



the Journal

Issue # 178

Single Issue \$4

COMBATING NEGATIVITY

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.

Table of Contents

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble	2
The Twelve Steps	3
Question of the Day	6

Theme: Combating Negativity

Converting the Negative Voices	11
Negative Thinking	12
Hiding What I Was Feeling	13
Love and Service Heals Me	15
Question of the Day: Combating Negativity	16
Internal Critics	17
Negativity: An Interview	19

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.

©1985, 2003, 2012 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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.

* ©1985 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities, which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.

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.

© 2019 May/June. The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Stories, interviews, personal testimony, and other content contained herein are authored by members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. The opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily the opinions of The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., F.W.S. office, Annual Business Conference or any other Conference committee including the Conference Journal Committee or the Journal production staff. Motions adopted at the 1989, 1990, and 1991 Conferences chartered the Journal, but it is impractical for all of the content of a periodical such as the Journal to be Conference-approved. Each recovery group can determine its own position on the use of content from the Journal at its meetings.

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.

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

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

Managing Editor

Lisa C.

Art Director

Fiona

Outreach Director

Becca

Proofreaders for this issue

Andrew K.

Beth L.

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, Combating Negativity: “How do you quiet the negative voices in your head and have a more positive outlook?” Here are some

wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #179 — July/August — ABM Issue** Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of *the Journal* — “How has the Journal helped in your recovery? and/or Please share any special stories you have about *the Journal* or the Conference Journal Committee.” — Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2019. And #180 — Sept./Oct. — “Practicing Principles Over Personalities: How do you practice principles over personalities in relationships during polarizing political/social climates?” — Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2019. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“How do you quiet the negative voices in your head and have a more positive outlook?”

Combating negativity - Prayer, 4th step inventory, outreach, go to a meeting, focus on gratitude, write out my thoughts and feelings, go walk in nature, spend time with a pet, get out of my head and do something creative like play the piano or draw or make something

— ANN R.

It’s tough enough to slam down the pity party megaphone that seems to have a mind of its own. But imagine how much harder it gets being a disabled, bisexual, over-23 years old addict who never texted in her life, and remembers life before the internet? Poor me, poor me, pour me another drink. As you might have guessed, humor and a profound faith in god are the two main ways that I ease myself back to reality. That reality includes being grateful simply to be alive. I mean those words literally. Just to wake up every morning in my own bed, with my own feline companion, sober? How can the negativity have a chance?

— MARSHA Z./NEWTON FUNDAMENTALS

Question of the day

Gratitude!!! What can I be grateful for? I first have to be aware, of course, that I am in negative thinking.

— ANN

I use meditation. I use a chant by 15th Century monks.

— JACK H., KATY, TX

When I have an active “monkey mind” filled with negativity (fear, anxiety, lack of trust, resentment) I use several program tools. I will say the Serenity Prayer, typically, which is calming and centering. If it persists, I will work Steps 1-3, mentally, if in the public, or aloud when alone. I also focus on the present, including saying the date, my location and my age. I reach out to program friends and my sponsor, meditate and pray. These tools are invaluable for me, a person raised in a family of origin filled with anxiety and negativity.

— ROBIN

I turn to my Higher Power.

— IVO, NETHERLANDS

A negative voice is a part of me. I sit down and start looking at how I feel physically. For example, I ask myself what my body is saying. (Does it hurt? Am I too warm?) Then the negative voice in my head stops obsessing.

— ANONYMOUS

I use the Serenity Prayer extensively. I’ve also learned to ground myself in the present by focusing for 30 seconds on my present surroundings.

— JOE C., SHERWOOD

Repetitious prayer, affirmations, meditation, talking it out with someone else, and doing something physical- move a muscle, change a thought.

— ANONYMOUS, SAN ANTONIO, TX

Prayers, calls to my sponsor, family, and friends. (I used to smoke a cigarette - but I quit smoking 18 months ago.)

— SAM E., NJ/NYC

“How do you quiet the negative voices in your head and have a more positive outlook?”

I first had to trace the negative self-talk back to its source – shaming and mixed messages from my family of origin. Years of acting out further strengthened the corrosive negativity. So, years of positive action coming from love, affirmations, and lovingly witnessing the rise and fall of the false self, have led to a more positive outlook.

— MARC S., TORONTO

Great question. It's very easy to go down the negative rabbit hole. If I start to beat myself up or start to think more negatively, I pause, take a deep breath, and use a slogan, “This too shall pass” or an affirmation.

— LINDSEY H.,
WEST PALM BEACH, FL

I utilize the 3 second rule: count 1,2,3, and move on to something else. I also enlist my Higher Power to assist me in being more positive. An attitude of gratitude is very helpful as well.

— JACLYN P.,
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MN

One of the ways is prayer to my Higher Power: “These thoughts are not those I think you would have me think. Please guide my thoughts to you and what you would have me think.” I look up to the sky to break the pattern and while I'm doing that I pray.

— ANNE K., TAMPA BAY

Some tools that I use to quiet the negative talk in my head are positive affirmations, gratitude lists, and prayer. Talking to my sponsor and other recovery fellows also helps in getting a more reality-based outlook.

