.

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COVER PHOTO: DOCTOR’S CAVE BEACH, MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

“PLEASE SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE AROUND DEFINING AND MAINTAINING TOP LINE BEHAVIOR.”

I end my evenings with one or two daily meditation readings then I say my prayers. I make sure to first thank my Higher Power, who I call God, for being my friend and keeping me sober today. I add additional gratitude and thanks. After that, I send my prayers for those in and out of programs, ones who may have entered my life on the road or in a store that were appearing or acting stressed, concerned, lonely etc.

I also add prayers or ask for help with difficulties I may be experiencing in my relationship or at work. There are also many days when I am struggling with a fear or situation that I ask for God's help. I pray before I go into an S.L.A.A. meeting. At one of my meeting locations there is a chapel where I stop to get centered for a few minutes before going in to the meeting. I believe that prayer does not come in a right or wrong way, as long as it is a daily occurrence to keep us spiritually connected.

— Ari, NJ

I pray most importantly for sobriety. The day starts and ends with this. I am an addict and need to be sober. I ask God for help and say, “Thank You,” to God. I pray for others in need of help and for addicts everywhere. I pray to love God and love others and to know the true meaning of the word love. God bless S.L.A.A.!

— Mandy

Hi All,

Prayer is when I am sharing at a group meeting. God is the hope that the Program and the group members can help me by inspiring me to stay on the path.

— Geo, Budapest, Hungary

I try to pray in the morning before I start my day. That doesn't always happen. My sponsor says I can start my day over at any time. Throughout my day I will take moments to pause and pray. Sometimes, if I can just say the word God, that gives me contact and helps me get connected. When I pray I feel grounded, peaceful, safe. It gives me more clarity to handle situations I encounter throughout the day.

— Anonymous

I pray spontaneously on the move.

I don't kneel / put my hands together or show any outward sign of praying.

— Robert L, Little Rock

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “How/why/when do you pray? Please share your experience strength and hope with prayers and praying.” The next two themes are — #169 — S.L.A.A. and Mental Illness — How do you find support with mental illness (bipolar, depression, schizophrenia)? How and when have you disclosed your illness to fellows in S.L.A.A., and/or how and when have you disclosed that you are a member of S.L.A.A. in mental health groups? How does it affect your recovery? Please share your experience, strength and hope. — The deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2017. And #170 — Hospitals and Institutions — “Have you ever been incarcerated/hospitalized because of your sex and love addiction? Please share your experience, strength and hope.” — The deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2017.

I have become so grateful for my Step 2 and Step 3 practice. In doing Step 3, my sponsor had me set a 21-day daily routine of morning prayer, meditation and evening prayer. I decided during this time to use prayer beads. I now wear them around my neck and I find them helpful to remind me to go to God for support and gratitude so that throughout the day, when I wish to connect or have a quiet moment wherever I am, during any situation, whether at a moment of peace or in a moment of panic, I touch my hand to my chest and I am reminded of the opportunity to pray. So, I pray.

— **Glenn S., Los Angeles**

I pray in the morning, usually when I wake up, a short prayer. Then as I take a shower, I pray a longer one, for the success of the day and that I be a good person. After that, when I remember, I kneel down and do the first 3 Steps. I also pray for my marriage, as it has great difficulties, either while having breakfast, or some time during the day. Then on the way to my workplace I pray for my sponsees, every day a different one. After that, I don't pray much, usually when I have some difficulty or I just say a few words to God when I have something to say (telling about my day, my gratitudes, etc.) What worked well for me is that I don't just pray when I want to act out, but I pray in advance for the next time when I will be tempted. I believe this has helped me face many difficult situations. In the evening, I pray with my family, and sometimes when I go to sleep. But I tend to forget it. So, I'll have to work on it.

— **Greg, Budapest, Hungary**

I pray every day, morning and night. God is my closest friend. I start my prayers with words of gratitude, deep, sincere gratitude for all God has given me. Never did I imagine I would be abstinent this long, contentedly single, and most days, tranquil.

— **Marsha Z., Jamaica Plain, MA**

I pray to my Higher Power numerous times a day.

— **Joseph R., Philadelphia**

I pray to start my day and to end it. I pray for the people that I objectify, for release from the resentment that I have, and to bless those I know who are in my mind. More prayer always works.

— **Anonymous, Largo, FL**

I meditate daily. It is my one opportunity first thing in the morning to get focused and grounded and to get in touch with my spirituality.

— **Seth, Boston/Newton**

I pray in the morning and at night. I sometimes double up on the meditation especially in times of stress.

— **Tim C., Cincinnati, OH**

Question of the Day

For me, prayers are talking with a God of my understanding – I talk with my Higher Power throughout the day. When I meditate and become still, my answers come to me. They also come to me through others. I think prayer is the action before the action.

— Nancy G., San Diego

I pray often during the day for humility.

— David F., Poland

I pray when I wake up, and at any point during my day when I start to feel that I am becoming disconnected.

— Rich, Worcester, MA

I pray daily in the morning and evening. I also pray anytime I face an important decision or tenuous situation.

— Jack S., Seminole

I pray all day throughout the day. I have a very open dialogue with my Higher Power to give me guidance, help me stop, breathe, and be the best version of myself.

— Ashly M., Houston

I would like to pray every morning at minimum, but most of the time I pray when I'm in pain or need to reach out. Praying usually looks like a personal conversation I have with my Higher Power.

— April, Houston

I pray because it is necessary to verbally communicate with my Higher Power. I pray mostly in the morning before my day begins. It is the best way to remind me that Higher Power is running the show.

— Jason S., Sacramento

As Chapter 4 of our Basic Text of S.L.A.A. says, God is a “great allower.” If I want to, he will let me run on self-will. Prayer is how I humble myself to God and receive his will for me.

— Steve B., Sunrise

When I wake, I get out of bed and on my knees. I say specific prayers daily to prepare to meditate. I check in with Higher Power when I'm scared, grateful, unsure. I express gratitude at night because I continue to turn my will and life over to Higher Power who does a much better job than I ever could.

— Anne K., Tampa

I pray to talk to my Higher Power. I meditate to listen to Higher Power. I pray when I need strength, courage and wisdom and when I need to get centered, feel love and relax.

— Danette S., Seminole, FL

Every time I speak my truth to another at or outside a meeting, I am praying. Every time I listen to another's truth, I am praying.

— Sarah C., San Antonio

I created a habit of praying and meditating for 20 minutes when I wake up-this is a priority only overcome by emergency. Practice, practice, practice.

— Tim P., Hollywood, FL

How I pray: On my knees to lower my ego and be submissive.

Why: to get in position to connect to my Higher Power, to clear a channel and ask for the knowledge of his will.

When: Morning and night and whenever I need connection.

