



theJournal

Issue # 150

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~ Program Crush ~

Sexual and Emotional Intrigue
at 12-Step Meetings

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

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

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S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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

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Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader:

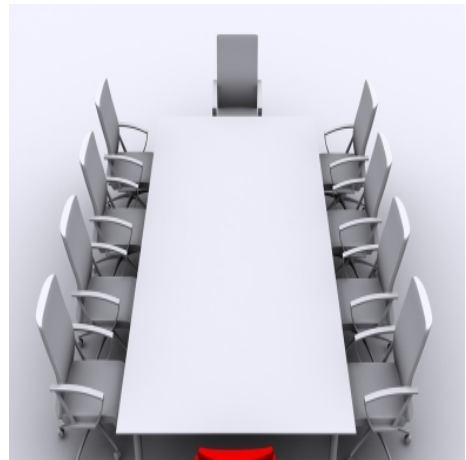
This Issue of *the Journal* is about having a crush on someone in a meeting. I've always had crushes since I was a young girl who had posters of Lief Garrett on her wall. So why wouldn't I develop a crush on someone when they share so openly and honestly in meetings? The fact is that we are open and honest in our shares—we need to be for sobriety. The trick is to prevent my addict from taking advantage of that.

When I first started coming to meetings, fellowship was a huge part of my recovery. We were all included and usually took up an entire section of a restaurant. Although fellowship was healing with a lot of program talk, it was also dangerous. It felt like high school with so many people having crushes on people in the rooms and even threatening friends if they were interested in their crushes. My crush led to us supporting each other in recovery, but then eventually to hopeless demoralization and losing sobriety and sanity.

Maybe that's what we needed to learn more about our disease. But hopefully others can learn from our experience and not have to go down that dark road. It's my hope that the stories contained in this issue will do that for someone who reads them. For others who have gone through it, they will probably nod in agreement as I did.

The tools of the program worked for the S.L.A.A. program members who wrote their stories here. I believe they can work for you too!

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*



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

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Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

“HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CRUSH ON SOMEONE IN A MEETING?
WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT IT?”

Yes... I thought about it. Prayed about it. Prayed for her. Talked to my sponsor. I was OK!

—STEVE B., CHICAGO

Yes. I do not have “program” calls or emails, texts or meetings with members of the opposite sex to avoid this intrigue or fantasy. (I will communicate with members of the opposite sex on Fellowship business.)

—ANONYMOUS

Yes. I talked about it with my sponsor, did some writing in my journal about it, talked about it in getting current meetings (without specifics that would reveal who it was). Those times have been great opportunities to get clarity on my fantasy/intrigue issues.

— ANONYMOUS, AUSTIN

I wouldn't go as far as to say a crush, but I have occasionally been triggered by some newcomers. I did my best to identify with their pain so I could see them as people and not objects of lust.

— ANDREW K., DALLAS, TX

Married them.

JACK S., LARGO, FL

Not in S.L.A.A. But 20 years ago in early A.A. sobriety. After 3 relationships while medication-free and 5 years later, I decided I was a sex addict and started asking A.A. members if there was a 12-Step program for this addiction. Voila — here I am, 13+ years later. Thank goodness.

— RITA H., MONTREAL

Yes. There was once someone who came to meetings that I felt very attracted to. I spoke to my sponsor and a trusted friend in the meeting. From speaking with them, I realized this was my addict attracted to their addict and it was not appropriate for me to get involved with this person. I set boundaries with my sponsor to keep myself safe and asked two trusted friends at the meeting to help me as well so I didn't slip.

— ANONYMOUS

Yes... All the time. I try to sit in a location where I can't look at them in the meeting. I tell someone else so they can keep me accountable. I remember that this too should pass and remind myself this is a human being just like me.

—JUANITA, HYATTSVILLE, MD

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “Have you ever had a crush on someone in a meeting? What did you do about it?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two questions are: Issue #151 — Sober at the Holidays — “Is it more difficult to stay sober around the holidays? What special problems have you encountered and what tools of the program did you use to stay sober?” The deadline for submissions is 9/15/14 and: Issue #152 — Strengthening Healthy Boundaries— “How has the S.L.A.A. program of recovery helped you to strengthen your boundaries?” The deadline for submissions is 11/14/14 Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

Yes. I did nothing because of anorexia. Then worked program and got over it.

— MARK W., SF/EB

Yes. I sought out my sponsor and discussed my situation. He suggested I speak to the person as a person not an “object of desire.” After getting to know her, we became just friends and I could live with that.

— JAY, G., PHILADELPHIA, PA

Not really. I have learned to wait and learn who that person really is and usually they show themselves. So waiting it out to see if I really am interested solves that.

— ELIZABETH P., HOUSTON

Yes. I try to keep in mind that both I and that person are there to recover, not hook up. I have had a relationship with a person in the Fellowship. I used different tools of recovery when entering into, being in and leaving that relationship.

— FREDRIK L., UPPSALA, SWEDEN

I think of the person as a biological brother or put the face of Jesus on that person and the fantasy seems to go away almost immediately.

— C.B., CA

Yes, I came to realize that my recovery is more important than the (fantasy) about the person I was obsessing over. (I made a decision) not to make (that) person my Higher Power. I came to realize that I was in my meeting to recover.

— ANONYMOUS, CA

I followed her to another meeting. The attraction was instant. I absorbed her shares. (We) talked afterwards. I enjoyed when we held hands (twice) and then I realized that I have a wife. I’m fantasizing about another. She stopped going to the meeting. When we met at another she offered to hang out and I wisely said, “No” and now we refrain from everything, any form of contact. That’s okay!