— NORA B., ORANGE COUNTY, CA

Affirmations! I'm grateful that my sponsor had me list affirmations several times and I continue to do lists of my new affirmations and encourage my sponsees to do the same.

— RICK S., PHILADELPHIA, PA

I concentrate on the 5 senses: 5 things I see; 4 things I can touch; 3 things I hear; 2 things I taste; 1 thing I smell. Being in the now!

— ARI, NJ

Question of the day

I use 2 tools - I either ask myself if a brother (or sister) in Program came to me with a similar issue, would I be negative or give a positive statement to them? Then I ask myself, why would I be harsher on myself? The other tool is to go to the worst case and realize I will be OK with what seems to be bad.

— DAVE G., LOS ANGELES

I try to use the tools I have been given over the years: prayer, meditation, a guided meditation and mindfulness app, listening to meditative music, self-care, exercise, yoga, and fellowship with like-minded people.

— STEVE, CINCINNATI

Becoming aware of them is sometimes the hardest part! When I notice them, I focus on my breathing, put my hand on my heart, and connect with my Higher Power.

— FIONA, LONDON

I use my tools- first and foremost, the Serenity Prayer. I do deep breathing- 3 cleansing breaths, then settle my mind, thinking about the positive side of the negative thoughts, then breathing, relaxing throughout, then 3 cleansing breaths and the Serenity Prayer again.

— IRV B., CONNECTICUT

I say affirmations and do mirror work. I look into my eyes in a mirror and say, "I love you, Kara." I write gratitude lists, talk to others and revive my sense of humor. I do Steps 1,2,3 and 10. Thank you!

— KARA B., BROOKLYN/
MANHATTAN, NY

To help quiet the negative voices, I had to distance myself from sources of negativity in my life, including members of my family of origin.

— PHILLIP W., LITTLE ROCK

“How do you quiet the negative voices in your head and have a more positive outlook?”

I like the A.A. saying, “The committee in my head gets up before I do!” In other words, my head is out to get me right from the gate. The 11th step is like pushing a reset button for me. I try to spend some time every day in prayer and meditation. I’m then in much less danger of being sabotaged by my negative thinking. I’m much more likely to remain peaceful and centered for the rest of the day. It’s amazing how simple yet profound the effect of starting my day this way is. Thank God for this Program and the freedom I have found here from my disease and from negative thinking.

— SUSAN G., HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

I created a list of rules, that I stick to in my life. It’s a code of my life. On this list one can find the most important goals, aspirations and a moral code.

Every day I try to think about these rules. Thanks to this I have a habit of looking on tough issues through the perspective of my list, which is written down in a completed form.

I communicate to people close to me my flaws, as if I was “disarming mines,” before someone steps on one of them and sets off an explosion. It gives me comfort, because once everyone knows my flaws, I have to start working on them.

The story of my life proves that who we are or what I accomplish is not only the result of my decision. I’m sharing this idea with others and because of that it resonates with me even more. I always try to figure out what caused the negativity to show.

Which flaw of mine is behind it? When I figure it out, I’m trying to work on this flaw to eliminate the root cause of negativity.

I’m looking for a reason why this flaw is in me, what “built” it. This awareness allows me to work better on the flaw that caused my negativity.

— LUKASZ

Question of the day

In early recovery, I did not watch TV or listen to popular music because I was triggered. I also needed 5 years to put the good stuff into my life. What I heard in meetings, read and practicing the Steps helped me calm my mind and replace the negative tapes and noise. Then I learned about service and the Traditions. Before I knew it, I was enjoying emotional sobriety as well as self-defined sobriety.

— RITA, MONTREAL

Before I can quiet the negativity in my mind, I need to find out what needs to be heard. What fear or resentment generates those voices? Once that's done, I try to keep things right-sized, outreach about it and talk honestly about my feelings. More often than not, it's about looking after my inner child and staying connected with reality.

— MATHILDE, LONDON

The attitude of negativity is, for me, most immediately and powerfully quieted by my decision to replace it with an attitude of gratitude.

— RICHARD R., OMAHA, NE

For me, it's constant work to stay positive and not let the "voices" convince me that I'm not worthy and not enough and that make me say, "Who cares anyhow?" One tool I use daily is a gratitude list. I've been sharing a minimum of three things I'm grateful for, every day now for 5 years. I may not be feeling as grateful as I write but I believe in "act as if" and "fake it till you make it." Just seeing the list on paper helps me get my day started in a more positive way, even if the Voices are still there trying to beat on me.

Obviously, if I'm feeling really down or agitated or sorry for myself, I try to call my sponsor or a recovery partner. Sometimes the voices can be pretty darn loud and projecting fear and darkness. Almost always, a call to a brother or sister in recovery helps quiet the noise.

Ultimately, we need to teach ourselves how to be positive. We need to honor our growth and realize we are now good people and not the out-of-control, self-centered addicts we once were. We're the good guys now!!!

—ANONYMOUS

Converting the Negative Voices

How do I convert the negative voices in my head? Let me count the ways. In no particular order, I practice the following lifestyle choices.