— **Paul T., London, UK**

I prayed regularly as a child because I went to Catholic school. In my 12-Step and S.L.A.A. experience, I've come to embrace prayer gradually. I pray and meditate for people I feel resentment towards. I pray before and after shares with outreach partners, in meetings, and whenever I remember to.

— **Jean, Seattle, WA**

I pray every day whether it's a good or bad day. And I pray when I get through the day without breaking my bottom line.

— **Mick B., Dublin Town Newbridge**

I start each morning with prayer and meditation. The prayer is more of an intentional prayer to be willing to act with courage and integrity. If, during the day, I find that I am in my own will or faced with a challenging situation, I repeat the prayer as needed. In addition, If I find myself in a character defect, I repeat the 7th Step prayer, asking the defect to be lifted.

— **Dave G., Los Angeles**

I pray, acknowledging my Higher Power, knowing that guidance will follow. I pray when I start my day, for peace, clarity, and guidance throughout the day. I thank my Higher Power at the end of each day.

— **Lindsey H., West Palm Beach**

I pray at meetings, at my faith group, when I exercise, when I'm outdoors and at any other time that I can remember. It always helps to relieve the obsession and bring me peace.

— **Jim B., Huntington Beach**

My praying has changed since being in the program. It is much simpler. I pray with simple slogans, simple prayer, and Step prayers- "God. I let go and let God. God, do for me what I cannot do for myself. God, I am powerless over my addiction, please restore me to sanity. I turn my will and my life over to your care."

— **Liz D., Dallas, TX**

I always had an issue with the word "pray." So instead, I substitute the word "meditate" on something. I meditate/pray whenever I'm feeling feelings. I meditate/pray in order to get back on board with my Higher Power's will and ask for help getting out of my own way so that I may see that will.

— **Suzanne, Los Angeles**

I pray daily for the knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out.

— **Amy G., Austin, TX**

I pray when I rise in the morning and retire at night. I speak with my sponsor almost daily and he reminds me to pray. I have a good forgetter. I teach my sponsees to pray and make suggestions to pray.

— **Gabriel, Sacramento, CA**

On my knees, I pray in the morning and in the evening and in between. During the day I pray because my life still feels unmanageable. My life is my Higher Power's, not mine. My life is to be of maximum service. My disease will never go away, it is arrested for the rest of my days. I am happy to say that I am alive.

Namaste~ Yours in Service,

— **Kristin, NJ**

My Evolution With Prayer

I had an appreciation for the benefits of prayer before I arrived in S.L.A.A. because of membership in another 12-Step program. I memorized and regularly recited the Serenity Prayer, and the Third, Seventh and Eleventh Step prayers. I also prayed each morning and thanked my Higher Power (H.P.) every evening for sobriety. I was very grateful because I had no hope when I first entered recovery and was thrilled that my life could be so much better. This was a great introduction to prayer in recovery.

However, when I hit bottom in this addiction, I was far more desperate and scared. I thought I had done everything right in recovery but I felt like the rug was pulled out from underneath me. I also had a lot to lose at this point – sobriety in my other program, my

health, and my freedom, if I let my anger take over.

I had already lost my mind and knew it. I had to question all of my recovery practices.

Praying changed for me in that when I asked for sobriety in the morning, I actually used the phrase, “I beg that you help me to stay sober today.”

I didn’t know if it would help. Also, I said the Third Step prayer a lot, but with a new level of seriousness. At some point, I realized that I had not turned over my sex and relationship life to my H.P. (even though I did not know it), and was being taught that this particular shortcoming in my Third Step may cost me my life.

My sobriety today is a true miracle of the program and praying is continuing to change for me. Although I say the Third and

Seventh Step prayers, they’re part of a bigger prayer, which is reciting and reviewing all of the Steps each day. Besides that practice, my attempts to maintain a conscious contact with my H.P. throughout the day are also a form of prayer. I’m learning from all of you that the more of a relationship I have with my H.P., the greater chance there is that I will not act out today. So, in addition to the prayers related to the Steps, the Steps themselves, begging H.P. for help and thanking H.P. at night for sobriety, and maintaining a conscious contact, I also talk to H.P. as I would a friend who is right in front of me. To me, all of the above are forms of prayer.

And for today, I beg my H.P. that we all stay sober another day.

— Chris

Meditation and Prayer Go Together

Before beginning a program of recovery in S.L.A.A., meditation was a daily part of my life but prayer was not. I liken this to something I recently heard in my home fellowship, “Meditation is when my Higher Power speaks to me. Prayer is when I speak to my Higher Power.” So, I was listening, but by not praying, I wasn’t actually having any conversations with God. Since joining S.L.A.A., prayer is now something I do daily, right after meditating each morning. I pray because it holds me accountable, keeps me humble, and is a way to stay connected to my Higher Power on a daily basis.

Prayer is also my way of asking for my Higher Power’s help, which I not only need, but also very much want. How can God give me what I need if I don’t ask?

Inspired by things I’ve read in *the Journal*, I eventually wrote my own short morning and evening prayers which I say aloud daily. (The action of hearing yourself speak is powerful, and I recommend it over reading or reciting prayers in your head.) In addition to my morning and evening prayers in which I ask God to remove my character defects, give me what I need for the day, and express gratitude, I often pray just by talking out loud.

I have entire conversations with my Higher Power, angels, and spirit guides as if they are right there. Sometimes I ask a question, then get silent and listen for an answer. For me, that free-form style of praying keeps my Higher Power close and maintains a personal, intimate relationship. Since prayer keeps me so well-connected to both God and myself, I figure I’d better keep it up because I know I can’t form healthy connections with people if I’m not connected to source and self first!