— AUDREY, CA

At first, when I got into the rooms, I had that simple thought “I wonder...” And then I started to really listen to what people shared. I slowly began letting go of those fantasies because I began to see people, all people as people instead of objects or characters in my romance fantasies. I still might be attracted to someone but I now just treat it like walking by a flower on the street. I can stop to smell a rose, but I don’t have to pluck it and take it home.

— GS, CA

Reminding Me of My Focus



Photo by Hope

I've had a crush on someone in an S.L.A.A. meeting. I came into S.L.A.A., after years in other programs, with an awareness that my motive for going to 12-Step meetings had often been to intrigue, get attention, and date.

In fact, every relationship I had while recovering from chemical dependency had been with someone from a meeting.

I knew when I started going to

mixed meetings in S.L.A.A. that I had a lot of changing to do. I told a friend who'd been in program for quite a while that I had a crush on someone in my meeting. My friend told me it was normal, and happened frequently, which gave me a sense of relief and self-acceptance.

I had a sponsor in S.L.A.A. early on, and shared it with her. I asked my sponsor what she suggested. She told me that if I

planned to avoid this person by avoiding this meeting, that it should only be for a temporary length of time because the addiction is in me.

I had to fix what was wrong in me by using the Steps, and this is how my patterns could change. I believed her reasoning was in line with my understanding of recovery which I got from the literature in another program.

I learned that just shielding

myself from temptation is never a permanent solution. Recovery is a spiritual solution and only my relationship with my Higher Power is the source of help. And for me, God uses people to help me.

At another S.L.A.A. meeting, I heard it mentioned in the readings that we are not here to meet romantic partners or prospective romantic partners. I needed to hear that and be reminded of it regularly.

It helped keep me on track and reminded me of what I needed to focus on at meetings. It also helped me to not feel so ashamed of my feelings. Apparently, I was not alone. I didn't need more experience acting out in my disease.

The Step work would help me come to the realization that what I had been doing wasn't working. I wanted to have more experience in recovery.

I became aware that just because I had a feeling of attraction, longing, or desire, it did not mean I had to act on it. This was something I had to be careful of when dealing with this person after the meeting and in fellowship. I struggled with balance in how I treated this person.

I tried to be a supportive fellow in recovery and be an acquaintance to this person, who I genuinely felt inspiration from and related to. I hoped to be warm, but I struggled with being cold and aloof in my shyness, insecurity, guilt and shame for even having an attraction to someone who I "should" accept as being "unavailable." I'm an addict. And sex and love addicts will have attractions that can lead to intrigue if we're not working towards recovery. I try not to beat myself up for having this battle and tendency toward addictive behavior.

It helped to learn that the people who started this particular meeting

ended up running off together in a relationship and quit the program! Anorexia focused meetings tend to "justify sexual activity" because we've been starving ourselves of sex and love. It is all about checking my motives for doing what I do.

So learning that other people struggled with this, and imagining what any relationship started in program could end up doing to the people and their recovery was a big deterrent. I needed that, as I felt a bit like a kid with a cookie jar, not sure how to go about not trying to get my "fix" anymore.

I will admit, sometimes my thoughts go there. And I wonder if there could be something there. I also had to check my motives for going to fellowship after the meeting, which early on I admit were not completely recovery oriented.

I tried to build a connection with this person as an acquaintance, and eventually took a cooler approach as I started to date in recovery. I also try to remember I can focus on being supportive to other women in recovery.

I personally have always valued friendships and even sponsorship relationships with men, but I have to continue to check my motives. I continue to be reminded that people in S.L.A.A. suffer from the same addictions I do, and that I want to help others, not stand in their way.

Hearing other men share in meetings helps to prevent me from objectifying them for my own selfish, addictive motives. So I continue to not act on my crush, mind my own business and try to offer support when I am able to. I recognize my progress and try not to beat myself up for not being "perfect."

— ANONYMOUS

At another S.L.A.A. meeting, I heard it mentioned in the readings that we are not here to meet romantic partners or prospective romantic partners. I needed to hear that and be reminded of it regularly.

Disease Plays Tricks With My Heart

I have had several crushes on people in meetings. The first time was 17 years ago when I first got into the program.

I had a major crush on a guy who was a full-blown sex addict. I had just gotten out of an abusive marriage with a sex addict, so I was ripe for the picking. In my marriage, sex was the only thing that was going well. I believed that if I could have amazing sex with a man that he would fall in love with me and take care of me the rest of his life.

I got so excited going to meetings and actually thought that I was going to make my crush fall for me in a big way. I believed I was going to have an amazing partner in my life because I knew that if he had sex with me he would fall madly in love with me.

We ended up having sex and he ignored me in a big way and rarely came to meetings anymore. I was very hurt. That was a tough lesson to learn. But my addiction was still leading the way and convincing me that the way to a man's heart was through incredible sex.

I knew in my logical mind this was not the case. But the patterns of my disease played tricks with my heart, convincing me that I knew best and that this time it would be different.

Since that time, I have had several crushes in meetings. But I learned that if I acted on my feelings with any of them that I

would get hurt. So I laid low and stayed out of danger by not getting involved. Awareness was the first key for me to change the behavior. I realized that it was not the crush itself that was wrong. It was the acting out and giving into the power of the disease that could lead me down the road to no return.

