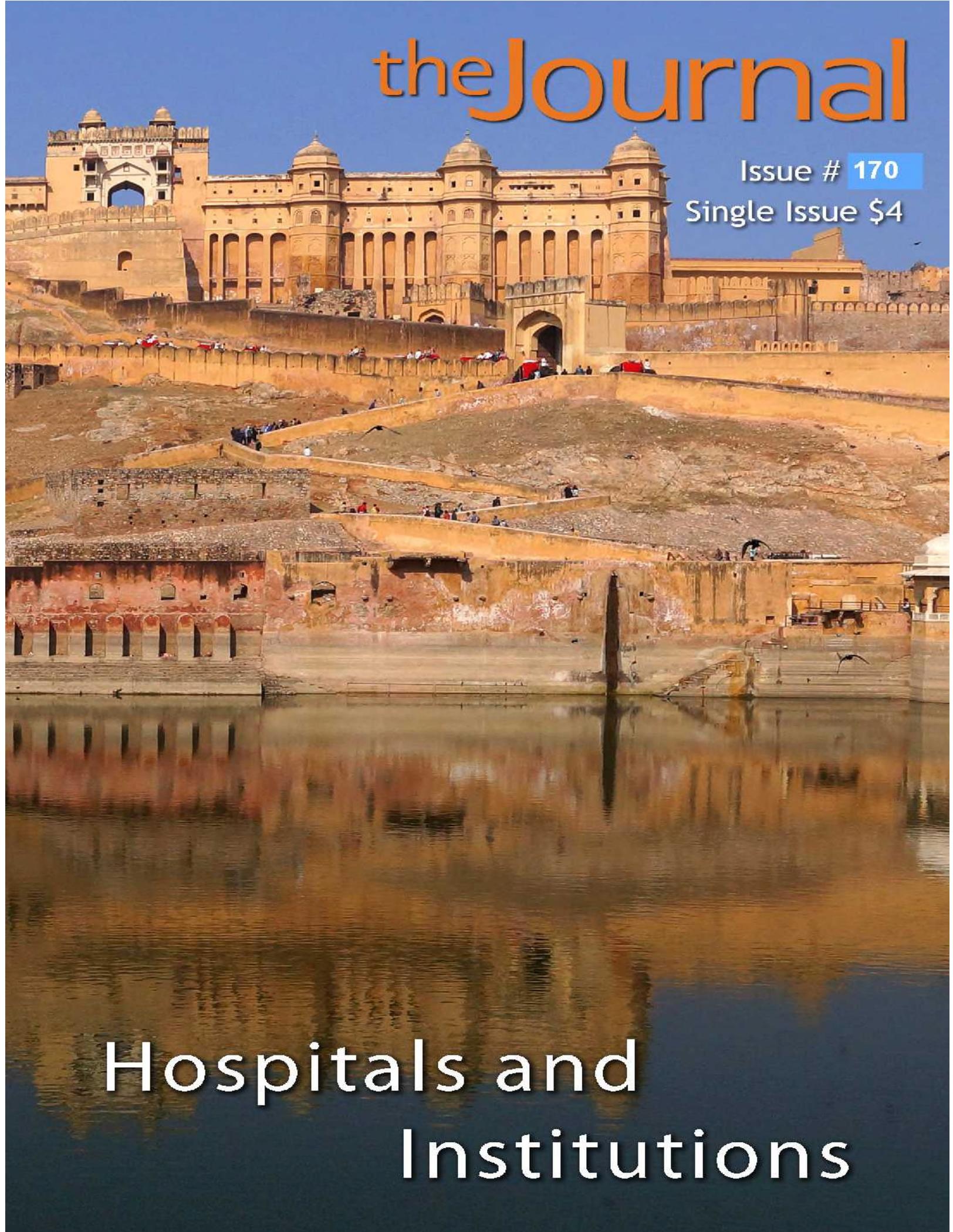


theJournal

Issue # 170

Single Issue \$4



Hospitals and
Institutions

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 re-

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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.

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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.

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,

This is was a very powerful *Journal* issue for me. It reminded me of the dark places my disease can take me and that I only have survived and stayed out of hospitals and institutions with the help of the Program of recovery and the Higher Power that I found in the rooms of S.L.A.A.

One of the stories contained something that I felt was worth noting: In the article that starts on page 17 the writer states, "I felt more invited and belonging in that circle [S.L.A.A.] than any other 12 Step group (the preamble, which explicitly expresses inclusion of all gender identities, was further reassurance.)"

I was at the ABM when that change to the Preamble was made: (from the Index of Motions for the S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting):

2012 [12-05] (Approved): The Conference Diversity Committee asks the Conference to approve a revision of the 2nd sentence in the 4th paragraph in The S.L.A.A. Preamble. Current Sentence: "We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns which renders any personal differences of sexual or gender orientation irrelevant." Proposed revision (with friendly amendment): "We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation and gender identity."

My sponsee and I were so happy to announce at our meetings that the change had been passed and the Basic Text would be revised to be more inclusive. It's great to know that changes made at the Annual Business meeting and that articles in *the Journal* can touch the lives of so many people. Really powerful stuff!

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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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.

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Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

“Have you ever been incarcerated/hospitalized because of your sex and love addiction? Please share your experience, strength and hope.”

Yes – two years into recovery, I became suicidal when I was laid off from my job and a sponsee told me I was emotionally unavailable. I checked myself into a treatment center because I didn't feel safe. I found myself there for the first time and began to individuate myself from my family of origin. I also was of service and brought S.L.A.A. meetings into the hospital as there were none at the time. My time there renewed my recovery and I was able to finish working through all the Steps for the first time shortly thereafter. My hospitalization was a turning point in my recovery when I began to love myself.

— Sarah C., San Antonio, TX

I have attempted suicide and was committed to a mental health facility for 10 days. It was a very real action to see how I no longer had control of life.

— Joe

I was hospitalized 3 times. I had chronic depression from acting out. Since coming into S.L.A.A., I have not been in the hospital.

— Diane S. Pittsfield, MA

Yes. A year and a half ago, I attempted suicide for the first and only time because of my shame and regret. I had married a sociopath. After our wedding day, he showed his true colors. He went from being a fun-loving kind and generous man to a pathological lying con artist. I watched everything crumble around me. I was being contacted daily by the caterer for his bounced payments. He had a lawyer because he had frauded his previous partner out of \$122,000. He cheated on me. I had to call the police because he was violent with me. My children had to live through all of this with me. My family and community were given yet another reason to gossip about and belittle me. That was in 2015. That was then. Today I am gratefully recovering.

— Carole, Montreal, QC

While I haven't been hospitalized, my addiction and dependency led me to consider suicide and it led to at least two nervous breakdowns. Happy to say that hasn't happened since finding recovery.

— Diana, Oakland

No. But I was well on my way to one of them if I didn't stop what I was doing. I'm just lucky I didn't get caught or get sicker.

— Rita, Montreal

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, Have you ever been incarcerated/hospitalized because of your sex and love addiction? Please share your experience, strength and hope.” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #171 — 11th Step — Please share your experience of practicing the 11th Step and/or any prayers or practices of meditation that you have found helpful. The deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2018. And #172 — Forgiveness — “How have you learned to forgive? Please share any special stories of forgiveness.” The deadline for submissions is March 15, 2018.

