

theJournal

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Anonymity

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

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

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Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Bill W. said it best: “One may say that anonymity is the spiritual base, the sure key to all the rest of our Traditions. It has come to stand for prudence and, most importantly, for self-effacement.

True consideration for the newcomer if he (she or they) desire to be nameless; vital protection against misuse of the name Alcoholics Anonymous at the public level; and to each of us a constant reminder that principles come before personal interest — such is the wide scope of this all-embracing principle. In it we see the cornerstone of our security as a movement; at a deeper spiritual level it points us to still greater self-renunciation.”*

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

* *From the A.A. pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity.”*

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “Anonymity: Do you feel different about anonymity than when you first got here? Please

share your experience, strength, and hope around breaking your anonymity to help another or any experiences around anonymity that have helped you grow in recovery.” Here are some insights that were submitted in service from fellow S.L.A.A. members. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #189 — March/April— God Shot— Describe any experiences that have proven to/reminded you that a Higher Power exists. How has this helped your recovery?— Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2021. And #190 — May/June — Returning to Romantic Relations — Have you ever returned to romantic relations after a period of abstinence in the S.L.A.A. program? Please share any issues and concerns and how you dealt with them. Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2021.

Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“Anonymity: Do you feel different about anonymity than when you first got here? Please share your experience, strength, and hope around breaking your anonymity to help another or any experiences around anonymity that have helped you grow in recovery.”

I was deathly afraid that someone I knew would be in a meeting and learn about the “real me.” I wouldn’t show my face on video when I first attended Zoom meetings, even if I shared. I felt much more heard, however, when I finally began sharing my face in the meetings. No one is judging me for being in S.L.A.A. - fellow members are there to help support my recovery.

— PAUL, OREGON

Question of the day

I am less concerned about my anonymity (because I think it helps break the stigma for newcomers) although I am careful with whom I share my program status. I am also more respectful of others' anonymity because I realize how important that is for some people to be able to confront their issues.

— JEFF C., WASHINGTON, D.C.

A part of my addiction thrives on drama — who, what, where, and when it happened. Because of this, I practice boundaries to preserve anonymity in recovery because knowing details of an identity actually won't help me recover. These details are not in fact necessary. I have yet to have an experience where anonymity needed to be broken. On the contrary, practicing this Tradition has helped me understand that I can get recovery from ANYONE.

— ANONYMOUS

Since I have joined the group, I feel that it is becoming easier for me to share my personal walk and continual healing in the group.

When I first joined, I felt apprehensive about sharing my life, but I now understand that we share when we're ready to share and that's okay. I believe we convey this message each time we do share in the group. ODAAT

— DANCER

Question of the day

I actually had a very bad experience when I shared with a friend that I was going to S.L.A.A. I thought she was safe because she was a trained mental health professional. But she told someone and then it got to another person who accused me of something that never occurred, and that other person spread an actual lie about me. I came into S.L.A.A. because I was having difficulty with no contact with my abusive ex-husband who molested my daughter. I live in a very close-knit community. The gossip was so painful, and I blamed myself. The lesson I took away was don't share with people who are not in a 12-Step program or if it's not for a Step 12. And I learned to talk to someone first before disclosing. I did an inventory about it, and while I thought I was being of service in explaining S.L.A.A. to my friend so she could help clients, I realize that my disclosure was an example of over-disclosing and lack of boundaries and it was done in a manner of self-deprecation.

— ANONYMOUS

Since I've been in program, I've realized the extreme importance and connection between anonymity and safety. I also have found it beneficial to share in outreach about traumatic events that have happened in my life in the past and how it affects my present. I need to trust in the anonymity of the program and realize my part is to be authentic and it is the other member's responsibility to keep my share anonymous, as I will keep theirs. If either of us doesn't, it can be disastrous - resulting in a new trauma to process. I have found that if we don't get 'real' with what's going on, we can't make positive changes. Getting to that real space takes much courage and willingness to explore, but it's infinitely worth it!