— Karen T, Palm Beach, FL

Asking Simple Questions in Prayer

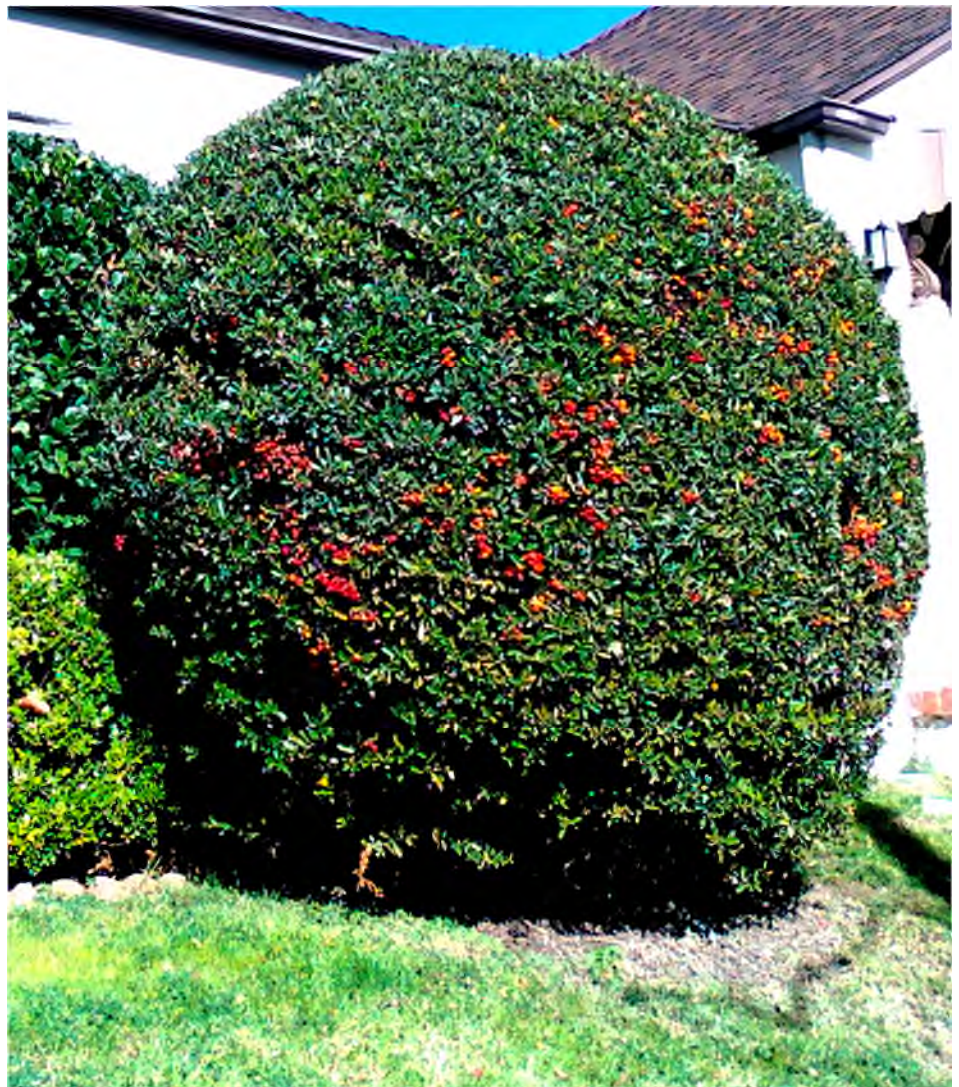
Before I came into Twelve-Step programs, my prayers were a metaphysical hodgepodge. The form of the prayers varied from focusing on images of experiences I coveted, to affirming different mantras of personal power. Those attempts at prayer stemmed from the notion that I am the center of my “You-niverse,” and that I was practicing my creative powers by dictating how my life would be.

Some of what I asked for was about career. Much of it was about sex. None of it was based on the principles of our program of recovery.

I learned in Step Eleven that when I pray, it’s best for me to ask a simple question, “What is God’s will for me?” and then ask to be given the power to carry out the will of Good Orderly Direction.

I ask this question each time I plan my day—often in the morning as prescribed in Alcoholics Anonymous. But if I stay up very late, I may meditate late at night, asking to learn God’s plan for me for the upcoming day. The intent seems to me more important than the timing.

I have recently added back some of my earlier forms of prayer, the affirmations I mentioned above, as well as creative visualization. I dismissed their power when I entered Twelve-Step recovery, but now believe



that while those forms of prayer may not fall under the tent of our program, I may use them in my life, so long as my requests remain rooted in our principles: honesty,

hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, discipline, and love for others.

— Anonymous

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Step Three Is Less About Prayer and More About Small Steps of Action

Step Three proved to be more difficult for me to understand than I anticipated. Because I come from an Evangelical tradition with strong revivalist roots, I felt I understood that Step Three was praying a prayer of commitment to God. I had done this many times. Further, I had attended and even participated in services where people were asked to come forward at the end of the meeting and make a prayer of commitment. I had passed out hundreds if not thousands of gospel tracts that encouraged people to do the same.

Yet, with all of my prayers of commitment, I was still acting out. The last time that I hired a prostitute, I remember being completely perplexed by Step Three. I had the excuse, unaccountable time, and means to travel to a city a couple of hours away and arrange the encounter. As a last-ditch effort before I left, I picked up the Twelve and Twelve and began reading Step Three. Bill W. kept talking about the key of willingness opening the door to a faith that actually works.

“Of course I’m not willing!” I shouted at the book in despair. “That is why I’m in recovery, you moron! If I was willing to not act out, I wouldn’t need the program!” I felt like he was answering my question by restating the question as the answer.

It took some years before the lens through which I was interpreting Step Three was shattered. Like most things in recovery, the action came first, leading to the understanding that came later. When I was in my

addiction, the first thing I would do when entering a hotel room on business was go to the drawer and pull out the phone book - something that in our internet age rarely exists anymore. I would look up both E for Escort and M

It took some years before the lens through which I was interpreting Step Three was shattered. Like most things in recovery, the action came first, leading to the understanding that came later.

for Massage to stake out what the city might have to offer. (Often these pages were torn out if another sex addict had the room before me.)

This would begin the triggering process so that by midweek I was taking action for my addiction. By the week’s end, I would return home in shame wondering how it happened again.

I agreed with my sponsor that I would do an action step. When I arrived at a hotel, I would take the phone book out of the drawer. I would then take the phone book to the front desk and ask if they could keep it for me instead of having it in my room. It was probably one of the more awkward things I did in recovery but no one ever reacted with puzzlement or

negativity.

Another action step was how I drove to the airport. There was one route that went by an adult bookstore where I had previously acted out. Another did not. I demonstrated tangibly my turning my life over to the care of God by driving the route that did not have the triggering temptation. This isn’t to say that these small actions were cures. Certainly, I could obtain another phone book or find a different venue in which to act out. But they created a tangible step that framed my trip as a man moving towards recovery as opposed to a man moving towards acting out. If I am truly powerless over this disease and my only hope is for a Power greater than myself to put sanity into my head, the willingness to make small, manageable steps as an expression of turning my life and will over to the care of God points the way out of the mire. This is what Bill W. had in mind when he spoke of a willingness towards a faith that works.

This is not to denigrate prayer, church-based recovery programs, or America’s revivalist traditions. Prayer is certainly addressed in Step Eleven. Nevertheless, when I interpreted Step Three as a prayer of commitment in my head, it proved frustrating and ineffectual. When I began to see our program of as one of small, tangible actions, I found that these specific works (actions) made my faith work succeed, moving me towards sobriety. I was able to go on many business trips since making these actions habits and doing them without acting out.

— David, Western North Carolina

Prayer is Constant Communication



How, why, when do you pray? Voice: using the song of the vowels. Any breathing exercise is prayer, moving energy, breath and sounds through the throat area which also vibrates the entire body and organs. Repetitive sound with rhythm brings patterns, moves thru the body, and out into space. Sound has the gift to cut much of

the habitual mind's activity and redirect it.