I keep in touch with program friends and run things by them as well as just enjoy each other. Other people keep my perspective sane and keep my humor intact. My head is a dangerous place to be, and the input of others helps quiet down the negative voices. Recently a friend has reminded me of Program wisdom that I had forgotten I had shared long ago. His memory, as well as the profoundness of the message, amazed me.

I also try to say the Serenity Prayer in the morning so that I can better remember it in the moment throughout the day. Yes, it takes practice, but when I feel things getting out of control at work, in my personal life, wherever, I silently- or not so silently- say the Serenity Prayer. I was given a new perspective on an old saying. God actually helps those who can't help themselves. The Serenity Prayer is a calming prayerful recitation that promises four things: serenity, acceptance, courage, and wisdom.

I borrow two things from other programs. First, the Third Step Prayer. When I remember, I say this after the Serenity Prayer. To me, it is about becoming of service, moving forward, and getting over myself. Second, the daily readers from Al-Anon. I won't try to convert everyone to an outside program, but here's what it's done for me. Those readers speak of learning boundaries, healthy self-care, and acceptance and detachment. These are all key to the spiritual life which I did not possess and the absence of which exacerbated my sex and love addiction. I realize that there are people in my life or who have been in my life that have been challenging to my serenity: they just happen to be alcoholics.

Finally, I am a Facebook addict and subscribe to some positive attitude feeds. The little inspirational sayings over calming backgrounds are something I save to my computer or phone. So many are Recovery oriented and have some real wisdom.

In closing, my head is a dangerous place. I use a few tools to keep myself sane and seek out serenity.

—DALE , CAPITOLA, CA

Negative Thinking

My most negative thinking always started with a resentment — it tripped me up more than any other emotion.

It made me feel like the whole world was against me, and I would feel so lonely. That's when I would go to the nearest bar, sit on a bar stool scowling, hoping someone would come along to assuage the lonely emptiness. In each new relationship I looked for "belonging" and peacefulness, but I found out that I could be the loneliest of all while in a relationship.

This is faulty thinking. I seem to be wired this way for some reason. In the Program I've learned to recognize it as my "stinkin thinkin" as they say. The Steps, especially the Fourth one, helped me to look at: how did I set myself up for this? This is what I've learned is called "my side of the street." I learned I had to keep my eyes on myself, not on "Them" and their side of the street.

In some cases, like in that of my raging mother, I had not brought it on myself, so I wondered what my part was then?

Well, I've learned that I had instincts that went awry when I was growing up because of the rage and the hurt. Then, I reacted to things, often on an unconscious level, and made decisions (unconsciously) to never trust again, to never love again, to never believe again, and I carried those decisions out in every relationship going forward.

It was a self-fulfilling prophecy. I would (unconsciously) choose someone who would prove my skewed instincts to be true, someone untrustworthy, someone incapable of loving me the way I wanted to be loved.

In the Program, I've learned to get my instincts back in balance, consciously making sane healthy choices, and keeping my eyes on Higher Power. I'm learning to love and trust safe people, for the first time in my life. I've found a peace here that I could never find in a glass of wine or in a partner. I'm so grateful for this program. Thank you all for being here to hear my truth.

— ANONYMOUS

Hiding What I Was Feeling



Despite coming from a dysfunctional, addictive family, anyone you ask would probably say I'm a positive, outgoing person.

However, it was a mask to cover what was really going on inside of me. If there was a negative thought or feeling, I have probably had it about myself, others, or anything else. In time I learned this paradox

kept many from trusting and considering me a "safe" person.

Recovery, especially counseling and my 4th Step, helped uncover many of these thoughts that surfaced as resentments and fears. My sponsors helped me understand this defect. I was dishonest to myself, others, and my Higher Power.

About the same time I had participated in several workshops through my job about how to work better with others. Through these workshops and other sources (it's amazing how they seem to come along at just the right moment, huh?), I learned that negativity is something humans seem to gravitate to, regardless of their general disposition.

I know it was a survival mechanism for me, helping me prepare for and anticipate what could happen so I could be safe. My addict also used negativity to keep me off balance and "needing" a fix. Learning there was a reason for my underlying negativity helped me avoid feeling needless guilt and shame.

Today, prayer and listening to my self-talk as an interested (but not enmeshed) bystander is the first of a chain of actions I take to keep my negativity at bay. I also avoid negative people, places, news, and other input. When I encounter negativity within or without myself, I say a quick

prayer (God, bless this source of negativity) and ask myself "How important is it?" If it's something I can control, I provide a more positive or understanding perspective and do the next right thing.

If it's something I can't control, I remember my Higher Power will take care of it, and me, in good time. If that doesn't help, I make outreach calls or texts, get to a meeting, or find some other act of service I can do. Plugging into my recovery family always brings the perspective I need.

Today, I'm mostly still a positive, outgoing person, but if something less positive is going on that someone needs to know, I can share it respectfully and honestly. Yes, it was uncomfortable hearing my "mask" had become a character defect, but now I can leave the mask off most days and use it when it is prudent. This keeps me further away from my addiction and closer to a life of grace and peace.

— ANONYMOUS

Love and Service Heals Me



Hi all, Susan, sex and love addict. I relate to so many of the shares I read here in *the Journal*. I too am subject to depression and anxiety. I am filled with thoughts sometimes...despair over things like my health and honestly, life in general. And yet strangely, I've never had it so good at the same time.

