



the Journal

Issue # 180

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Practicing Principles
Over Personalities

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

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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In submitting such content to S.L.A.A., the member releases S.L.A.A., any other members of S.L.A.A. and S.L.A.A.'s officers, directors, employees and agents (collectively, the "Releasees") from any and all claims which the member may have against any of the Releasees in connection with the member's submission of content to the Journal.

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Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader,

I have to admit, I didn't really understand the question of the day for this issue. I think because politics always makes my head spin. But when I read the articles and answers to the question of the day in this issue, I understood. There's some really great insight into Tradition 12 in this issue. I can take the tools set forth into my Program life, family life and work life. I enjoyed reading this issue and hope you will too!

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “Practicing Principles Over Personalities: How do you practice principles over personalities in relationships during polarizing

political/social climates?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #181 — Nov./Dec. — “Anorexia and acting out: Please describe any experiences that have shown you that anorexia and acting out can be regarded as two parts of the same thing (sex and love addiction). These problems may seem unrelated but they are really two sides of the same coin.” — Deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2019. And #182 — Jan./Feb. — “Thank You A.A. Please take this opportunity to express gratitude for what the founders and foundresses of A.A./Al-Anon have gifted to the planet, as adapted by S.L.A.A.” — Deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2019. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

How do you practice principles over personalities in relationships during polarizing political/social climates?

I listen. It's not worth harming my relationship with someone I care about at pushing my views. It's not worth the stress created by trying to be right. I would rather have a relationship than to be right.

— JACK H. KATY, TX

I practice remembering what my role in any situation is and not making someone else's stuff my stuff.

— JACK S., TAMPA BAY

I pray for direction. I acknowledge the observation and possibly share it. I pray for those in conflict. I focus on the principles.

— ANNE K., TAMPA BAY

This is a difficult question. For me, this is an ongoing learning process. Some days it's easier and some days it's harder.

— SAM E., NY/NJ

Question of the day

Step work and tools help me with this and restraint of pen and tongue.

— KARA B., BROOKLYN/
MANHATTAN, NY

My sponsor has repeatedly reminded me that “the other side” (whoever it is) thinks they are just as right as I think I am. If “love and tolerance are our code,” as I learned in early recovery, prayer and distractions like exercise help a lot.

— MATT F., AUSTIN

Anonymity is at the core of this principle for me. Avoiding naming and focusing on the feelings and the idea, the experience rather than the trigger and the fear.

— ANONYMOUS

Remembering to pause is a big portion of my Program for many reasons. A quick prayer such as, “Help me. Help me. Help me,” usually helps me focus on the moment and act accordingly to my Program.

— RICK, CASTORVILLE, PA

The way I practice principles over personalities is often by realizing there is more than one way to look at an issue, backing off and seeking a neutral position to facilitate better understanding.

— ANONYMOUS

Refocus. Breathe. Speak. For me, listening and understanding the polar opposite is most difficult but necessary. If the discussion becomes polarized or degenerates, I breathe deeply and try re-entry. I try to reflect back what the other party says so that meaning is not lost in argument.

— IRV B., CONNECTICUT

How do you practice principles over personalities in relationships
during polarizing political/social climates?

I use deep breathing, and recovery tools to reconnect with the principle that I have power to use my voice. I do not have control over others.

— NANCY G., SAN DIEGO

Since the 2016 election in the U.S., I have been active politically. I was dating someone with similar views of the problem, but different ideas of the solution. We agreed to disagree. Eventually, the political differences – especially my active participation – broke us up.

— DAVE

Practicing principles over personalities in relationships is practiced by continuously expanding self-understanding of fellowship principles while constantly guarding the personal, social, and psychological needs of each person in the relationship with respect.

— RICHARD R., OMAHA, NE

My experience has been that a polarizing political and social climate raises all kinds of opportunities to develop new resentments and feed old ones. It's meant, for me, a need to focus on being open to hearing others' ideas and responding with kindness and openness. That said, I also need to hold my own boundaries when discussions become disrespectful or attacking. So, it's a balance that's required for me between openness to others and maintaining boundaries. In short, these times feel like a test of my emotional sobriety.

— SCOTT F., MILWAUKEE

To remind myself of what Bill W. (co-founder of A.A.)- and I will paraphrase here – said, “The primary result of the 12-Steps is ego deflation.” So, it's about practicing humility one day at a time.

— NED J., FL

Question of the day

Today, I am aware of my feelings (mad, sad, glad, fear, shame/guilt) and when I am triggered, one of my feelings will manifest in an exaggerated way such that I may overreact. What the 48 principles of S.L.A.A. (12 Steps, 12 Traditions, 12 Concepts, 12 Media Guidelines) help me do (as lived daily) is to practice these principles in all areas of my life.

— RITA, MONTREAL

I try to take a step back emotionally and focus on the issue at hand. With practice, in life and through service at meetings and intergroup, this has become easier.

— FIONA M., LONDON

Great topic. I would use the tools of the Program. Pause. Keep it simple. Find out how I can be helpful instead of harmful. Ask myself, "How important is it?"

— LINDSEY H.,
WEST PALM BEACH, FL

For me, it comes down to respecting the other person and not necessarily the message. I may not agree with what is said, but that does not mean I should disrespect the speaker.