Voice is the center of expression and moves energy, so it does not remain stagnant.

Voicing brings intentionality. It is communication with Higher Power/ Universe/ God, asking for guidance and taking action via voicing things as we understand them.

The sacred thing is breath, is prayer.

Meditation and contemplation help us detach from thinking — also known as “stinkin’ thinkin’” — the dualistic mind. I return to being in presence, which can be experienced when taking a walk in nature, in a forest, or on a beach.

Another way I pray is with intentionality and sending loving

kindness to others, specific persons and to all sentient beings, or self. Prayer is good with a group, in a circle, holding hands, saying the serenity prayer or Ohm-ing. Group hugs are prayer.

Another form of practice of prayer is walking meditation, staying in the present, noting all sensations with all the senses, and staying with the breath, really being there with each step in the now.

All these are forms of prayer. To bring awareness to the moment, engaging the entire being, body and mind and soul. Soul to me is that greater sense of who we really are as part and whole within creation.

So prayer is about humbly asking, when faced with the complexity and ambiguities of life. It is a shifting of gears, surrendering to what is, knowing that my own mind cannot find a

solution. In that moment of letting go, entering the depth of the moment, only then do I open myself to receive in a place that is way larger than my thinking mind. In that moment, I enter the wholeness of creation, not being separate, but entering oneness. I believe that there is something larger than myself.

— Sean P. Albuquerque, NM

How Prayer Came to Me

I have never been a religious person, but I labelled myself as culturally Catholic. I had no faith, I had no beliefs and I had no spirituality. I made my sex and love addiction my Higher Power and there was no room for anything else. When I started my recovery journey and walked into the rooms of an S.L.A.A. meeting, I was often reminded that I needed a Higher Power, a God of my understanding. This idea was completely foreign to me. Traveling to Venus was far more realistic. I couldn't even remember the words of the Serenity Prayer, let alone believe in its words.

I knew I was missing some kind of spirituality but did not know where to start looking for it. Things started to change when I began working and believing in the Steps, especially Steps 1, 2 and 3. Life miraculously started to bloom around me. My heart got

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I started praying with meaning for the first time in my life. First it was just a simple wake-up prayer, "Please, help me stay sober." Then a good night prayer, "Thank you for keeping me sober." During the night when I could not sleep, I repeated the Serenity Prayer until I fell asleep. This prayer alone has saved me. It has put my mind at ease and centers me many times throughout my day.

I find myself now praying in times of hardship, when I am triggered, when my mind begins a negative spiral, when I have cravings, when work upsets me, any situation that knocks me off balance, and even when I have moments of gratitude. I repeat the Serenity Prayer again and again until I reach a calm, peaceful serenity. I am so grateful for S.L.A.A. and all its blessings.

— Wendy, Montreal

Prayer Helped Me Over Hurdles

Prayer helped me overcome 2 major blocks to recovery. Without this help, I never would have stuck around for 19 years in S.L.A.A.

The first block was a belief in God. I didn't want to believe in God when I first came to Twelve-Step programs because, at times, I thought He would take away all of my fun. At other times, I thought I couldn't trust a God to take care of me the way I needed to learn to take care of myself. Immaturity and fear of responsibility/perfectionism prevented me from learning how to take care of myself.

The second block was PTSD. I was in an abusive relationship for nine years and God didn't save me then. My boyfriend killed my best friend (let's call him S) because I cheated on him with (S). Someone must have been praying for (S) because he was a good guy. But God didn't save him. He did everything right and was a good person and God didn't defend him so why would God care about someone as insignificant and deceitful as me?

So, when I came to A.A. in 1996, I had a big chip on my shoulder. I felt like the person the A.A. Twelve and Twelve describes to whom "claims for the power of prayer may, despite all the logic and experience in proof of it, still be unconvincing or quite objectionable."

My sponsor gave me a lot of direction to try to counteract that belief. As part of my Third Step I had to memorize and say the Third Step prayer from A.A. literature for 30 days. And when that time was up, she said try it for

30 more and so on. And then my sponsor added the Seventh Step prayer. Before I knew it, I was saying more prayers each day than I ever thought I was capable of! This helped me stay sober but not to believe.

Eventually it helped me believe that maybe there was something out there in the universe keeping me sober from drugs and alcohol. But I wasn't certain that something was God. It might have just been the group or my sponsor. All of this was very vague in my mind. Prayers brought me to solid ground but I couldn't always stay there because sex and love addiction pulled me back into disbelief and chaos.

Persistent prayer over 5 years of this rocky sea of recovery finally brought me to a spiritual experience and the shore of a belief in God that has withstood many storms. Like the S.L.A.A. Basic Text says, "Our growing relationship with God was like a stabilizing keel beneath us. No matter how stormy the winds above the surface of life's waters, or how much sail we sometimes hoisted into the gale in the form of commitments beyond the scope of our limited strength and energy, we found that the keel beneath us, meditation and prayer, guaranteed that we would not capsize. We would retain our buoyancy on the ocean of life. We could survive whatever life might throw at us."

I know that the constant praying over the years brought me to my new life but a few instances of prayer really stand out for me:

1. I hit bottom in my sex and love addiction in a relationship

with a married man. I knew I was insane and actually felt my mind snap. I was completely convinced that I had to be locked up in a mental institution. I was on my knees, screaming and crying and hyperventilating. A fellow S.L.A.A. member told me that prayers are powerful and asked me what I wanted her to pray for. I said, "Pray for my obsession with _____ to be lifted." She said the prayer to me, "God, please lift Lisa's obsession with _____. Help her to be sober in S.L.A.A." I immediately stopped gasping for air.

My tears dried up. My voice became softer and I felt a calm wash over me. My qualifier came over and tried to engage me in a huge dramatic scene and I sent him home. The next day I told him I was breaking up with him and instituting a no contact rule (he was in S.L.A.A. also). He started screaming and threatening to stalk me and kidnap me and I hung up the phone.

That was my sober date and I've been sober for 15-and-a-half years now. I went on to sponsor 8 women at a time and to take service commitments in my meetings and Intergroup. I became *the Journal* editor and joined the Conference Literature Committee to help bring literature to the Fellowship. I became a completely different person. Prayer changed me from a suicidal, self-centered mess into a responsible person who loves to be of service.

2. After my spiritual experience, I started having panic attacks at work, home and even while driving. They came in the

form of swirling lights in front of my eyes that become more intense until I was blinded by them. I couldn't see anything else but these swirling lights.

I knew they were panic attacks because in my acting out days I would get attacks that were less intense. I would act out over them and they would go away. I was honest with my Nicotine Anonymous sponsee about this and she told me about a prayer that worked for her and helped her avoid going back to the disease for answers.