It's remarkable the tension, and harmony these two frames of reference have for me. I struggle with perfectionism as well, from an upbringing by my mother who wanted things to be just so: perfect. It has manifested in me in lots of little things, like I can't stand to see a blind hanging crookedly.

I compulsively go around the house straightening things. LOL. My husband teases me sometimes, unstraightening them right in front of me. I have to laugh. I've learned that I can't take myself too seriously (rule 62). I've thrown out Rules 1-61. Well, some days are better than others. :) All I know today is that I would be a basket case without this program. As I continue to work the Steps, I've come to realize so much about myself. I am deeply flawed, yet wonderfully accepted and loved (an intense craving all my life) by my Higher Power. I've also (oh so

slowly) come to realize that it's all about loving, instead of getting love. I want so much for my needs to be filled, and instead I must look after the interests and needs of others if I want to recover.

The funny thing, in so doing, loving and being of service, I feel loved. I feel my needs are being met even when I am nuttier than a squirrel chasing its tail; even then. There's enough in this program to keep me coming back, one day at a time for a lifetime; it's enough. I'm so glad you are all here to hear me. Blessings

— SUSAN

Question of the Day: Combating Negativity

I have hesitated writing on this topic because I'm afraid I don't "quiet the negative voices in my head" very well.

As so many, my default setting seems to be negative. In my essence I am positive and affirming, but the ego-voice I hear in my head is not. It rushes to the fore and wants to have the floor. This saddens and frustrates me (which may be my perfectionism.)

I guess it's which voice I give credence and validity to that counts. All too often I feel the negative voice "is" me. I can be pretty sarcastic and I think that comes out of negativity.

I have been a practicing addict of all stripes for many years: I think the negativity is a legacy of that background.

So how can I change it? Perhaps "I" can't, but must rely on Higher Power to remove it—once I become

willing to let it go.

I can also choose to direct my thoughts another way, what we call “acting as if” in another fellowship.

Or maybe, wisest of all, I can just ignore that voice, let it have its say and be done with it. It’s not who I am or certainly who I want

to be.

Maybe the best course is to say “Thank you for sharing” and move on.

The negativity is not who I am or who I want to be; why let it have center stage?

— ANONYMOUS

Internal Critics

At the beginning of my recovery on S.L.A.A. program, my internal critics and dissatisfaction were present on every step until I realized where these negative thoughts come from.

I have been thinking about myself as if I didn’t love myself at all. The source was communication that I was receiving as a child from my parents. Most of the time they were dissatisfied with my behavior, which exceeded the norms of a nice and calm boy. They were showing their disapproval by repeating over and over again the critical opinions, often accompanied by shouting and anger. Subconsciously I started believing in what they were telling me.

Once I understood that, while being in the recovery process, I was able to divide these voices

from my personality — the voices that aren’t really me. I could have rejected them and instead introduced phrases that were delicate, pleasant and serene. One outstanding tool has been writing every morning a list of gratitude and what I love myself for.

That allows me to amplify the positive message from the beginning of the day, hence I am satisfied every day. And it helps to eliminate the fears that were paralyzing me before. I started to give myself acceptance, even though I am not perfect.

The most difficult challenge for me was to follow through with every day exercises — looking at my reflection in the mirror and telling myself “you are important to me. You are precious to me... valuable. I care about you. I love you.” When I was saying this to

myself, I got shivers all over my back, because on one side I needed to hear this as a child and now hearing this moved me deeply and at the same time frightened me a little.

At the beginning it was very hard for me to believe these words, but I continued and by doing this every day I was able to create a close relationship with myself based on acceptance and love.

I started believing that I can have a good relationship with myself and be happy. It's later that a good relationship with my Higher Power happened. I experienced that being happy is not dependent on other people, but in relationship with self. I am very grateful for S.L.A.A. for showing me the immense power of tools that led me to positivity based on a good relationship with myself.

— PATRYK

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>

Negativity: An Interview



This is an edited transcript of an interview (or really a conversation) between two married S.L.A.A. members (the writers are anonymous. We use AnonF to identify the wife and AnonM for the husband). AnonF heard the Journal theme (combating negativity) and thought of her husband and what a positive influence he has been on her and many others.

AnonF and AnonM have been married for 12 years and are sponsored, and sponsor in S.L.A.A. They have many service

commitments with meetings and their Intergroup.

AnonM has been a member of S.L.A.A. and sober for over 15 years. He is sober in A.A. for 30 years. AnonF is sober in A.A. 22 years and been a member of S.L.A.A. for 21 years, sober off her bottom lines for 17 years.

AnonF: I used to crave attention and I found the easiest way to get it was with negative attention from being a rebel. Did you fall into that trap?

AnonM: Thanks for taking my

answer. (laughter from AnonM and AnonF)

Yes. Growing up, negativity seemed to be the easiest way to get attention- not getting good grades, not doing all the things I was told to do but more so misbehaving in school, having problems in class, and not getting along socially. As I got older, I was not doing things properly. I was having problems with the law- things along those lines which drew a lot of negative attention.