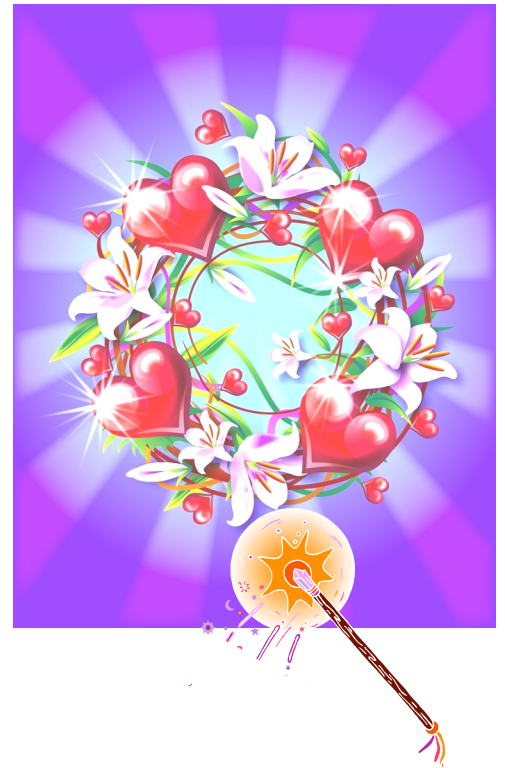
The second thing that helps me is to talk to someone in the meeting about it. I have gone to someone I felt safe with and told them about the crush.

Telling someone helps to diffuse the urge because it is no longer a dirty little secret. I still had feelings for the person but they lessened because of my total honesty.

Another thing that has helped, is having discussion topics about meeting crushes. This allows a person to be able to be totally honest about feelings without revealing too much about the person.

I have done this in meetings that do not include the crush interest and it felt good to share about it. This made me feel safer in the meeting where the crush exists because I am not holding it inside any longer.

I also write about it in a journal and figure out why I have the crush and why I get triggered by this person. Being honest and



open with myself about it allows me to get real with whatever is going on with me that is feeling triggered. And it helps me work through it.

I still have crushes on people in meetings from time to time but I allow myself to feel the feelings and yet be gentle with myself about it.

It is common to have crushes on people in meetings because we become very intimate and familiar with people as they share from the depths of their being, day after day or week after week.

The thing about it is to do what you need to do in order to diffuse the situation. I have even had to leave meetings where I have experienced a crush on someone, for my own good.

Do whatever works because crushes will happen. So protect yourself in the safest way possible. Sometimes feelings get intense so talking about them can help in so many ways.

Sincerely,

— HOLLEY K.



Phone Groups: Rural Lifelines

I met John at church in a small community. He served me communion several times over several months. I was intrigued by his gentleness, which had been sorely lacking in my life to that point.

Finally, I sat with him at a church potluck and got to know him. I fell instantly 'in love' and began to plot how I might let him know this. I did not know if he was married; I had not made a habit of looking at left hands, since it had not mattered to me before then.

At last the occasion arrived when I could ask him to lunch after church one Sunday. He asked me about my past and how I ended up in his small community.

I told him of my most recent domestic disasters culminating in my confession of a crush on him. He smiled sadly and began to tell me about Sex and Love

Addicts Anonymous. I was stunned. All this time I had thought it was my ex-partners' fault that my relationships didn't work out.

This small community had only one S.L.A.A. meeting and he was the group chair. Devastating! I was in such pain emotionally that I did not know where to turn since the next nearest meeting was hours away. I learned about the telephone groups and they became my life-line, especially the women's groups. I now consider the Women's We Are Not Alone phone group to be my home group.

I am so grateful that John did not engage in a relationship with me and kept his boundaries so well. It is a huge gift to me that he gave me a chance at sobriety instead.

— ANONYMOUS

Hooked on My Sponsor

My sponsor had been struggling to make a relationship work for a few years. She started seeing this woman within the first year of her recovery.

As I approached the anniversary of my first year, I wondered how she did it because I was not ready at all.

Of course, periodically I heard her speak of the stress in her relationship. To me it looked like she feared her partner's displeasure and walked on eggshells, however, it could have just been that my sponsor kept her boundaries about her time with her family versus program time.

When I would voice my displeasure with how she was being treated, she would minimize the situation and tell me she had to look at herself and try to grow through it.

To me, it sounded like using anabolic steroids to grow stronger while the drug ate away at sanity. Then I felt guilty for finding fault in my sponsor.

Oh, I knew she hadn't set herself up as perfect, but it was easy to think of her as so much wiser than me because she helped me during my Fourth Step work.

She taught me to look at my assets. She saw through my cloud of denial to the character defects I didn't want to see. On the few

occasions I used her in an emergency to calm down, her experience, strength and hope guided me well.

One pattern in my life that has been revealed is that of being attracted to someone else's interest in me.

If a person complimented me, compared me favorably to another (especially their partner or ex-partner), or if we made each other laugh, and if I thought she needed to be rescued, then I imagined she was interested in me.

While working my Fourth Step one day, in one conversation, my sponsor did all those things. Not more than a few hours later, I found my thoughts wandering to the edges of a fantasy involvement with her.

I found this to be an uncomfortable prospect. I had committed myself to a year of celibacy which didn't end for another six months. And one of my bottom lines was not dating someone who was already in a relationship.

This fantasy was unwelcome, so I continually pulled my mind away.

How do you stop fantasy? This was my main question when I first joined S.L.A.A.

By now, I had learned to stop fantasy first by being willing to stop it, and then by calling a recovery partner, going to a meeting, reading S.L.A.A. literature, and praying. I had also found I could stop it by distraction, meditation and Step work.

However, the temptation to fantasize started happening more and more frequently over subsequent days. By the fourth day of this, the fantasy would hit me unbidden throughout the day, not just at night.

A tool I use is the "three-second rule" where I give myself 3 seconds to divert my train of thought after one of these automatic involuntary thoughts. However, I became alarmed because my "three-second rule" was challenged so often it was as if this fantasy had gained strength equal to my early-withdrawal fantasies about my previous qualifier.

