

The background of the cover is a photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there is a dense field of purple and white flowers, likely verbena, growing in sandy soil. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The plants have green leaves and dark stems. In the background, there are rolling hills under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

the Journal

Issue # 171

Single Issue \$4

The 11th Step

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,

Step 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.

The stories and answers to the question of day in this issue show the power of this Step. Thank you for the many wonderful contributions to this issue. I really enjoyed reading them!

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 Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. 1550 NE Loop 410, Suite 118 San Antonio, TX 78209, 1-210-828-7900 Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT except for holidays (fax) 1-210-828-7922. www.slaafws.org

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

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Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

“Please share your experience of practicing the 11th Step and/or any prayers or practices of meditation that you have found helpful.”

Worship on a daily basis and prayer in the a.m. — it’s kind of a religious thing, but it’s the way I feel connected. Worship has always been my safe place, my sacred place — the place where I feel sunshine and warmth. One of the greatest moments of my life happened on a mission, with the sisters, praying in the early hours of the morning. In stillness, in quiet, is where I find love. I came to the garden. It’s my sacred place. My car becomes this for me each day. A space for just me and my Higher Power, chatting and singing to start off my day.

I have to remember to continue through the day too. I find that prayer does not have to be done in a loud voice or super spiritual way. It is just a conversation with my best friend and closest companion. It’s the way I have been able to climb out of dark places.

— **Megan W., Sacramento**

Staying close to God through prayer and meditation is critical for me as a recovering addict. My sobriety depends on my relationship with God. I can talk and listen to God through quiet times, prayer, writing, literature, and pray only for knowledge of His will for me and power to carry that out. God’s will for me is to be sober and I tap into the power to do that through these quiet times.

— **Mandy**

I have not officially taken the 11th step with my sponsor but I do practice it since I have been through the 12 Steps in other fellowships. I currently am taking my 3rd Step in the S.L.A.A. Fellowship.

What I have been doing is a “feelings” guided meditation. I tend to be more of a holistic person so I use essential oils therapeutically while listening to meditative music or guided meditations on YouTube. I will invite my Higher Power into the meditation through deep inhalations. I tend to thank God for all my blessings and those that may go unnoticed. I admit my powerlessness over sex and love addiction. When I practice doing this, it is interesting how my day sometimes goes a little smoother. I ask God how I can be of service to others. I thank him for my experiences and ask for guidance. I usually do a lot of guided affirmations. I think I want to practice breathing and listening more. I am thankful for the gift of slowing down and connecting.

— **Anonymous, Sacramento, California**

I say prayers from the A.A. Big Book on my knees. I use meditation twenty-four hours a day in S.L.A.A.

— **Anthony P., Chicago**

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “Please share your experience of practicing the 11th Step and/or any prayers or practices of meditation that you have found helpful.” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #172 — Forgiveness — “How have you learned to forgive? Please share any special stories of forgiveness.” The deadline for submissions is March 15, 2018. And #173 — July/August — ABM Issue** Healthy sex: “What has your journey been like towards a healthy sex life? And/or how do you maintain a healthy sex life in sobriety?” The deadline for submissions is May 15, 2018.

For many years I could not quiet my mind. When I first came to 12-Step programs, I had a difficult time with meditation because I was not able to stay in the moment and I had expectations of perfection. I couldn't do it perfectly and felt shame and inadequacy. One of my friends in fellowship told me that “Praying is when we talk to God and meditating is when we listen to God.” I would meditate, listen and be still, for one minute at a time and praise myself after each mini session. Then, like when I was working the 3rd Step, I learned about having a partnership with my Higher Power and that the relationship could go both ways. So I took that into my meditation time and turned it into more of a communication time. I would add a minute of prayer before my minute of meditation so then I was doing 2 minutes. I eventually added more time to both. Now I do five minutes every day. I begin with prayer and end with prayer. I have really benefited from memorizing prayers and I recite them in times of need. My favorites are the full version of the Serenity Prayer, the Third Step Prayer and the Prayer of Saint Francis.

— **Nora, Orange County**

As someone who practices a specific faith, I believe prayer and meditation may be different for me than for others. For me, meditation is thinking about the spiritual literature that I've read, and praying to my God about it. How can I apply this to my life? By praying “Please, help me to carry out your will as revealed in meditation today.

— **Anonymous**

My daily practice of the 11th Step includes starting the day on my knees, asking my Higher Power to help me to be of service. Meditation: I like to get centered by quieting my mind and praying for guidance. I like using mantras too, like, “I trust my Higher Power.”

— **Lindsey, West Palm Beach**

One prayer, or blessing, I try to use every day is when I feel anger arise toward another human being, whether I know that person or not. For instance, when some driver cuts me off on the freeway, or some customer service person is less than helpful, and I feel anger coming up, I try to remember to offer them the following blessing:

May you be free of suffering and the causes of suffering.

May you live in peace.

I find this practice particularly helpful and appropriate, since I've come to realize that people hurt others from a place of their own suffering, just as I hurt others, especially before I went into recovery, because I was suffering.

Saying this blessing interrupts the feelings of anger and replaces them with compassion — or at least that is the goal. The more compassion I can generate towards others, the more I can generate and offer to myself for past failings and the shortcomings I continue to work on. I also try to use this blessing when I find myself judging people. Again, I try to replace my critical, judging voice with a voice of compassion, and understanding that we all struggle and we all suffer. I have been amazed by the power of this simple practice in keeping me more calm and peaceful throughout my day.

Author's note: this practice derives from the Tibetan Buddhist practice of Tonglen. Additional info about this practice can be found online.

— **Mark, Sacramento**

Question of the Day

I'll be honest. Prayer and meditation are practices that I don't do often enough. All my life I have been used to living in a state of hyper-vigilance bordering on mania. It's very easy to allow myself to get so caught up in the daily "micro-dramas" that I forget to take the time to re-center and reconnect with myself and my Higher Power. When I have remembered to take the time and do it, actually do it, not just think about it, it has been very beneficial. Meditation helps me to get out of my head, disconnect from the events around me and really get connected back with myself and my Higher Power.

When I was racing full time, I would meditate while sitting in my car getting ready to go on the track. I found it helpful to quit my mind from all the worries about what has been done, what needs to be done and to visualize my performance. To say it succinctly, it helps me to be in the moment—nowhere else but the here and now. On a more day-to-day basis, taking the time to meditate has allowed me greater clarity and the ability to handle situations better and act from a state of serenity instead of reacting from a state of impulsivity.

Prayer has also had the benefit of allowing me to express my concerns and the simple practice of saying them out loud has left me with the feeling of being covered by a blanket of peace.