— RICH K., WORCESTER, MA

I remember that I love the person's heart and not their opinion. Sometimes I avoid political conversation.

— ANONYMOUS

I don't check the news on my smart phone prior to going to meetings and say the serenity prayer to be in alignment and in contact with my Higher Power.

— ANONYMOUS

All of the Steps and Traditions are signposts along the road to recovery. I use them to guide me in all aspects of my life; they help me choose correctly as I navigate life today.

— SUSAN G.,
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

How do you practice principles over personalities in relationships
during polarizing political/social climates?

I say that nobody is perfect. The only perfect one is God. People might not tell me the truth. So, I don't need that kind of perfection!

— ANONYMOUS,
LOS ANGELES

It's difficult to practice this to be honest – oftentimes I feel myself being affected by other people's symptoms. Extending sympathy helps at times along with the reminder that everyone deals with sex and love addiction differently.

— ANONYMOUS, LOS ANGELES

I call my sponsor, pause before reacting. I speak from the "I" perspective. I have thorough conversations with my sponsor prior to any serious talk with others i.e.: mate, boss, family, friends.

— BILLY, LOS ANGELES

I try to practice compassion and I strive to put myself in someone else's shoes, when they have different socio-political views. I also try to separate how someone treats my friends and family, from what their beliefs are. When dating people of different races, I think before I speak.

— DAVID G., PALMS/CULVER CITY, CA

My first reaction is judgment. I immediately start there. When I (upon occasion) start from being present instead of being in my head, I can understand what others are talking about. Being present with good judgment is a great place to reside.

— STEVE W., LOS ANGELES

Question Keeps Focus on Principles

“Is this an outside issue?”



This has always been a good nonthreatening question to bring up when there is any question if something is an outside issue or not. It brings things back to principles over personalities. Though I live in a progressive portion of the Bay Area, having the pride march announced at the meeting is not an S.L.A.A. matter. It is certainly something that members may choose to

participate in, but it is a non-S.L.A.A. announcement.

Similarly, the secretary may re-read one of the guidelines if there seems to be something brought up in a meeting that is questionable. On one occasion, in a person's share in a men's meeting, the member cautioned that there were radical portions of the feminist community that were against men's only meetings. The secretary

did nothing more but reread the portion of the script that asked members to refrain from discussions of political opinions, religion, or other items not directly related to program. We did not need to question opinion that was

being put forth, we just needed to read the statement that was already in our script and let it be at that. We use a script in the meeting because scripts are hard to argue with.

— D.B., CAPITOLA, CA

Twelve Steps Help Heal Political and Social Polarization

A lot of media spokesmen have highlighted that social and political climates have become polarized in recent years. Watching a recent documentary on the 2008 financial crisis put some of these tensions in perspective, as political and social polarization is a consistent phenomenon after any recession.

It is healing to remember that the 12 Steps and Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous survived times of turmoil far beyond what I could probably imagine-- the Great Depression, World War II and the wars that followed in the 20th century, political corruptions in the U.S. and around the world. None of these earthquakes resulted in disruption of the foundation of the 12 Steps and their power to bring healing to people in this Program.

If anything, these sources of stress have driven people to

bottom-out in their diseases and into the rooms of S.L.A.A. and other 12 Step programs, where we find a real solution to our turmoil. Even now with election season coming up, I am driven to a new level of compassion as I see my fellows in the rooms of my women's home group. In a world that is always pointing out our differences, I see how each of my fellows just wants to be loved.

I need to have a way to be accepted and know that I am loveable, and I find that within the rooms of this recovery program. I can carry that peace to a splintering world, and it helps me love others to the best of my ability, regardless of their opinions on politics, religion or other lifestyle choices.

I am forever grateful for the warmth, comfort and joy that comes from the deep, accepting love within S.L.A.A.

— ANONYMOUS, PITTSBURGH, PA

Principles Before Personalities: An Interview

Lisa: How many years in the S.L.A.A. Program and/or years of sobriety do you have?

Dave G: I came into program in April of 2013 and so that was over 6 years ago. I have about 4 1/2 years of sobriety. My sobriety date is September 21, 2014.

Lisa: Please list the service work you have done in S.L.A.A. over the years (I know it's a lot!).

Dave G: I've done basically every job there is to do in a meeting. I've been speaker seeker, phone list person, literature rep, treasurer, secretary, intergroup rep. At intergroup I've been mail clerk, assistant treasurer, treasurer, and ABM delegate. At the FWS level I've been on the Conference Diversity committee, the Steps, Traditions and Concepts committee, the Public Information committee which I've chaired for a few years, the Conference Literature committee, which I'm currently co-chairing. I have been a member of the Board Finance Committee and the Conference Finance Committee. I think that's it.

Lisa: Cool! That's a lot!

The theme for this issue of the Journal is: "Practicing Principles Over Personalities: How do you practice principles over personalities in relationships during polarizing political/social climates?"

What principles of the program do you find difficult to put above personalities?

Dave G: There are times when people's definition of sobriety differs from mine. They make comments that I feel are inappropriate and I struggle to say to myself that each of us defines sobriety in our own way. I struggle when I feel someone isn't working a good program. I try to let go of judgment, but I have to remind myself because my initial response is judging. I have to come back and say, "I'm judging again."