At least I was getting some attention, as opposed to no attention. So, a lot of that continued into later in life, seeking out attention through negative behaviors.

AnonF: What comes to mind when you say that is the bad crowd, the gang of kids that can take you into negative activities.

AnonM: I ended up hanging out with a much older crowd when I was younger. They were not the best influences (laughter). So, yes, that did add to it as well.

AnonF: Were there a lot of undertones of criticism or harshness with making fun of each other?

AnonM: There was a lot of that going on. They were also more of an alcohol partying and drug-using criminal crowd that tended to do a

lot more of that stuff. But a lot of that came from growing up to begin with. Maybe I sought that a little more so because my household was very negative. My father was a bad influence and a very negative person, so I might've tended to look for that a little bit more. And maybe I found some acceptance in that because that's what I got growing up.

AnonF: And how did you get out of that?

AnonM: It was only in recovery that I got out of that. I got out of it by getting sober and going to meetings. I got healthier by finding a new fellowship to be with. I found new people to be around who set positive examples for me. My first sponsor in recovery was a positive influence. He was a much more positive-minded person. I was a very negative person in childhood and in active addiction and only in doing Step work, going to meetings regularly, and continuing to do the work on my addict, did I gain a more optimistic outlook. To take the A.A. example of the cup that runneth over, my cup had always been completely empty or overflowing with poison. With Program, my cup started to fill up with positivity. And in so many ways it started to fill up with God because that was also a big part of the change. I had a shift in

my attitude and I shifted away from bad behavior.

I needed to completely change that life strategy that had worked in the past on so many levels but didn't work anymore. Trying to draw energy through negativity didn't work anymore. What used to work for me started to backfire on me and only hurt me.

AnonF: Yeah, when I came into the rooms of A.A. I heard people say, "Stick with the winners." I had friends that would not allow me to put myself down and every time I started to say something bad about myself, they would stop me and change it around to force me to be kind to myself. We would be at fellowship and they would say, "No, you can't say that bad thing about yourself ever again."

The only thing that really got me into trouble was that four years into A.A. recovery I fell in with a guy who wanted to act out in S.L.A.A. We made fun of the program. I don't think we thought that the program wasn't working and wouldn't work, we were just negative about everything. I guess the negativity made us feel superior to everyone else when we were really just very insecure and scared.

So, did you surround yourself in the beginning with negative or positive people?

AnonM: I tried to surround myself with people who were "winners." But it wasn't an immediate transition. To change that attitude was years in the making. It was not so easy for me to go from extremely dark and negative to all "sunshine and rainbows."

It was a matter of learning to let people love me until I was able to learn to love myself. It was a matter of time and the ongoing work. I had to continuously watch myself because it is still possible for me to be negative about different things and not always stay in the most positive place. So, I have to keep doing the work that it requires. People in my life have not always been positive, but they had humor.

There's also been some sarcasm and joking around over the years about certain things too. Something that my first sponsor tried to teach me and that I've tried to teach my sponsees, newcomers and fellows is to remember the positive changes they have made as opposed to always looking at the darker side of myself and things that have happened. I find it helpful to just say, "You're alright," or, "I think you're a good person."

AnonF: And your anorexia doesn't hold you back?

AnonM: Anorexia is still one of those things that contributes to negativity or negative emotions, behaviors, thoughts or fears. When I'm in my anorexia I'm a lot more prone to be in a negative place. In recovery, the negativity isn't 100% completely gone but my outlook has changed and shifted dramatically. You and I talk all the time about how our behaviors have shifted.

I see my own behavior for the better part almost completely shifted. It's now more so the case that, where previously I was negative, fearful and angry almost all the time, now I am positive cheerful, optimistic almost all the time. And it's more the rarity that the negativity comes in.

If I'm in my anorexia, I'm not in the positive, and it's only a matter of time before that stuff tends to creep back in in a bigger way.

AnonF: You seem pretty good at telling people that you love them. And you do show them affection. Sometimes my head will tell me, don't tell him that. Don't give them that compliment because they'll use it against you in some way. My paranoia creeps in.

AnonM: I feel fortunate that I don't really ever think of it that way. You and I were just talking about it earlier today that we give compliments or attention in an

appropriate fashion. So, I'm not giving somebody a compliment or expressing positivity in an effort to get anything that isn't altruistic out of it.

AnonF: Yes. I've always known you to have good motives. And I've always been envious of your ability to see the good in everyone and to put a positive spin on situations that leave me resentful for quite a while.

AnonM: Hopefully I am saying something for the right reasons and for a positive healthy reason. So, that has a lot to do with it too. But I do want to come from a place of love and tolerance. There is a little bit more work there for me to do to not be sarcastic or a bit acerbic. To really come from a more loving place, a more God-centered place.

AnonF: So would you be sarcastic with people that you didn't really like but that you needed to be around?

AnonM: Sometimes in joking with some friends or fellows I can be sarcastic. It's a matter of finding the proper type of humor. I can say things under the guise of good humor that might be sarcastic and biting a little bit too. It was interesting that in a meeting I was just in recently, the topic was about looking at the differences

between negativity or being caustic. It was about saying something sarcastic to somebody and then it not being taken as the constructive criticism that it's meant to be.