You would think that with all the benefits of prayer and meditation that I would do it more often. Even with all the benefits that I have experienced, with really no downside, I still have to force myself to take the time. It's too easy to keep living in the manic, reactive manner that I've lived in for so long. Recovery is something that takes practice and the practice of meditation and prayer are the best ways that I've found to stay connected to myself, my Higher Power and my recovery.

— **Doug H. Sacramento, CA**

Remembering to pray before activities or during the day is really helpful.

— **Alex, London**

Meditation has been a tremendous help in remaining centered and keeping my sobriety. I started going to heartfulness meditation weekly and it has become an integral part of my life and a definite top line. The more you do it, the more you can go there when needed.

My favorite prayers are the Serenity Prayer and the Set Aside prayer. If I am struggling, I use them and they never have let me down. The Serenity Prayer reminds me what is mine and the Set Aside prayer opens me up for the answer from my heart or from outside myself.

— **Ann**

Practicing prayer and centering to start my day helps me enter and proceed through my day in a sober manner. When I don't, I tend to bounce from issue to issue all day.

— **Stephen F., CT**

Most recently, I like the affirmation/prayer: "When you were/I was born, God had decided the world could not exist without you/me." I share this with family, friends and S.L.A.A. members frequently.

— **Rita H., Montreal**

I start with simple prayers and work my way up to more involved detailed prayers. One of the best ways for me to improve my praying is to get on my knees and humble-out.

— **Christopher G., Largo, FL**

I say the A.A. Third Step Prayer and the Seventh Step Prayer if I'm feeling adventurous from the St. Francis Prayer (11th Step Prayer). I say these on my knees humbly.

— Paul T., London, UK

I try to sit as regularly as possible for 20-30 minutes. Often, I practice sending healing to those I hold resentment towards. It helps greatly to see them as suffering people who deserve my compassion. I find it grounds and heals me and I realize they are merely a part of myself that I need to develop compassion for.

— Jean J., Seattle, WA

I practice the 11th Step through reading my daily devotionals, breathing exercises, and caring for my earth suit (my body).

— Jason S., Sacramento

I love the Third Step Prayer, Acceptance Prayer and the Seventh Step Prayer.

— Anonymous, Pittsfield, MA

My daily meditation practice is non-judgmental – “BOC” – butt on cushion. Meditation has been instrumental and a primary foundation of being able to center and focus myself. This centering is critical to my spiritual health and essential to my recovery.

— Seth, Newton, MA

Early in the morning, I meditate and pray. This helps maintain my connection with God.

— Roberto, Frankfurt

Third Step Prayer, First Step Prayer, Fifth Step Prayer. Meditation, being in the forest, hugging lots of trees. Patting myself, talking to others. Yoga. Dance.

— Susanna

Allowing my mind to be filled with the awareness of my Higher Power. Remembering that I am not alone, nor in charge -this reminds me to pause instead of react.

— Rick S., Westchester, PA

I practice visualization daily and have conversations with my Higher Power, often practicing conscious contact. Sitting quiet and still at least five minutes a day is also essential to keep peace of mind, if not more.

— April G., Houston, TX

When I get up each morning, I pray using the Serenity Prayer, the Third Step Prayer, and the Seventh Step Prayer. Then I meditate, focusing on just my breath. Then, I journal. Instead of writing down to-do lists, or fears or fantasies, I let God guide my pen. I use this time to actively listen to what my Higher Power wants me to hear.

— Sarah E., Oakland, CA

Taking a Positive Approach to the 11th Step



I was raised with religion and always believed in God. In the past my prayers were limited to going to church and praying when I was afraid of a given situation/crisis.

When I worked the 11th Step and heard in meetings about the benefits of prayer and meditation, I began to pray more often. My sponsor suggested I pray for people who hurt me. I had resistance to doing that! Why would I pray for someone who

hurt me? She explained that it would help me, so I tried it, albeit without enthusiasm.

At first it felt insincere, then it began to feel neutral, finally it seemed like “Why not? The person is obviously sick in their soul.” It brought me more peace.

My sponsor also suggested I write a gratitude list of 5 things each day. That helped me enormously! As I had to think about things I was grateful for, I began to see how much I have

compared to those who have not. In the past I was only miserable about not having the love of whatever man I was longing for and totally did not see what I did have.

I began to appreciate the basic things I previously took for granted and the extra things I had in my life. Along with the gratitude list I was asked to list 5 blessings (nice things, beautiful things I saw and acts of kindness) I received on a daily basis. In

doing that and sending the lists to my sponsor for a time, I became more aware of my environment instead of being a prisoner in my own negative thoughts and painful emotions.

I began to notice the wildflowers in the grass and thought, "My Higher Power sends me flowers every day." I could enjoy a full moon, little ducks in the pond, kind strangers who did little things for me, the attention I got from other people even if I did not get it from the desired man. I felt and still feel very blessed.

I thank God very often for everything that I learned to notice. I shared my feelings both joyful ones and painful ones. When I got stuck in a negative mood, I shared

that with my Higher Power and asked to have them removed. I sometimes had to do it multiple times, but it did work.

I began to look for ways of serving my Higher Power by what I could do for others or the environment (like picking up plastic trash around me). The opportunities for service were not difficult and I did them gladly. That made me feel better about myself and more connected to others, even strangers. My conscious contact with God increased the more I prayed.

Meditation is something I do less, I must admit. There are many forms of meditation. The one I do use is to listen to the messages I hear in church and think about

how that may apply to me in my life. I find that I always hear something I need to hear to help me whether it be in a reading, a sermon or a hymn.

I enjoy attending church and I pray often. I subscribe to a daily meditation email so that gives me a quick message for the day. Although I have daily meditation books, I tend to forget to read them, but the online one comes right up on my computer.

I highly recommend all 12 Steps and the 11th Step has been a tremendous help to me in my recovery and in my life in general.

— **Claire, Amsterdam, Netherlands**

Discovering I Am Not Alone

I attended the S.L.A.A. convention in London in February 2017 while completing my work on Step 12, part of which was to do a Chair at the convention on "Being in a Healthy Relationship in Recovery."

This was big for me as I suffered from shame around my relationship because I had identified as gay, but 5 years of recovery had led to a reconciliation in my marriage of 29 years. The obvious confusion sat there in the background.

I thought, "How can this be healthy if I am a gay man? How do I share about this healthy, nurturing, beautiful, spiritually and physically intimate relationship? My home group has seen my growth but how will others make sense of this? More importantly, am I finally ready to make sense of this?"

I prayed on it and at the convention a longtime recovery friend said, "Are you coming to the LGBTQ meeting?"

My reply was, "No, it will be

full of proper gay people not like me!"

Wow. I still have so much shame about not being good enough. This friend said, "Which bit of the 'B' in LGBTQ don't you think qualifies you to be there?"

