

# theJournal

Issue # 172

Single Issue \$4

# Forgiveness

# Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

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

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## S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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

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# Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader,

This theme and the articles presented in this issue of the Journal remind me that holding on to resentment and refusing to forgive hurts me more than it hurts the other person.

The Basic Text says, "For our own sake, we had to extend to those we thought we hated the compassionate understanding we needed in order to experience forgiveness ourselves. We could not make our forgiveness of others conditional on their having redeemed themselves, or righted their wrongs. We had to forgive them because, like us, they were sick and afflicted, and presumably had not set out in life to be so."

The stories in this issue describe the struggle we go through to hopefully get to that belief in sobriety. I am grateful to the writers for that reminder!

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

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

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# Question of the Day

## & Answers from Yesterday

“How have you learned to forgive?”

Please share any special stories of forgiveness.”

**When** I hold onto resentment and don't forgive, I have to ask myself whether I want to be right or I want to be happy. I held a lot of anger after my seven-year marriage — I literally couldn't say one nice thing about him or our time together. I was in too much pain to forgive. I thought the angrier I was, the more I was justified. It was all a lie. All I had to do was look within myself, see my part and let go. I wanted happiness and holding onto resentment/anger never did, or ever will, serve me. I had to ask myself what was more important: my ego and its pain or my spirit finding freedom. I realized the more I held onto the former, the smaller my life became. When I made the decision to follow the latter, something miraculous happened. I was able to forgive both him and myself. The years of heaviness my heart endured simply disappeared. I was able to be present to our relationship and see that he (we) tried our best. We have a different relationship now. One that we wish each other well; one where expectation doesn't live — just kind regard and a friendship that resembles the man I married.

— TIA R, LOS ANGELES

**The** greatest thing that's allowed me to forgive is taking responsibility for my mistakes (acknowledging my humanness). And through forgiving myself I am much more able to forgive others.

— ANN

**I** forgive my sponsor. She is not my Higher Power.

— ANONYMOUS

**I** forgive myself for putting off my recovery for so long and for my old choices. I struggle with and am willing to surrender beating myself up for choices I've made that didn't work out in recovery. Thank you for letting me share my experience, strength and hope.

— S., LOS ANGELES

**I'm** learning to forgive myself, a day at a time (doing my best to do so anyway).

— KIMBERLEY, LOS ANGELES

**When** I realized that I have been forgiven, how could I withhold forgiveness from others?

— ANONYMOUS

**I** have learned that forgiveness is not required nor always possible.

— ANONYMOUS

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “How have you learned to forgive? Please share any special stories of forgiveness.” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #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. And #174 — September/October — The Smartphone in Addiction and Sobriety. Please share how smartphones affect your recovery. The deadline for submissions is July 15, 2018.

**My** ex wife told my children to never speak to me again. After working with a sponsor, I realized how much I had hurt her – and needed forgiveness. Then I could forgive.

— **TIM P, HOLLYWOOD, FL**

**Yes!** Fueled by resentment, fear, and shame, I hated my ex-wife and myself. I had been a liar, a cheat, and had caused great harm for many years. Through working the steps, being of service and learning to love and forgive myself, I have been blessed with forgiveness of others, too. Praying for those who have harmed me, along with seeing my part, has set me free.

— **MARC S., TORONTO, CANADA**

**I** have first learned to forgive myself through working the Steps. From there, I was able to forgive family members by continuing to work the Steps, go to meetings and be of service. My relationship with family has seen the most radical change as a result of this process. Relationships with my sisters and mother, which were non-existent, have slowly become close again.

— **JIM B., HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA**

**In** the last couple of years, God has softened my heart and I have let go of resentment and anger toward my parents. I can be there for them in the aging process. I feel I am making living amends and with that comes love and compassion.

— **DIANE S., PITTSFIELD, MA**

**Life** is for giving, not for getting. Forgiving is an awesome way to show who I choose to be. It gives others a better chance to change their ways also! When I am mean in response, then it just keeps the negative going. Thanks,

— **ANN**

**I** listen with an open mind to shares in my meetings and with my sponsees. The stories I relate to most are about issues I need most to forgive myself for. Through this process, I was and am given the continued opportunity to forgive myself.

— **SARAH C., SAN ANTONIO**

**I** am more tolerant, less reactive and do not mention what has happened. I pray and if I do it for 2 weeks, it goes away.

— **AMALIA, HOUSTON**

**It** was a process for me. One of the most important things for me was looking at my part as to why someone “needed” my forgiveness.

— **RICH K., WORCESTER, MA**

**I** have learned to forgive through Step 9. Making amends opened the door for me to show up differently for myself and my relationships.

— **ASHLY B., HOUSTON**

# Question of the Day

**By** practicing the 4th and 9th Step, also the 10th, looking at my own behavior and attitude, lots of prayer and meditation, journaling and tagging space for myself allows forgiveness because ultimately forgiveness is for me and my peace of mind.

— **APRIL G., HOUSTON, TX**

**Initially**, as a last resort, I had to forgive my abuser without saying what he did was OK. Finally, I was able to let go of my anger and resentment.

— **RICK S., WESTCHESTER, PA**

**I** have learned that forgiveness is dependent upon me understanding that people have mostly hurt me out of their own illness and that in many cases I have some part in the situation.

— **STEVE B., SUNRISE, FL**

**I** have learned to forgive by living my life to the fullest and not worrying about the other party. God forgives them and so do I.

— **JASON S., SACRAMENTO**

**When** I came into the program, I had big shame and guilt about the things I had done in my addiction. I worked the 12 Steps in a private rehab and found that I was forgivable. I could change and heal with the program and therapy. So when I came to Steps 8 and 9, I was willing to forgive my parents and others but it is a process. It did not happen in a moment but with the accumulation of moments. This forgiving process sets me free to be available to the present moment.

— **RITA H., MONTREAL**

**Throughout** my recovery, I continue to learn what it means to love myself unconditionally, and through that I have had to learn how to forgive myself for my past actions and how to use those experiences to be more compassionate towards myself and towards others.

— **Lindsey, West Palm Beach**

**I** used a book on breaking up by a relationship expert to forgive my prior partner. I had a trained coach and completed all exercises including face-to-face meetings. I feel free from resentments and hurts.

— **Nancy G., San Diego**

# Letter to Myself



**B**efore she let me begin making direct amends to others, my sponsor suggested that I write a letter to myself, forgiving myself for all of the harms I had done to myself through my sex and love addiction. Writing the letter was easy – I had so much to forgive myself for! I wanted to hear from my Higher Power just how I should “deliver” the letter to myself.

One morning in my meditation, I saw an image of myself climbing a hill and sitting in a church filled with stained glass. On my next day off, I set out on foot to travel to San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral. I brought my letter and left my phone and music player at home, so I could really be present with myself on the journey.