— ANN

Question of the day

Before I came into the rooms, I saw the purpose of anonymity as a way to remain hidden in my acting out. Now I know it to be for safety so that I may honestly and vulnerably own my past acting out behaviors and recover.

— CATE B., WASHINGTON, D.C.

When I first came into S.L.A.A., I didn't care at all about my anonymity. I thought that telling everyone about my addiction was important in the spirit of transparency and honesty. Now I view anonymity as more of practicing privacy rather than secrecy. Also, I can see the spiritual value in not exploiting S.L.A.A. by not divulging my own private information in inappropriate situations.

— NORA B., ORANGE COUNTY, CA

I've had positive and negative experiences in breaking my own anonymity. I've learned to use discretion and check my motives, but it can be very liberating to be transparent for the purpose of helping another person recover.

— KIRSTEN C., REDLANDS, CA

I feel the same today as I did on day one about the importance of anonymity in the program. Anonymity should be broken only in extremely serious circumstances and only upon serious reflection and prayer.

— SAM E., NYC

Question of the day

I am now more willing to break my anonymity in order to help carry the message to a potential newcomer. I live freely now and enjoy rigorous honesty. I no longer have a sense of shame over this disease.

— CHRISTINA H., LOS ANGELES

I have grown more mindful and respectful of other people's anonymity. I see this as a sign for myself of a growth in selflessness and respect for others.

— ANONYMOUS

I learned early in my recovery that protecting member's anonymity at all costs is paramount in this program. The sensitivity in our program calls for anonymity.

— GABRIEL, SACRAMENTO

I think that anonymity is more complex and confusing when social media enters the picture. It was a surprise when, by virtue of email contacts on my recovery account I started receiving Facebook friend recommendations from S.L.A.A. This experience caused me to reconsider boundaries and how to apply anonymity given the reality of social media.

— SCOTT F., CHICAGO

Question of the day

There have been two circumstances that I break my anonymity: 1. to help others who are still suffering. 2. as part of my dating plan I need to disclose my membership before any intimacy occurs.

— DAVE G., LOS ANGELES

Yes. When I first came in, I thought that no one would know me. Today, I know many last names and have learned that anonymity is about respect.

— RICH K., WORCESTER, MA

Yes. I do. When I came in, I knew nothing about these people and didn't ask. After having a friend end up in the hospital and not knowing their full name, it was tough to get the information. Now, I know that it is ok to know and ask about my friend's names. I would never share that with another. Frankly, I just found out this year that a friend I have known for 9 years is a well-known author. Anonymity is about keeping what I know, what I hear, what I see stays with me. I keep that confidence. But when I come across a person in pain, I share who and what I am and that there are resources and a whole fellowship that can help.

— RICK B., LARGO, FL

Anonymity: An Interview



Lisa: What is your anonymity like in S.L.A.A. (do you tell close friends, newcomers, co-workers)?

Lee: I aspire to the attitude I've heard at a meeting: "I'm a sex and love addict. I don't care who knows it as long as I don't forget it." But of course, the practical side arises right

away. My close friends are generally in S.L.A.A. or A.A. so they know. I'm retired but when I worked, I did not share my problems with co-workers unless it was appropriate. For example, if someone was cheating on their partner, I would let them know I had the same problem and share the

solution. I do not broadcast my membership in S.L.A.A. but I work hard not to be driven by fear and shame. Rather, it is important for me and my continuing spiritual growth to admit the reality of who I am and not hide from anyone.

Lisa: What has your personal experience been with attraction rather than promotion?

Lee: Attraction is preferable to promotion in all areas of my life. I do not tell my partner what to do. I do my best to be a good example. At times I do tell sponsees what to do but always, I realize, they will follow my example rather than my directives.

Lisa: In the 12 Traditions, anonymity is described as the spiritual foundation. How have you seen this is true in your recovery?

Lee: Anonymity in S.L.A.A. is humility at work. It is not secrecy or confidentiality. It is the realization that we are all equals. We are all imperfect, struggling, human beings who share a disease. We are neither superior nor inferior to each other. We have been given the gift to be able to laugh at ourselves.