I went and heard a powerful share about the bravery of a fellow who after struggling to assert gay rights came out as bisexual. At that meeting I identified in a new way for the first time. I said, "Hi, my name is David, I am a sex and love addict and I am bisexual." I opened my share in this way and the freedom this blinding flash of the obvious, this spiritual awakening, this new level of self-acceptance has brought to my recovery and relationship is nothing short of miraculous.

To this point, I had used mindfulness meditation as an anxiety control tool and believed this was Step 11 meditation. It was what I had at the time. But following the convention and the removal of what I now see as a real spiritual blockage, I began to meditate in a new way that really

felt like conscious contact with a power greater than me.

I approached this meditation initially without a time expectation as there had been a strong level of anxiety around the idea that it must be so long to be "real meditation."

I felt finally free to let Higher Power into my mind, to allow him to roam, root around, shuffle and make what he wanted of all that was in there.

I felt finally ready to be open to whatever he found, open to his will for me whatever that might be. In writing this I am seeing clearly for the first time how connected my willingness to accept who I am, to allow me to be me whatever that is, connects to my willingness and capacity to make conscious contact with a power greater than I. My prayer is not revolutionary in its content or words but for me it is revolutionary in its power: "God, take me out of your way that I might be in YOUR WAY."

In grateful fellowship.

— **David A, Wales, UK**

Meditation Is How I'm Getting to Know Myself

I was familiar with prayer when I joined S.L.A.A. because I was already active in another 12-Step fellowship. However, I had never practiced the meditation part of the 11th Step. A friend said that I should start meditating because I was in such pain from withdrawal.

The actual conversation went something like this: "You're such a mess, perhaps you should try meditating." I was willing to go to any length at that point – including meditating!

Without any formal training, I started sitting for a few minutes a day (not easy, considering how my obsessive thinking prevented me from being present for any moment).

And I had a lot of anger toward

my Higher Power, so spending time with that power was not at the top of my list of goals! But withdrawal allowed me to have low expectations. Even without trying too hard, I started to love meditation.

Within a short period of time, I was meditating daily for at least thirty minutes. I have been taught that living in the moment is helpful when meditating. However, my mind is like a vacuum...desperate to latch onto anything other than the present moment.

Focusing on my breath appears to be the most effective way to be in the moment. When I can do that, I feel that I'm as close to my Higher Power as I can be.

It was and is the most

refreshing part of my day. Through the Steps, I learned that my addictions were really helping me escape from myself, not from the other people and things of this world. Meditation is helping me to see myself in a calm and forgiving way. It is also helping me to develop a relationship with myself that I heard others talk about – a love affair with who I am.

I now live more in the moment than I ever did before. Prior to S.L.A.A., I had a fantasy life that consumed every waking moment. Our wonderful program has provided me with tools that often allow me calmness even when events or my mind indicate that I should panic. Meditation is one of these important tools.

— Anonymous

My Practice of the 11th Step

I guess I should start out by saying that I felt woefully inadequate in my practice of the 11th Step early in recovery in several programs.

I never felt I was "doing it right." I tried repeatedly to meditate – eyes closed, with my hands held palms up on my crossed legs. I would do it for 15 or 20 minutes and rarely got anything out of it. "This isn't working. It escapes me," I would think dejectedly.

Slowly, through the years, I've started to see that my best approach to this Step is simple – very, very simple.

In our text, it says in the 11th Step, that meditation can simply be "a moment of quiet listening, stilling our own thoughts to allow God's ideas to slip into awareness." *Wow, I can do this*, I thought with relief! The text continues, "The style or amount of time devoted to this was unimportant, as long as it was

frequent enough to be a regular part of our day." This freed me from the onus of "15 minutes EVERY day." It met me where I was.

My most frequent prayer is simply, "Thank You." It is deeply felt and said with my heart, not my lips. When you come from where I did (should I say, "Where WE did?") it's really the only prayer. My wreckage includes psychosis, hospitalization, shame, despair, sadness – the whole

familiar gamut.

Today, through the blessing and grace of the rooms and Higher Power, my life is so markedly, radically different in tone and feel that, “Thank You” becomes the only prayer. And we’re told, “A

grateful addict doesn’t use.” For today, I don’t want to use.

Recovery texts are a great resource for me and have always been a big part of my Program. In a non-conference-approved book that has helped millions, the

author says, “‘Thank You’ is one of her favorite prayers along with, ‘Help,’” (another favorite of mine).

With the 11th Step my approach is very, very simple.

— **Christina/NJ**



Meditation, Affirmations, Prayers and Mantras



When I came to S.L.A.A., my mind was like a whirling dervish all the time! I attended a silent meditation retreat once a year. While I loved it, I didn't transfer what I learned and practiced at that weekend into a daily practice.

Early in my S.L.A.A. sobriety, I realized that when I meditated I found great relief from the insanity of the obsession caused by my sex and love addiction.

I couldn't just sit in the silence because there was none. My mind was busy and loud! So during one

of the silent meditation retreats I attended, I created these affirmations, prayers, and mantras, to help me focus on something instead of trying to corral my mind into stillness, which was an impossible feat! They work!

I can almost feel my blood pressure and heart rate slowing down when I read these and then meditate on them in silence for a few minutes. I may feel fragmented at the beginning of my meditation but by the end I feel at peace and one with God.

At first begin with three minutes of stillness sitting on a chair, on the floor, or even lying in your bed. If three minutes seems impossible, begin with one minute. Gradually increase your meditation time until you are spending 10 minutes or more daily.

There is no need to use all the affirmations, prayers and mantras every day. Choose one or two and use it until you are comfortable with it. Then choose a different one or two. The variety will keep your meditation practice from

getting stale and boring.

I carry a copy of these in my purse and use them whenever I have to wait. I don't turn to my cell phone to pass the moments, I turn to these affirmations, prayers and mantras. I feel like I deepen my recovery and healing from my sex and love addiction every time I read and use these in a meditation.

I also keep a copy in my literature bag that I take with me to all meetings so that I can use it during the meditation at the meeting I'm attending. It is extremely helpful.

I hope they will help you too. Feel free to change the words around in a manner that fits for you and the level of spirituality and recovery you are at today.

Blessings on your road to recovery.

With every breath I take I am more deeply connected to God.

I feel the presence of God in every area of my body and in every area of my life, and I am eternally grateful.

In the stillness of my body and calm of my mind I am deeply connected to ____.

- God
- Gratitude
- Grace

- Acceptance
- Love
- Kindness
- Joy
- Beauty
- Wisdom
- Peace
- Prosperity
- Healing
- My feelings
- My Self-Worth
- God's Power of Self-Control
- God's Omnipotent Power
- God's Grace
- God's Forgiveness

With every breath I take I am more deeply connect to _____. I feel _____ in every area of my body and in every area of my life. For this I am eternally grateful. (Fill in the blanks with one of the above.)

I take this sacred, silent and still moment to embrace and secure my constant, calm heart. I celebrate the gift of emotional evenness this meditation grants me.