As I walked up the steep hill to the church, I suddenly realized that Grace Cathedral stood

opposite the hotel where I had committed the act that had landed me at my sex and love addiction bottom, bringing me into my first S.L.A.A. meeting. I walked into Grace Cathedral and heard lovely voices singing gently in harmony. I found a quiet place in the church to read my letter and as I did, I felt the meaning of my amends to myself and to my younger selves. I wept with grief and relief.

— SARAH E., OAKLAND, CA

# Letting Love Replace Anger

I had so much anger coming into the rooms. When I thought of my parents, certain co-workers, my qualifier, I could feel my chest tighten and tension enter my muscles.

The biggest resentment I experienced was against God. A feeling of helplessness and shame would always follow. Hadn't I taken time to pray and wait for answers from God? Why had he let me down so profoundly?

The relationship never worked out the way I *needed* it to, and no matter what I prayed, I seemed to be pushed farther and farther from the happiness and freedom I craved. It was not until working with a sponsor in this program, that I began to see that the source of my anger was against myself.

Under all of those other people and unanswered prayers was the person I wish I could have been, but that I simply wasn't. I was not who my qualifier wanted me to be. I wasn't who I wanted to be.

I had lost control. And the most terrifying admission was that I was powerless. I did not want to be powerless over so many things, all of the people who I loved and

cared about. But coming into the rooms, I met people who were genuine and kind even though I was powerless.

Gradually, I began to let that love into my heart, realizing that if God had put them in my life, and was still giving me an opportunity to build a healthy life with new, better relationships, then He had probably forgiven me.

With this "head knowledge," I still instinctively hated myself and expected myself to find the power I didn't have. My sponsor finally confronted me with my unwillingness to forgive myself.

I can still remember her telling me with heat in her voice, "So you're more powerful than God then? He forgave you, but you still don't forgive yourself?"

I had finally heard something that helped me identify the source of my inability to forgive myself - my pride.

Returning to the rooms day after day and continuing to work the Steps with a sponsor, I let that self-hate go like an autumn tree sheds leaves.

Eventually they all dropped off and I could walk around free and

clean. Today, when opportunities to get angry at myself or others come up, I take them straight to the Program (a meeting or my sponsor). I do the 4th Step.

I don't want that old, dead junk cluttering up the clean, spacious place this program has given me.

I usually find that I am being unreasonable in my expectations toward myself (i.e. the time I expected to learn how to be a computer programmer within a few weeks) or others (i.e. expecting my parents or co-workers to be healthy and mature when they do not have a program or a desire for a Higher Power). This program helps me "stay in my own hoola-hoop" one day at a time and let the things that used to cause resentments slip off me like water off of a duck's feathers. Gentleness and forgiveness with others was something I never thought I could get, and I was shocked most of all to find that it had to start with myself. I never could have gotten there on my own. Thank God for this program and this beautiful, fun fellowship.

— Liz B, TEXAS

## One of My Favorite Topics

Forgiveness is a favorite topic for me. I also appreciate this recovery forum to participate in by writing and thinking about recovery and sharing.

When I first got into Twelve Step programs, I attended a great workshop on unconditional love and forgiveness. It gave me a great format that I try to use when I get

into resentments. I have to recognize my unmet expectation when I wish a person, thing or situation was different. I have to really let go of that expectation and give up getting that need or want met by that person, place or thing. I have to then feel God's love for me, really feel the unconditional love inside me. Then I get to "forward" that love

to the person, place or situation, and really feel it go out to them.

It is God's unconditional love and forgiveness moving through me that makes it possible. It is healing and freeing. A favorite realization on this topic is the fact that forgiveness and reconciliation are two separate things.

I often confuse the two, taking

forgiveness on my part to assume that I'm ready to let that person "move back in" to that place where the "harm" occurred, often without any work on their part to change, as if change were even possible.

Just because someone says they won't do something anymore doesn't mean it is that easy, especially when it comes to abuse and especially when the person does not see it as a problem and is not likely to get help for it.

I do not need to reconcile to forgive. I let God be the judge, jury and prosecutor. Ideally, I get to protect myself by removing myself from unhealthy, abusive and harmful people. I still struggle with getting out of unhealthy relationships. It can be dangerous for me to reconcile or use forgiveness as a reason to stay in harm's way. A big part of what I am learning is the absolute need to feel the feelings from harms. I often try to use my ideal desire for forgiveness to put off dealing with feelings. I am sitting on a lifetime of family and relationship issues.

In my family of origin there was a lot of emotional abuse, emotional incest, verbal abuse and neglect that is likely at the root of much of my issues that brought me to S.L.A.A. The feelings have been festering, and I need to take a more thorough Fourth Step about these relationships and work through the feelings that would have been appropriate for me to feel at the time.

Feeling all these old, stuck feelings is an important process and a need I have that a sponsor is helping me to identify.

I have to find ways to express those feelings through writing unsent letters. I have to share my experiences with someone who can help me choose appropriate feelings about them that were too painful to feel and deal with at the time and to feel them now, one at a time. I didn't feel things



appropriately.

I was traumatized, scared to show emotion, emotionally abused, invalidated, numb, self-deprecating, intoxicated, too busy, codependent, addicted, and I used acting out as an identity. The unfelt feelings take up a lot of space in my life and it's exhausting keeping them at bay. Unfelt feelings also come up in inappropriate ways. I probably choose relationships similar to those I had with my abusive family members out of unfinished business, familiarity, or a need to do things differently this time because I have not allowed myself to really go there and process the original feelings.

I suppose getting out of enmeshment with these people I had primary relationships with is helping me to feel safe enough for the feelings to start to bubble to the surface, and it's happening.

My inner child has really had a lashing, and I have adopted a lot of the same techniques I was abused with as self-harm.

It will probably take a lifetime

to mend, God willing. There is nothing like stopping acting out for the pain to rear its head to be dealt with. I learned to act out as a very young child, and not too much has changed in my acting out MO. I have to forgive myself.

My abusive family members also have hurt, scared and wounded inner children, and I get to visualize giving them hugs and love and putting them in my heart. I also still have some angry feelings towards them that I need to deal with in a healthy way that will result in healthier boundaries without enmeshment, codependency, or people pleasing. Direct confrontation is not going to be fruitful because they are not likely to own their part or validate me. And I can't act out my feelings on them or innocent surrogates anymore. I have to be willing to forgive and take responsibility for my feelings.

One of my bottom lines my S.L.A.A. sponsor helped me identify is to not tolerate abuse. This has been a crucial boundary for me to keep in my recovery. It's

helped me identify and get out of abusive relationships, but sometimes not soon enough, so I've put myself in harm's way.