Lisa: Yeah. I do that too.

In your time in program have you given up personal desires for the common good of S.L.A.A.? Is there an instance that stands out for you that you could describe here?

Dave G: Earlier in the program when I was abstinent but not really sober, there was someone at

a meeting that I was attracted to. She was going through rough times with one of her parents dying.

She needed comforting. I was being inappropriate, using that as an angle to be around her and get her attention. It became a struggle between trying to be of service and trying to make myself look good with the intention of pursuing her later on, after showing her what a good guy I was.

From that, and working with my sponsor, I realized that I needed to take a step back and even though there are members of the Fellowship that I am attracted to, that they are fellow addicts, still suffering. I do not seek any relationship with anyone in program because I feel that if they come to me for advice and I'm giving them advice with the motive of making myself look better, I'm not necessarily going to give them the best advice.

There are people from program that I've run into in my everyday life. I've had good conversations with them. They are age appropriate and seem to be sober. Under other circumstances, I might have asked them for coffee but because they are members of S.L.A.A., I just let it be friendship.

Lisa: I've seen you do a lot of really important service work for S.L.A.A. over the years without any compensation- how do you stay positive and continue to do so much work?

Dave G: I feel that the service work has been part of the key to my sobriety. There are times that I've been challenged by other things going on in my life and having service work helps me get grounded.

It got me to meetings when I didn't really feel like going to meetings. Having the responsibility of being treasurer for S.L.A.A. intergroup and secretary in another Fellowship's intergroup, I was held to a standard that I would have to tell the group if I had a slip. Not wanting to have a slip because I didn't want to have to admit it, kept me from doing slippery things.

Lisa: Have you ever dealt with or seen the secretary deal with outside issues - discussions of political opinions, religion, or other items not directly related to program - in a meeting?

Dave G: Yes. There have been times, especially in November of 2016 where there were a lot of people who were traumatized by the results of the election. People were expressing their feelings, but they were talking about an outside issue. There were some objections raised. They were dealt with by the secretary. Some meetings that I go to where books that are not conference approved but are relevant to our addiction are part

of the literature and we've made the conscious decision to include those as starting points for our discussion on sex and love addiction. We make clear to everyone that they are not conference approved. Sometimes people have claimed that reference to the Big Book of A.A. is an outside issue. In that case, the secretary of the meeting listened to the objection but overruled it and did have the meeting vote on it.

Lisa: How did the vote go?

Dave G.: There was probably one or two people who did agree with the person who said they didn't want to discuss the Big Book. But the majority of people were in favor of using the Big Book.

Lisa: Yes. In my opinion, that's a good example of using the Tradition that each meeting is autonomous and using group conscience to promote unity, applying the principles.

You have chaired many committees over the years. How have you dealt with outside issues?

Dave G.: They really haven't come up. The committees for the most part have been really focused on dealing with things that are for the good of the Fellowship. On the Steps, Traditions and Concepts committee it has come up in reference to some of the questions

that have come into the committee and for the most part we tell them that each meeting is autonomous and they should deal with it at the meeting level.

Lisa: Sometimes stepping down from a service commitment can be practicing principles before personalities. Has that happened in your experience? Can you tell us about it?

Dave G.: There have been times when I have felt that it was time to relinquish control. This happened more in another Fellowship where I'd been asked to stay on in a position and I felt it was time to move on in the spirit of rotation. What is that term about deacons from A.A.?

Lisa: "Do we become bleeding deacons or elder statesman?" I believe it says.

Dave G.: I didn't want to become a bleeding deacon. I had difficulty working with the person they chose to replace me. They did not run the meeting in the same way I would. Even though I like being part of that Fellowship, I did not continue on in intergroup in that Fellowship. I was getting too much into judgment. And I realized that that wouldn't have been a healthy place for me.

Lisa: Yes. That sounds like practicing principles before

personalities to me. The principle is to be of service and stay out of our character defects, I think.

Have you held back your opinion in instances where it would avoid conflict in service work even though you felt strongly about an issue?

Dave G: If I feel strongly about it, I usually speak up. If I have mixed feelings about it, I normally will keep quiet. Sometimes I will talk even though I haven't figured out my opinion just to try to help me figure it out. That has happened many times where I've started out saying, "Well, on this hand, I like this but on the other hand, I like that." As I talk about it and the principles of the Program, I get it and understand how I feel. But often if I don't have a well-formed opinion, I will keep quiet.

Some of my sponsees have different political views than I do, but because it is an outside issue I try to avoid political discussions with them – my job as a sponsor is to help them work the steps not to convince them of my political views.

Lisa: Have you had conflict arise?

Dave G.: It's gotten tense sometimes. But I don't think there's been any real conflict.

Lisa: Is there anything else about this topic that you would

add or questions that you would have asked about it?

Dave G.: The biggest thing I find in dealing with personalities is realizing that everyone has had their trauma and problems to deal with and sometimes they are striking out from a hurt position because of what has happened to them. That has made me much more empathetic to them and their position rather than judging or getting into conflict with them. I realize they are suffering and that they have had stuff happen to them that I don't know about. I try to be understanding of them and where they're coming from.