I once ended up in an institution over a suicide attempt over the constant emotional turmoil and chaos I was in because of my sex and love addiction. This episode was only a cry for help, but by the time I hit bottom and got sober, I was planning a murder suicide. I’m so glad I was able to surrender instead. Today, because of my recovery, I’ve never had it so good.

— **Anonymous**

No. But addiction does take us to bleak places.

— **Jean, NM**

No. But I should have been. I first heard a share from someone who got recovery from a nudge from a judge and I wondered if I had run the same course, if I might have gotten recovery earlier in life.

— **Glenn, Los Angeles**

This is Kristin, recovered, recovering. I celebrated my 8-year anniversary of back to back abstinence from acting out on my bottom-line behaviors. I have not participated in any real top-line behaviors like exercising, going for a walk in the park, going to the movies, or visiting with a friend in a very long time but I haven’t been incarcerated for my issues nor hospitalized in the last 8 years, either. Thank you, God!

Before recovery, I was hospitalized because of my disease. When I was 19 years old I was anorexic with food. I was restricting. I was dating my future husband and was going through a lot. The Menendez Brothers had just been tried and convicted for killing both of their parents because of the sexual abuse and mental and emotional cruelty they suffered as children. Hearing about that shook me to the core in an unearthly manner. Shortly after that, I decided that I wanted to be hospitalized.

Thank you for sharing your experience strength and hope with me.

Always. I remain recovered, recovering, 1 day @ a time.

Thank You.

— **Kristin, NJ**

Hitting Bottom Is Not the End



It all started in November of 2016 when I had just gotten out of a relationship, and I was ready to fall in love again as soon as possible. There was this girl, let's call her Lauren, in my creative writing class.

Once my previous relationship had ended, I was given free reign to become as close as I could with Lauren. We talked constantly in class, passed notes like we were in middle school, and began to get lunch outside of school. She was bubbly and smiled often. I got her to open up about herself quite a bit, and by the time we had our first lunch together, I got the idea

that I knew more about her than some of her closest friends.

I kept much of myself in the dark, seeking only intimacy from her because it felt safer that way. She told me extremely intimate details of her past - abuse, assault, and sex - and I listened eagerly.

The closer we got, the more I felt I could save her, help her in some way.

We continued to grow close until the point we were hanging out *and* texting every single day. Although it was easy to do so because we went to the same school, we grew as attached to each other as two people possibly

could. The hours between classes that we did not share grew uncomfortably long, and the spare minutes between text messages we exchanged were exhausting.

When school let out for the semester break, I did not have to worry very long about whether or not we would see each other as often. We were at each other's houses nearly every day. We adventured in Los Angeles quite frequently, and shared even deeper stories.

Still, there remained pieces of me that I did not divulge. At the time, my sponsor from S.L.A.A. warned me about how close

Lauren and I were getting. I had begun to bring Lauren to my S.L.A.A. meetings because, from her stories, I recognized many of the traits of a Sex and Love Addict. Thinking that I was doing both of us a favor, sharing meetings became another way for us to continue developing our bond and yet another excuse to hang out and grow closer.

Winter break was also the start of our physical relationship. We spoke longingly of kissing one another, holding each other's hands, and discussed, in hushed tones, doing more. It began with occasionally taking each other's hands in the car for "emotional support," as we called it, and then, it advanced to sensual hugs that would last for what seemed like hours when we said goodbye.

I received another warning from a close friend about Lauren about a week before Christmas. Some friends, Lauren, and I had all been at a small party, and one of my friends had seen how handsy Lauren had become after drinking. Lauren had thrown her legs onto my lap as I spoke to a close female friend of mine, and at one point when I went to the bathroom, Lauren had followed me and tried to make a move on me in the privacy of the restroom with the door closed.

While I realize this may be a dream come true to some readers, all I remember was feeling so uncomfortable and embarrassed. My cheeks were hot and my head sweat as I kept on deflecting her advances as best I could. My friend later told me to beware how possessive a girl like Lauren could be physically especially in front of other girls.

Two days before Christmas, my family, Lauren, and I went to a showing of "It's A Wonderful Life," my favorite film of all time, in Los Angeles. It began as a wonderful night, as to be expected, and I bawled by the end of the

film.

After I had dropped off my family back at home, it was time to take Lauren back to her house.

Almost as soon as we left my home, Lauren began making advances on me as I drove. I froze up. I began to stutter. I could not find a way to say, "No."

By the end of the drive, a pit developed in my chest, and my mouth dried up from trying to find a way to speak. My fists clenched and unclenched on the wheel, and I was bawling once again as soon as we got to her house.

She immediately stopped, and we talked briefly about what happened, about what I was feeling, about what she was feeling.

Our conversation advanced to other things like general feelings we had for each other, about how we were essentially dating at that point, and that it made sense for us to have a physical relationship because we had grown so close already. I felt a switch had turned on inside of me, and at around four in the morning, we kissed. It quickly advanced, and although we did not have sex, months of pent up sexual tension was unleashed.

So began our physical relationship. It began as intense, uncomfortable, inappropriate pressure, and continued despite us both knowing it was wrong. We continued to attend meetings.

All the while, I felt tremendous guilt about what we were doing and how it began.

By the end of winter break, we agreed to stop physically acting out, but the damage had already been done.

By the start of January, I began to feel terrible about myself. The stories Lauren had told me about her past sexual relationships began to haunt me.

I stopped being able to focus in class, instead being constantly reminded of feelings of sexual

insecurity and discomfort with my own body.

Both Lauren and I thought it would pass, that our feelings for each other would surpass my own negative feelings, but it did not. As the year advanced, the stories in my head grew worse. She had been incredibly detailed about her previous sexual liaisons.

I began to throw up after meals, grew uncomfortable with her touching me in any way at times, hated looking at myself in the mirror, and all the while continued to value her above all else - especially myself.

I refused to tell my friends and family about what was going on, wishing to instead protect Lauren's identity and our relationship.

Despite my deteriorating mental state, we became boyfriend and girlfriend in March, and still, nothing was getting better.

I was fooling myself in making things official, and Lauren felt impotent in finding any way to help me. In early April, I began hurting myself by cutting. In a way, it was the exact solution that I had been looking for. Because of the pain, I could not think about anything else, including the stories and feelings of inadequacy that haunted me.

I used a blade from a cheap razor I had bought and lashed at first my upper thighs and then advanced to my chest. Whenever someone said something, or I saw something that triggered me, I would excuse myself to the restroom and slash at my skin.

Generally, no one would notice if I limped back, winced as I sat down, or saw the blood stains in my jeans and t-shirt aside from Lauren. She quickly realized what was going on, but could not do anything.

By the middle/end of April, things had grown out of control, and still, my friends and family had no idea what was going on. I

made euphemistic suggestions to Lauren about killing myself, and she pleaded with me not to do it.

I think she feared how people would view her and her part in my mental state, so she told only her therapist about what I was telling her.

When I told my counselor, he asked if we could make a contract saying that I would not cut until the next time we saw each other, and I refused. So instead, he recommended a 51/50 where I would voluntarily enter the hospital and stay there on a 72-hour hold.