Confusing anonymity with secrecy is missing the principle

of Tradition Twelve. We are not here to hide from others or from society — hiding ourselves is a part of our disease. We are here to admit to the reality of our situations and live in that reality as fully as possible.

Lisa: Have you ever encountered a situation where others have broken anonymity? If so, how did you or other fellows place principles before personalities?

Lee: I have not had this experience. One of my S.L.A.A. friends always says that if we meet out in the world, remember that we know each other from playing basketball at the YMCA, not from the fellowship. I don't feel comfortable with the secrecy, but his anonymity is not mine to judge or control.

When I was working and travelling out of town I would often want to go to a meeting in the evening. When asked by co-workers where I was going, I would say I was meeting with some old drinking buddies. The strangers I met at an S.L.A.A. meeting were not old drinking buddies, but I felt the analogy was accurate enough. We were people who shared the same failings, the same compulsions.

Lisa: I had a sponsor who, after 8 years of sobriety in S.L.A.A., became too fearful of her membership being exposed and losing her job as an elementary school teacher. How do you deal with the fear of having your anonymity blown and the possibility of negative results from that?

Lee: The fear is real. The stigma is real. The reality is that we could lose our job, our livelihood, and face ostracism by the community. I'm retired so I don't face these overwhelming threats so much anymore. Nevertheless, I know they are real. I hope we can all maintain our caution and our reverence for each other's safety while also avoiding the fear and shame that society wants us to carry. Each one of us is a human being filled with compassion, understanding, patience, and humility no matter how we have stumbled in the past.

It is my hope that someday society will have more understanding, more tolerance, more compassion. Those of us who are situated in such a way that allows us to stand up to the stigma society holds can help move society toward a more open attitude. We have a duty to be open as well as cautious. Ultimately though it is our

Higher Power who will take care of these things.

Lisa: Your path to becoming the chair of the CLC and your way of leading without being a dictator is really inspiring for me to see (you worked anonymously for years on the committee and made it through some difficult times within the committee and really practiced principles before personalities). You have embodied the spirit of Tradition 11 in that way. Can you tell us a little about how you came to that level of self-restraint and humbleness?

Lee: Thank you for the feedback. All success, and praise for any success, belongs to my Higher Power (the one I don't understand). The Steps, the Traditions, the Concepts have given me a framework for living. I am so grateful for the program. My life before recovery was nothing more than a permanent frown. I still make many mistakes. I wake up each morning and I'm still an addict. I ask for help, for guidance.

Service work gives me a sense of being useful. It is a validation of my worth as a human being. I know much of the work of committees is not for everyone and that's fine. But, for me, I am given the gift

of getting out of myself. And yet, I can still complain. I don't want to go to another meeting; I don't want to talk about these business items; I just want to watch another Netflix show. I complain, but I am nourished. I complain because I am human.

Practicing the Steps is crucial. I need to do the drill over and over, day after day. I practice the principles one day then get up the next morning and have to start all over. I

make more mistakes, make more amends, surrender again. This is reality. To never fully recover is a gift not a defeat. I have the opportunity every day to work these Steps and when I do my life expands in wonderful ways. I am just another bozo on the bus doing the best I can, arm in arm with the bozo next to me.

Lisa: Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom and experience.

My Journey

My journey into S.L.A.A. was my first experience with identifying into, and participating in, an anonymous program of recovery. When I entered, I understood very little about anonymity. Should I use a fake name?

Should I compartmentalize, saying nothing about myself that could be used to link me to one of my "other" lives? Should I not even go to in-person

meetings? I had no answers to these questions, not at first. I had to take a leap of faith -- fueled by the Gift of Desperation (my first recovery G.O.D.) -- that I would figure it all out as I went along. I started understanding when I heard things that explained the underlying purpose of anonymity.

Things like, "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program. To recover we must be free to say what is in our

minds and hearts. Therefore, we ask that what you hear here, what you see here, when you leave here, let it stay here.” In hearing that, I learned that anonymity is about all of us doing our part to ensure that S.L.A.A. meetings are a safe place for us to share about our struggles with this addiction.