I've gravitated towards narcissistic verbal and emotional abusers. I've also sacrificed self-respect and self-love for sex and "love."

Part of my S.L.A.A. Fourth Step was to write about each of my primary relationships and how I acted outside of my moral compass in each one.

This helps me to stay on my side of the street. And often, when I incurred harm in those relationships I participated in, making direct amends is not ideal because this could bring harm to me by being involved with abusers.

So, I keep them in daily prayer and ask for God's divine will in their lives and I try to act in ways

to protect myself so neither of us have to practice abuse dynamics again. This is where I find myself today.

In the end, if I am taking others' harms too personally, I'm being self-centered. I am also responsible for taking care of how I've been affected, and healing the harm is most often not going to come from the person who caused the harm. I can't find another similar person to try to help me mend it and get it right this time. I can't convince the neglecter/abuser/bully to love me.

Forget it. I can't keep taking on shame because of what happened to me as a child. God did not create me for that.

It was never my shame to own, it was the abusers' shame. And I have a lot of suppressed rage I have some hope I can finally deal with. This is many years in the

making.

I know edging out the acting out behaviors and detaching with love is finally making these feelings from harm that was done to me safe to feel. I have to let this stuff come up and create some healthier boundaries. I have to love and reparent myself.

Forgiveness is absolutely a goal I have (and I fall short of) for all interactions, no matter what. I used to beat myself up, and probably still do, and have a critical nature.

I pray daily for discernment, acceptance, and praise. I end my day with a mental list of what I did right today, which helps me practice self-forgiveness and gives me peace of mind to fall asleep quickly.

— ANONYMOUS

## How I Have Learned to Forgive

I needed to forgive my mother, as I suspect so many of my fellows do, too. She is 90 now and I had deeply resented her for decades. She said a horrendous thing to me when I was 10 and struggling terribly with a move the family made. It scored my heart and my soul (and may have proved an unfortunate and sad self-fulfilling prophecy).

I attended a Back to Basics Step study and shared the resentment with my sponsor. "You wanted her to stay home," she wisely said. (The move had included the necessity for my mother to return to full-time work.) It was true and so simple. (Why had I not seen it?)

The effect of that inventory was

that I was able to see what my mother had, in fact, given me. There were many material rewards she provided — no small feat with eight children. The upshot was that I was able to write in essence an amends letter to her in which I listed the many things she had given me. I met her on her terms; not mine. I paired the writing with a beautiful card that showed a painting of a mother and child together. I gave it to her for Mother's Day and she had it framed and mounted it on her wall. It meant that much to her.

In another inventory, I found I still harbored resentment toward her for her practice of endlessly

repeating stories from her Irish childhood. I had listened to them since I was 7 and had had it. Sharing it with another member (the efficacy of the 5<sup>th</sup> step) proved highly effective.

I find today that I am actually able to listen to the stories—really listen and comprehend them. It's truly miraculous. Today, I can honestly say that the fierce resentment toward her has been alleviated. What has become crystal clear to me now is how deeply I love her and am attached to her. It was always that way, I just could never see it because my mind was full of fury.

— CHRISTINA

# Had to Forgive Myself First



Spring is a time of renewal and rebirth for me. It is also when I got sober in more ways than one. This year I celebrate 24 years sobriety in the beverage program and 14 years sobriety in this program. I am well aware that I could not be sober today if I had not learned to forgive myself first and give myself a second chance.

In March 1994 I was picked up on the corner of a street with just the clothes on my back and taken to a private rehab in a chalet 50 miles north of the city. It was one of the best days of my life as my return to sanity began.

The question I asked myself when I hit bottom with medicators

and a woman half my age beating me up was, "What is a mature professional woman doing in a situation like this?" The answer that came to me was, "I must be under the influence." The next thought was, "I think I need rehab." It was that simple.

Immediately I called a therapist that I had not seen in years and asked for help. The rest is history but really it has been one day at a time. I was blessed to be in a three-week rehab that used the 12 Steps and drama therapy.

At that time I could admit that I was an alcoholic and accepted that I could not drink ever again.

My other addictions had to wait until my mind was clear enough to

see the many coping strategies/addictions that I had developed over decades that had stopped working for me.

For an over-achiever who had done life my way and managed to burn the candle at both ends while becoming Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde, I could not fathom how I had sunk so low.

I mean I was a health professional with credentials, I had been making a lot of money and even been a professor and head of a department at a major university. How could I ever return to my professional life and earn a decent living again?

What I found was that it was first by forgiving myself; letting go

of all the judgments, high expectations, perfectionism and that I was worthy of a second chance. Best of all, I did not have to do it alone.

I was fiercely independent for 30 years and look at where that got me. I found a Higher Power that loved me just as I am; and, that I was forgivable to the degree that I turned my will (thoughts) and my life (actions) over and stayed right-sized.

When I realized that I was forgivable then I could begin the process of forgiving others.

I did what was suggested and got sponsors (for each 12-Step program), went to meetings and more meetings, stepped up to

service plus worked the 12 Steps over and over again.

Each year/time I work the 12 Steps I get an opportunity to forgive myself and others again; especially with long-held or new resentments (that creep up on me without my knowledge at times). When I do this I take responsibility for my life and stop blaming others for what I have done.

In early sobriety I read the following, "Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that crushed it." (Mark Twain) This resonated with me. I was not born an addict and I am not responsible for the traumatic childhood I endured. However, I

am responsible for who I am today.

When I forgive myself or someone else I am really saying I accept and love them/myself as they are/I am and I am willing to let go of any hard feelings (anger, fear, guilt, shame). Part of forgiveness is keeping myself safe in all my relationships (family, friends, partner, service and professionally) and this means boundary setting, owning what is mine. I get to practice the character asset of forgiveness on a regular basis and for that I am grateful.

— RITA H., MONTREAL

# Long Road to Forgiveness

**M**y name's Aza and I'm a love addict and anorectic. My road to forgiveness was long and not at all straightforward. As a child of an alcoholic I began my road to recovery in several Twelve-Step programs before I joined S.L.A.A. I struggled with low self-esteem and the conviction that nothing would go right in my life, because how could it? Negative messages from my past that I'm sure to fail in everything I do had taken root in my head. Particularly in my relationships with the people closest to me: my mother, father, boyfriends and husband.

I brought to life those self-fulfilling prophecies of failure.

I wasn't able to talk about what I felt and I reenacted painful family patterns: a relationship with an alcoholic, then marriage to a drug addict.

When I felt entangled in a

situation which I judged I couldn't get out of, I ran away to the next relationship.

The carousel was spinning quicker and quicker, I was running from myself and couldn't look truth in the eyes.