I remember calling my mother before I left the counseling center for the hospital. I remember the coolness of her voice and how she had so many questions.

She was away on business in Chicago at the time, and I could hear the distance even over the phone. Once we were off the phone, she immediately called my sisters and told them what was going to happen. Before I left, I had one run-in with Lauren who my mother had called after my sisters. I found myself apologizing to Lauren for not telling her what was going on, apologizing for my own mental health when I had no reason to do so.

My mother had bombarded her with questions, and Lauren let her in on months-long issues I had been dealing with and had not been brave enough to tell anyone. We left each other's company on what I thought was good terms, but I could not help wishing that I would never see her again.

The first hospital I went to was terrifying and uncomfortable. I undressed and put on a papery hospital gown and sweat through my deodorant. I had brought two books and had to read them for

about six hours until a doctor could finally see me. I sat in a hallway for much of that time, watching the people pass, and realizing that many of my hallway-mates were going through similar things as me.

After about an hour into the experience, my sisters came to visit me, one at a time.

We cried together, and I showed them my scars. We talked about why I was there, and I could see their faces grow rigid at the mention of Lauren.

The next morning, I was strapped down to a hospital gurney and greeted by Lauren as I was wheeled into an ambulance. Our conversation was short, and I thought we both had tears in our eyes.

The drive to the mental facility that I would be at for the rest of my extended vacation was also brief. There, I would spend many hours in bed, staring at the blank walls, making friends with fellow patients, watching comic book movies during movie time, coloring inside the lines, reading, journaling, going to group therapy sessions, gagging at the food, answering phone calls from friends (mostly Lauren) and family, and visiting with Lauren and my parents during visiting hours.

I was kept an extra two days because of the seriousness of the cuts, but once I did get out, I felt free for a while.

On the first day of my release, the sun was not out, but the wind from the rolled down car window was enough of the freedom I so longed to feel again. I did not talk much with my mother in the car on the way home nor did I talk much with anyone about the hospital.

It seemed I had learned little from my experience. Of course, I had lost the taste for hurting or killing myself for a while, but I still felt closed off, and I decided to stay with Lauren. It was not until months later in July that I finally broke up with her. The feelings that I had felt right before the hospital were beginning to arise again, and I finally decided to take the final step to get clean.

It was certainly hard. It was quite nearly the hardest thing I had to do to break up with someone I had grown so twistedly in love with and I felt so much affection for. However, I am here to tell you that it is possible. Forget your own stubborn will, and go with the will of God (whatever that word means to you). Believe in something stronger than you, and you yourself will become stronger. I still think about Lauren nearly every day, but I no longer feel the need to cut or take my life. I do not believe she was a bad person, but I think we were both foolish to think we could make it work after things had become so dark.

I plead with you to tell people close to you of your struggles. When you begin to hide certain aspects of another person, you have to ask yourself what you're hiding and why. Don't let yourself be consumed by your own self-doubt and insecurities. It may take blood and tears to make you believe that you are worth so much more than your problems, but it should not. If you are reading this, do not give up hope. Your bottom is not the end, and there is always hope to find.

— **Dominick C.**

Romantic Fantasy Addiction Led to Hospitalization



I was hospitalized on the psychiatric floor of a local hospital from Dec. 6 to Dec. 13, 2013 because of my romantic fantasy addiction.

I had held out as long as I could: I entered withdrawal on Aug. 27, 2011 during an O.A. retreat. I soldiered on through the hardest 2-1/2-years of my life in withdrawal from 10 years of solid romantic fantasy addiction. (Actually, the addiction, in a much-lessened state, was active for many years beyond the decade of heavy fantasizing — when I literally *lived* on the planet

“Fantasy.”)

During my withdrawal there was a catch in my throat the entire time, and the repressed grief localized in my stomach like a snake curled up there.

But the emotions caught up with me (I guess they always do.) My strength petered out and thoughts of suicide began to appear more and more frequently. I remember a reading in a daily meditation book for sex addicts that talked about dark thoughts like these. I read it for comfort but was starting to realize that my strength was faltering.

My psychiatrist and I went around and around about whether I should be hospitalized during a visit to her. I hesitated (Who *wants* to be hospitalized?) I finally decided, haltingly, that it would be the wisest course. My mother drove me to the hospital; and I started to cry hysterically (all that repressed grief came up) when I talked to the intake clerk. He asked, of course, whether I was suicidal, and I answered, “Yes.”

The crying continued for another hour or so after I was placed in a room with another

patient while I waited for a bed. I was put on suicide watch – an armed security guard watched me as I cried. A social worker interviewed me, and I tried to explain that I was a romantic fantasy addict, wondering if the psychological community will ever understand the multiplicity of addictions.

After a time, a bed became available and I went up to the psychiatric floor, where the same social worker talked with me about diaphragmatic breathing as an antidote. I was blessedly “cried out” and gave peaceful sobs of relief after crying so long and letting out all the emotion that had been pent up inside me.

I had never been in the psychiatric ward before. When I was 10, my mother had screamed at me one painful night that maybe I belonged there. A destiny foretold? Maybe.

The psych ward is a very sad place. It seemed to me that everyone there was dealing with loss of some kind. One woman had lost her kids to her physician-husband. Another had lost an abusive lover whom she grieved. One former postal worker had lost his brother.

We gathered at meal times, with the question hanging silently in the air among us: Why are you here? How did you get here? I thought maybe I could find a friend on the floor, but everyone was pretty much sad and unreachable. The second question

that hovered among us was when are you getting out?

There was very little psychological support on the floor. We had an exercise therapist early in the day who had us do side bends together. One day a woman brought in a therapy dog for us. Unsmiling men would deliver Communion to us (it was a Catholic hospital.) One of them shared that after a tour in Vietnam, he had had a similar stay. I remember seizing on the fact that Vietnam was a long time ago and he was obviously okay now.

The days passed slowly. After meals, the patients would often retreat to their rooms, lost in their own sad worlds.

I did have one unfortunate run-in with an unsympathetic nurse on the floor. One night, the dinner menu said the entrée was cod. It turned out to be tilapia, to which I am violently allergic. Shortly after, I dove for my bed because the room was spinning. Then, I lost control of my bowels.

The night nurse erupted, berating me and saying that I would have to clean it up because there was no one else to do it. I let loose myself with a stream of equally charged invective: wondering how she could be a nurse--of all things--when she was so clearly without compassion. I complained later to a supervisor, who to her credit, listened attentively as I outlined my complaints.