With every breath I take...
I relax deeper into the arms of God.

I surrender my life over to the loving care of God.

I breathe in the safety, comfort, love and grace of God.

I am able to extend more peace, compassion and forgiveness to all those around me.

I am aware that this is an orderly Universe and that God is in charge.

Today I nurture a soft heart, kind words and gentle spirit.

I pray to be released from fear that I might know true love.

I pray to be released from judgment that I might know true acceptance.

I pray to be released from resentment that I might know true forgiveness.

I pray to be released from negativity that I might know true joy.

I pray to be released from procrastination that I might know true freedom.

I am now guided by God and the wisdom of my heart.

I am now connected to...

Divine right thought and action working in my life.

The healing power of God in all areas of my life.

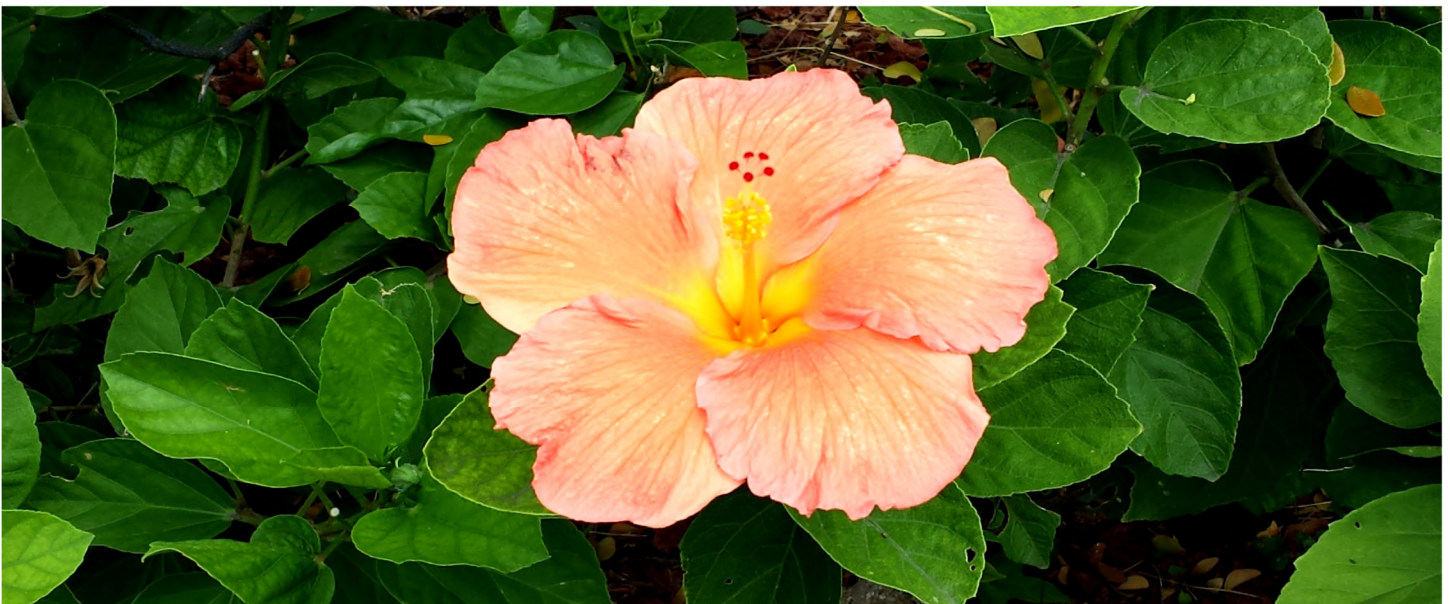
God and a world of infinite possibility.

As I sit in the stillness and silence...

I open the door to all the miracles God has waiting for me.

I am one with God.

— Alicia in The OC



The Beauty and the Healing Power of Meditation in Recovery



Recovery happens in those extremely difficult moments when we want to act on a trigger or an impulse, but we refrain. That's the first moment of sobriety! At first we refrain in a white-knuckling manner not knowing how we are going to live without the actions that have grown beyond habitual, and been completely involuntary for so long.

But we move on to take the next indicated step, the next sober action to start replacing all of our sex and love addicted behavior. We reach out to our sponsor or another recovery partner, we go to a meeting, journal our feelings, read our literature, or take some kind of top line action like a walk, bubble bath, or nap.

The key here is not taking the

action that would set us back, but taking action that moves us forward.

There are two kinds of pain we experience in this program:

1. The pain that sets us back.

The pain of continuing to cycle through the powerlessness, chaos, insanity, unmanageability, and drama of our sex and love addiction. Somehow, somehow, we

think “this time” will be different. It will ease the pain of withdrawal “this time.” But taking that sex and love addicted action only prolongs the pain and suffering from this disease for the rest of our lives. This long-term pain and suffering is actually agony.

2. The pain that moves us forward.

This is the pain of arresting the disease by not doing the thing we always do, the thing we think will give us comfort. Instead, we feel the pain by sitting in the feelings and processing them with a sponsor, talking about them with a recovery partner and writing about them. This pain doesn't last a lifetime like the above pain. It is a short-term pain that leads to long-term serenity and joy.

This is why we hear, “Pain is inevitable, but agony is optional.”

In my six years of perfectly-imperfect sobriety, the number one thing that has helped me to stop taking destructive sex and love addicted actions and to start taking constructive action has been meditation, the ability to simply sit through the urge to act.

Meditation and simply practicing sitting still has helped me install an internal “pause button,” that has given me what feels like rock solid sobriety, the kind where I am no longer a prisoner of the obsession and the power of choice and clarity has returned. This internal pause button, has helped me put into practice our slogan, “Every action does not require a reaction.” I knew this was available to those in recovery, but it wasn't available to me until I had a solid meditation practice.

As a result of sitting still, even when I don't want to or even when I don't think it will help, I feel a deep sense of emotional autonomy and independence like I have never felt before. Now, I don't need a man, or any person to fulfill me, to make me feel good, or to be my fix in any way.

Here are a few additional ways simply sitting still has paid off for me in a powerful way:

The program has given me a solid understanding of my triggers and helped me to heal the core wounds that caused them.

Things that used to trigger me no longer do as a result of working all of the Steps repeatedly and as necessary.

But, when I get triggered now, I have the internal pause button to help me keep my mouth shut! I stop internally and take no outside action until I can sort out my feelings.

It is rarely what I initially think it is that has disturbed me. When I have determined what I'm really feeling and the right thing to say, and when I am able to speak in a kind and loving manner, then I can say what I need to say - and not one second before. Instead of the instant reaction of things I want to say, I pause.