The difference was that now I knew the fantasy was like a snowball, it could grow from



Photo by Lisa C.

minutes to hours to days wasted and needed things would not get done. My recovery had progressed to the point that I was now employed and I could not afford for things to not get done.

My anxiety grew until I didn't sleep at all one night. I kept imagining how to tell her about this and how she might react. A terrible fear would grip my heart: Would I have to cut my association with her?

I realized this obsessive thought was no different than fantasizing. I had to sleep, so I chose to write about it. My initial justifications for why I should not tell her included not wanting to have to start my Step work over again with someone else.

That fear felt 'manufactured' and inauthentic. I asked my Higher Power to show me what I

was really fearing. What came to me was a suspicion that my only reason for keeping contact was to continue the intrigue.

I woke up un-rested after only a few hours of sleep and went to work. I had a second sleepless night, different only in that I was more tempted to drown my pain in fantasy and less willing to resist.

While one part of me watched from the safety of the shore, the other part of me disintegrated into the ocean of insanity. I had begun to believe I was destined to date my sponsor, even though I knew this was not sane or sober thinking.

I wrote more. I had an insight: I had treated my former partners exactly as I imagined her partner treated her.

I was controlling, angry and

easily displeased, I was possessive of my time with my partners and suspicious of their involvement with other women. I could accept a person's wisdom without needing to compare my education to theirs unless I was dating that person.

I used what they confided in me against them in arguments and then complained that they stopped communicating with me. I felt disgusted with myself. I prayed, meditated and finally grew tired enough to get a couple hours of sleep.

That next morning I decided I had to tell someone, but I was too afraid to tell my sponsor, so I called my most reliable, neutral and level-headed friend in the program, but I could not reach her. After leaving two messages with texts following each, I finally



emailed the gist of what I wanted to say and felt some relief.

My friend called later that evening, explaining she had been ill. Without being courteous and inquiring about her health, I hastily confessed.

She said, "First I want you to know that you are not alone." She explained that she had experienced her sponsees occasionally do the same thing with her and yet they were able to work through it.

"Maybe it is just a phase we all go through," she speculated. My friend said that sometimes if the only thing her sponsees knew about her partner was what she told them about him during moments of frustration, then they would have seen him "as a monster."

She said I would have to pray more on whether I should reveal this fantasy to my sponsor. She advised that if my sponsor was doing a good job as a sponsor then maybe I could set some boundaries.

I should ask her to not talk to me about the problems she was having with her partner, and then we could continue to work together.

Most reassuring was that I saw it as a phenomenon, and thus could let go of this idea

that it was some sort of sign of my destiny. It was not 'real' for these other women, so it was not something I needed to act on. The miracle is that as the days went by afterward, I thought of it less and less and moved on in my relationship with my sponsor and progressed in my Step work.

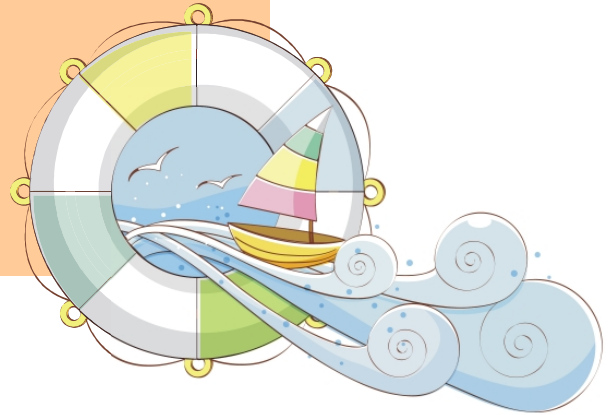
So far, I have not revealed the totality of the story to her. Although in my inventory similar situations arose and I found the nature of my character defects around it.

I was judgmental in order to feel better about myself. I was controlling of others in order to reassure myself nothing could hurt me. I was possessive and jealous so that I could reassure myself I wouldn't be abandoned.

I chose partners who were lesser educated and had a lower socioeconomic status so that I could rescue them and feel reassured that they wouldn't leave me because they were dependent on me.

I hid my vulnerability behind my humor and my supposed 'expertise' in certain areas, yet I constantly sought reassurance that I was funny and smart.

— A REASSURANCE JUNKIE, USA



Headed for Trouble

When I realized that I had a crush on a fellow S.L.A.A. member, I knew I was headed for trouble.

I had 4 years of sobriety from my bottom lines and I guess I expected not to feel attracted to a totally unavailable person... again.

In order to keep our meetings safe, intriguing with fellow members is discouraged.

Fellowship outside the meetings was supposed to be a training ground for practicing healthy friendship, not the beginning of yet another inappropriate one-sided affair.

When it all began (with my crush), I had been cleared for dating for a year. I was working on being comfortable in solitude, improving conscious contact with my Higher Power and practicing making friends.

I wasn't breaking any bottom line behaviors, so why didn't I feel sober?

Whenever I saw the person that I was attracted to, or talked to them, I'd get that old familiar out-of-balance, anxious, excited feeling. I'd be so distracted at meetings that I couldn't focus on the topic or the shares.

Then I'd check in with my

support network to talk about my feelings of fear and uncertainty. I was hearing conflicting advice. Some would say to try to stay friends with the person. But some told me to nip it in the bud.

I had to make some changes to protect myself. I was powerless over wanting to make contact, this I knew for sure. Indeed, I got so distracted one night as I was hurrying to a meeting that I ran a stop sign which resulted in a 2 car accident. I had hit a new bottom and I knew I needed help.

Luckily, I got the support from my sponsor to do 90 days of no contact. So I eliminated the

meetings that that person attended in order to avoid putting my emotional sobriety at risk. It was like going through withdrawal.