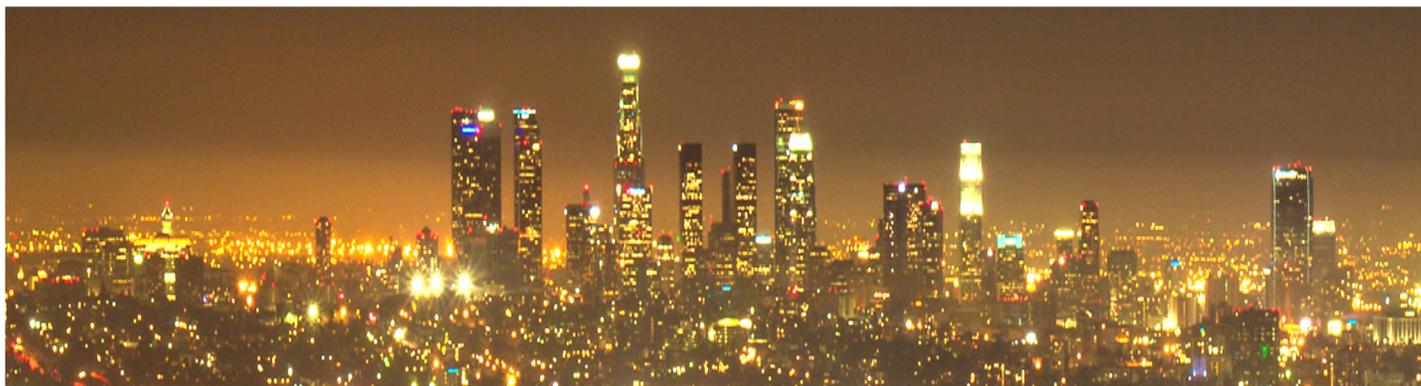
While a patient, I read recovery literature to stay somewhat afloat mentally. I wrote daily about the experience; and while I still have the pages, what strikes me now is how different my handwriting was from its normal style. Everything was cramped on the ward.

Three good friends from the S.L.A.A. rooms visited me. One from another fellowship, as well. The visits brightened the day and I appreciated the expression of love and care. In addition, I let an O.A. friend know that it was okay to let other members know of my whereabouts, and I received no less than 10 calls from concerned fellows. If there was a single thing that turned the tide for me, that may have been it.

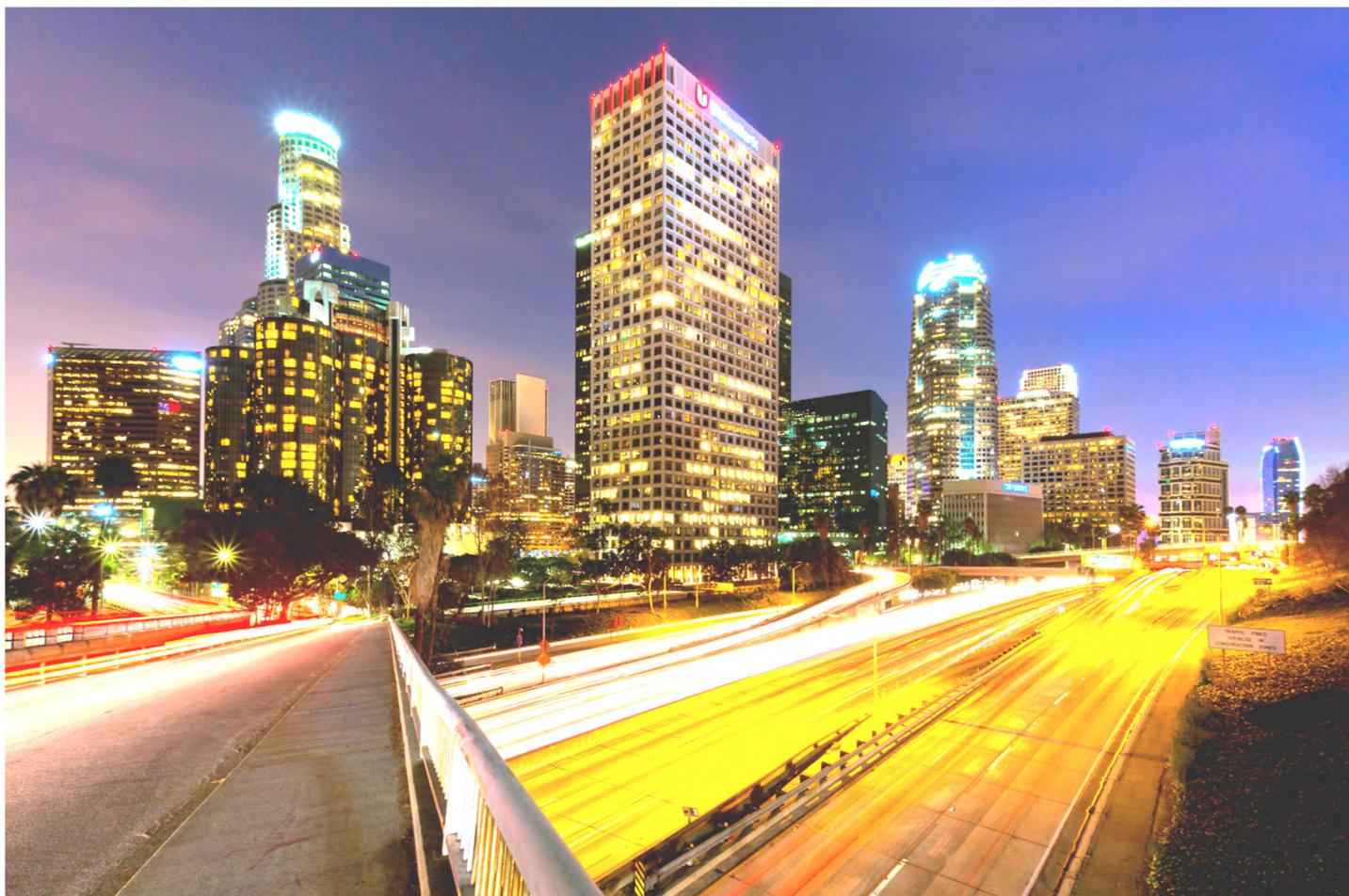
The stay on the psych floor proved to be a remedy. When I left after a week, I was no longer suicidal. My admitting psychiatrist had changed my meds and I don't know if this contributed. I sort of think that I cried myself out and was ready for the next phase of my life, post-heavy fantasy.

After that, things had somehow changed, become more manageable and positive. I continued to do many S.L.A.A. phone meetings and call my sponsor. At the end of the day, I think my Higher Power reached down into my heart and healed it and me.

— **Christina, NJ**



Real Sexual Liberation



2016 began with a frosty January stay in a White Plains psych ward, preceded by a young lifetime of enslavement to addiction that culminated in suicidal determination to escape the ubiquitous misery and mayhem.

What followed this initial hospitalization was an incessant revolving door of institutionalization.

Surrounded by suicide survivors, schizophrenics, and straitjacketed strangers, I felt oddly more at home than ever.

Beyond the relatability, I was attentively and wholly taken care of. Rejection of responsibility was a pervasive theme in my addiction - opting to rely on sugar daddies, efface my existential condition (condemned to be free, in Sartrean terms), and willingly forfeit my crushing autonomy to destructive masters, plugging the perceived pointlessness of my life with compulsive debauchery. As Viktor Frankl explained, seemingly describing my pattern, "When a person can't find a deep sense of meaning, they distract themselves with pleasure."

Professionally convinced that my drug dependence was the root of my suffering, I was sent on a trek around the country in and out of rehabs to appease doctors and family, repetitively relapsing.

In Tennessee, I was introduced to S.L.A.A., but at that point I was in denial about my sex and love addiction, certain my constant escapades were a product of methamphetamine induced libidinous stimulation, and I was vehemently opposed to 12 Step models of recovery due to my atheist, intellectually elitist convictions.