The crazy comedian Ron White tells a story where he got in trouble with the law and he quips, “I know I had the right to remain silent, I just didn't have the ability!” And that is precisely how I've felt most of my life. I knew there were things I shouldn't be saying or doing, but I just couldn't stop doing or saying them!

The above also works with family members, friends, and my teenage son. I have a relationship with my teenage son that most parents dream of. It is real for me and I will be eternally grateful to S.L.A.A. for this. I never would have experienced this without the program and without a regular meditation practice.

It has helped me to avoid enmeshment when dating. My desire for constant validation, attention and contact is seductive and very destructive. Once I'm in an enmeshed relationship, my reality is completely distorted. I can't differentiate fantasy from reality. If I just breath and don't dial “his” number, the urge will

pass. This helps me to underscore that real recovery is turning to my Higher Power instead of turning to a man.

It has helped me to say, “I'll have to think about that and get back to you,” instead of saying yes immediately to something I'm not comfortable with but can't quite put my finger on why.

It has helped me slow down during the initial stages of dating (if I just relax and allow the relationship to slowly evolve in its own time without me asking “possessive” kinds of questions or saying things that increase the emotional or sexual intensity).

It has helped me refrain from responding to inflammatory or affectionate texts and emails from qualifiers. The most recent one came from a highly triggering qualifier in the wee hours of Christmas morning. It was a simple, “Merry Christmas, gorgeous. I hope you are doing great. XO (qualifiers name).” I felt the hit right away and it looked so innocent to simply respond in kind. Why not? There would be no harm in it. But, I knew it would open a Pandora's Box of insanity and I'd had complete and total peace for the year and a half since we'd broken up. The annual text or email he sent had the luster that “this time” it could be different. Ha! When I just sit through the feelings and breath, I'm able to face reality instead of conjuring up some insane romantic fantasy.

I know that without a daily meditation practice I would not have the “emotional evenness” referred to in Step Eleven in our Basic Text.

Several of the meetings I attend regularly have a three, five, or ten-minute meditation and it is extremely helpful. I think meditation should be a part of every S.L.A.A. meeting, even if it is only one minute, because it is such an essential requirement for making it through withdrawal and

into solid sobriety and recovery. We have to learn how to simply sit still and not act on all of our impulses and urges.

I think meditation is so essential to recovery in S.L.A.A. that it needs to be bumped up from Step 11 to Step 3.5.

Of course, I shudder as I write this feeling completely sacreligious messing with the sacred Steps that have saved my life and the lives of so many!

But when it comes to attaining solid sexual and emotional sobriety from sex and love addiction, I think building a meditation practice from the beginning is a must.

I needed to have the “emotional evenness” long before I got to Step 11 in this program. It actually helped me get to Step 11 without losing my sobriety numerous times along the way.

“Emotional evenness” is exactly what “serenity” is all about. Our main prayer could read like this, “God grant me the emotional evenness to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.”

If we added Step 3.5 it would read like this:

3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God.

3.5. Sought to practice daily meditation to establish emotional evenness and a deeper connection to God, as we understood God.

I had a bumbling meditation practice for many years, but when I discovered two free apps my meditation practice became more enjoyable and the results were far greater. The two apps I use are

“Headspace” and “Calm.” They each have a free series of guided meditations that teach how to meditate. While they are different, I like the steps that both teach. I’m reminded that there is no right or wrong way to meditate. For example, most of the time I meditate in a “zero gravity chair,” or lying in bed, instead of sitting straight up in a chair or sitting cross-legged on the floor, 100% of the time. And it still works miraculously. Just like exercise, I realized I needed to enjoy some aspect of my meditation practice if I was going to want to do it every day. So, what I have found to be true for myself and the women I sponsor is, all that matters is that we sit down, be still, and do it.

— Alicia in The OC

Healing from Spiritual Abuse

Hello, I am MP, a grateful sex and love addict. I grew up with what one might call “spiritual abuse” — violent, violating acts were committed in the name of a Higher Power. There was a lot of verbal abuse in “God’s” name too. Seeing these adults acting in direct conflict with what they claimed were their spiritual values really caused me to view them as hypocrites, and I didn’t buy into any of it. So, I was an atheist when I was very young. My family members had sexually abused me, so I had no faith in the concept of “family.”

For me, family and God were jokes I just rolled my eyes at. I felt the same about the institution of education. Several teachers made

romantic overtures towards me as a kid, maybe 3 or 4 teachers, so I knew they were all corrupt too.

And of course, I had no respect for the law, because in my mind, no one from “the law” had protected me from child abuse. So, I came into early adulthood with no faith in anything at all, except probably acting out. Acting out, whether with masturbation or with other people was a power that worked for me, numbing me out and helping me cope.

So, it was very, very effective — until it stopped working, and then I was truly in despair, for I had no god, and no relief any more from acting out. I was at “the jumping off place” as they say. I was really in a deep chasm of spiritual

despair.

That was when I finally surrendered to Program. I had no choice! I remember the first moment that God started working in my life was when we read the 1st Step aloud at a meeting. For the first time, I understood the concepts of a “psychic change” and a “whole life strategy.”

I knew that it was God’s grace for me to have a moment of surrender like that, because I had been unable to get sober for a few years. But the moment came, and I went into withdrawal and did the Steps.

That was about 9 years ago and today I have a very strong relationship with God, who I know delivered me from a hopeless

addiction that nearly killed me. Any doubts I used to entertain about God's existence has been washed away by my experiences in Program, and the love I have received in S.L.A.A.

For the 11th Step, I practice one-hour silent meditation at a Buddhist center and have been doing so for about one year now. It has been a thrilling journey inward, where all the good stuff is kept. Everything I used to run from, I now face with glee, because it's mine, and I love myself and want to know everything about myself. Sitting in silent meditation, I have been flooded with forgiveness for my perpetrators, seeing them as young children.

I had moments of grief and spent the whole meditation crying.

But I've also had such deep joy in meditation. Most of all, I no longer live with the freeform anxiety I used to have that fueled my acting out. Meditation has made me really calm and present, and I'm so glad I had the willingness to get into it. I have no problem praying today. I love the set aside prayer, "God, please help me set aside everything I think I know, for an open mind and a new experience..."

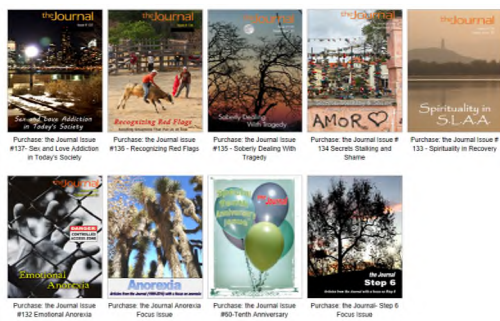
I also love the prayer, "God, here I am and here are all my troubles. I've made a mess of things and can't do anything about it. You take me and all my troubles and do anything you want with me. Amen."