I love the line on page 116 of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text: "In order to maintain sobriety, we have the right to be a jerk." That meant that whenever contact was imminent, I gave myself permission to do whatever it took to avoid it.

I couldn't let their feelings affect my commitment to my sobriety (page 73 of our Basic Text). One day at a time, I turned over everything to my Higher Power. I practiced my top lines and focused on radical self-care. I worked the Steps and uncovered some resentments and a few more character defects.

When I shared my 5th Step with a fellow member, it was made abundantly clear that the only way

that I know I am sober is by my gut and my Higher Power's guidance. After a few months, I felt more centered and less panicky, even at times when I was unable to avoid the person I was attracted to.

Today, I still am attracted, but I'm more stable. So I get to practice acceptance, tolerance and kindness to myself and towards others.

Today, I am still a sex and love addict, and choice has once again been restored to me as a result of doing the Steps, carrying the message of hope, and working with sponsees and others. I am so grateful I have a structured program of recovery that has led me through and beyond my expectations. Today, I feel a renewed sense of hope and I am happy, joyous and free!

— ANONYMOUS

**"In order to maintain sobriety, we have the right to be a jerk."
—page 116 of our basic text**

Hugs and Healthy Boundaries

When I first joined S.L.A.A., after the first few months of attending a regular weekly S.L.A.A. meeting in my area, I developed a crush on a man who sometimes came to the meetings.

I was triggered by men in general, so attending a coed meeting was challenging to begin with. I made sure not to hug the men during fellowship, but one time this man came up to me and the woman standing next to me, and he asked if it was okay to give me a hug. Since setting boundaries has often been difficult for me, it was hard to say

no, and I let him.

After that, I couldn't stop obsessing about him during meetings. It's hard to explain why, but my addiction was probably triggered by a combination of being shown attention by a man who I found physically attractive as well as being touched by him, even in a simple hug.

Mostly, I only obsessed about him at the meetings when he was there. If he didn't show up, I felt relief. Then I could relax, fully participate, and enjoy the meeting. When he did show up, I found it hard to concentrate,

because I was using all my effort not to go into fantasy, which is one of my bottom lines.

The funny thing is that, from the little I knew about him, I sensed we were probably not compatible. In a lot of ways, I didn't even like his personality. And when I found out he came from the same part of the country and had a similar background to my ex-husband, I knew there was no way I wanted anything to do with him.

Still, that information did not stop the obsession and discomfort, and soon I became afraid I was going to do or say

something inappropriate to him. In fact, I did find myself going up to him more frequently after the meeting to talk to him, or looking at him longer than I should have.

I began to imagine that he noticed and that he felt uncomfortable; my perception of reality regarding the situation became so distorted that I finally talked to my sponsor about it. We agreed that it might be good for me to stop going to those meetings for a while.

I decided to stop going for a month, although I attended other meetings during that time.

Meanwhile, I committed to using the tools of the program to explore my crush. In particular, I read the S.L.A.A. pamphlet on romantic obsession and wrote about it in my journal.

I began to understand how I was not only hurting myself, I was also hurting him.

Regarding myself, I realized that when I crushed on him, I

was manifesting several of the Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction: “We become emotionally attached to people without knowing them; We stay enslaved... to romantic intrigue;” and “We assign magical qualities to others.”

Just thinking about the possibility of us being together gave me a “hit,” and thus the crush was feeding my addiction.

I was objectifying him and making judgments about his character without really even knowing him.

My crush was preventing me from respecting him as an ordinary human being who was sincerely trying to overcome his addiction, just as I was mine.

Reading the S.L.A.A. literature and writing in my journal also helped me gain insight into how to recognize and handle obsessions in the future.

After a month, I felt I was ready to attend the meetings

again. At first, he wasn’t there. Then one day he showed up, and I initially worried that the crush would start all over again.

But I was able to prompt myself to remember what I knew of him and our likely incompatibility.

Just that mental prompting was enough to stop the fantasy without demeaning him in my mind.

I was also able to concentrate on the meeting. I knew I had changed something profound from cultivating my awareness about romantic obsession.

Nowadays I still notice him when he comes to the meetings, but it’s more a memory of a crush than the real thing.

And if I even sense an impulse to obsess about him, which rarely happens, I am able to draw upon the tools of recovery to make the impulse fade away in the moment.

— ANONYMOUS, ARIZONA

***the Journal* themes and deadlines for 2014**

Issue #	Theme	Question Of The Day (QOD)	Submission deadline (articles and QOD)
#151	Sober at the Holidays	“Is it more difficult to stay sober around the holidays? What special problems have you encountered and what tools of the program did you use to stay sober?”	Sept. 15, 2014
#152	Strengthening Healthy Boundaries	How has the S.L.A.A. program of recovery helped you to strengthen your boundaries?	Nov. 14, 2014

Submit your answers and longer articles on the theme at www.slaafws.org

Disease Can Turn Spark of Crush Into Raging Obsession

Early on in my recovery there was someone who came to my home group for a long time.

He was a very nice guy, kind, and quiet. He, like me and others attending the meeting, was struggling to recover from an adult life of addiction and a childhood of abuse.

I noticed him one night in a different location: A group therapy meeting that I was attending to aid in my recovery from a childhood of abuse.

He was kind, good looking, had a great job, and drove a hot sports car. Being a lesbian, I was drawn to his car and to his job, I can honestly say that I wanted to “be” him. I began to develop a crush, similar to what a teenage girl would feel for a pop star.

After therapy one night, we were walking to our cars and what began as a few naïve, honest, and well intentioned comments about my crush on him erupted into a raging obsession in a few hours. Never had I admitted such a feeling, never had I been so openly powerless and vulnerable.