Smart as I thought I was, I failed to realize then that my sexual habits acquainted me with crystal meth in the first place.

My amalgam of addictive manifestations progressed despite intervention until I was arrested and jailed in Manhattan. While I wasn't charged for a sex crime, my arson felony was a direct result of deranged disease behavior and abusive entanglement.

Facing five years in male state prison, I, a transsexual woman, was scared into my longest stint of residential treatment in a state I despised, Florida.

Through chemical sobriety, intense therapy, and desperation, I intrepidly sifted through a colossal shame complex that forced me to face the reality of my sex and love addiction, which had been the longest sustained demon that possessed me, stemming back to practically my earliest memories, long before I ever picked up a substance or self-mutilated.

Finally, open-minded and willing enough, I started attending S.L.A.A. meetings that were held at my treatment center, instantly loved the intimate and safe environment of the Fellowship, and avidly studied the enlightening literature.

I felt more invited and belonging in that circle than any other 12 Step group (the preamble, which explicitly expresses inclusion of all gender identities, was further reassurance.)

I also experienced a firmer connection to the process, gaining a more profound and personally nuanced understanding of my malady.

My first meeting was excruciating, as wounds inevitably surfaced, but I was reminded that

the traumas that never heal are the ones I refuse to see. Where once there was a bottomless, nihilistic void in the deepest stratum of my being, a spiritual germ was planted, and I glimpsed a better prospect.

In typical fashion, disregarding the potential consequences, I emotionally and sexually relapsed when I was transferred to an IOP housing facility. This acting out eventually led to crystal relapse, exacerbating my sexual insanity, but with the taste of an alternative path still fresh, it wasn't long before I was back in treatment. Plus, my introduction to S.L.A.A. sobriety ruined my carnal binge, as I couldn't successfully suppress

My first meeting was excruciating, as wounds inevitably surfaced, but I was reminded that the traumas that never heal are the ones I refuse to see.

what was revealed to me and my acting out just wasn't the same.

Suddenly the shallow waste was glaringly apparent, and getting a "high" like the old days was but a dream. I'm now living in a halfway house and making it to every S.L.A.A. meeting available in the area, finally surrendering to the program, committing to abstain from my bottom-line

inclinations and to endure withdrawal.

It has been arduous, but the pain has birthed a true chance for legitimate freedom. It has been the genesis of an authentic, loving relationship with myself, who I've been seeking to avoid for so long, full of discovery and remedy. It has given me the opportunity, for the first time in my life, to cultivate genuine platonic friendships and enhance family bonds. It has afforded me the precious gift of a spiritual resurgence and dedicated Buddhist practice. Time and reservoirs of energy I previously squandered on obsessive copulating, fantasizing, and plotting have been productively redirected to creative and rewarding outlets.

With the aid of the S.L.A.A. program and fellowship, I have accountability, support, insight, and camaraderie through the unknown, unfamiliar successes and hurdles of recovery. Where once I resented my own humanity, cursed the future, and saw nothing but bleak despair on the horizon, today I live in the present with serenity and optimism, knowing that I am still just at the beginning of an exciting, lifelong journey.

I have also been blessed, through right action, to dodge incarceration thus far, and hospitals for that matter. More significant, however, is my increasing deliverance from the self-imposed shackles of sex and love addiction, and constant growth in the responsible liberty of sobriety and internal fulfillment of recovery.

— Sadie Rae M., Florida

Given the Gift of a Serious Awakening



My name is Rich, and I am a grateful recovering sex and love addict. I am also a convicted felon, and a registered sex offender.

I learned early on in my recovery that addiction, no matter the type, will lead me to at least one of three places: prison, insanity, or death.

As I was reading through Issue #169 regarding S.L.A.A. and Mental Illness, it was a reminder to me about not only my bipolar disorder (insanity), but also about the reason(s) I came into recovery.

I was arrested January 31,

2006 in an internet sting, and I have shared that this may have been one of the best days of my life. I had been acting out in my addictions (I am also a compulsive gambler) for the better part of 15 years, and I could not stop. I made myself countless promises that I was going to stop “Tomorrow.”

But by the time tomorrow came around, it was today, and I couldn’t stop today. Sitting in the holding cell, I had an awakening to the fact that I had a problem, and a serious one at that.

I was at the point where I had to make some decisions regarding my life. I thought that night that

my life was over. I would never see my kids. I would never find another job. My professional license would be gone forever, and I would be homeless, if not in jail for an extremely long time.

And I also felt that I deserved every single one of those things. But I still needed to change, regardless if those things happened or not. I wanted a better way of life, and I was willing to do anything to find it.

At the time of my arrest, we (my ex-wife, 4 kids, and cat) were living at her parents’ house because we were renovating ours. We had ripped off the second floor

and put on a second and third floor. The house was basically studs, no running water, extremely limited electricity, and a wood stove.

That is where I lived for the next 8 months, from February until September. Again, this is one of the best things that happened to me, as it was a reminder of where I was headed if I made the decision to go back out again.

The day after I was bailed out, one of the first things I did was go to the library to look for help. I found a book on sex addiction by a leading counselor in the field of sexual addiction and immersed myself in it. I also went through the phone book and found a number for Gamblers Anonymous.

I went to my first GA meeting that Friday, and as I finished the book, found contact information for different Twelve Step Fellowships listed in the appendix. At the time, the Fellowship-Wide Services office was still located in the Boston area, getting ready to move to their current location in San Antonio.

Someone was kind enough to answer, and informed me of all the S.L.A.A. meetings in my area, including one that night.

I was desperate and I went, and through the Grace of my Higher Power, one other person showed up at that meeting that night, informing me that they didn't usually come, but they felt they needed a meeting. Another reminder to me, that when I feel that I don't need a meeting, or don't feel like going, I should show up, because I may be the only face that a newcomer sees, and provide them the hope that the program does work.

When my case was elevated to the Superior Court system, my 72 counts in District Court were reduced to 12 counts in Superior

Court. The process seemed extremely long and drawn out, but I had a friend who continued to say that "Justice delayed is victory," as I became less important within the system.

Finally, approximately a year later, my attorney said that it was time to change my plea to guilty.

I had been attending meetings since that first week, and on the advice of my attorney had been keeping a log of them, having someone in the meetings sign my book every time I went. At the time of my pleas, I was averaging seven meetings a week. Trust me, I was sick.

Talk about fear. My kids still did not know that I had been arrested, though my older 2 knew something was going on.

That day when I changed my plea, I thought it was over. However, the prosecutor wanted me sentenced to 10 years, and we were looking for probation. The judge in the case held over my sentence, and requested that additional testing be done to determine my risk and assess a sentence.

I continued attending meetings. I had transitioned from individual therapy to group therapy.

I was seeing my psychiatrist every 3-4 months for continued treatment and monitoring of my bipolar disorder, which was stable by this time. I feel that the combination of medication and sobriety helped to stabilize the insanity in my mind.

Finally, sentencing day came, and the night before, I attended a meeting. Before I walked into the meeting however, I did one of the hardest things I think I had ever done.

I spoke to my two oldest children who were almost 12 and 10, and told them that there was a possibility I was going to jail, and it could be for a very long time.