My awakening only occurred after a very painful fall. I had a three-year-old son then.

I thought I'd met a wonderful person, that my dreams about intimacy would be fulfilled.

I didn't completely believe in those dreams. They quickly turned out to be a delusion and a mirage. My partner turned out to be a sex addict, and I unconsciously chose him to recreate my learned scripts of betrayal and failure.

Ironically, it all began at meetings of a Twelve-Step program. Now I know it's called "Thirteenth-Stepping."

My relationship with a sex addict was such a shock for me

that I decided to work the Steps in S.L.A.A.

My eyes began to slowly open. All my life I'd searched for love and acceptance from people who couldn't give it to me.

I couldn't even – while already working the 12 Steps – give myself what I needed, meaning attention and acceptance. I kept looking for ideal love and a partner who would become for me what my now deceased alcoholic father had never been.

Even on the Third Step it was hard to unconditionally trust my Higher Power, trust that my Higher Power really looks after me and that I don't have to feverishly look for a career any longer.

I understood all of that when I began to work the S.L.A.A. program. Also, the subject of forgiving others, particularly my father and mother, and myself were foregrounded then.



I was carrying resentment and pain in my heart: why did this have to happen to me? Why was I born into a family where my father's alcoholism and his absence took first place?

It seemed to me then that forgiving meant admitting defeat and that it would totally destroy me.

I still hated my father for what he had done: not being in my life. At the same time, I obsessively looked for partners as unavailable as he had been. I thought I could save them and that they'd join me on the right road.

Today I know I don't have any influence on other people, and the only person I can change is me.

I made peace with my father

standing over his grave. I forgave him and also entered therapy to soothe the pain and regret for what might have been. I also forgave myself for my harmful behavior. That was even more difficult than forgiving my father.

When my ex-husband committed suicide, I was tormented by guilt. It was just after I'd completed my Ninth Step (amends). I thought: If only I'd stayed with him... Working the program helped me forgive myself for leaving him. I'm glad I apologized to him for my behavior before he died.

Today I know that my Higher Power has forgiven me, so I can also forgive myself.

Without a Higher Power I

couldn't have done that.

What's more: I believe that nothing I might do, no mistake I might make in the future, is capable of cutting me off from my Higher Power.

I've completely turned over my life and all the miracles that happen to me every day. I don't worry about what may happen tomorrow. I'm only human and it's human to make mistakes.

That doesn't mean that I deliberately give up on honesty or the willingness to work on myself. I simply trust that whatever may happen I'll always find the way home.

—Aza

# Letting Go of Guilt and Fear

I grew up in a dysfunctional family. I experienced emotional and physical violence.

Ever since I can remember I always felt unwanted and unloved. My parents used all sorts of punishments.

They didn't believe that even unimportant things should be forgiven. They weren't inclined to drop punishments.

I left home when I was 18. Every day I'd dreamed about leaving the place where I'd suffered so much. My heart was frozen. I didn't feel much, but the hate I felt for my abusers dominated.

In order to begin searching for help I first needed to experience the bottom of addiction. I had no choice and had to return to my past. Anger was eating me up from the inside, I longed for revenge, thinking it would bring me relief. I began to be seriously sick, for example suffering depression, neuroses and many psychosomatic maladies.

The 12-Step program arrived to help me. I found out that you have to prepare for forgiveness like you do for a mountain expedition and first you have to train a little.

You don't reach the summit right away. For me it's a process

that's been going on for years.

I felt relief when I heard that I don't have to feel guilty for experiencing anger towards my parents. I don't have to feel fear. I have the right to feel angry! Forgiveness means totally letting the debt go, selflessly, but to be able to do it, I first needed to forgive myself.

After a great struggle, I realized I wasn't capable of doing it unaided. I needed to open up to my Higher Power, my God, and let Him fill me up. It was a decision to stop fighting single-handedly.

Above all I saw the abuser inside me. Admitting the truth about myself – I mean about my own weakness, sinfulness, immaturity, addiction and limitations – enabled me to open up to the gift of self-forgiveness. One of the most important boundaries I had to put down was saying “no more” to the feeling of injustice that was still working inside me. I tried to become responsible for myself and my life. I wasn't interested in a passing feeling of relief, but in real freedom from being a victim.

Today I'm reconciled to the fact that forgiveness is a process measured in years.

From time to time emotional pain comes up and is connected

with all the feelings of being hurt and of being aware of consequences.

Feelings carry valuable information about the size of the hurt, but a conscious decision is needed for forgiveness.

Ever since I became more aware of myself and started practicing showing myself sympathy every day, openness to a new way of being in relationships has appeared.

More and more often I feel empathy and gratitude towards my parents; if only because they wanted me to be born.

For me, forgiving the debt I mentioned earlier means giving up the desire for compensation, grudges, or expectations that they still owe me something. I can now see them in a totally different light, as people who themselves were weak and damaged.

I believe I'm going in the right direction when I stop wanting to punish myself and others and stop wanting to avoid responsibility for the mistakes that I've made.

I've started letting forgiveness in and I'm learning to love rather than waiting for it from others – like my parents.

— MIRIAM

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The S.L.A.A. Basic Text eBook  
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# Writing Helps to Let the Past Go

I've learned that forgiveness is a process with many layers. What helped me peel away those layers most is a guided audio meditation on forgiveness, journaling, and asking Higher Power (God, to me) for help. Throughout working a program of recovery in S.L.A.A., the most remarkable thing I've learned about forgiveness is that the one who needs it most is me.

Every time I think I have moved beyond guilt, shame and regret for the lifelong consequences of this disease and my behavior while active in my addiction, another layer surfaces and there I am, back to the drawing board, asking God for the grace and wisdom to let the past go. Journaling seems to help immensely; once I put feelings into ink on paper they're out and

**When all is said and done, I guess you can say I've learned to forgive by God's example. If God loves us unconditionally, who am I to argue?**

release more easily. And every time, Higher Power brings me the clarity to see where I'm still judging myself.

Boy do I have quite a judge!

I've recently decided to retire my judge (and jury if they're in there too) once and for all. I'd like to simply "live from the heart", which I define as living from my connected essence with Higher Power, without the psychological and intellectual baggage of attachment, grievance and recrimination. I'll probably fail at this too and need to ask for help again, maybe on a daily basis. But, that's okay because no one is sitting in judgment of me more than I am.

So when all is said and done, I guess you can say I've learned to forgive by God's example. If God loves us unconditionally, who am I to argue? I've learned to forgive by learning to love myself.