My disease stepped in to obliterate these feelings and crush them with a desperate obsession for someone I couldn't have, didn't “want” and really, truly didn't want to be. My disease didn't care and as careful as I had been not to do it, I had “Sh*t where I ate.” The obsession became all-consuming.

I called my sponsor every day and checked in honestly about where I was at. I realized that even though I identify as gay, my disease is straight. I read the literature and worked a 4th Step on vulnerability. It is no consequence



that at the height of this compulsion, my body was expressing nightly panic attacks and body memories of sexual abuse that happened when I was a very young child.

I talked to others in the program. I also found out that my therapist didn't really understand sexual addiction when I spoke to her about this obsession.

I learned that my crush had mentioned this experience and his obsession and she decided we could "work it out" and arranged a meeting a few weeks into the obsessive experience.

That turned out to be a complete disaster. After that, I left that therapy group and he began to attend a meeting in another town.

I sat on my hands for several weeks after that and eventually two things happened: The obsession lifted and I shared at a meeting in another fellowship about the experience.

After the meeting someone whose program I had always admired came up to me and admitted to having the same experience and acting on it to disastrous ends.

Her marriage was in shambles, she was in a position

to lose custody of her children and she had lost her job. That night, in the one place an addict can get a great roasted chicken and talk sobriety, we sat for several hours. In that South Miami restaurant, I realized that sharing my experience helped her.

Sharing my desperate feelings of obsession, my tendency to run away immediately from any perception of vulnerability and my disease's desire for people, places, and things that are destructive to me actually helped her turn her life around.

I am glad to say that today we are still friends and that we are still both sober.

I am also glad to say that whenever I experience the intense discomfort of the disease and just "sit on my hands" and don't act out, I always survive.

I not only survive, but I come out of it with a little bit more hope. I have a closer relationship with my Higher Power and my sobriety support group. Being honest about where I am every day is vital to being truly who I am.

—ANONYMOUS

I am glad to say that today we are still friends and that we are still both sober.

The Journal is now available in audiobook (mp3) format.

Get them at:

<http://store.slaafws.org/ctgy/JAUD.html>



Share space

I Don't Want to be Like This Anymore

My sponsee and I were reading some 12-Step literature the other day and we came across a great prayer. I told her to say the prayer for thirty days to help her stay away from her qualifier and move toward acceptance of the disease.

She started saying it every day. But the next time we met she said, "I've been saying that prayer every night, but I don't understand it."

So we opened up our book and took it line by line. "God, I don't care what I sound like." I turned to my sponsee, "Do you care if people think your ideas are bad or if people think you're crazy?" I said. "People know I'm crazy," she said.

"From what I see, it seems like you are a highly intelligent, capable person except when in your disease, and you don't let people know when you're in your disease," I said. "So it seems to me that you care very much about what you sound like," I said.

"And that hinders your recovery because you can't get the help that you need when you're in crisis."

"Maybe," she said. "Yeah, I don't ever share what's going on with me."

"I suggest you raise your hand in a meeting and share honestly. You can't save your face and your ass at the same time," I said.

We moved on to the next line of the prayer: "Or look like."

"I know you care what you look like," I said to my sponsee. "You always wear the coolest clothes and you watch your weight."

"Yes," she said. "I almost didn't go to the meeting



Photo by James E.

this morning because of these bags under my eyes." She dabbed her face with a tissue as she said this. "But, I realized that's just craziness and I wouldn't get the recovery that I need," she added.

"Yes, we're both getting older and that's a fact of life," I said. "Write a fear inventory on that and read it to me. I need to pray for acceptance on that one, too!"

Then I read the next line of the prayer: "Who my partners are."

"That's a big one," I said. "Of course I should care about who my partners are. As a sex and love addict, I care very much who my partners are."

"But the point of this one is that God should choose who my partners are and I need to let him make that decision. My choice of partners was my married qualifier."

"We were going to run away together and become gurus of S.L.A.A. We were going to throw S.L.A.A. parties and have all S.L.A.A. literature on our bookshelves. I saw a rainbow once when we were

together and I thought that meant God chose him for me. But our relationship was complete delusion and pure insanity.

“When I had a spiritual experience, got sober, went through the Steps again, and cut off all contact with him, God sent me a better partner. Someone at my level in every way (intellect, financial, etc.) and someone I was willing to communicate honestly with and a partner in recovery who was willing to walk this road with me.

“Can you say that you can let God choose your partners for you or do you still need control? Do you feel like God is trustworthy enough for that?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “I admit that my choices have always been wrong. But God doesn’t always give me the best choices, or notice me, or protect me,” she said.

“It was usually you who didn’t protect you,” I replied, a little saddened because I knew this was one of my major character defects also.

“When you practice conscious contact and self-care you notice that Higher Power has been there all along. You’ve been carried this far, even through dangerous behavior, hospitalizations, attempted suicide, drug addiction, and much more.

“You were never abandoned until you abandoned yourself. It’s time to care about yourself and lean on Higher Power and program instead of the guy who is human and spiritually sick like you. He will fail you because he’s not available. Higher Power is available all the time,” I said with confidence, knowing I truly believed what I was saying.

“Let’s take the next part of the prayer,” I said

“—or where I live.”

“In the time I’ve known you,

you’ve moved to New York and back twice,” I said.

“I’ve always wanted to live somewhere else,” she said, nodding in agreement. “I always think my life will be so much better there.

“I know you always take yourself with you, though. I end up doing the same things and making the new place miserable. I guess if I could get sober it wouldn’t matter where I lived.”

“Yes, I think that’s the point about this line of the prayer.”

“So the next line —I just don’t want to be like this anymore,” I said.

“Yes, I agree with that totally,” she said. “I am powerless over my sex and love addiction and I don’t want to trash my life or go through one more crazy scene with some self-centered guy who treats me like shit ever again.