The subject in the meeting was "consider the source." So, if I'm saying something that's a constructive form of criticism or I'm giving some feedback (and very often I like to give feedback when it's asked for, not always unbidden feedback), I might do it in a joking or sarcastic manner. Hopefully the person that I'm talking with at the time will consider the source. They know that it's coming from me and that it's coming from a loving, positive place.

It's very important for me to be careful with whom I'm talking to because if somebody doesn't know me and I'm saying something in that sort of way they might not take it the right way.

They might take it in a hurtful manner as opposed to coming from a loving place.

So it's very easy for somebody to hear me and say, "You're being mean." Sometimes you still do that with some things I say, when I actually meant it in a loving positive way.

AnonF: Yes. That's just my old fears coming up. When it comes

down to it, I know you are loving and want the best for me.

AnonM: Yes. So, when I'm talking to someone who knows me, they usually know it's coming from a loving place.

AnonF: I always found that the negative voices were strong as soon as I got up in the morning. How do you deal with negativity when you're most vulnerable (hungry, angry, lonely, or tired).

AnonM: I always used to wake up with that crappy headspace. But I generally tend to wake up in a good place now. That was something that you used to suffer from horribly and I know that you've come a long way within yourself to wake up in a more positive place.

AnonF: Yes. I think the fact that I read 12-Step literature and write in my journal about it every morning and call my sponsor helps a lot with that.

AnonM: Those are some of the things we do to not go into the day with that negativity. I try to have some of those practices on a daily basis. I try to have a prayer life. I try to do a meditation when I can in the morning. I start the day in a completely different light than how I used to start the day.

That it's not going to be a horrible, terrible day, that it's

going to be a good day. And I try to approach it from that and thank goodness I got a bit of a blessing to be able to do that.

Lately I have been going through a difficult time sleeping. I'm still struggling a little bit with that or the other thing you just mentioned- being hungry, angry, lonely or tired (H.A.L.T.).

If I'm not taking care of myself with that throughout the day- if I haven't had lunch at the right time and I'm hungry, I'm going to be grumpy or not in a mindful, peaceful place. So, it is a matter of trying my best to eliminate the H.A.L.T. I don't get lonely much anymore because I tend to spend a lot of time with folks in social settings. I have been tired though. Not sleeping well through the evening will allow that negativity to creep back in. And then I'm not mindful or maybe even conscious of the negativity creeping back in.

AnonF: Yes. But you did make a doctor's appointment for that tomorrow. That's self-care.

AnonM: And I am trying to follow up on the physical aspects of the sleep deprivation. I'm trying to have self-care and do something about the

problem. I'm trying to invite Higher Power in to help me with those problems.

AnonF: Yes. All this talk brought to mind when I was a teenager, smoking and drinking and being dead tired in the morning. My mom would try to wake me up for school. She would sing a really happy song, "Good morning to you. Good morning to you. We're all in our places with bright shiny faces." I would yell and throw shoes at her.

AnonM: Yes. You've shared that story with me many times. I can see the difference.

AnonF: Yes. I know that every morning when I get up, I go straight to reading recovery literature and writing. Writing about recovery themes has always been kind of meditative for me.

AnonM: Yes I try to meditate as much as I can and ask for Higher Power's help for the day ahead.

AnonF: Negativity attacks me when I don't get my way or when I am in fear. How do you deal with issues of control and fear to turn the negative voices into positive ones?

AnonM: It's hard to say because none of us are happy

when we don't get our way. If something's not happening the way I want it to happen then I try to tell myself, "Well then, it's not meant to go that way." That's not always the case. Some things have a deeper impact than others. Some areas are deeper. If it's something basic or simple, then it's a lot easier to just let go of it. I try not to be so triggered into negativity.

If you and I don't agree on something, I try not to go to a negative place right away with it. It is a matter of doing those ongoing things that we need to do to maintain balance.

I was just talking with another fellow today about how we are sober a long time in different areas.

But that doesn't mean everything is perfect. Yes, many things are much better, but things creep back in. Some things have a way of finding their way back into our lives if we let them in.

So, it's a matter of continuing to do the things that you just mentioned. You do your morning reading and writing and call your sponsor. I have my practices that I do every day. I talk to fellows every day. I talk to sponsees. I go to meetings regularly. I still do three or four meetings a week

and I still do fellowship with fellows. I just recently joined a new fellowship where I am trying to become active in that fellowship. I have friends there. I am actively looking for a sponsor.

I'm having a bit of a hard time finding one there but I'm actively looking because I need to keep working the Steps. I need to keep working the program. I can't stay clean on yesterday's shower and I can't stay sober on Steps from years ago. Yes. I try to do some Step work regularly, but there is a need to go through the Steps all over again in a more official capacity.

And I need to have somebody that I can reach out to for help and to make sure that it is an ongoing thing. I'm not always meant to get my way. Sometimes my way is just selfish and wrong.

AnonF: I think my part is more that I have a lot of fear. I don't know whether it was learning to be paranoid in my childhood from my parents or what it was. But I have a lot of fears including fear of trusting God. I was an atheist or agnostic most of my life.