**— KAREN T., PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL**

## I Can Stop Harming Myself With Resentment

I forgive for myself. It's the resentments I've held onto that keep me sick. My thinking becomes obsessed with what "he" or "she" did, and I block my Higher Power and my Higher Power's way of life. Forgiving someone might mean that I still am in some kind of a relationship with them. Or in the case of someone who I dated who was just not available, I forgive and release any negativity I felt towards him and also release myself from the relationship.

Today I forgive people, but I do not forgive behaviors.

I believe I have forgiven men who emotionally, verbally, or sexually mistreated me; those who were on my resentment list in my S.L.A.A. 4th Step. Whereas I used

to forgive and forget, today it's also important for me to remember what happened. If I see someone I'm dating exhibit unhealthy behaviors that I put up with before recovery, I can release myself from the person, so I do not have to become sick again.

As I learn in another program I work, forgiving doesn't mean I condone someone's behavior.

I don't have to like the behavior and I usually get to choose how much I'll participate with someone whose behavior has been hurtful for me.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change: people will do things I don't like and I'm likely to develop resentments.

The courage to change the

things I can- how far will I go with the resentment? Will I let it harm me or can I let it go?

Does letting go of that resentment for whatever the perceived harm include letting go of my relationship with the person? (Or if it's a family, Program or work relationship that will continue how might I need to adjust my own boundaries so as not to invite further hurt?)

And the wisdom to know the difference- I guess even once I'm in a healthy and successful partnership I'll still have resentments at my partner, so I want to proceed remembering I want to be healthy, emotionally sober, happy, joyous and free.

**— ANONYMOUS**

# Letter to Qualifier

Dear Qualifier,  
I recently found a 12-Step program called Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous and I realize I need to forgive you.

I believed I loved you and therefore expected you to love me in the same fashion. I forgive you for not loving me in the manner that I demanded.

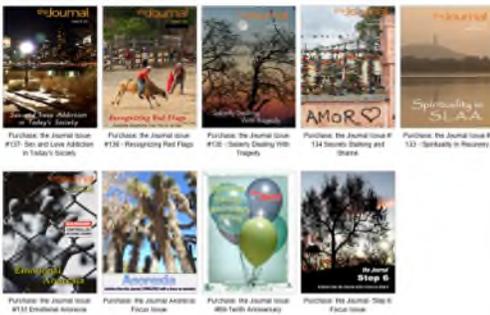
Since we were a couple, I thought we had to coordinate our schedules and put each other first for weekend activities. I forgive you for being an individual and wanting to own your own weekends.

After learning of my recovery programs, you also wanted recovery and began attending your own recovery program. Since we were both in recovery, I thought we were both healthy and would, of course, have a healthy relationship. I forgive you for not recovering at a pace that was acceptable to me.

Since God had brought us together, I figured we were just meant to be together. I forgive you for not taking our relationship for granted.