My other favorite prayer is just, "God, help me." and "Thank you, God." Keep it simple, right? There

is no wrong way to pray, I've realized. It's just about being genuine and open to something greater than yourself. And meditation is just listening to one's intuition, and listening to what God's will might be. So, prayer and meditation work together as a question and answer routine. But life is infinitely richer and rewarding when I practice these two things on a regular basis, and I would never go back to the anxiety I used to have before meditation. May you find your own path to Higher Power. May you find your way back to Higher Power if you lost your faith. And may you continue to enrich your faith if you always had it!

—MP

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The Only Solution is Spiritual



My sobriety wouldn't matter if it weren't for prayer and meditation. As an addict, I know that the only solution to my problem is a spiritual one. The oneness that I

sought through toxic relationships, and the oblivion that I so desperately looked for through addictive sex—these were all just misled searches for God, for connection to the universe, for

a deep spiritual experience.

Entering this program and working the Steps showed me that it is only by abstaining from the addictive behaviors which pull me further and further from God—

and replacing them with spiritually wholesome actions—that I get to feel the feelings I so deeply yearned for during my days of acting out. How ironic.

Four years and four months ago, my sobriety date and first meeting both provided me with Twelve Steps to change my ways.

Little did I know that by admitting I was an addict, choosing to surrender my life to the will of the universe, and begrudgingly sitting for five minutes of meditation per day (at the suggestion of my sponsor), my external and internal world would change!

Meditation first started for me as simply a mental exercise. Could I sit still for just five minutes without busying myself? It was hard! I wanted to reach for my phone, text, read, journal—anything but sit!

Soon, it became easier, and I would sit for ten minutes each time I meditated. I began to feel a calm in meditation, or a centeredness.

Each moment in meditation was my opportunity to be quiet and remember God. In remembering God, I would remember my program. I remember the beautiful life I get to live today.

Sometimes, I physically feel my body lighten, and other times, I just try to get through the minutes until my timer goes off.

After nine months of sobriety, consistent meetings, and Step work, my spirituality burgeoned with curiosity. I began reading about different faiths and philosophies and I also started meditating in accordance with specific practices.

I was exploring! My spirituality — as consistently rejuvenated with close-to-daily meditation — became the center focus of how I lived. When adding new features to my day or schedule, I began wondering, “Will this choice affect my centeredness? Will it inhibit or

encourage my connection to God?”

Several years later, I still ask myself these questions. It is difficult on some days to get

you, and it will be with you always.”

Even when I don’t find that ecstatic joy, meditation is centering and helps me remember

I am so grateful to experience a way of life which I never dreamed of being possible for me – adventurous, connected, beautiful, spiritual, and peaceful.

myself down to sit and be quiet and connect.

I wish I could say that I do it every single day! But I never regret it when I do. When I sit to meditate, I listen to God.

I wipe away my thoughts to try and hear God’s will for me. It’s not in crystal clear terms. A guru, of whom I am a big fan, shares: “Meditate more and more deeply, until calmness and joy become second nature to you.

To be ecstatic is not difficult. It is thinking that it is difficult that holds you apart from it. Never think of divine joy as distant from

my Steps 2, 3, and 11. Moreover, I now can more easily find beauty and find God in every moment. Each second is an opportunity to find and listen to God—whether I’m in traffic or looking at a night sky full of stars.

Because of this program and Step 11’s focus on meditation, my way of being and my life have both changed. I am so grateful to experience a way of life which I never dreamed of being possible for me – adventurous, connected, beautiful, spiritual, and peaceful.

— Tessa



The Spiritual Dimension

I have been in the Fellowship for a few years now and I am always glad about this topic because the spiritual dimension of the Fellowship is very important to me.

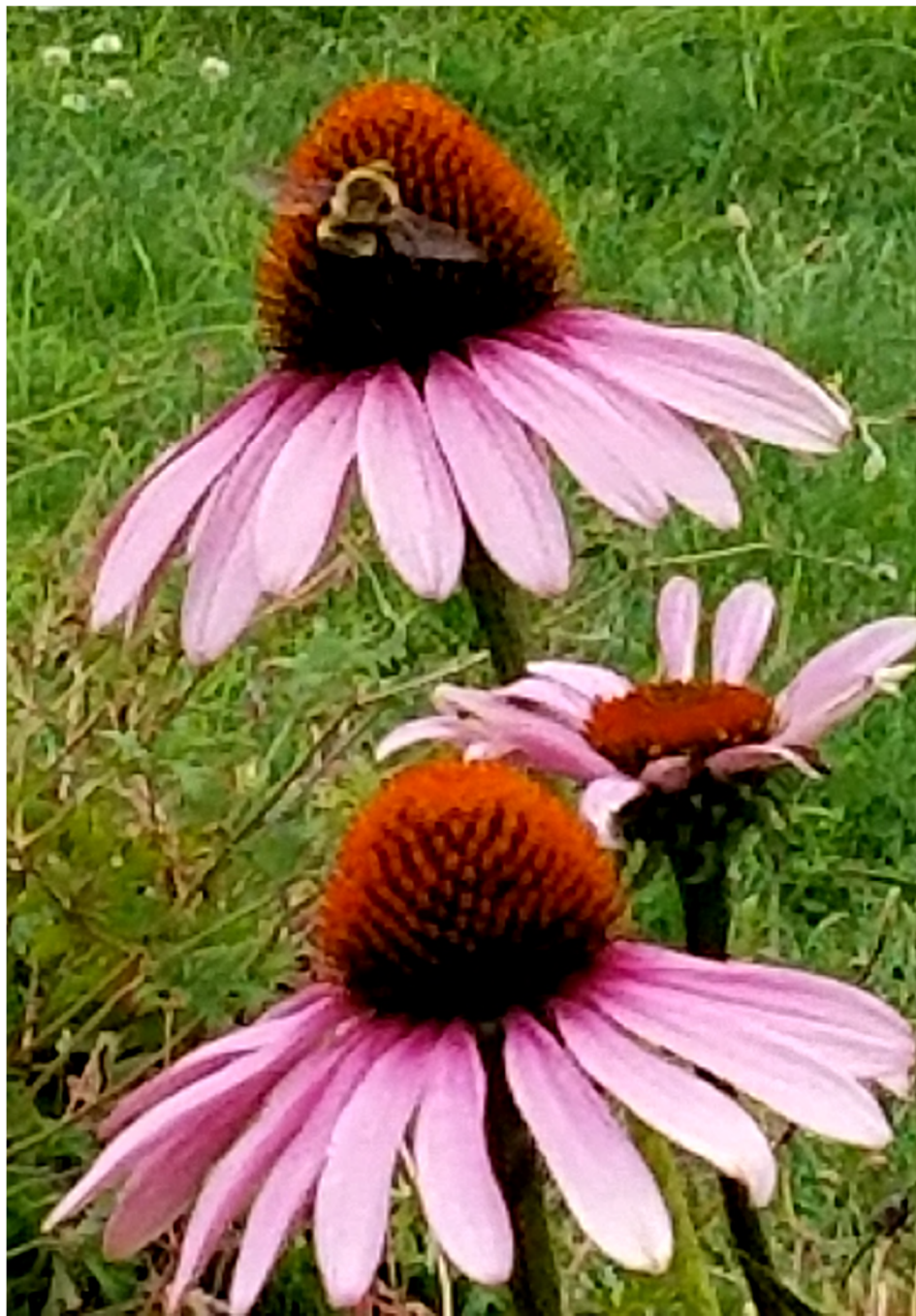
I feel that when I search for support in the power of a loving God instead of relying on my own possibilities, it strengthens me a lot. For me, Steps 2, 3 and 11 are the lynchpins of the Program. I keep going back to them when I am working the other Steps.