I can tell you that just typing that brings tears to my eyes for the pain that I had put them through.

That morning my attorney continued to argue about the importance of me continuing treatment outside of the jail system and being able to help support my family. The prosecutor, despite all of the evidence of my testing done by my therapist group and by the independent therapist, continued to push for me to be sentenced to 10 years in prison.

In the end, the judge issued me a sentence of 18 months, of which I had to serve 90 days in the local county house of correction. I also received 10 years of probation after I was released, which included continued attendance at meetings. I had 8 people from my meetings, as well as my wife there in the courtroom to support me.

I had letters from the people in the meetings that were presented as support for the work that I was doing. I had written a letter, as had my wife.

I worked hard during the time I was going through this, and the judge was able to see all of the work that I had done.

But I had done some terrible, terrible things, and I did deserve to go away, and it is another thing I am grateful for.

Jail showed me a lot, and there were a lot of offenders in the system.

I was placed in protective custody, and for the first 2 months of my stay, I was in a 23-hour lockdown. I kept my head down and stayed out of trouble.

On my birthday, I was moved to the open PC unit, allowing me more freedom. The miracle of the 85 days I was in (I received 5 days credit for good time) was that I had 6 people visit me, had the opportunity to speak with 8 others on the phone, and received

mail from another 15 people in recovery.

My time in programs touched 29 people to reach out to me while I was away. There were people there who received no mail the entire time I was there, and probably never received mail.

When I was finally released, my sponsor and another addict picked me up at the jail and drove me the hour and a half back to my wife's parents' house, so that I could get my car.

My boss at the time welcomed me back, and we had a sit down regarding everything that had transpired, because he did not know that I was facing any sort of charges.

We reviewed my conditions and he was willing to work with them. This summer I completed

my probation and I am a "free" man.

I am still a registered offender, and that is the next item on my list of things to do.

I was allowed to keep my professional license on a probationary basis until my probation was completed, and now have full access to that.

The miracles continue to happen in my life.

Though I am divorced, I have an excellent relationship with my ex-wife and her family, and an excellent relationship with my kids, whom I see almost daily. My professional life is taking off, and as I am typing this, I am having a lease reviewed for me to get my own workspace.

I have serenity and peace of mind because of these programs

and the work that I have been willing to do. I have been to prison, I have been insane, and I will die an addict.

But when that day occurs, I pray that I may still be recovering, clean, and sober. I know that will be the case as long as I continue to put the effort in and continue to use the tools that are placed before me.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story, and I hope that something within it gives you the hope to continue your recovery, no matter the circumstances that you are facing. I learned that I don't need to be behind bars to be in prison, nor does being in prison mean that I am limited in my freedom from making decisions.

— **Rich K., Worcester, MA**

Program Helps Me Stay Out of the Hospital

Although I have a long history of clinical depression, my sex and love addiction contributed to being hospitalized many times in locked psych wards.

Three of these times, I was held on a 51/50 (involuntarily confinement of a person suspected to have a mental disorder that makes them a danger to themselves, a danger to others, and/or gravely disabled) and was taken by ambulance to the emergency room.

Sometimes I was in the hospital for a 72-hour hold, other times it was up to two weeks. I once spent 2 days strapped down in the ICU because the doctors thought I had damaged my heart after taking an overdose. I was a

danger to myself.

I remember once, I was trying to work up the courage to slit my wrists after finding out one of my lovers was seeing another woman. Although I was seeing other men too (for the times when he was unavailable), he was the one I thought I wanted to be with. I made a call to him saying I was going to kill myself.

I heard sirens coming my way and believed he had called 911 to save me.

The sirens kept going in the wrong direction. I also remember a time on the psych ward making many desperate phone calls to men that I was involved with. I played the victim and begged them to come visit me. It didn't work.

My pattern of sex and love addiction includes becoming sexually involved with and emotionally attached to people who are unavailable.

This causes my addicted mind to twist reality. I begin to believe I can't live without a particular person. When that person inevitably lets me down, I spiral way down and do insane things. I sometimes had stalking behaviors and I would manipulate and lie to get my own way. That didn't work either.

The more I continued my pattern, the worse it became. Sex and love addiction is a progressive disease. My withdrawals and disappointments took on unrealistic (to say the least) qualities.

I felt empty and I retreated further into myself and away from people in my life that loved me. I didn't know how to nurture myself and had no skills to become self-reliant.

So that's what it was like. What happened is that a friend of mine became my facilitator into S.L.A.A. I had been crying to her yet again about my failure to be loved the way I wanted.

She asked me to meet her and somehow, I was willing and able to do that.

We talked for a long time and I was extremely resistant to the solution.

I decided to try S.L.A.A. because I was in so much pain and didn't have any ideas left on how to fix it myself. I had been doing the same thing for years and it was time to try something new. I was a wreck.

S.L.A.A. has taught me to value myself and not abandon myself for anything.

It is a spiritual program that has put me in touch with a Higher Power that will guide me. I don't have to continue in my pattern of

I decided to try S.L.A.A. because I was in so much pain and didn't have any ideas left on how to fix it myself. I had been doing the same thing for years and it was time to try something new.

addiction.

I don't have to seek to get my needs met through actions that are destructive.

I don't have to be emotionally dependent on anyone anymore. I am free of that bondage.

Through working the Steps, I learned how to find my part in situations that brought pain.

Inventoring my resentments and fears shows me that I have a responsibility to change my character if I want to recover. I become aware of my defects and I turn them over to my Higher Power. If I have hurt someone, I can make amends and keep my side of the street clean. I am no longer self destructive due to the tools I have learned in S.L.A.A.

I'm happy to report that I haven't had a psych ward stay in many years. S.L.A.A. is not a substitute for treatment of my mental illness.

I treat my clinical depression with medication. It's part of taking care of myself.

I treat my sex and love addiction through working the Steps and tools of S.L.A.A.

— Kim S., Huntington Beach, CA

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



Chasing the Highs of Romantic Obsession

I live with a rare, life-threatening autoimmune disease. I've been in and out of hospitals for over a decade, and receive infusions every two weeks of the most expensive drug in the world, costing my insurance over \$725,000 each year.

It started with an impulsive decision in college, driven by my sex and love addiction.

Soon after starting to date my third serious girlfriend, we learned that her younger sister had been diagnosed with cancer on the same day that my grandmother had been murdered.

This powerful coincidence of tragedy proved to me that we were "meant to be" and sparked my obsession, a pattern in all my romantic relationships that I now see was how I buried my underlying love anorexia.

In addition to chasing the highs of romantic obsession, I demanded intense intimacy and performed physically to drown my uneasy feelings.

That is why, when my girlfriend told me she had a cold sore and I might not want to kiss her on the mouth, I ignored it and proceeded to make out with her passionately.

That activity brought the herpes simplex virus into my throat, where I began to get outbreaks every winter after finals. With the raw sores in my throat, it was impossible to eat or drink anything without intense pain, which made healing very difficult.

My recovery would take 2-3 weeks each year, until I graduated and moved to New York City and took a restaurant job. I couldn't make rent if I took time off to heal, so the stress that year caused my

illness to stretch over five weeks.