**CONNIE J, WI**

## Single issues of the e-journal

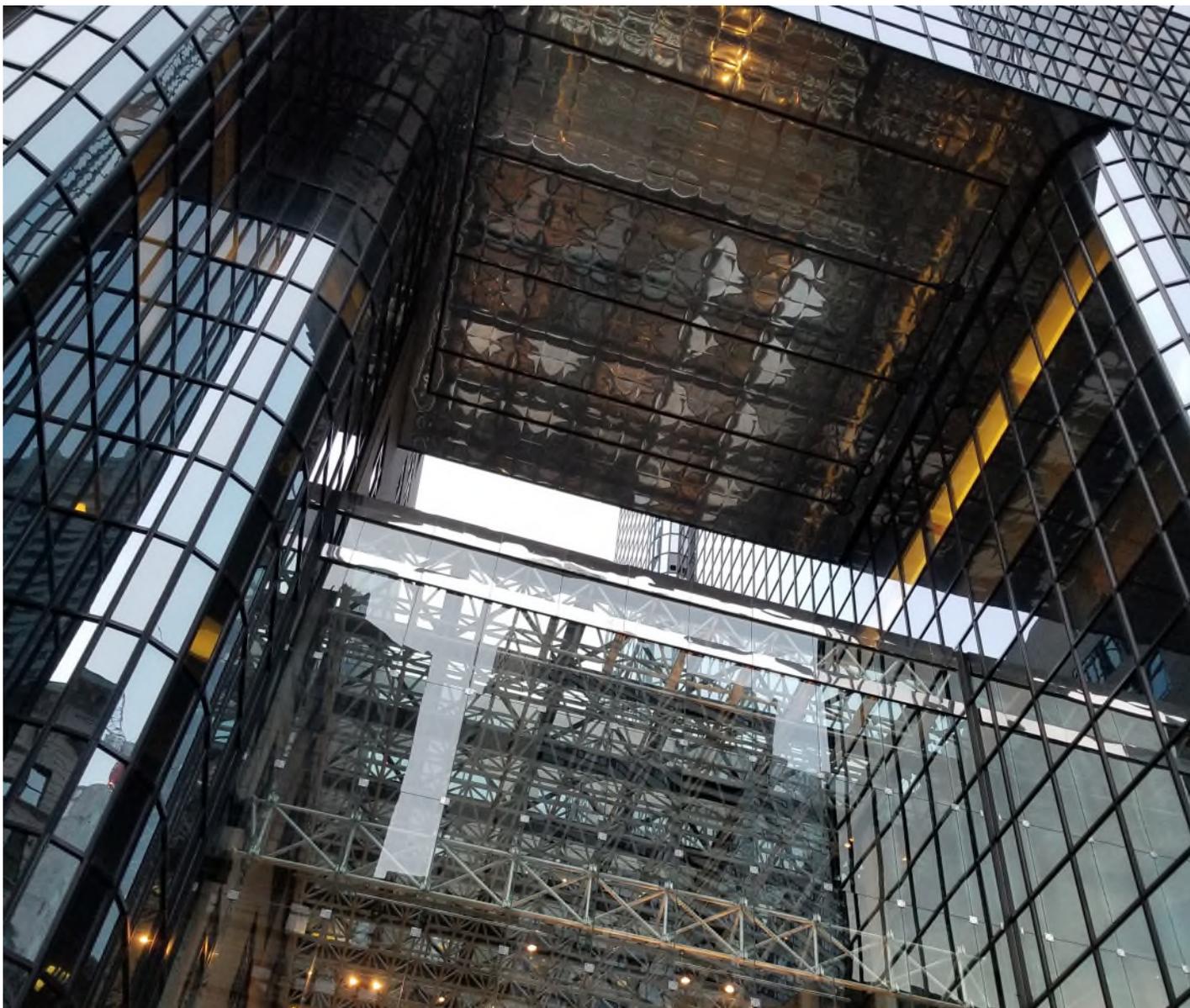


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The Journal is a meeting in a magazine. It can be used: To read at meetings, To find experience, strength and hope while on vacation, To read with sponsees, To stay connected to the program. Topics now available: #154 — Ready for Sponsorship? — #153 — Secrets Versus Privacy: How Do We Tell the Difference? — #152 — Strengthening Healthy Boundaries — #151 — Sober at the Holidays — #150 — Program Crush: Sexual and Emotional Intrigue at 12-Step Meetings — #149 — \*\*ABM issue Diversity — #148 — Breaking Up... with a Sponsor — #147 Fantasy Versus Reality — #146 After Sober Dating — #145 Addiction in the Age of Technology — #144 Sex and Love Addiction: What is Real? — #143 How Do Newcomers Become Old-timers — #142 Safety in Meetings — 141 Developing True Intimacy — #140 Cross Addictions — #139 Working with Character Defects — 138 Family Issues — 137 Sex and Love Addiction in Today's Society — 136 Recognizing Red Flags — #135 Soberly Dealing With Tragedy — #134 Secrets Stalking and Shame — #133 Spirituality in Recovery — #132 Emotional Anorexia **Step 6 Focus Issue** - S.L.A.A. members share their experience strength and hope in working Step 6. **Anorexia Focus Issue**- S.L.A.A. members share their experience strength and hope around anorexia. **#60-Tenth Anniversary** - Stories about sex and love addiction written by S.L.A.A. members in 1999.

# The Gift of Forgiveness



I had a difficult time forgiving people before 12-Step programs because I always thought forgiveness meant allowing harmful people back into my life and letting them hurt me again. Forgiving my boyfriend for hitting me meant sex and more physical abuse. This was never real forgiveness anyway. It was

just an illusion. I acted like I forgave when I got back together with him and stayed in that painful, dangerous situation of having a relationship with an abuser.

But the definition of forgiveness is to cease to feel resentment against (an offender) or to grant relief from payment of.

I always expected reimbursement for my pain. He was going to make good on his promises some day and make it all up to me.

Sex numbed me out but didn't take away the anger I secretly felt. (I had to keep my resentments hidden for fear of the dangerous repercussions if they saw the light of day.) Learning to have

healthy boundaries, practicing self care and trusting God helped me to know that I never had to fall into that hole of fake forgiveness again.

The 12 –Step process of setting resentments on paper in the 4th Step, revealing them to God and another human being who understands in the 5th Step, planning amends in the 8th Step and making amends in the 9th Step helped immensely in learning how to forgive myself and others. There was one amends experience that really accelerated my ability to forgive. It was with a co-worker. Before I joined A.A. and got sober in 1996, I partied with my co-workers.

One of them, D–, became my good friend because he was always trying to rescue me from myself. Once, when I tried to drive drunk at 2 a.m. to see my boyfriend who lived an hour away, D– threw me over his shoulder to prevent me from leaving a party. I never acted out with D– (although we attempted a foursome that none of us really wanted to go through with, so it didn't happen).

Our cubicles were next to each other so we talked about world news all day long. It was always light and fun between us. But after the foursome attempt, things got awkward. We bickered a lot. I got angry at him a lot. The A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book says that we were often adult children who expected to be rescued or tried to control everyone to meet our incessant demands. I expected too much from D– and it angered me when he didn't always rescue me or meet my demands.

Always the practical joker, D– set up an elaborate joke one day to fool me. I enjoyed eating popcorn from the office vending machine. D– hated the smell of imitation butter that filled the office whenever I microwaved the popcorn. Hours after I had eaten

and forgotten about the snack, a news blast appeared in my email as if it had come from a reputable news organization. It said that the brand of butter-flavored popcorn that I had just eaten was recalled because the flavoring was found to cause Parkinson's disease.

I had a mini panic attack and asked D– if he thought I should make myself throw up. He finally told me it was a joke. I felt foolish and belittled. All we did was argue after that. I went to human resources and asked to have my desk moved away from D–. An avalanche of accusations and letters that went into our personal files followed. It ended when my desk was moved and I was reprimanded. I was convinced D– was trying everything in his power to get me fired for the year following all of this. I joined A.A., got sober and got to my 8th Step during that year. My sponsor told me I had to make amends to D– and that I had to put out of my mind all the wrongs he had done to me and only focus on changing my own behavior. She said D– was spiritually sick and probably wouldn't change but I needed to keep my side of the street clean, admit I was an alcoholic and admit that I had done things to hurt the relationship. I was convinced that, armed with the knowledge that I was an alcoholic, if I revealed anything to D– he would surely see to it that I would get fired.

My sponsor said if I didn't let go of this resentment and trust God in the form of a face-to-face amends, I would surely drink again and to drink again would mean death.

I prayed about it for a week but was still too fearful of losing my job. When finally the voices in my head telling me to make the amends or I would drink became too loud to ignore, I asked him to step outside the office with me so we could talk. I said, "I'm an

alcoholic. I'm working a Twelve Step program and I need to make an amends for my behavior last year." He said he was familiar with A.A. and always knew I had a drinking problem. He was happy that I was getting help because he always loved me as a friend. The past year full of animosity melted away in an instant. He hadn't been sitting there plotting my demise and secretly stewing in resentment the way that I had. My feelings had only hurt me in that time period.

I saw my own contribution to all of our problems—which were mostly of my own doing because I was in so much pain and really didn't know how to live life and interact with other human beings.

We went back to work and I felt lighter and happier than I had in a very long time. We started interacting at work with respect for each other. We slowly became friends again. I was much more of an adult in the relationship thanks to my Twelve Step work. We had much more of a give-and-take friendship.

I no longer needed rescuing from him and he didn't need to live up to any unrealistic expectations that I had in the past. We forgave each other. Two months later my supervisor got another job and D– stepped into the position. I can't even imagine the hell that I would have been in if D– and I hadn't forgiven each other! I probably would have quit. Instead we had a really great working relationship for the next couple of years and I even attended his wedding.

I wished him well when he left the company and even think fondly of him today because he was my first insight into the power of transformation that comes with forgiveness and amends.

I look for the gift of forgiveness in every area of my life today.

—ANONYMOUS

# Share space

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## An S.L.A.A. Online Meeting

SLAAOnline is a 12 Step, 12 Tradition Intergroup of meetings of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. Online meetings of SLAAOnline take place in realtime in text-only chat, 3 times daily. Please see our website at: [SLAAOnline.org](http://SLAAOnline.org) for meeting days, times, and also helpful information such as acronyms which are used during the meeting.

We suggest that shares be about our experience, strength and hope in using the 12 Steps and the Tools of Recovery in our 24-hour experience. We suggest that all shares be SOLUTION-FOCUSED, in which we share our growth and recovery, even through the difficult times.

Our group conscience guidelines and meeting format encourage active listening...meaning "greeting" and "thanking" sharers, and making short encouraging comments such as, "WTG", "GFY", "nodding" or "relate" [during the meetings]. Participation is appreciated.