AnonM: We all have a somewhere from where these

fears or negativity come from. It's not so much a matter of worrying that nothing's ever going to work out or nothing's ever going to go my way. It's a matter of that sometimes things aren't going to go my way, but it's OK. Very often things are going to go my way and not necessarily that that's the way I wanted them to go or thought they would go with me or with anyone else.

Sometimes what I perceive as something going the wrong way or the exact opposite way than I think it should go, isn't the worst thing that could happen. I don't know what the plan is. But sometimes there's a bigger plan going on that I don't know about. I know sometimes some of the worst things I thought could've happened turned out to be the best.

AnonF: I think we complement each other on that one because you're more in control of your fears. When I'm fearful you can usually point out to me how I don't have to be afraid. I feel like you can conquer fears better.

AnonM: I don't have as much fear as I used to. I try to be more grounded and think that things are going to be OK. Ultimately, I believe we're both going to be OK.

AnonF: You help me when you say that.

AnonM: Many of us are still coming from that fearful place and a more conscious contact with our Higher Power is a cornerstone to helping us see that everything is going to be OK. And I need to remember that I don't always know the right way for things to go.

I don't think I'm infallible. I don't think any of us are. Even if I'm pretty sure somebody's doing it the wrong way, I am trying to learn to change that with love. I try to approach the situation from a loving place because it's going to get a better response.

And it's not a matter of being underhanded, it's a matter of coming from that truly loving place. I like that saying, "Would you rather be right or happy?" Are we going to be bleeding deacons or elder statesman?

AnonF: Do you have any negative voices around A) health issues, B) anger, C) job fears or D) death?

AnonM: I can talk just a little more about the health issues. I'm getting a little older. I've been blessed in life with never having any health issues to speak of. I used to put my head on the pillow and go to sleep and sleep the whole night through.

I took things for granted after all the abuse that I put my body through for so many years. Now being sober for almost 30 years, I'm faced with some health issues. I certainly know that not facing them isn't going to help them so I do need to take a much more direct self-care approach and follow up with my doctor's appointments and follow up with all of that stuff. I need to do more to help myself stay in a healthy place.

The work thing that we were just talking about that I've been going through. It's been this ongoing thing where I've had the first conflict in a work situation. That hasn't happened in many years. I've been working with the same company for a long time. Lately, I have been really worried that things aren't going to go my way. It was contributing to the negativity, fears, and stress.

I kept worrying, "Am I going to lose my job?" My way out of the negative thinking is to talk with fellows, do the writing around it and a lot of prayer and meditation on it. I came to a place where I'll try to do my best with it. And if I can't do it- and if I see that I can't do it- if I'm going to lose my job then I'll be OK. I'll find another job. Or something else will present itself.

AnonF: And we have a support system.

AnonM: Yes. So much peace came within that. Like it says in the Serenity Prayer: "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

And sometimes I get lost in the wisdom to know the difference.

I really came to the place where I could also take care of myself and stand up for myself in that work situation. I surrendered to what is going to be is going to be.

I found peace and let go of the negativity and the fear around it. In the past I would just dwell in what was wrong with the situation. I would think about how it's so wrong and stupid.

That wasn't helping anything. I was just staying in the wrong and not coming to the other side, not coming to the solution.

AnonF: So, the next part of that question (anger). You seem to have dealt with your anger.

AnonM: I come from a rageaholic background. I did a lot of work over the years. Part of turning my life around and getting rid of the negativity and fear was to deal with my anger issues. I don't think I'm perfect with it.

But, I'm not so easily triggered to slip into fearful anger. Because that's usually where the anger is coming from anyways- the fear. We talk about that hungry, angry, lonely tired thing, I have to maintain all the tools of recovery.

I have to stay in the solution instead of the problem. I don't really get too angry anymore.

AnonF: And the next part of the question (death)?

AnonM: I'm not so narcissistic in terms of death. Not to say that I never think of death. But I don't dwell in thinking about the fact that one day I'm going to die. I try to live in today. And today we're here and everything is pretty good.

AnonF: Death is more difficult for me, I think. When somebody that I love dies, like when my sister-in-law's mother died, it shook my faith for a while. I went into a lot of negativity and thought, "What's the point?" And I'd hate to even think about how I'm going to be when you die.

AnonM: Well, God willing and each of us willing, we'll be here for a long time. I try not to be in the fearful place of when that's going to happen.

AnonF: Yes. My solution when that fear comes up is to tell fellows that I'm going to need a lot of support and I laugh about it. Not

to say that I'm making light of death, but I try not to dwell in the dramatic futurizing.

AnonM: Yes. And that's why I want to practice self-care and maintain my health, because I want to live as long as I can. I want to be as on the ball and present as I can be for as long as possible. We've both suffered loss in our lives.

My dad is not well. It's a matter of time before he passes. But I also don't want to see him continue to suffer the way he's suffering. Death is one of those things that gives us excuses to do things that maybe we shouldn't do because we can ask ourselves, "What is the point?"

The point is that I want to try to be as present, giving and loving as I can be while I'm still here. That has a lot to do with living in today.