In keeping with my addiction, I pushed myself too hard instead of asking for help or recognizing my body's needs. Doctors tell me that toward the end of those five weeks my immune system flipped into hyperdrive, and started attacking my own healthy tissue.

My immune system targeted my bone marrow, which dried up, and less than a year later my body was not producing enough blood cells for me to live on. I was diagnosed with Aplastic Anemia and told I had a 50% chance of dying within ten years. I was only 26 years old.

It would be seven more years before I would go to my first 12-Step meeting for sex addiction. While I tried extreme treatments for my autoimmune disease, flew across country for clinical trials, explored yoga and tai chi, and finally got on the expensive orphan drug that stabilized my condition—my sex and love addiction only escalated.

I used sexual prowess to prove I wasn't "that sick," and repeatedly got more hooked into partners than I wanted to. In between relationships, I tried to get the emotional dependency "out of my system" by having increasing numbers of flings.

I was out of control and no one (including myself) questioned my behavior; my emotional and spiritual disease served as an encouraging sign that my physical disease hadn't dominated my life.

After one partner left me 19 days before our wedding, and another I hoped to marry left me after realizing the extent of my fantasy life, I decided I needed

help. My path has been a combination of therapy, multiple 12-Step programs, and abstinence from all romance and physical intimacy for eight years. I learned that I crave unhealthy attention and have done a lot of work to tone down my drama and storytelling.

A great practice in that regard has been working the same job for seven years, yet never sharing about my illness at work (for fear of getting targeted and losing my health insurance). Staying on top of my medical bills and reimbursements is both a sobering practice, and a good measure of how sober I am. As my physical disease progresses, I get to practice acceptance of the real limitations in my life and finally break through the denial that my sex and love addiction helped perpetuate.

Today, as my health is unpredictable, I am learning to live one day at a time, and to surrender to this physical illness over which I am powerless. Without the rooms of S.L.A.A., I don't believe I would have found space in the world to sit with my problems, or to contemplate the patterns that destabilize my life and make healing impossible.

While my physical health is not great, I am finding a growing clarity and acceptance that encompasses the other problems and makes them okay.

Thank you to all the pioneers who make healing their priority and commit to living in a way that kept the door open for people like me to walk through.

— Andrew V, Seattle, WA

Share space

Too Many Years, Not Enough Days



It's an unfortunate fact of addiction that sometimes those who have long-term sobriety relapse.

When that happens, I have heard some say that the long-termer had too many years and not enough days.

As I get farther into double-digit recovery, I've been thinking about this phrase a lot. I take it to mean that perhaps the relapsed

long-termer assumed that because they had years of recovery, and perhaps a certain level of calmness, there was no longer a need to work hard at their recovery on a daily basis.

Another possibility is that the long-termer thought they were cured. Perhaps, with this much time, meetings weren't necessary, one could think. Plus, maybe no long-term members attend

meetings in their area, so perhaps that sets an example that meetings are not as necessary later in recovery.

Whatever the reason, I want to confirm to my Higher Power, to myself, and to another human being (all of you), that I don't want to have too many years and not enough days.

I don't want to take my recovery for granted. Nor do I

want to take any chances with it. My recovery is too precious. For those reasons, I want to continue to beg Higher Power in the morning for another day of sobriety and thank Higher Power at night. I want to continue to meditate and improve my conscious contact with Higher Power.

I want to continue to attend meetings and work with others. I also want to continue to learn about who I am.

What I don't want to do is give anyone the impression that I'm only doing the above because I'm afraid I'll act out and lose my

I don't want to take my recovery for granted. Nor do I want to take any chances with it. My recovery is too precious.

mind again.

There is a bit of that, but I have

to admit something I never thought would be the case. I actually get a lot of comfort by taking the above positive actions. I feel more at peace with myself and with the world. This is one of the reasons that I find our program so amazing – I never would have thought that by getting closer to Higher Power or being 100% dedicated to recovery, that I'd feel better and have more freedom, but that's ended up being the case.

Thank you S.L.A.A. and Higher Power for another day of sobriety.

— **Chris D.**

The Old Game of Not Accepting Myself

Five years ago, as a 54-year-old gay man, I came to such a state of despair and emptiness that I discovered my old ways of having anonymous sex were emotionally painful and spiritually devoid of real meaning.

The old game of not accepting myself (including my sexuality) and having fleeting and sometimes potentially dangerous sexual encounters with other men no longer medicated the guilt, shame and anger I'd stuffed all my

life. I felt unworthy of love and self-acceptance. I had already been sober 8 years in A.A., N.A. and CoDA when I took a chance and went to my first S.L.A.A. meeting. I expected to find monstrous, despairing perverts like myself there who hated themselves.

Instead, the wisdom and unconditional love and fellowship in the rooms supported me to, in time, truly admit that I was powerless over sex and love

addiction – that my life had become unmanageable.

Instead of looking for sex partners who'd supposedly give me the love I never had from my parents (especially my abusive, alcoholic mother who had been declared unfit to have legal custody of me when I was 10), I learned to try to find that love from within me and from my Higher Power.

— **Anonymous**

Self Will vs. Surrender

When I try to forcefully remove a character defect, it doesn't feel natural or easy. It's like dieting to lose weight.

I feel deprived and resentful. I'm trying to control the process for a specific result I have in my mind. When it doesn't work the

way I planned, I feel let down. When I surrender a defect to God, all I have to do is pray and then act as if it has been removed. I have no previous notions about how it is supposed to look. If the defect comes up again, I just pray again and turn my mind towards other things.

I don't dwell on it. This practice of awareness and letting go is the heart of self acceptance. I can have faith that the character defect will be removed in my higher power's time. I can be the human and God can be the higher power.

— **Kim S., Huntington Beach, CA**

How I Found God- (The God of My Understanding)

I began my S.L.A.A. program in July of 2016, and climbing the steps has been a slow-going process.

Overachiever that I am, I began Step 1- “We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction...” in my first month. K, my newly-found sponsor offered me what sounded like a simple list-making exercise: “For each Characteristic [of Sex and Love Addicts] write down an example of how your life was unmanageable in that regard. For example, *“Became emotionally attached to people without knowing them”* was evidenced by *“I often felt I loved someone after one or two sexual liaisons”*.”

Believing that I was a “fast-tracker” (after all hadn’t I already put my initially furious denial and blame of others behind me?), I dove in, eager to expose, dissect, and hopefully learn from my past mistakes.

With new convert zeal I sprinted into the exercise of documenting my unmanageability into rows and columns. I diligently cataloged my addictive infractions, the “payoffs” (good or bad rewards) I received and how those acts resulted in injury to myself and others.

The first thing I learned was that recovery is not a race. Full commitment to the exercise required time for reflection, clarity, and reliving the emotional impact of my behavior. That took 5 months.

By the time K presented me with my Step 1 chip, the hugs, tears and applause had been

earnestly achieved.

So, Step 1 was complete, and I had momentum going at last. I set my sights on Step 2: “We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” My overachiever voice spoke with renewed hyper-optimism: “OK, you got this one! All you have to do is say ‘...of course I believe this’, and then move on, right? Do that and Step 3 comes right behind it... Easy!”

That was over a year ago.

I suppose the good news is that a new voice was born out of my rigorous (albeit unexpected) effort to conscientiously complete Step 1.