I also have to talk a little about working with sponsees. I was stuck in the middle of my Fourth Step when I was asked by someone to sponsor them. I consulted with my sponsor and he said I could work with him until they reached where I was in the Steps. I find that trying to teach someone something helps me to understand the principles more deeply. Hearing sponsees' Step 4 and 5 reminded me of similar incidents I had omitted from my first Step 4 and 5, and people I needed to make a Ninth Step amend to.

Lisa: Thank you so much for doing this. I appreciate that you took the time to do this interview.

Dave G.: No problem.

Principles Before Personalities

Certainly, this tenet is vital to the loving, accepting, compassionate spiritual nature of our program. Unless people are acting in inappropriate ways in meetings or around us, we need to accept them with arms wide open into the fellowship.

I have had many personal experiences with this concept in my relationship with other recovering folks. Just recently, I had to make the decision to limit my contact and discussion with another program member. It wasn't only that their political views were so different from mine

but that they were so unwilling to consider any other point of view at all. There was and is no middle ground. So, when we do see each other we talk about recovery, sports, family, etc. and avoid all political issues.

I've made many dear friends in the rooms. I also have many people who I care about deeply and respect whom I have no interest spending time with outside of the rooms. For both, I have time to listen and help if needed.

— BOB

An Invitation For You

Enlarge your recovery by allowing others to get the same benefit that you get from reading *the Journal*. It is a great way to carry S.L.A.A.'s message of hope and practice the Twelfth Step. The fellowship needs volunteers of all skills and levels of availability. Here's what you can do:

- Become a Journal Representative for your intergroup or home group, encouraging the use of *the Journal* as a source of topics, letting people know that there are Journals for sale, and ensuring that plenty of Journal subscription cards are always on the literature table. •

Visit a local organization that deals with sex and love addicts in your area, bringing copies of *the Journal* along with a few pamphlets. The institution may be a treatment facility, a judicial entity, a large recovery club that welcomes varied literature, or a hospital.

Contact info: <http://www.slaafws.org/contact/journaleditor>

Share space

S.L.A.A. Is My Prevention

The low self-esteem,
the lying and manipulation.
Who was I, what was I?
Uncontrolled fantasy and satiation.

This discovery of me,
it had a name.
But would this name cause me shame?

S.L.A.A. was found from
some online searching,
when I typed in low self-esteem,
and cheating on my husband.

This discomfort,
this sadness was so hard to bear.
But there is fellowship & friends,
who are always going to be there.

These new friends
were so honest & true.
They smiled and replied,
"Don't worry, me too!"

So many times, while I shared,
they could relate.
I realized I am not alone,
there's no need to escape.

I can do this, I want to change.
My behaviors were making me go insane.

A life with less drama,
a life with less pain.
I am not stalking or texting,
or going insane.

I found top-line behaviors,
to pray and sit still.
Five years ago,
I'd just want to take a happy pill,
the pill of sex,
the pill of any attention.
I am so grateful,
S.L.A.A was my prevention.

I could decide who I want in my life now.
And who was there for just a short while.
I have to remember that God has a plan,
even if it isn't my style.

To love myself,
and learn to be okay on my two feet
means falling, and getting up
crawling, when the road is too steep.

Reminding myself,
the pain won't always be there.
Stay sober, do service,
and I have a loving God who cares.

— ARI, NJ

Truth



A real-time share during a meeting in SLAAOnline (<http://www.slaaonline.org>). Names of others in the room are redacted for the sake of anonymity (replaced with *****)

[09:57] <@Lotus> Susan here sex and love addict
[09:57] <*****> Hi Susan
[09:57] <*****> Hey Susan
[09:57] <*****> Hi Susan
[09:57] <*****> Hi Susan
[09:57] <@Lotus> Honesty has always been a struggle for me
[09:57] <*****> hi Susan
[09:57] <*****> hi susan
[09:57] <*****> hi susan
[09:57] <Lotus> I have been one to embellish the truth in order to look good

[09:57] <Lotus> or be more interesting
[09:57] <*****> relates
[09:57] <@Lotus> white-lies
[09:57] <*****> Relates
[09:57] <*****> Hi Susan
[09:57] <*****> Hello Lotus
[09:58] <*****> relates
[09:58] <Lotus> the thing of it is...the Steps have helped me to get honest with myself (first), God and my sponsor, then others
[09:58] <Lotus> I never saw this character defect about myself before
[09:58] <Lotus> now I inwardly wince every time I start to tell a white lie.
[09:59] <*****> nods
[09:59] <@Lotus> I have learned HP cares about what comes out of your mouth
[09:59] <@Lotus> every word
[09:59] <@Lotus> He is listening
[09:59] <@Lotus> and is prompting me to speak the truth now
[09:59] <@Lotus> even if it makes me feel bad
[09:59] <*****> nods
[09:59] <@Lotus> and look bad
[10:00] <*****> nods
[10:00] <*****> it's very freeing to tell the truth
[10:00] <*****> Relates
[10:00] <@Lotus> and ultimately I get to deal with my deep down truth
[10:00] <@Lotus> I have low self-worth
[10:00] <*****> relates
[10:00] <@Lotus> and think I need to look better
[10:00] <*****> relates
[10:01] <Lotus> but the reality is, I am a child of HP's and I am enough just as I am
[10:01] <*****> relates totally
[10:01] <*****> Nods
[10:01] <@Lotus> today I cultivate God-esteem
[10:01] <@Lotus> instead of self-esteem, because self-esteem has never be enough
[10:01] <@Lotus> it's a struggle
[10:01] <*****> Gfy
[10:01] <@Lotus> more and more it's the truth:

[10:01] <@Lotus> I am loved and esteemed by HP
[10:01] <@Lotus> and that's enough
[10:01] <@Lotus> so glad I have this Program
[10:01] <@Lotus> and all of you
[10:02] <@Lotus> (((((Room)))))) thanks for listening
[10:02] <@Lotus> done
[10:02] <*****> Lovely share (((Susan)))
[10:02] <*****> tyfs Susan, glad you're here
[10:02] <*****> Thank you much Susan
[10:02] <*****> Awesome, thanks Susan. Great share
[10:02] <*****> Thanks for your ESH Susan
[10:02] <*****> thank you Susan
[10:02] <*****> So glad you are here tyfs
[10:02] <*****> thank you Susan
[10:02] <*****> ty hopeful Susan
[10:02] <*****> thanks for sharing ESH Susan, glad you are here,
love the God-esteem
[10:02] <*****> Safe hugs back tyfs Susan
[10:02] <*****> thank your for your great share Susan, so glad to
hear you
[10:02] <*****> Full of hope
[10:03] <*****> thanks Susan

*HP (Higher Power)

*tyfs (thank-you for sharing)

* (((((Room)))))) = hugs to everyone listening

Gfy (good for you)

ESH (experience, strength, hope)

The S.L.A.A. Basic Text eBook
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Higher Power and Needs

©1967 As Bill Sees It: Selected Writings of the Alcoholics Anonymous Co-Founder (Page 100) A.A. Comes Of Age p-52/53

When I was a child, I acquired some of the traits that had a lot to do with my insatiable craving for alcohol. I was brought up in a little town in Vermont, under the shadow of Mount Aeolus. An early recollection is that of looking up at this vast and mysterious mountain, wondering what it meant and whether I could ever climb that high. But I was presently distracted by my aunt who as a fourth birthday present, made me a plate of fudge. For the next thirty-five years I pursued the fudge of life and quite forgot about the mountain.

* * Share: I am reminded by this passage of a developmental theory — of a “hierarchy of needs.” We all need safety, food clothing shelter, etc. If we don't have those basic needs, we will only be focused on that and nothing else; If we have those, we can be concerned with our love needs. If we are loved, we can concern ourselves with the top or the pinnacle of existence- which is self

-actualization and Higher Power needs. For me, I could never get past my “love” needs. I was desperate for love. I didn't feel it from father. I discarded relationship after relationship because I didn't feel loved there either.

Then I realized, in coming to S.L.A.A., that feeling loved is an inside job. It's about Higher Power loving me and feeling secure in that. It's about letting His love wash over me- even about spilling over onto others. It's about being more concerned with loving others than in being loved. The love comes. Feeling loved doesn't happen when I'm looking for it from others; it happens in prayer, and in meditation. For me, it's not about self-love either, that was never enough, and it never will be. It's about being loved by Higher Power; pure and simple, and it's been enough. The love from others comes when I am not looking for it now because I am not a black hole of needs anymore (which actually prevents me from being loved). I'm so glad I'm here! I have found true love here with all of you. I will keep coming back.

— ANONYMOUS

Self-Searching

I recently read some writings from Bill W. one of the founders of A.A. He wrote something that really resonated with me:

©1967 As Bill Sees It: Selected Writings of the Alcoholics Anonymous Co-Founder (Page 10)

Twelve and Twelve p-98

Self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures. With it comes the development of that kind of humility that makes it possible for us to receive God's help. Yet it is only a step. We will want to go further.

We will want the good that is in us all, even in the worst of us, to flower and to grow. But first of all, we shall want sunlight; nothing much can grow in the dark. Meditation is our step out into the sun.

Letter 1946:

A clear light seems to fall upon us all -- when we open our eyes. Since our blindness is caused by our own defects, we must first deeply realize what they are. Constructive meditation is the first requirement for each new step in our spiritual growth.

This is a tricky subject to share on...and navigating this in my faith beliefs has been a challenge.

There are some in my faith belief who would say meditation is of a faith belief that is contrary to ours; but I've come to believe this is simply not true. I have found that meditation, for me, has always started out with reading spiritual literature, followed by reflection on it. I ask myself: what does what I just read mean to me? How does it apply to my recovery? What have I just learned about myself? What do I need to course correct on? What am I doing well? How can I do better? Where was I hurt? What did I instinctually do that went awry?

So many seeds for my destruction lay scattered about in my thoughts. Meditatively reflecting on and uncovering them helps me to figure out how to let go and let Higher Power (HP) take over. This reading talks about resentments too. Meditation helps me to uncover those destructive thoughts and expose them to the cleaning light of HP. I'm able to let go of them most of the time.

It's such a crucial thing for me to meditate, yet it's often hard to get started. Like many others I've heard, I sometimes find reasons not to do this meditative practice, i.e. too busy, not ready yet, etc. Not

wanting to do it often lends clarity on the areas where I'm stuck, too; it's fertile ground for future exploration. I'm glad I get to be in recovery and get reminded of

these important Steps from all of you. I'll keep at it, and stay, one day at a time. Glad you're here too.