She said, "Light stream. Clear Light." She wrote these simple words down on a piece of paper and handed it to me. She said, "Imagine a huge beam of light shining straight up to the sky. It's a direct line to God. When you say these words it opens an immediate and intense connection to God."

In my thoughts, I scoffed at this. *It's all airy fantasyland and not for me*, I thought. I'm not like that. A straight forward prayer worked for me, I should stick to that.

I walked into the lunch room in my office the next day, looking for something interesting in the vending machine. As I looked, I overheard a co-worker saying, "I just finished reading a book on prayer. It helped me heal my panic attacks. It talked about a woman stuck in traffic who realized she was stopped because of a car accident up ahead. She said a prayer for whoever was in the accident and she drove by to see the person sitting up in a stretcher, talking to paramedics and the mangled mess of a car looked like that scene shouldn't have been possible. There were a lot of stories in the book that prove the power of prayer to overcome obstacles in life."

As I stared at the vending machine and heard this story, it made me want to cry and I didn't quite know why. A thought

popped into my mind that my S.L.A.A. fellow's prayer worked for me so maybe my Nicotine Anonymous sponsee's prayer could work too, even if I felt foolish saying it.

Soon after that, I had to stop my car in the fast lane on the freeway because I was blinded by the swirling lights. "Light stream. Clear Light. Light stream. Clear Light," I shouted over and over

Prayers brought me to solid ground but I couldn't always stay there because sex and love addiction pulled me back into disbelief and chaos.

again. I heard car horns honking. I saw nothing but swirling lights. I inched my car forward, hoping there was nothing in front of my car. "Light stream. Clear Light."

The road started to come into focus. I started sobbing. More road came in to focus.

I slowly drove the rest of the way to work, drained of all energy. Through a few more, less intense panic attacks, I said this prayer over the next few months. With sobriety and prayer, my panic attacks went away and I haven't had one in many years (I think it's been at least 14 years).

3. After I broke up with my

qualifier and got sober, my sponsor told me to pray for him to get everything that I wanted for myself. I didn't want to do that because I didn't really want him to have happiness without me because that would mean he was really gone for good.

My addict battled to keep me in longing. I said the prayer begrudgingly, "God, please let _____ have a nice house and a great career, a loving spouse and a baby." I said the prayer many times over the next few months. I hadn't seen or heard about my qualifier. I told all of our mutual friends not to mention even his name to me.

Most of them listened. One day, after an A.A. meeting, a mutual friend who doesn't listen very well told me that _____ was doing well and had adopted a child with his spouse. I was at first angry at my friend for talking about him and risking throwing me into the pit of longing that I was finally out of.

But when I realized that I wasn't in any pain of longing or loneliness, I was shocked. My prayer worked.

The guy I never thought would take responsibility and be a dad repaired his relationship and started a family.

I needed those years in sobriety where I saw huge miracles and complete transformation through prayer. Today, I think that feeling is more of a quiet sense that prayer works. Sometimes I miss that childlike wonder that I used to feel.

But life is good today and prayer is always with me constantly throughout the day. I haven't seen any dramatic miracles lately, but everything is right in my world. Sometimes there are moments of joy but above all, thank God there is peace.

— Lisa C.

Morning Prayer

Evening Prayer

Higher Power (or God), grant me the courage to accept your will, to surrender my own, and to trust at all times that you know what I need better than I and are bringing it to me.

Give me the tools to stay sober, healthy, and connected to myself for today and reveal the next steps I should take to achieve my goals, desires, intentions and healing. Help me take life one day at a time.

Please remove my most troublesome defects of character (list whatever they are for you, such as “control, perfectionism, insecurity, fear, obsessive thinking, and false gods”).

Come to my aid when I need help and help me without my asking when I forget. Grant me the conscious awareness to remember to ask for your help.

Give me the strength and courage to continue my journey of growth and healing and to take the next steps you reveal to me, today, and without attachment to outcome.

I humbly ask for this or something better. Amen.

Higher Power (or God), thank you for this day and for giving me the tools and experiences to have lived it. Whatever happened today, thank you for orchestrating it for my highest good.

Soften and open my heart with acceptance and forgiveness if needed. Calm my anxious nerves and help me re-center in my divinity, which is one with you.

Grant me the courage and wisdom to let go of attachment to outcome, worry, fear and expectation. Ease and even my emotional state to one of neutrality and peace. Remove my most troublesome thoughts and emotions before I sleep.

Make it possible for me to leave behind whatever needs to be left, to take and integrate the lessons and insights of today forward, and to remain in the moment.

Nurture me with a good night’s rest and rejuvenation so I may awake tomorrow with a clear mind, open heart, joyous, enthusiastic outlook and deep gratitude.

Amen.

— Karen T., Palm Beach County, FL

Prayer Focused on Abundance

I wrote a prayer intended to focus on abundance, not lack, that can be used with mindful breathing, wherein you repeat a phrase as you breathe in and repeat another phrase as you exhale. This is a practice Thich

Naht Hanh recommends. Mindful breathing, Thich says, brings you back to “water the good seeds” when your mind starts to wander and “water bad seeds,” as mine does. Repeated practice, they say, can change the neural pathways in

the brain and thus produce a change in thinking.

So, I’ve broken up the sentences into “thought groups,” and thought groups are separated by slashes (/). Breathe in/breathe out. That’s how it goes.

The Universe/supports me.
The Universe/endorse me.
I am not alone/in the Universe.
I am accompanied/by fellow travelers,
All born/of 93% stardust,
All looking roughly alike/but developing differently.
The same energy/the seed of unlimited potential,
Lives in all of us/and in me.
It is light/hidden in darkness.
It is boundless/and ever expanding.
Its spirit/flows around me,

Through nature/and spiritual elders,
And also/through spiritual ancestors,
Who are all available/through daily communion,
Reminding me/that serenity
Is internal/not external,
That the Spirit of the Universe/dwells in me,
That I can touch it/with regular practice,
That there lies abundance/not lack,
And that there/I will find peace,
Happiness/and joy.