This must be my burgeoning voice of integrity. It demands an honest answer and isn’t satisfied with any shortcuts to the truth. Like the stern math teacher who wants to see your work. “Tell me again, how did you arrive at that conclusion?”

As someone who has resorted to many shortcuts in life, I’m grateful for this new voice. It belongs to a part of me that cares about my choices. It’s there to remind me about my higher purpose, and it is protective and unconditionally loving.

“You can’t say you believe in a Higher Power just to finish Step 2,” the voice insisted. “You really have to believe it!”

Hence I was very stuck. Believing that a Higher Power can restore me requires a deep capacity to trust some metaphysical force with my well-being.

Simply said, I don’t trust

anyone with my well-being; that’s how I became an addict to begin with*.

(*Generally speaking, psychologists, addiction theorists and treatment professionals agree that early trust issues triggered by dysfunctional bonding with caretakers are often the core driver of sex and love addiction.)

What I came to believe instead, is that nobody can be trusted and that it’s up to me to fulfill my needs... in any way I can.

Reflecting on my history of love avoidance and the unmanageability it precipitated, helped me realize that I have been navigating life using an emotional map entitled, *“The top one million beings I refuse to trust.”*

For brevity’s sake here are the top five beings I refuse to trust:

5- My teachers

4- My family

3- My lovers

2- God

1- Myself

Bottom line (and I shared this with K during a phone call) — I didn’t believe I could hand my life over, period.

“So... maybe the recovery road ends here then,” I muttered.

“I see,” K said thoughtfully, and the thoughtful pause became unnerving.

“I mean,” I continued, saying anything to end the silence, “I believe in the notion of a Higher Power. You know, metaphysically.” Silence. “I have been exploring this for a while now. I can embrace a lot of ideas, Hindu energy flow, Zen detachment, Christian love.”

K is a person of great faith with a lifetime of committed spiritual practice. The power of her belief — her trust in a Higher Power — is a crucial source of strength and wisdom. I'd like to think that she was communing with that source as my verbal water treading escalated.

"What about the miracles in your life, Beth?"

"Yeah, Beth, what about the miracles?" challenged my voice of integrity.

Like a railyard switch, this question redirected the forward momentum of my intellectual blathering onto a new track. My speeding mental locomotive lost power, slowing to a stop at the mouth of a dark, bewildering tunnel. No longer able to flee or distract, the truths I had been avoiding caught up with me.

"You were just telling me about how thankful you are for your new job," K continued. "Your new house, breakthroughs in your marriage, your son voluntarily calling you. And that's just the last couple of months. Did you create all that on your own?"

"No, child," graced my inner voice, "You *were* guided."

"I was guided," I gasped, as sudden sobbing erupted.

"Yes," comforted K, "I believe you were, Beth. However you want to describe that loving force. It's yours to name." I remained emotionally overcome with reverence and gratitude for an interminable period.

"Yes, I see," I eventually said as a lifetime of remembered joys and traumas flashed by. "I have ALWAYS been guided...." More emotional outpouring. "... God of

my understanding, huh?"

She let my words linger. K's silence, previously unnerving, was now a source of comfort. She had led me to a profound awakening, and her quiet witness deepened its profundity.

"Yes," she agreed at last, "That's a wise way to frame it, and when you're ready to consciously trust the God of your understanding, you'll be ready to begin Step 3 — turn your will and life over to it."

She couldn't see me shaking my head with heartfelt agreement when my inner voice spoke more.

"Precious child, you already have."

Then we sat together in silence, allowing the moment to linger.

— Beth

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Evidence of Powerlessness



This disease is certainly “cunning, baffling and powerful,” and my powerlessness over it, if not collusion with it, is evident on a continual basis.

My most recent experience of this was, what appeared on the surface, to be an innocent, harmless bit of “noble” behavior – I should always be suspicious of anything that feels like “noble,” aka: heroic or snooty behavior on my part.

My ex, with whom I am actually only taking a six-month break for the purpose of clarity, one way or the other called to say she had received a package for me at her house. I was 99% sure what it was, and rather than simply say, “Thanks for letting me know – how about forwarding it to me?”

which, where I live would take about a day, I said, “Wow, well you shouldn’t have to deliver it to me and I really want it, so how about if I come by and get it?”

She said “sure” and told me when she’d be there, and I popped over to get it. She invited me in, I said “sure,” and the next thing you know, we’re sitting on her couch together having a conversation.

The scary thing for me is that the idea of asking her to forward the package to me never even occurred to me until four days after the experience!

While, thankfully, I didn’t act out sexually with her at her house, the visit triggered feelings in me that, within a few hours, led to a loss of abstinence in another addiction recovery.

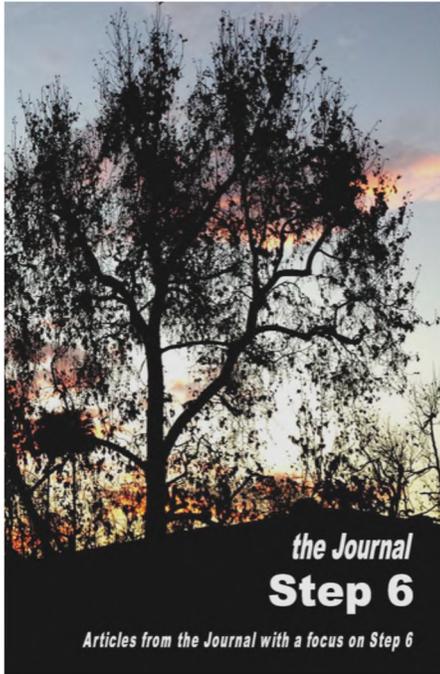
I made numerous phone calls,

including to my sponsor in each of the two programs involved, between the time she and I met and the time I acted out in the other addiction and got on my knees and asked for help and guidance and none of these steps, under the circumstance, were enough to prevent the addictive behavior.

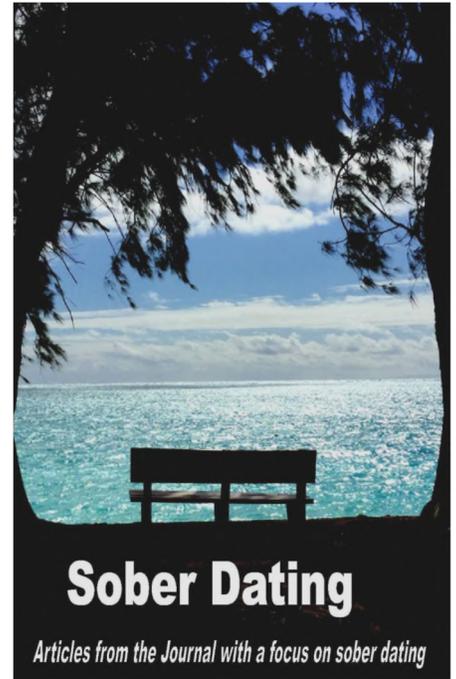
Powerless over my sex and love addiction. It is cunning, baffling and powerful.

Hopefully, in the future, I will have the sense – and the willingness to call my sponsor and/or get on my knees and ask for guidance before responding to any such situation where my ex or other potentially triggering people or circumstances may be involved.

— **Anonymous**



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