The #SLAA room is to be considered as a 24/7 informal chat meeting. While the regularly scheduled meetings take precedence over the informal chats, the room always falls under the Traditions and is therefore treated as a "meeting in progress" at all times, and group conscience guidelines apply - <http://slaaonline.org/guidelines>.

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\*All the names of members during this live S.L.A.A. meeting have been removed and replaced with: "@@@" for the sake of anonymity. The individual who is sharing has agreed to publish this share in the Journal, and is using a Nickname for the sake of anonymity.

[09:45] <@Lotus> Lotus here, sex and love addict

[09:45] <@@@> Hi Lotus

[09:45] <@Lotus> glad to be in a meeting

[09:45] <+@@@@> Hi Lotus

[09:45] <@Lotus> you guys are my peeps

[09:45] <+@@@@> :)

[09:45] <+@@@@> Hi Lotus

[09:45] <+@@@@> Hi Lotus

[09:45] <+@@@@> :)

[09:45] <+@@@@> hi Lotus

[09:45] <@Lotus> no one else understands what it's like to have this disease

[09:45] <+@@@@> hi Lotus

[09:45] <+@@@@> nods

[09:46] <@Lotus> but I think they [family and friends] kinda have a clue after all my unhappy marriages!

[09:46] <@Lotus> ugh I used to have so much shame about it

[09:46] <@Lotus> I was never involved with anyone who was capable of intimacy  
[09:46] <@Lotus> and the big surprise to me  
[09:46] <@Lotus> is that I was the one who was incapable of intimacy  
[09:46] <@Lotus> that's why I chose them [my qualifiers]  
[09:47] <@@@@@> nods  
[09:47] <@@@@@> understands  
[09:47] <@Lotus> when I got married again, for the last time...  
[09:47] <@@@@@> relates  
[09:47] <@Lotus> I had a couple of years of recovery  
[09:47] <@Lotus> had worked the steps in a big way  
[09:47] <@Lotus> and because of that hard work  
[09:48] <@Lotus> I believe...God put this healthy partner in my life  
[09:48] <@@@@@> :)  
[09:48] <@Lotus> suddenly I wanted intimacy more than anything  
[09:48] <@@@@@> gfy  
[09:48] <@Lotus> it's been such hard work for me  
[09:48] <@Lotus> because deep down inside I am scared to death of this intimacy  
[09:49] <@Lotus> my addict keeps wanting to sabotage it  
[09:49] <@Lotus> with being critical  
[09:49] <@Lotus> being jealous  
[09:49] <@Lotus> being suspicious  
[09:49] <@@@@@> :(  
[09:49] <@@@@@> relates  
[09:49] <@@@@@> safe hug Lotus  
[09:49] <@Lotus> being triggered by others because of lust  
[09:49] <@Lotus> but it's all good  
[09:49] <@@@@@> relates  
[09:49] <@Lotus> because HP is workin on it!  
[09:49] <@@@@@> yes

[09:49] <@Lotus> I trust Him today  
[09:50] <@Lotus> It's hard...but more and more  
[09:50] <@Lotus> the Steps are workin  
[09:50] <@@@@@> gfy  
[09:50] <@Lotus> they say in program...it works if you work it!  
[09:50] <@Lotus> I believe it's true  
[09:50] <@Lotus> right now I'm in the middle of yet another 4th step  
[09:50] <@Lotus> deeper than I've ever gone before  
[09:51] <@Lotus> taking a hard, hard look at myself  
[09:51] <@@@@@> gfy  
[09:51] <@Lotus> turning it all over to HP  
[09:51] <@Lotus> I'm completely powerless  
[09:51] <@Lotus> I'm glad I know that today  
[09:51] <@Lotus> so glad again, that all of you are here  
[09:51] <@Lotus> thanks for listening  
[09:51] <@Lotus> done  
[09:51] <@@@@@> thanks for your ESH, Lotus. so glad you're here.  
[09:51] <@@@@@> Thanks for sharing your ESH, Lotus. Glad you're here.  
[09:51] <@@@@@> Tyfs  
[09:51] <@@@@@> thank you much Lotus  
[09:52] <@@@@@> thanks for your share Lotus and your ESH  
[09:52] <@@@@@> thank you Lotus for your inspiring share  
[09:52] <@@@@@> Thank you for sharing, Lotus  
[09:52] <@@@@@> thanks Lotus for your inspiring share, very glad you're here

GFY = Good for you

HP = Higher Power

ESH = Experience, Strength and Hope

TYFS = Thank-you for sharing

# What is a/the Bottom-Line(s) in S.L.A.A.?

When I came into the rooms almost 18 years ago, I was told there is one bottom-line with a list of behaviors to stop doing as part of defining my sobriety.

With time I had a list of ten (10) behaviors/patterns that I identified as problematic for me and would represent a loss of sobriety in S.L.A.A. if I did any one, let alone two or more of them. (One time while attending an event in New York, I heard a woman say she had 62 behaviors on her bottom line.)

In May 2004, I lost my sobriety by acting out on one of my behaviors. Luckily within a week I recommitted to my program, did the *Renewal of Sobriety* pamphlet, redid the *40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis*, and got back to the basics...Steps 1, 2 and 3.

I had a new sobriety date and actually tightened my list of behaviors on my bottom line; e.g. no sex in a new relationship for 3 months became no sex outside a committed monogamous relationship (which for me takes at least six months to get to know someone well enough to commit).

Over the decades I have heard members say that he/she was sober from one bottom-line behavior for 3 years and another for 5 days.

This puzzled me, and I wondered how I could be sober on one and not another. So I decided I needed to look into the S.L.A.A. literature to see what exactly is a bottom line or bottom-line behavior(s).

Below is a compilation of what I found as well as clarity around other S.L.A.A. terms; e.g. “act(ing) out,” “personal sobriety date,” “slip,” and “abstinence.” Take

what you like and leave the rest.

## S.L.A.A. Basic Text

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### Chapter Two

P27. “Now that **bottom-line addictive behavior**, acting out sexually or engaging in romantic intrigue, was no longer going on, I was left without the payoffs toward which my entire life had been geared.”

### Chapter Four Step One

P72-73. “If, for example, we claimed that our “**bottom line**” addiction was engaging in exhibitionistic behavior, then in defining our pattern only as this specific practice we might kid ourselves that new, paid-for sexual liaisons actually were not part of our addictive pattern.

We would claim that such novelty actually was a step forward, because we were no longer engaging in purely solitary acts.

The opposite was true for those of us who labelled only blatant promiscuous behavior as addictive. We would engage in such solitary activities as masturbation, voyeurism, or exhibitionism, and claim that they were improvements because we were no longer involving others directly in our disease.