— ANONYMOUS

Relapse While Working the Program

I came to S.L.A.A. to stay in 2003, but I actually came here the first time in 1990. I got 16 months "sober" and then I couldn't hang anymore; it was just too hard to look at myself and surrender the dis-ease to God. I left the Program and drifted through 4 more disastrous relationships before I made it back. One thing though, before I left, I did do a thorough inventory; it was like a snapshot in time.

There was such a long list of people that I had been (seemingly) intimate with. I've since learned that I was incapable of being intimate and all these encounters had been self-fulfilling prophecies. When I came back to the program in 2003, ready to get honest, I learned that at the root of my sex and love addiction was anorexia and lust disguised as "love." I always chose partners I couldn't be intimate with.

I was so sick and tired when I limped back into the Program with

a broken life and a broken spirit. This program gave me hope again, and I set to work. I emailed my long-distance sponsor daily, long emails of check-in and my Step work.

I also worked with others. (It was highly recommended to me that helping others would help me to stay sober.) But I wasn't ready to fully surrender yet. My worst obsession/bottom was while working this Program. This time I didn't leave though. I heard someone share once that if you leave, you may not hear what you need to hear to get sober again. Finally, finally, when I was at the "jumping off place," I surrendered in 2006. My life has never been the same. Had I not finally let go of that last obsession, I would have made the five o'clock news no doubt. I'm so glad that God saved me, and so glad to be here with all of you. Thanks for reading this.

— ANONYMOUS

Truly Loving

In working the Steps of S.L.A.A., I've discovered that I have been an "unloving" person. Not just unloving, but unlovable too. I wouldn't let anyone really love me; to really know me. I threw up this wall of bitter criticism and withdrawal in disapproval. I was distant, unapproachable, with an air of constant disappointment. How different it is to be in recovery, and not anorexic either - but fully present, vulnerable, and forgiving. Oh my goodness, that's a hard one.

I've been leaning into God during my husband's recent illness. 3 weeks ago our lives completely changed. He literally couldn't walk, and was on a

walker. Now he is back to nearly normal - 75 percent recovered. I have been realizing how much I love this man. During our retreat last October, we reaffirmed our love, and vowed to verbalize it more, to give words of praise and encouragement, to touch, hold hands, and snuggle. These things, I think, are like water to a thirsty growing plant.

I'm leaning into HP now, just for this day, asking to be forgiving, loving, and joyful even, to be patient, kind, and gentle. Oh my goodness, gentle. In doing so, I receive so much goodness and love. I will keep coming back. So grateful for you all.

Thanks for listening today.

—ANONYMOUS

Double Winner

I am a double winner — a member of two Twelve-Step fellowships. I would like to share how one informs the other and aids in my recovery.

My start in S.L.A.A. began in 2009 when I had an incomprehensible demoralization around my most severe acting out behaviors. I was eager to work the

Steps, and this propelled me into five years of sobriety. Prior to this, I made attempts at sexual sobriety through a 12-Step church group. Not to diminish that group in any way, it didn't stick for more than 18 months. During that time, I visited the codependency group on and off for a couple of months. I liked the people in the group, but I

couldn't understand the focus of the group due to the amorphous nature of codependency. This did not help my sexual sobriety either.

After the 2009 start in S.L.A.A., I found a Twelve-Step group for friends and family of alcoholics. One of my housemates at the time was spiraling down in alcoholic and drug-using madness. His behavior and anger became so severe that none of us wanted to be around him. I eventually had to get a lawyer (met in Program, thank you Higher Power) to bring an eviction lawsuit against him and have the sheriffs remove him after 2-1/2 long months.

During this time, I became dependent on my new Program. Here were people who knew the madness of living with someone with drug and alcohol problems. Here the topics of boundaries and detachment were spoken. What a relief to learn that we didn't cause the problem, we can't control it and we can't cure it. Here were the philosophies of keeping the focus on ourselves and our own improvement and to quit taking things personally (Q-Tip). After the alcoholic was evicted, I found that I still needed the Program. Its preamble is "we who live or have lived with alcoholics..."

This Program is still amorphous in that it is not a simple, "Put the plug in the jug," but it focuses on self-improvement apart from the

alcoholic. The skills learned in this program are applicable to any human relationship such as work, our other, sober relationships, and of course S.L.A.A. recovery. Do we not also deal with issues of having appropriate boundaries? Do we not also deal with speaking up for ourselves? Do we not also deal with personal self-improvement as an alternative to enmeshment?

I have been with my second program for a few years now and it has become a new friend, as well as providing a number of new program friends who model the best of the practices and philosophy of the Program. It has buoyed me through another difficult situation and has become a rich compliment to my experience in S.L.A.A.

The one agonizing part is that I choose to not reveal that I am a sex and love addict as I don't think it would be understood by or comfortable for all members of the Program. However, this has helped me learn to share the underlying elements of the problem and not get caught up in the wrapper. In all honesty I am participating in this program more than S.L.A.A. these days, but that's OK as long as we get what we need wherever we want and that we keep in touch with dealing with all of our various addictions. I wish you the best in any adjoining programs that you find helpful.