— Scott M., Texas

Share space

Lessons in Good Orderly Direction

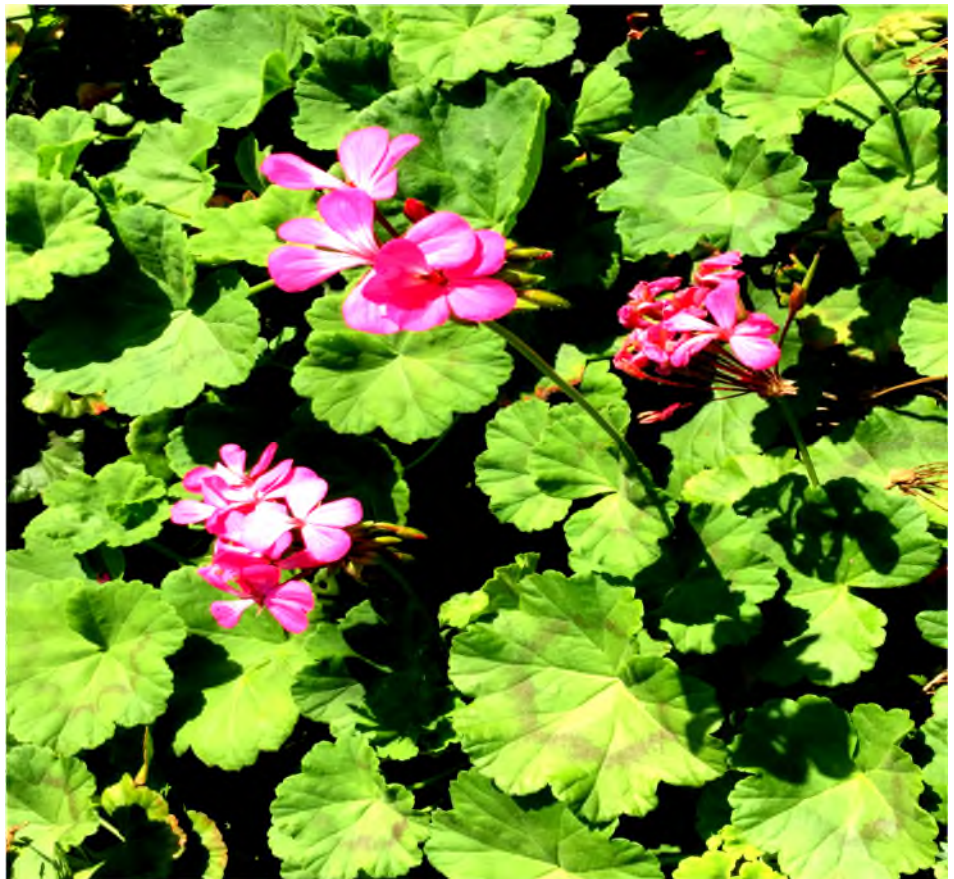
Growing up, I had two models of manhood. The first was my father, who worked hard, drank passionately, and openly resented his domineering wife. My second role model was my uncle, a player, skirt-chaser and charmer. I patterned myself after these two epic figures.

Drawing what I considered the best qualities of my uncle, I committed to being social. From my father, I drew the work ethic.

I also fell under the spell of the world image these men were operating within. In their lives, women were either playthings or temperamental shrews. The implication was that women started out sweet and in time turned sour.

I was a teenager when my parents separated. They sat me down at the dining-room table and soberly explained how they were breaking up and it was my fault. Their complaint had to do with family bickering and my lack of interest in being at home. From that episode and similar others, I added the belief that children spoil romance.

There are many benefits to the lessons my family taught. I am



now middle aged and have worked myself into a financially stable life. I am a bachelor who has managed to stay in decent shape and has an active dating life. In many ways, I could not have picked a better set

of role models to inspire the creation of my enviable life.

As my hair goes gray and my face wrinkles, I doubt I'll be able to remain a successful bachelor. I have been afraid of facing more

frequent rejection based on my age. I fear facing old age from the disadvantaged position of being undesirable.

When I think about God, I consider it Good Orderly Direction. All of life. Reality. I use the neuter pronoun, It, as life no doubt encompasses both genders. This all-inclusive and somewhat nebulous definition has helped me immensely.

Working the Twelve Steps helped me face reality in the areas of honesty, food, relationships, money, belongings and of course, in regards to love and sex.

Our program helped me accept life from a position of humility. Every life has seasons. My fears about love and sex are related to facing a potential shortage. Framed in this manner, it is easy

to see how panicked I could become. But age has also brought a diminishing of lust, the temperance of emotional

I also think of our program as a dialogue with God on the topics of love and sexuality. S.L.A.A. is a classroom, one in which I invite wisdom into my soul.

outbursts, and the experience needed to sidestep bad situations. Growing older will most likely bring both drawbacks and

advantages.

I listen intently when I attend meetings, for I seek to learn from the challenges that my fellows are facing. We tend to understand other people's problems better than our own. If the lessons I learn in the rooms are applicable to my current life, I consider that a true blessing. I also think of our program as a dialogue with God on the topics of love and sexuality. S.L.A.A. is a classroom, one in which I invite wisdom into my soul.

I didn't have a tremendous amount of say about who I modeled my personality after. This program affords me the privilege of shaping the rest of my time with the help of Good Orderly Direction.

— Anonymous

I Thought I Could Control Myself

Soon after joining S.L.A.A., I set my period of abstinence at 5 months. To some of us this may seem too long a period of time. I thought it would be annoying and frustrating to go without sex, but not difficult. A month into it, I was at a party and met a guy I liked.

During 12 hours high on coke and ecstasy, spilling my life's secrets and my passwords (after ingesting that truth serum) to a man I just met, I still kept my boundaries up around sex. But as the night passed, and the drugs wore off, I began to feel weak in body and spirit, and I finally gave in. I couldn't keep up my abstinence even for myself.

I was devastated. Only a month into this abstinence, I had to admit my powerlessness over sex and love addiction and I cried for a day. I sat outside and people walking by would ask me how I could be so sad, and I would just keep crying. I couldn't say, "No" to a man.

My realization that my life was unmanageable came pretty early on, after only a few meetings. I had a lot of ways for justifying and rationalizing my behavior. I would have sex with someone on the second date, which was really a way to feel control over a fear of intimacy. In my relationships I'd withdraw emotions and know that I didn't want to be with a person.

But I didn't want either of the 2 other options – 1) sexual acting out or 2) being alone. I'd tell myself that I was really searching for love, but in the meantime, I'd have fun with sexual liaisons.

In that unmanageability of liaisons, I realized that promiscuous sex and unwanted relationships block my path towards love – self-love and love from another. They take time, energy and self-confidence. And the only way I can be involved with people in this way is if I check out of my body or cut off my heart from making decisions. That's how I slept with all those guys, I ignored my heart.