“I know I will kill myself over this disease when I let it get bad enough. This has landed me in the psych hospital and I don’t want to go back there or worse!”

“I agree. You’re such an amazing person and the world would have much less light in it without you. When you’re sober and working a program, you help so many people and are so fun to be around. People gravitate toward you. You have a lot of people who love you, including me!”

“Anyway,” I said, blushing, “let’s continue,” I read the next line of the prayer, “On your terms.”

“That’s a tough one,” I said.

“I want my terms. I want to be able to arrange the players and set the stage. I want my life to follow the movie in my head.

“Sometimes Higher Power’s terms can be painful or difficult. Are you willing to do God’s will even if you have to practice patience and tolerance?”

“Those are two bad words for addicts. We’re immature and want to throw a tantrum instead,” I said.

“Yeah,” my sponsee replied. “Most of the time I say Higher Power’s terms are too hard. ‘F’ it I’m going to call him. It’s much easier to numb out and do what I know I’m going to do eventually because I’m an addict,” she said.

“Yeah,” I said. “It’s hard to fight the addict voice that wants to keep us sick and weak. The harder choice is Higher Power’s way and responsibility.”

“But the easier softer way usually puts us in a world of hurt or worse,” I said.

“Okay. Let’s move on to the next line.

“In your time,” I said.

“God can be really slow sometimes! It just depends on what we need,” I said.

“I feel like I’m getting too old to wait on Higher Power’s time,” my sponsee said. “I let so many opportunities for the life I want pass me by and now I feel like it’s too late. And I don’t trust that God will do anything for me in any amount of time.”

“Yes,” I said, nodding my head in agreement. “I was 40 before I got married for the first time. I had to clear out the wreckage of my past and that didn’t happen over night so it won’t clear out overnight. And it usually takes a long time for me to understand and see what I’m supposed to see.

“When the voice pops into your head that God isn’t doing it right or fast enough, that’s when you know you’re playing God. Just be willing to let go and let God.”

“Okay. Let’s keep going,” I said.

“Please remake me as you will.

“What if God wants to remake me by putting an eyeball in the middle of my forehead so I can

see better?” I said. “Would I be OK with him remaking me in a way that I think makes me look like a freak?”

“I have to be willing to say that no matter what, I will stay sober and keep up conscious contact. I’m not perfect with that,” I said.

“I resent God quite often and

think he’s wrong. But I write a resentment inventory and look for ways to be of service and pray and meditate anyway. And the feeling passes.

“And I eventually see that everything happens the way it’s supposed to.”

“And now the very last line of

the prayer and probably most important,” I said.

“Thank you.”

“We have to remember to be grateful for what we have,” I said. “Gratitude lists at night help me with that even if it’s just ‘Thank you that I’m still alive.’”

—ANONYMOUS

Those S.L.A.A. Bottom Lines Have Changed My Life

Step 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Whilst working my Step 6, I was asked by a friend, “Has S.L.A.A. miraculously taken away your romantic obsession? Like, in A.A. the desire to drink is completely removed – does that happen in S.L.A.A.?”

I felt slightly defensive answering this, but on later consideration, I realised that what S.L.A.A. had “taken away and left behind” was indeed miraculous!

Of course, I still have lots going on inside my head, sometimes obsession, at times that old voice of self criticism, but my desire to act out has been removed.

Before S.L.A.A., no matter how many times I broke up with a partner, I always called them the next day (until I had another lover to focus on). No matter how many times I told friends “I’m going to be on my own for a while,” I had a lover by the next week.

No matter how much I sat on my hands to stop myself from calling or texting someone I knew I shouldn’t, eventually I’d have to reach for the phone. But those S.L.A.A. bottom lines have changed my life! I don’t know how or why now, but they have. And what I’m left with then, is the stuff that goes on in my head, the things that have been identified through my Fourth Step as my defects of character – superficiality, fear, anxiety, avoidance... the list goes on.

But these become the fodder for my daily spiritual practice. They’re the reason I get out my spiritual sanding paper.

And now that I’m not constantly embroiled as I once was in pain, drama, crises, and unmanageability – I have the emotional, spiritual and physical space in which to become entirely ready.

I need to keep a disciplined and joyful approach to my spiritual life and over time, things will happen – because it’s GOD that will be removing these

things, not me. I just need to be aware, willing and in a state of readiness.

A bloke shared at a meeting recently something like, “Don’t limit yourself by making requests of God because what God can give you will far surpass what you can conceive of. So be as open as you can rather than asking for particulars.”

This struck a chord with me around turning my ENTIRE life’s will, including my defects of character, over to the care of my Higher Power. I cannot foresee what will be given in the place of a defect removed – so why fantasize and speculate?

It’s also, for me, about the discomfort of sitting with what is underneath those medicating behaviours. Last Sunday I had the WHOLE day to myself – amazing! Over-busyness has dissipated! Caretaking a partner is not a part of my life anymore! Spending an entire day (or week) fighting and arguing is off the agenda!

My little house and business

are in order! A manageable life, just for today... and hey, what came up?! – I felt lonely and a bit frustrated.

And whilst it was uncomfortable to sit in it, I was also able to thank my Higher Power for giving me the opportunity to feel those feelings.

These were the self-same feelings that when I was growing up and dangerously alone and neglected, I learnt how to push down by working, activity, sex, lovers and crises.

But now that they are no longer there, I have to feel these feelings.

I can't pray, "God please take away my compulsions for alcoholic men, my obsession with work," etc. and then say, "But I don't want to experience what lies beneath."

Now that I have a simple programme for working through this stuff, also a fellowship (support) and more self-esteem – I have TOOLS to experience the feelings that were previously unsafe for me to feel.