I search for a spirituality for myself where I can express my feelings. I like moments when I am alone in prayer, supported by biblical text. I imagine the biblical scene and myself in it. I try to get into it and feel it with all my senses – see it, hear it, touch it, almost taste and smell it. I look for my place in it and I check what emotions come up. Sometimes I need to explore the cultural background of the particular scene to better understand and feel it.

I attend retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises of a theologian from the 1400s, where I experience the presence of God in the silence and where I meet people who teach me how to make the most of this time.

For me, it is very important that I can use my imagination to create good pictures – I feel that it strengthens me and cures me and my wounded soul. This way of praying helps me to meet God, as someone close to me, who feels something with me or invites me to feel something with Him. This is a fascinating revelation. It portrays God as someone who experiences all human feelings. He understands me completely.

Another way that I pray is to



say the prayer of praise. It strengthens me because it involves my body as well. Each part of me may praise God. I can feel the creature and by that, I mean, the perfect creature, who is

supposed to be here. And I can worship God in my life. I feel that God is glad for me. This combination of dance and prayer is very positive.

What is very helpful for me, is

taking part in religious celebration in my faith – joyful meeting in thanksgiving. I feel it helps me fight back anorexia. I experience closeness and relation there: I speak, listen, sing, pass the sign of peace with others, look on the colors of liturgy and all of the tender gestures of the worship of God. Some of them I can do on my own, and finally, I can both spiritually and physically unite

with God in communion. I ask and am open to love. This is a beautiful lesson of closeness. I am starting to believe that God never has any obstacles in his love for me. He always wants me and He waits. Like in the Fellowship – I am always accepted.

The Serenity Prayer has become my everyday prayer. If I turn myself over to it, I find peace, strength, and wisdom.

When I say the prayer a few times in a row, the light comes.

I thank God that I am in a partner relationship with Him. As Step 11 says, He wants to be close to me, and I can only answer in the way I am able. I know that the only thing I can't do without is God's love.

— Maria, Poland

Third Step Prayer Breakdown

When I first joined 12-Step Programs and started working the Steps with a sponsor, I would sit at my sponsor's house and read the Big Book of A.A. The chapter entitled "How It Works" contains a useful prayer for Step 3.

The first time we came across it in our reading, my sponsor told me to say it with her. She said to add more respect to it, we should get on our knees, hold hands and bow our heads while we said it. This sounded like archaic religious bullcrap to me. I didn't believe in God at the time. I didn't want to have religion forced down my throat by some cult. I had been scared of cults my whole life (probably because I knew my temperament was susceptible to being pulled into a cult some day).

My thoughts cried out against it, but I didn't want to go back to my alcoholism, so I was open enough to try it. It was awkward and uncomfortable, but I sat there on the floor of her apartment and held her hands (awkward intimacy) and read the prayer out loud with her.

She had us get on our knees to give that moment the respect it deserves. The fact that I was willing to set my prejudices aside

and kneel on the floor meant that I truly meant what I said when I said I was ready to take Step 3.

Bowing our heads meant that we were willing to say that God was in charge. We were willing to show humility and work in service to Higher Power.

Holding hands was a way to show me that I wasn't alone. She had taken this Step years before me and was sober 8 years in A.A. because of it (and all the other Steps). She was right by my side all along the path of recovery, as others had been for her.

Saying this prayer, even though I didn't believe in God for my first 5 years of recovery, helped me open the door to let a Higher Power into my life. And after repeated recitations of this and other prayers every day, I had a lightning bolt spiritual experience that changed my life in every way and has allowed me to stay sober and fairly serene for 21 years.

My home group in S.L.A.A. has adopted this prayer. We say it out loud after every meeting. The leader announces, "Would anyone who would like to, please join me in the Third Step prayer." To hear 100 voices reciting this prayer at the same time is a very powerful thing!

Following are my thoughts on why this prayer has helped me so much.

Sentence #1:

God, I offer myself to thee – to build with me and to do with me as thou wilt.

At first, the idea of offering myself to something I didn't believe in sounded ludicrous. I was too rebellious to offer up important aspects of my life to some power out there who would never communicate with me and who I couldn't scientifically prove existed. I couldn't put my big brain to work to solve spiritual problems. I thought too much about this one.

But one day I was in enough pain to remember this line like it was a lifeline. Maybe it could work if I tried it. So I tried it and it did. Then came the next difficult part: *to build with me and to do with me as thou wilt*. Building back up my shattered life took a lot of hard work. I always wanted to stay lazy! And I found out that God expected to use me to build up other people's lives also by sponsoring and doing service work.

And when God did with me as he wanted, he took away the one thing I thought I couldn't live without: my qualifier. He

eventually replaced him with a kind, caring man, but I had to allow it. (Like my sponsor always said, "It's difficult for God to fill that seat if there's already someone sitting in it.")

I was afraid God would want too much from me if he was allowed free reign to do as he would. (Even the language is strong and dramatic: *do with me as thou wilt.*) But this addict needs in-your-face images. I get bored with anything less. These words I remember and they finally sunk in and created miracles in my life.

Sentence #2:

Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.

Most of the time when I said this line, in the back of my mind was the nagging fear that relieving me of the bondage of self would include making me homeless or at least giving away all my worldly possessions and going to live in the woods or something equally as long suffering. Sometimes I wish it had been as simple as that! As it turns out, this line is about being humble. I have to look at my character defects and discard them.

I have to care about other people. I have to ask God what his will is and be patient and wait for answers.

Sentence #3:

Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy

Way of life.

Funny. When I was writing this prayer from memory, I wrote "take from me every difficulty." It's as if I want God to extract every problem from my life so I don't have to deal with anything. My addict brain hates change.

It convinces me that the only way to avoid numbing out in addiction is to avoid pain altogether. This part of the prayer doesn't say that.