AnonF: It seems like the death of my sister-in-law's mother had a lot to do with the 11th Step. Because my sister-in-law used to be in 12-Step Programs with me and when we found out her mom had a tumor we prayed together. We prayed with all our might that God would protect her and keep her with us and for her to get better. But she died a month later in a horrible death. And it sent my sister-in-law out of the Program.

AnonM: Well, she was already going out before she found out

about her mother. She wasn't going to many meetings, she was slipping a lot and was being dishonest, if I remember correctly.

AnonF: You're right she was wavering. (laughter). That's what I like about you. My addict head makes up fearful stories and you shine the light of reality on the story.

AnonM: I don't want to get into a religious debate but there's only so much of an interventionist God. And I know it's a sensitive subject but it wasn't so horrible a death. She didn't suffer for long. And she was surrounded by love.

AnonF: Yes we all supported each other and she was able to have a hospital bed in her home.

AnonM: And she got to go with a great deal of dignity. Not to take away from anybody's death but it's really tough. Who are we to decide when someone should or shouldn't go? Nobody wants anyone to die before their time.

But I don't know what anyone's time is. My mom died at 42. It wasn't an easy death. That's what we were talking about earlier on.

I think I know what I want. Is there a God? Isn't there a God? How do these things happen if there is a God? I can pray for a

lot of things — that doesn't mean it will happen. And we all go through that. But we usually come out the other side.

AnonF: In the years since her death, I've regained some of the faith that I lost. I think seeing her on her deathbed was traumatic.

I've done a lot of research about the 11th Step since then and in the A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book it says that prayers for other people are fundamentally good but we should avoid making demands on God and seek his will for our lives.

I couldn't control whether or not my loved one would die, I could only pray for God's will.

AnonM: And we can pray for peace within ourselves. And that way we can be as positive and as loving as possible in those situations.

To help someone go through that to pass on with as much love as possible is the best thing and sometimes the only thing we can do. It's possible for us to flip and go the other direction too.

I know that with the loss of my mom I went the completely other direction where I was still in my addiction. And I wasn't of love or support to anyone. And I missed everything to do with my mom's passing because I wasn't

in a place to give. In recovery we're able to give back.

AnonF: Yes. Everyone did rally around her and I tried to help anywhere I could, moving furniture, bringing food, sitting by her bedside. That certainly wouldn't have been the way I did things in my addiction.

Do you think there's anything we've missed about the topic of combatting negativity?

AnonM: We were interrupted a bit earlier by a phone call from a fellow. He just went through something where he did it his way. And he suffered through the process, but he came out the other side. He's back on track. And am I going to be loving and supportive in the process? Am I going to fall into fear and negativity? I want to project positivity with people. And not a false sense of positivity. But a true sense of, "We're all going to make up our own minds. And we're all going to make our own decisions. It would be nice if we could be supportive to help those around us go through those hard times. I believe I have to keep doing those things to keep me in a place to be able to do that. The 11th Step prayer is about giving. It's not about taking. I'm trying to be in that place where I can be of service and be giving. I don't naturally want to come from that place. I want to come from another place of, "Well, I am fearful. I'm not going to get mine. Therefore, I can't give to someone else because I'm not going to get mine if I give it

all away." The more I believe I'm able to give, the more I'm able to come from that place. Hopefully I'm less worried about myself.

AnonF: I did want to talk about how negative voices attack me when I do positive things for myself. Mostly with my career, my anorexia attacks me with negative voices in my head, telling me I can't do anything right. I remember getting an opportunity for my career and walking to an appointment. The negative voices were relentless, shouting at me. They were almost like demons. They yelled, "Who do you think you are? You can't do this. You're going to mess everything up. Your whole world is going to blow up if you do this." I wanted to lay down on the sidewalk and not take another step. That's where my anorexia went in the beginning of my sobriety in S.L.A.A. I just had to breathe deeply, pray and tell myself, "Let it be what it is." My anorexia isn't as strong as it used to be.

AnonM: The more power we give our anorexia, the more all of those fears and all that negativity will come back. It's truly a matter of continuing to try to work on the opposite of our anorexia. Our anorexia is really founded in a fearful negative place. It's about coming out of that to let the sunshine of the spirit come in.

AnonF: Thank you for doing this interview!

AnonM: (grumble)

AnonF: (laughter)

Individual Contribution Month

Give Thanks this May by Giving Back

SUPPORT S.L.A.A. FELLOWSHIP-WIDE SERVICES BY DONATING TODAY

S.L.A.A. Fellowship-Wide Services assist many individuals who identify as newcomers, seasoned members and those of us who still suffer. Your contribution will help the F.W.S. to publish and ship more than 80,000 pieces of literature, gather and maintain a comprehensive database of over 1000 groups worldwide and provide logistical support to like minded committees, prison outreach programs, conventions and many other essential tasks.



*This is a message from the Conference Finance Committee.

2 ways you can
donate now...

Send a check or money order to:

The Augustine Fellowship - S.L.A.A.-F.W.S.
1550 NE Loop 410, Suite 118
San Antonio, TX 78209



Donate Today





THE INSPIRATION LINE

Your 24-Hour Sponsor

215-574-2120

CELEBRATES

200,000 CALLS!

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

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.



theJournal