— D.B., CAPITOLA, CA

Not Lacking

I'm listening to a beautiful song at the moment, and the words that stand out to me are "I shall not want." What that means to me in my recovery is that I have been filled with so many fears, needs, insecurities, and doubts, that my "wants" have consumed me; they threaten daily to engulf me. Prior to recovery, I felt justified in wanting, needing and taking, but I've come to realize how self-focused that place of "not having" has been. The wanting has justified my acting-out. The needing has been a black hole that's consumed me.

Today not "wanting" is a place of peace that I've only found here; it's a place of keeping my eyes on God; of realizing that my wants and needs are so inferior to what my Higher Power wants for my highest good. What I may actually get in having open hands is a gift

that far surpasses anything I've ever known: true love, peace, even goodwill to my fellows. I have to trust...to keep my hands open. The Steps keep me focused on keeping open hands.

Sometimes God has to pry my fingers open; there can be many things clutched there. Letting go, oh my goodness that's so hard for me to do. The funny thing is, now the phrase "I shall not want" has come to mean, "I shall not lack." Today, my Higher Power sees to the many needs I have. He eases my fears, secures me, fills my deepest and truest needs, and the empty places that have consumed me. To quote someone I once heard in a meeting, "I was made to be incomplete." Only in seeking to complete myself in my Higher Power can I truly do so. I'm so thankful that I finally know this.

—ANONYMOUS

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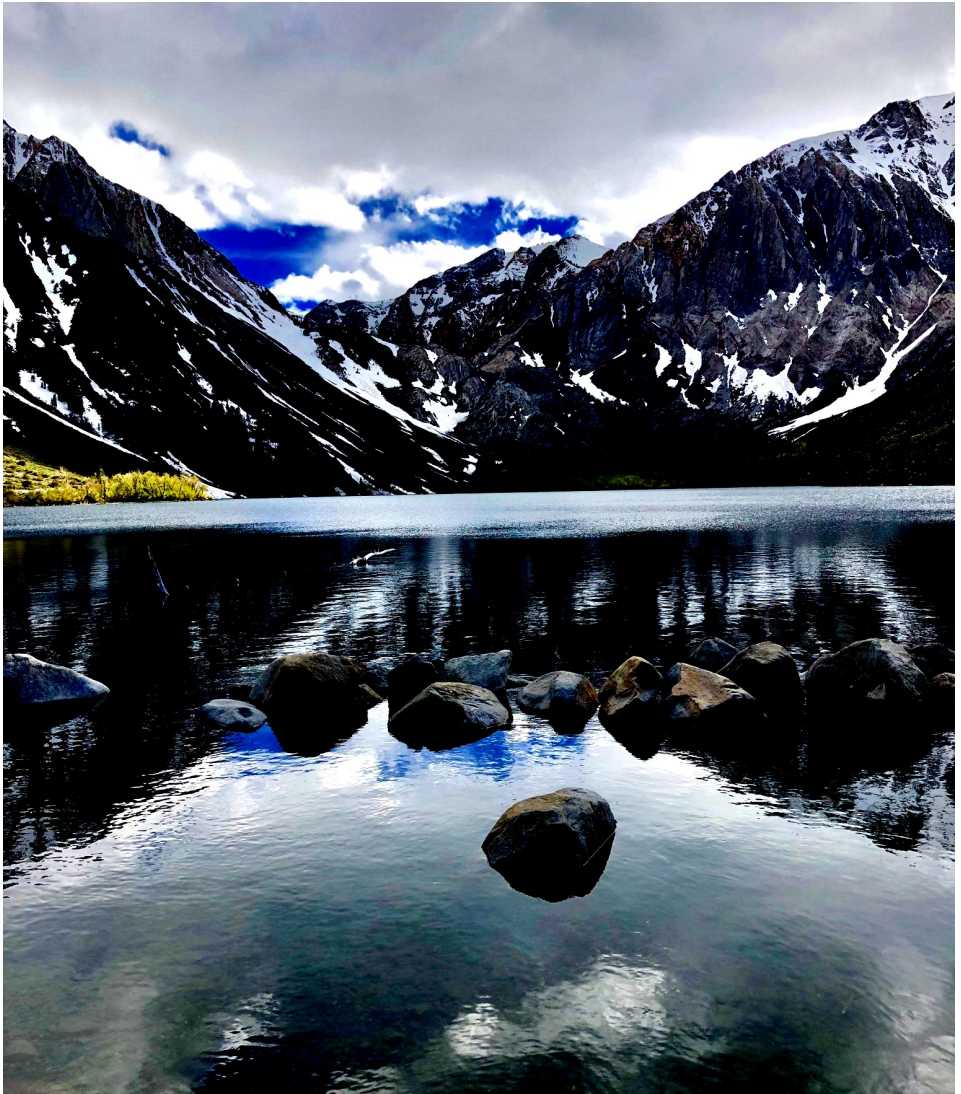
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Changing My Belief System



Thanks to the Program, I am gradually changing my thoughts, beliefs, all that I thought I was - my whole belief system. I am concocting a new identity while walking the Steps

and creating a new personality that is not self-centered anymore. The new me is other-centered. For example, my tardiness has bothered me a lot for a long time. I have recently realized that my tardiness came out of self-centeredness. I would come to appointments late and I would hate myself for it.