So using the tools of the programme is "being entirely ready." I am readying myself for something that is beyond my power to enact. I'm making space

for the unforeseeable to happen – and not running away from myself in the process of it happening.

* I wrote that 18 months ago as part of my Step 6 work – and since then the divinity and miracles of the S.L.A.A. programme seem to be unending. I truly love and respect myself today. I have a partnership with a man that is beyond my wildest dreams.

I am in Sweden on an incredible study opportunity and I offer my deepest gratitude to this programme and fellowship.

— ANONYMOUS

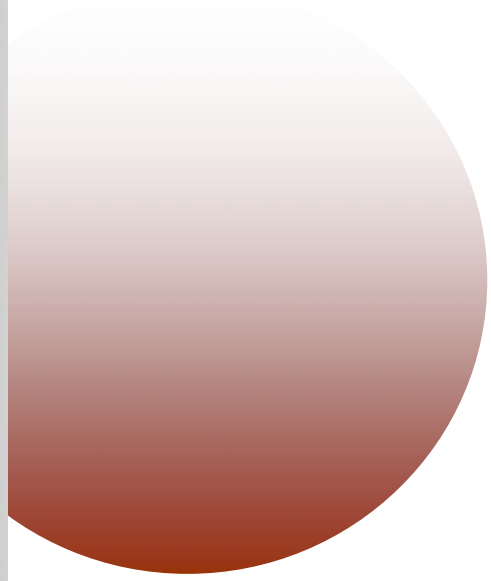
Pictures Tell a Story

Subject*: Tornado

Message*: Enclosed please find several pictures. These were taken after an Oklahoma tornado several years back. My friend and fellow member of the program/fellowship had his mobile home blown away and we were looking thru the wreckage for possessions and found a valuable book.

— DAVID





The S.L.A.A. Basic Text!



Recovery in Mixed Meetings



Photo by James E.

I first went to a face-to-face S.L.A.A. meeting before I was actually sure I wanted to be sober from acting out.

I left there thinking, “I want what they have.” But another part of me thought, “He’s the one that I pick, and him and him.”

When I finally surrendered and came back from treatment, I knew I needed a face-to-face meeting along with my phone meetings. I knew exactly where I could go. I went back to that same meeting. The same people

were there. But this time I needed my recovery more than I needed their phone number. I needed to feel safe, to be able to share my story, and to hear their story of hope. The secretary remembered me from before and welcomed me back. I now go to the meeting and feel at home regardless of whether or not I’m the only woman in the room that night.

I hear parts of my story when they share. I know I belong in that chair. I attend that meeting

every week. I cry, I laugh, I give hope to other women that may walk in one night. Those men in that room are the same as me, just men.

I am grateful that I can have healthy relationships with men in program and practice boundaries as well. It has shown me how far I’ve come. I’m so grateful for S.L.A.A. One day at a time I suit up and show up because I deserve it!!

— ANONYMOUS

Keep Coming Back

We start with desperation,
Fear, with shame both wide and deep.
Our need for hope spawns promises,
We all intend to keep.

But 'tho we strive and try our best,
We fail and fail again,
To keep that promise to abstain,
From whatever brought us in.

Yet God supplies with gentle love,
Forgiveness for mistakes.
“Just try again,” God says to us,
“To fail means higher stakes.”

“There’s only one requirement
To guarantee success.
It’s slip and slip and slip again,
But less and less and less.”

— BEEZ, 2014

Meditation Book Project

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE:

1. PERSONAL SHARES FOR MEDITATIONS.
2. POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS/PRAYERS.

PLEASE EMAIL SHARES TO THE *JOURNAL* WWW.SLAAFWS.ORG

Powerless

QUOTE: “We began to recognize that we were powerless, not merely to change some specific sex partner, lover, or situation. We were powerless over an addictive pattern, of which any current, specific circumstance was just the most recent example.” — Page 71 of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

SHARE: We are the owners of our patterns. These patterns are ways of thinking and behaving that are embedded and unconscious and therefore acted out without recognition of another choice. By honestly writing out our history and experiences with powerlessness and unmanageability as most do in formally working a First Step, we will inevitably uncover (discover?) our (dysfunctional?) non-working patterns and the progression of our disease. Admitting and accepting this part of our sex and love addiction as it is now documented and undeniable, is crucial in beginning to take personal responsibility and in changing. We can no longer point the finger as we have done in the past.

AFFIRMATION: *Today I will commit to focusing on myself with the help of the program, my Higher Power, and my sponsor.*

Help Carry the message

2015 Calendars are here!



All proceeds benefit F.W.S.

the Journal Calendars are 12-month wall calendars (size: 8.5" x 11") with brief anonymous inspirational excerpts from *the Journal* and they are available at the F.W.S. store –www.slaafws.org

The *Journal* calendar can be used:

- To celebrate *the Journal*, our meeting in a magazine
- To let other S.L.A.A. members know about the *Journal*
- As an incentive to subscribe to *the Journal*

What you can do:

- Buy a calendar for yourself to support FWS and *the Journal*
- Vote to sell *the Journal* calendar at your Intergroup or meeting literature table and let people know what it is.
- Give away a *Journal* calendar as an incentive to subscribe to *the Journal*

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- Calls come from all over the world! 50% from the east coast, 15% from the west coast, 20% from the mid-west, 10% from Florida, 4% from New England and even Hawaii !
- Our busiest day is Thanksgiving and there is never a busy signal, so you will get through to receive inspiring thoughts !
- The Inspiration Line has been in existence for 27 years!

The Inspiration Line is presented to the SLAA Fellowship by the Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup. To find out more or to volunteer, call the Line and leave a message.



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