It only asks that God remove difficulties so that it will help other people. My sponsor always said, "God doesn't give you a relationship when you want one. He gives you a relationship when it will help other people." That definitely came true in my life. I didn't make my healthy relationship happen. It came to me and we both work hard in recovery in multiple programs.

When I was writing the next line of this prayer from memory, I mixed in the Seventh Step prayer line, "*I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.*"

I think I thought of this line because my character defects usually stand in the way of God and me removing my difficulties. They are the main reason for much of my difficulties.

Sentence #4:

May I do Thy will always!

Always is a tall order and brings up panic sometimes when

I'm in my addict thinking. I have to continue daily to turn my will over and to seek and do what God asks of me. It is a daily reprieve from the bondage of self that will hopefully continue for a lifetime.

No easy task! Maybe that's the reason this sentence ends in an exclamation mark instead of a period. It's not a simple statement to make. It has a lot of feeling behind it. It takes a lot of work to go against one's desires and compulsions to work towards stillness instead of ambition, to stick to the Traditions of Program instead of clawing my way to the top to be in control.

I also wrote: Clear away the wreckage of my past. This line is from the Promises of A.A.: "Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us."

I was asking God to do for me something that Program tells me to do for myself. There are clear directions about what actions to take in the Steps. God doesn't take these actions for me, we take them together, if I'm lucky enough to be willing.

I pray and meditate to keep in touch with my willingness to turn everything over to my Higher Power. It has kept me sober in many addictions for many years now. This will hopefully continue for many more years to come!

— Anonymous

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Source of Strength



When World War II broke out, our A.A. dependence on a Higher Power had its first major test... Would [soldiers] be able to take discipline, stand up under fire, and endure the monotony and misery of war? Would the kind of dependence they had learned in A.A. carry them through?... dependence upon a Higher Power worked. Far from being a weakness, this dependence was their chief source of strength.

— A.A. Twelve and Twelve, pp. 38-39

I was given the gift of seeing first hand the truthfulness of the above statement. Step 11 got me through struggles that, before Program, would have broken me and made me run for the hills.

I was sober from alcohol and drugs in A.A. for 10 years, sober in Nicotine Anonymous for 9 years, sober in S.L.A.A. for 5 years, and abstinent from compulsive eating in CEA-HOW for 3 years when my

back started hurting me.

I went to the doctor and he eventually found a tumor the size of a baseball in my uterus. It was sitting against my spine causing the back pain. It had to be operated on. Horrific words to a reformed hypochondriac (prayer and healthy living had taken care of that for me in sobriety— no more overreaction and drama for me).

My only realistic choices were hysterectomy or to take out the

tumor and repair the uterus. Difficult choice for any woman to make.

I was about to get married. We had talked about kids and decided we weren't really interested in becoming parents, but hadn't ruled out the possibility entirely. What if we changed our minds? And hysterectomy is such a final choice to make right before a

It seemed like the more hopeful choice. Then started the difficulty of scheduling appointments and showing up for myself. I had to donate 2 units of blood to myself. For someone who faints at blood tests, I thought there was no way in h-e-double-hockey-sticks that I would be able to sit through even one session of giving blood. But I prayed and showed up anyway.

me out.

The surgery went well (it seemed like 2 seconds to me) and the minute I came out of the drug fog into awareness I started crying because I was so grateful that I made it through. I felt like God had been there with me every step of the way. I told my fiancé and Dad how much I loved them. It was actually a huge moment of joy through the pain.

That night in the hospital I got really great care and whenever I felt too alone I had these little puffy plastic things on my legs that would expand and apply pressure to ease the pain in my legs. I felt like it was a little God shot.

I was able to stay abstinent in my food program even with hospital food (the old me would have used the surgery as an excuse to indulge in whatever fast food I wanted).

And when they sent me home, I had a prescription for 2 weeks worth of really strong painkillers. The old me would have partied down. The new me who had a spiritual practice knew that even the allowed amount of those painkillers were a dangerous thing for me. I took only half of the pill for 3 days after I got home and then switched to ibuprofen.

I made my three meals daily and ate everything I was supposed to even though it gave me pain in my abdomen from walking around and from difficulty digesting. It was a chore to get down any amount of food. I stayed sober from all of my addictive behaviors even though I had some pretty good excuses to slip.

This experience made me see that if I continued on my spiritual path, I could get through anything! I was actually grateful for the lesson.

— Anonymous

I researched, prayed and meditated, asking God for clear signs about what to do. I went to meetings and shared about it and shared with others during fellowship dinners.

marriage (at any time really).

So I had two big mountains in front of me. Where would I find the strength to go through with any kind of surgery when most of my life was spent abusing my body instead of taking care of it? And how would I make the choice of which surgery was best?

I researched, prayed and meditated, asking God for clear signs about what to do. I went to meetings and shared about it and shared with others during fellowship dinners.

After a ton of meditation and prayer, I went to a meeting and shared my dilemma once again. A woman came up to me after the meeting and talked to me for 15 minutes about her experience with a tumor. She said that she had chosen the removal and repair surgery and even though there were complications, she knows that it was the right choice.

She wished me well and told me that she knew Higher Power would carry me through as He did for her and so many others. She said there are no wrong choices in God's universe.

So I finally decided and scheduled the removal and repair.

I watched a meditation and affirmation video on my iPod while I donated. I said positive affirmations and prayed to be protected on the way there and back. I constantly asked God for strength.

When I started to panic I thought about how God was always there for me when I was getting sober. I thought about my sponsor's words, "God didn't carry you this far to drop you on your head." Did I have the kind of God that wanted me to suffer?

No, I had the kind that helped me stay sober in 4 programs and I was about to get married as a happy by-product.

I got through the blood donating. Then came the morning of the surgery. Alone in the prep room waiting for the drugs that would knock me out, I was even scared of the IV needle that they were sticking in my arm. Would I survive the surgery? I started to panic. "Close your eyes. Breathe in slowly," I told myself. "Breathe in God, Breathe out fear." I did this for what seemed like forever (probably more like 15 or 20 minutes) and the guy with the drugs finally came and knocked



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Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup, originators of the Inspiration Line want to thank Fellowship Wide Services and the Journal for supporting the Inspiration Line. GDVI wants to acknowledge the 15 volunteers from all over the US & Canada that leave inspirational messages on the Line and credit them for making this huge milestone possible: Alicia, California, Alyce, Montreal Canada, Alyson, Pennsylvania, Bob, Pennsylvania, Brenda, Maryland/Florida, John, Florida, Kip, Connecticut, Leah, New York, Mark, New Mexico, Matt, Pennsylvania, Michael S., Pennsylvania, Mike M., Pennsylvania, Natalie, Pennsylvania, Rich, Massachusetts, Sean, New Mexico, Shelly, New York, Steve D, Pennsylvania and Zoe, Pennsylvania



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