Such attempts were as futile as for an alcoholic to switch from beer to wine, or wine to beer, claiming either as an “improvement” over the other.

Those of us who tried to

deceive ourselves in the way we defined our sex and love addiction either found ourselves slipping back into the old behavior or getting into real trouble with our new “steps forward.”

We learned the hard way there was no such thing as half-surrender. The “freedom” to define our own addictive pattern could not be used in a self-serving way. Our addictions are a reality that persists regardless of any short-sighted, convenient definition. If we were leaving out of our personal definition some behavior that was addictive, it would certainly pull us back into the pattern again.

...The proof that our surrender was indeed unconditional was that we now **refrained**, one day at a time, **from every form of bottom-line behavior we saw as part of our own addictive pattern.**

...Each of us, regardless of individual circumstances, was now willing to go to any lengths, a day at a time, to stay unhooked. This decision was unilateral. ...We were willing to be available not to the next lover or new sexual fantasy, but to whatever might happen next within ourselves.

### Step Six

P84. “Hadh’t we given up enough when **we stopped all forms of bottom-line addictive behavior?**”

### Step Nine

P95. “...we were still on the path of recovery as long as we did not **act out in bottom-line behavior.**”

## Chapter Five

P105. "It also does not matter what the specifics of your own pattern of sex and love addiction have been, although it is important that you do identify your own pattern. Some of our patterns have included "one-night stands," frantic sexual liaisons with no emotional ties, or manic masturbation, exhibitionism and/or voyeurism. Others have involved obsessive intrigue with, or dependency on, one or many people (serially or concurrently) with the conviction that without an "other" we would be at death's door. Regardless of which pattern is yours, it has to stop....It is this point when you finally stop that really signals the start of your recovery in S.L.A.A., and the day on which it starts is your **personal sobriety date**.

P107. "What we have found is that **once we have recognized certain bottom-line behavior** which we know is addictive for us, and **refrain from acting out in these "bottom-line" ways on a daily basis**, we then discover numerous habits and traits of behavior and personality that have been addiction-related.

P111. "...and we felt ourselves thrown back into having to devote all our energy, once again, to **abstaining from addictive behavior at a "bottom line" level**, we once again felt the extent to which the roots of our sex and love addiction had infiltrated our very souls."

## Chapter Eight

P139. "To a great extent, we learned through trial and error as we **moved beyond focusing only on bottom-line sobriety** from sex and love addiction and began to ponder partnership with another."

**S.L.A.A. Pamphlets** (title page has no number/#)

Suggestions for Newcomers  
©1985

P2. A. "Define your bottom-line behavior."

**Bottom-line behavior is any sexual or emotional act which, once engaged in, leads to loss of control over rate, frequency, or duration of its recurrence, resulting in worsening self-destructive consequences....Staying away from this behavior defines your sobriety."**

Qs Beginners Ask ©1985

P1. *What is sobriety?*

"...There are no absolutes for sobriety in S.L.A.A. as individual patterns of sex and love addiction vary. However, each S.L.A.A. identifies for him/herself major addictive behavior which is personally relevant and **becomes "sober" by abstaining from this behavior** on a daily basis."

P2. *What suggestions does S.L.A.A. give new members?*

"**Define their bottom-line and addictive behavior.** They start now and add to it later if necessary. **This is the sobriety definition.**"

P3. *What is acting out?*

"...**Acting out patterns, and therefore "bottom-line" behavior**, can differ markedly among individual sex and love addicts. This acting out behavior can run the range from obvious promiscuity involving countless individuals, to solitary acts such as compulsive masturbation,

voyeurism, and exhibitionism, to obsessive commitments to fantasy and romantic intrigue. It may include hyper-dependency problems involving one (or many) individuals. **Some acting out patterns can involve all of the above, but more often a "bottom-line" acting out scenario highlights one or two major areas.**"

Withdrawal ©1995

P1. *What is Withdrawal?*

"A primary and critical step in beginning recovery from sex and love addiction is **identifying our bottom-line behaviors** – those activities from which we must refrain in order to attain physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wholeness."

Welcome ©1997

P5-6. *The Language of Recovery*

"**Abstinence.** A change in our behavior that involves stopping the addictive pattern – one day, sometimes one minute, at a time. Abstinence is a beginning point in sobriety.

**Bottom-Line Behaviors.**

Generally, self-defined activities which we refrain from in order to experience our physical, mental, emotional, sexual and spiritual wholeness.

**Sobriety.** Initially a state of abstinence from addictive bottom-line behaviors; often accompanied by the return of sanity, choice and personal dignity that comes from abstaining from bottom-line behaviors.

**Sobriety Date.** Generally, the date we stop engaging in our bottom-line behaviors."

Renewal of Sobriety ©2004

P1. "A **slip is a break in our continuous sobriety.** It means

we have acted out on a bottom-line addictive behavior....

Often, admitting a slip while sharing or “getting current” at a meeting may not be enough to put us solidly back on the road to sobriety.

In order to regain our sobriety, we have found it necessary to surrender, ask for help, and commit once again to abstinence from bottom-line addictive behaviors....

**If we slip, it is suggested that we begin a new period of sobriety** with the help of our Higher Power and our sponsor.”

### Setting Bottom-Lines ©2006

P1. “Bottom-lines are the boundaries between our addictive lives and...”

### P2. I. **Destructive Behaviors**

“...One way to begin determining our bottom-lines in S.L.A.A. is to list our destructive behaviors, which typically involve sex, love, romance, or unhealthy avoidance of these. Identifying the addictive activities we engage in helps us determine what not to do if we want to become sober in S.L.A.A.”

### P5. II. **Addictive Patterns**

“As you review your list of destructive behaviors, keep an eye out for similarities. You may begin to see certain patterns of acting out emerging. Maybe it’s the type of activity you pursue. Perhaps it’s the type of person you pursue. Possibly it’s the way that you create or alter your schedule to make time to act out?”

### P7. III. **Accessory Behaviors (warning signs)**

“You may notice other behaviors that are not destructive by themselves but serve your addiction. It is vital to be aware of the obsessions, rituals, and

triggers that have led to acting out. Look for behaviors that you are not sure belong on your bottom-lines or that have minor consequences. These are warning signs that you are in danger of acting out.”

### P9 IV. **Bottom-Line Behaviors**

“A “bottom-line” is derived

from a pattern – not necessarily any one specific activity. Additionally, a bottom-line needs to be clear enough so that it is obvious when it is crossed. If you’re struggling with finding a pattern, set a specific bottom-line anyway. It will get you started.”

Hope it helps,

— **ANONYMOUS, MONTREAL**



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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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