— Anonymous

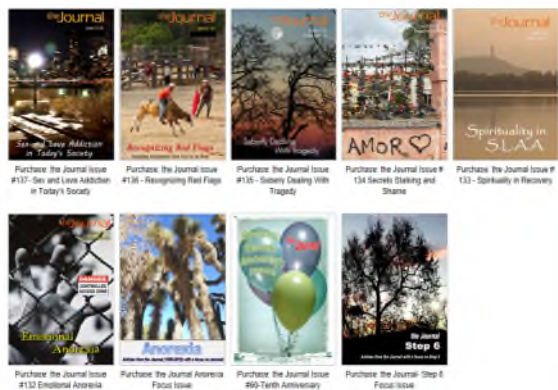
S.L.A.A.: A Poem

Marriage; a word that seems to hold such symbolism, such hope
Instead I used lying and manipulation as my choice to cope
There was coping with my image and my low self esteem
Then always trying to make a fantasy be more than just a dream
I wanted fulfillment from one who was simply not there
I wanted love, compassion, tenderness & a whole lot of care
A life with a one and only, a life that could be such bliss
But then each new person would start with just a kiss
I found ones to make me smile, I found ones who would adore
But all I did was get a hit, still always wanting more
A dream of safety and monogamy would not be quick to find,
Eight years of marriage, along with the constant wandering mind
The frustrations and the struggles, the agony and pain
The love I wanted, I couldn't find
The tears would flow like rain
I couldn't figure out why I could not feel complete
The November 2013 day I finally felt defeat
A place full of hope, so much joy and so much love
Then working Step 2, I found a Higher Power from above
The grace and peace, I could finally see
I was not alone because I found recovery
It was so much of me where this missing piece was
I needed to surrender to my God up above
I couldn't do it on my own for many years before
It was time to allow the unmanageability to be no more
A new phone number, a move, many people to leave behind
But what I didn't know it was actually me I would find
With work and support and knowing I was not alone
This new place called S.L.A.A., I was now calling home
It's a place with comfort, warmth and the honesty so pure
Now that I found what I was missing, my old life could be no more
The tears I would have, would now be true and now be real
The emotions I had, and the vulnerability I would feel
I didn't know such a life could exist

I listened, I waited till I got the gist
 Recovery isn't going through the 12 Steps and then it's done
 It is a lifelong process, where my days may not always be much fun
 It's responsibility, it's real, it's peace and serenity
 It's doing my best to stay far away from the insanity
 A song, a location, a calendar date
 These are common triggers, I try to escape
 They can bring me back to the old times that I wish to forget
 But without them I would never be here working the Steps
 A rigorous process, with not ever a straight line
 But all I have to do is see it one day at a time
 Remembering that the old times are what got me here
 And now I can live a life with far less worry and far less fear
 I must be here with God and be here with me
 Faith, hope and being present, a life of serenity
 Thanks to acceptance and thanks to the past
 Now each day I move forward as if it's my last

— Ari F. 11/28/16 - 3 years and 8 days sober

Single issues of the e-journal



The Journal is a meeting in a magazine. It can be used: To read at meetings, To find experience, strength and hope while on vacation, To read with sponsees, To stay connected to the program. Topics now available: #154 — Ready for Sponsorship? — #153 — Secrets Versus Privacy: How Do We Tell the Difference? — #152 — Strengthening Healthy Boundaries — #151 — Sober at the Holidays — #150 — Program Crush: Sexual and Emotional Intrigue at 12-Step Meetings — #149 — **ABM issue Diversity — #148 — Breaking Up... with a Sponsor — #147 Fantasy Versus Reality — #146 After Sober Dating — #145 Addiction in the Age of Technology — #144 Sex and Love Addiction: What is Real? — #143 How Do Newcomers Become Old-timers — #142 Safety in Meetings — 141 Developing True Intimacy — #140 Cross Addictions — #139 Working with Character Defects — 138 Family Issues — 137 Sex and Love

Addiction in Today's Society — 136 Recognizing Red Flags — #135 Soberly Dealing With Tragedy — #134 Secrets Stalking and Shame — #133 Spirituality in Recovery — #132 Emotional Anorexia

Step 6 Focus Issue - S.L.A.A. members share their experience strength and hope in working Step 6. **Anorexia Focus Issue**- S.L.A.A. members share their experience strength and hope around anorexia. **#60-Tenth Anniversary** - Stories about sex and love addiction written by S.L.A.A. members in 1999. **Sober Dating Focus Issue** Available at www.slaafws.org \$3.50 each

Seeking Love of God and Love of Self



I am breaking the chains and being set free. The time has come to part ways. A long time ago, you saw the gaps in me and made me believe you filled the void when nothing else could.

That was a lie, of course, but I didn't know it then. I didn't know it for a very long time. Like a lost child, I sought comfort wherever I could find it. Even when I discovered the truth, I found it hard to say goodbye.

You are such a bedeviling creature and I am such a slave to your seductive charms. You go right for my weaknesses and unless I am careful I succumb every time.

You are the ultimate illusionist.

Even though I know better by now, if I find myself tired, angry, afraid, depressed or lonely, you will still appear to be the answer, the relief, the escape I desire – unless I am honest with myself and willing to see through the mask.

I know now what I seek is love of God and love of self, not lust. I seek wholeness and unity of mind, body, spirit, not betraying oaths for momentary pleasures that only splinter me. What you offer is a mirage, not even a temporary fix, but merely a distraction to numb the pain. In the end, you don't fill me or complete me, you empty me and keep me shattered in pieces.

Like a fool, I sought to

purchase love, solace, oneness. These things cannot be bought or sold. They can only be claimed as rightful, divine-endowed parts of me.

But I would not believe that I was God-worthy. I would not accept that I was created from love, by love, for love.

Feeling loveless is no way to live. Nothing good comes from the desperation and despair that follows.

In spurning God, I let a hole in my heart fester. Like the seducer you are, you are always eager to fill that void, though in reality you can't. You are the Pandora of the fabled box. Once I open that chest of alluring pleasures, your stream

of temptress guises are too many and enticing to avoid. One or more is sure to envelop me if I let things go that far.

You are the mythic siren calling me and your bewitching powers cast a spell that pulls a veil over reality, obscuring moral bounds so that I fall back into your wiles again, suddenly grown blind to the truth, willing to risk all, to cross boundaries, to betray myself and others.

In the haze of your intoxicating pull, it's as if all sound judgment is rendered powerless.

You make it seem as if I have no will to resist and in fact by the time I do entertain your delights, I am in your control.

With some perspective that we call sobriety, I now know that I always have a choice.

It begins by admitting that I have a problem but also by believing that it need not define me. It is a part of my nature. It is a chronic affliction that thrives under certain conditions. If I am in a vulnerable state of mind, heart and soul, then I am at risk. It doesn't mean I will act out, it just means that is when I am most susceptible, therefore that's when I need to be most vigilant.

Those of us who identify as afflicted this way find that recovery, even in our darkest, lowest times, is always freely offered and within our grasp. The solution is surrender to a Higher Power of our choice. Whatever name you give it, healing flows from this wellspring of love that is the source of all life.

This disease feeds on negative energy. Recovery springs from positive energy.

Recovery is the conscious, intentional act of walking out of the darkness and into the light. It is a choice that must be made over and over again.

It means bravely facing life one day, one action, one decision, one

thought, one feeling at a time. It requires basking in the glow of life, with all its intensity or boredom, its anxiety and discomfort, its pain and pleasure, rather than hiding in the gloom of shadow and looking for some artificial high.