Someone in the Program asked me what's in it for me. The question irritated me. I did not want to be tardy, why would I? There was nothing in it for me, so I thought. And then, slowly, wheels started turning and I realized that my tardiness was part of my dysfunctional pattern: my self-centeredness. I would engage in self-condemnation and I would suffer after showing up late. Why would I cause my own suffering? I realized that to free myself from tardiness I needed to put others first, be less controlling, and let go of false pride.

If I surrender and say I can only do what I can do and others are more important than doing dishes, then I will let the chores be and I will show up early to socialize with others to be there for them. It is challenging for me to not finish up my chores and leave early for appointments. It is about false pride and self-centeredness. I am grateful for this realization that service for others is the solution for my tardiness. If I place others first, and I put myself into service, then I will let go of any unfinished

chores and I will show up for other people early without interrupting meetings.

I have recently realized that my tardiness has to do with social anorexia, a controlling pattern, selfishness, being slothful, having false pride and perfectionism. Really when I look at my tardiness, I can see how fear plays a major role in it. It surprised me to see all those factors contributing to me being unable to arrive early to meetings. I have recently started an experiment where I decided that I would leave early for meetings to be there for others. I wanted to be useful and of service to participating fellow travelers. When I was leaving earlier than normal to make it to a meeting yesterday, I clearly felt fear arise in me. It was a type of social fear, something like social anorexia, longing for being alone and isolation. Thoughts such as "What would I be doing there early? Wouldn't that be awkward to arrive early to mingle with others? And what would I say or talk about with others?"

I was very surprised to observe my fearful thoughts, concerns, and mental chatter because I always considered myself to be socially skilled, outgoing and friendly. It was against what I thought I was. However, when it comes to arriving places early, I clearly experience social anorexia, fear of awkwardness, longing for isolation, wasting time with others,

when I could be doing chores instead.

I was in denial of my social fear until now. Thanks to my fellow traveler's comments in a meeting, I looked closer at my tardiness, and I am glad I did because once aware, I can change it now — stop being a sloth in the sense of delaying my departure for meetings. I can stop setting high expectations for getting my chores done before my departure, and

instead just let them be. I can stop being critical of myself for arriving late. In summary, it appears that my tardiness is a complex issue. The solution is to be useful and serve others by arriving early to meetings. I am determined to give up my tardiness and start serving others by showing up early as an esteemable act and spending more time in fellowship relieving my social fears and coming out of my social anorexia.

— Bo. S.

Treading Water

I've kind of been treading water lately, you know, doing "the do": quiet time for prayer and meditation, meetings, talking to sponsor, sponsoring others, being of service, working the Steps, yada yada, and it's working, or else I'd not be sober for sure.

Yet, I scan the horizon, to see if joy is coming. This morning in the meditation book it said: the greatest happiness is knowing that I don't need to be happy all the time, and for me this is spot on!

If you ever watch surfers at the beach, they are often on their boards just floating, paddling around, or sitting quietly waiting for the next big wave. In my

recovery sometimes I float, enjoying the warm sunshine on my face; from time to time there are waves that clobber me, chew me up, and spit me out...face first. Every now and again, I catch a wave of joy. Let me tell you, there were zero days of joy at the end of my acting out.

I've come to realize I probably wouldn't appreciate a state of happiness if I felt like that all the time. So, I wait - treading water. It's a peaceful waiting, and for today - these 24 hours, I'm content to wait. I'm glad to be in this big wide ocean of recovery with all of you.

— ANONYMOUS

Yoga and the 12 Step Program

My background in yoga helped me with my recovery from character defects and addictions. I have a healthy physical yoga practice that brings me closer to God every day. Yoga boosts my confidence and happiness through mastery of yoga poses (asanas) and the release of “feel good” hormones. I am a certified yoga teacher, and I enjoy teaching yoga. Yoga consists of eight limbs: the highest stage is Samadhi, the union with God or Paramatma in Sanskrit. Yoga and the 12-Step Program are spiritual pathways to surrender to God. The first two limbs of yoga: Yamas and Niyamas are moral and behavior guidelines to bring one’s house in order; they recommend to stay away from the seven deadly sins and love thy neighbor as thyself.

All major religions recommend love and affirm that we are connected, and we are the happiest when we support each other. Yoga asanas and breathwork provide a good outlet for one’s need to control constructively. I had instinctively gravitated to yoga long before I knew that I had a problem.

I had been in denial without knowing it. In childhood, I stuffed my feelings and emotions, and I wore a mask of hate and anger. I forgot about the stuffed feelings and emotions as I wandered into trouble. I hit bottom when I met a handsome devil. He was dressed up as a devil in a black apron and a triggering costume at a Halloween party. It was lust at first sight for him. With a little manipulation on his part, I fell for him and got stuck there for five and a half years. Finally, I took Oprah’s advice to heart when she said that she regretted not getting a Ph.D. instead of wasting time on bad boyfriends.

I went and enrolled in a Ph.D. program remembering Oprah’s words. I am so glad I did, because almost four years later, I broke up with that bad boyfriend, and I had three years of a Ph.D. program under my belt. Today I am clean and sober, working the Steps, and enjoying a vast support network of fellow travelers.

I look forward to attending meetings, which, for me, are the best way to commune with God.

— Bo. S.

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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