I am not cured. There is no such thing as a cure where this is concerned. I am, however, informed, armed with tools,

**Mark this as my
release – release from
the bonds and chains
that held me captive.
I hereby claim that
release for myself. I
hereby resolve to
choose freedom,
sobriety, serenity.**

working a program, taking steps and slowly making progress. There are stumbles along the way. I sometimes take wrong turns. I sometimes relapse. Been there, done that.

I am getting too old for this shit.

The longer it is with me, the more rewiring my brain requires. A lifetime of bad habits and patterns in my thinking and reacting must be unlearned and new, healthier ones put in their place. It's like an old dog learning new tricks.

Starting over at 58 is not a good picture or prospect, but it's a lot better than dying alone or being a sullen mess feeding on chaos and misery.

That's where this leads if left unchecked —ruined relationships,

losing your spouse, your family, your home, your livelihood, your name, your health, even your freedom.

Did I mention losing your mind? You see, this affliction is a form of insanity.

Despite my best intentions and full recognition of right and wrong, I am liable to turn a blind eye and throw everything away that I say I cherish for a fix.

I'm liable to lie and cheat, to break promises, vows, oaths. I'm liable to sabotage goals and plans.

I have been lucky so far.

Nothing lost — except peace of mind— except causing various people in my life untold pain. Making amends is a lifetime project.

The past can hold me hostage if I let it. This problem can enslave me if I empower it.

Revealing my truth in this forum feels awkward but right. It is a public testimony. It is a declaration.

It is a prayer. This disease is all about secrets and rituals, about holding onto old wounds and hurts and getting stuck in the muck and mire.

Recovery is all about honesty and transparency, about housecleaning, about moving forward. Freely telling my story, my truth, symbolizes my saying goodbye to something I don't need anymore. I therefore let go of the crutch and the anesthetic of addiction. I let go of the fear, resentment and self-pity that lead me to seek these false supports and cause me to become dependent on them.

Mark this as my release – release from the bonds and chains that held me captive. I hereby claim that release for myself. I hereby resolve to choose freedom, sobriety, serenity.

I am scared but not broken. I am healing. I am free.

— Leo B., Omaha, NE

Fall from Grace

An addiction is a pilot light in the back of your mind.
It's always on, no matter the time.
A constant reminder of what's at stake.
Serenity or insanity?
Which will you take?
So don't feed the fire.
Keep it on simmer.
In your addiction there are no winners.
Like not seeing your true face.
Acting out is a slow.... fall from grace.
The fall is long and some don't hit bottom.
Some survive it while others are forgotten.
So stay in your lane don't roll the dice.
Addicts sit in a circle of fire and ice.
Because some are numb and others are in pain.
There's often more to lose than there is to gain.
The clock is ticking
Will I raise my hand to speak?
Or will I pass and wait until next week?
We come here to be heard and seen.
To not slip into the cracks in between
Addiction and love.
If you speak your truth
you can be of service to others too.
This is what sharing can do
The choice... is up... to you.

— Chris S.

Step One and Signs of Recovery

Step One: Admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.

The inspiration for this share is from two signs of recovery. The first is "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."

The second is "We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on

our character defects."

Just when I think I have learned so much, God and life give me yet another learning opportunity that I could not have endured without the experience of the previous one. This is what Step One means to me.

My past life has consisted of dating services, online dating, singles events, countless nights at dance clubs and bars, and vacationing alone, all with the sole purpose of hooking up and expecting these to turn into lifelong partnerships.

The whole time I was living through a fantasy that I would be rescued from my despair and loneliness. I am grateful to God that today, after a lot of letting go and admitting powerlessness, I can actually enjoy my life without hidden agendas and the ever stressful job of finding my soulmate.

Through many excruciatingly painful disappointments from confusing powerlessness with weakness and defeat, I often ended up with severe depression, thoughts of suicide, and an even greater sense of unworthiness when a boyfriend left me because it was the ultimate determinant of my lack of value. I now know that letting go means I can either accept powerlessness, or I can make the process unbearable by believing I can change the course of the relationship when it is only ME I can change.

Sex used to mean love, and withdrawal of it meant I was being deprived of love. As a form of attention, this was yet another way I measured my worthiness and lovability. Having a relationship with a man and not having sex to complicate love, I can no longer mask a lot of the reality that I once tried so hard to ignore (because it interfered with my fantasy). This leaves both of us with the sobering ability to see each other for who we are without the superficial act of sex without intimacy. Emotional dependency is still difficult for me, but I am aware enough to admit powerlessness, turn it over to God, and take responsibility for my part.

While in a relationship, I was never satisfied with myself or my

boyfriend. If you would do x, y, and z, then I would be happy. Really, I was saying, 'It's your job to make me happy, and you're doing a terrible job.' Mr. Right had to always admit he was wrong. This left us both frustrated and angry. Too miserable to stay, yet too miserable to leave. Program has taught me that the more I try to control an outcome, the worse it gets. It's as if my frenzy to make things turn out a certain way put a negative energy into the situation, sealing the destructive fate. My job is to get my selfish little hands out of the mix.

Before program, I had an overwhelming anger and resentment towards boyfriends, family, and friends for not seeing things my way because I had to be right.

I had to be right because nothing was worse than being wrong. Yet I never felt understood or heard.

Powerlessness means to stop the destructive pattern of trying to be right and getting others to agree with me. Respecting another person means shutting my own mouth to allow their truth to be heard.

When I am thinking about another person, trying to figure out, analyze, and critique, I am in their business.

This means I can't be in my own business. Powerlessness means letting these insane thoughts go so I can focus on my own stuff, and believe me, I have plenty of stuff.

I am guilty of establishing what the S.L.A.A. Basic Text calls "excessive emotional dependency".

I thought I could "bait" a potential husband through being appealing (I now know I was allowing myself to be objectified which promoted not being seen authentically). Since I hated my insides so much, I had to hide that until he was far too enmeshed to

escape or leave me.

My ultimate goal was to make myself be seen as irreplaceable so he would not abandon me. I am grateful to say that there is no more hiding who I am.

I am powerless over what another person chooses for himself, with or without a relationship with me. I see now that in the long run, my authentic self can only grow when I get out of my own way and out of the other person's way. I am powerless over both our paths. If it is God's will, then I need that other person to go his separate way for the sake of my own sanity.

After three years in program, I still have a lot of fear around my recovery and the pace at which I would like it to go, but I know this is "never-enough" thinking. I trust and know that I am not in charge. This has spared me countless years of destructive, spiraling and obsessive thinking. When I come from a place of fear, it is because I am not trusting God and my will is trying to take over. Remembering Step One actually calms me because I no longer need to carry the weight of the world on my shoulders. It is no longer me against the world.

— Anonymous

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