As my participation in S.L.A.A. continued, I also learned that anonymity is about leaving titles and societal

recognition at the door. We recover together in the humble knowledge that regardless of what exalted or condemned identities we have outside of the rooms, inside the rooms we are all just people with a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. That sense of equality is essential to our unity -- the first of the Traditions that make our program possible.

Thank G.O.D.!

— ANONYMOUS, U.S.A.

Overcoming Over-Sharing

When I first came to S.L.A.A., I was a chronic over-sharer. I would tell anybody anything, no matter how personal or inappropriate. My boundaries were non-existent, and I had no understanding of anonymity. I would get a hit by trying to shock people, or impress them, or get them to feel sorry for me, by dumping all my traumas and sordid history all over anyone who crossed my path. Joining S.L.A.A. became

just another thing I could use to prove how messed up I was, to get attention or sympathy, to shock or intrigue.

Shortly after coming into S.L.A.A., but quite a while before actually getting sober, I was out to lunch with a group of fellows from another program. There was someone I wanted to intrigue with, so I started telling him all about having just joined S.L.A.A. and why. Thankfully, he had a lot more recovery than I did. He

drew a boundary, ended the conversation and turned away to talk to someone else. I was mortified in that moment, but it was also a real wake-up call. He had actually seen what I was trying to do and he didn't fall for it. I realized I wasn't being sexy or funny or intriguing. It was just being sad and creepy.

A big part of my recovery in this program has been learning to have boundaries, including learning when it is appropriate to share personal information and when it isn't. I no longer

broadcast my membership in S.L.A.A. I will break my anonymity when it is a true 12th Step opportunity, to carry the message to a potential sex and love addict, but I have to be careful that I'm not doing it as a means to try to intrigue. Sometimes, if I'm attracted to the person, I will have to put my own sobriety first. I may have to trust that they have their own Higher Power, that they will hear the message, and that it doesn't necessarily have to come from me.

— M., LOS ANGELES

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CELEBRATES

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

Anonymity

I have been in recovery for over 45 years now. My first program was Gambler's anonymous and for at least the last 35 years, everyone I know has known I am a compulsive gambler in recovery. My name and phone number have been posted in many public places and even my work colleagues and most of my clients knew about my addiction.

As you might imagine, S.L.A.A. is a different story. Even to my Alanon brothers and sisters I "couch" my participation as being in a group talking about relationships. I occasionally would identify as a sex and love addict in my GA meetings, but it always was so uncomfortable that I desisted in the future. Some of my GA

brothers know about the program but I don't think really "get it".

I also attend some open A.A. meetings occasionally and have been able, on and off, to find a few folks who needed our program. Some are still working the program today and that is great but attraction rather than promotion is pretty limiting.

Bottom line, pardon the pun, anonymity is crucial to the program and the guiding principle but it is sad that we cannot be more open about our illness if only to attract those suffering souls out there that don't know there's a better way.

Yours, in program and service,

BOB D., SARASOTA, FL.

The S.L.A.A. Basic Text eBook
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Share space

How to Become a Sex and Love Addict in 57 Easy Steps

“When I grow up, I want to be a sex and love addict!”

Said no child ever.

But here I am.

Grateful. Growing. Learning. Making mistakes. Plodding through the mud of my past. Digging out weeds. Blowing the dust of shame off memories in the attic — just a little girl who liked to play in the stream, pick flowers, jump in the leaves, draw cats, write stories, and swing on her swing.

I was a little girl in a dysfunctional home where my daily mantra was “walk on eggshells” so as not to upset the delicate balance between my co-dependent, histrionic mother and my sex addicted,

alcoholic Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde father. I just wanted to be a little girl. I didn’t want to think about who dad was touching and what dad was watching.

I was awkward and clumsy with an older sister who was disabled from a brain aneurism she had when she was 5.

I witnessed the fighting, watched my dog get beaten and thought maybe someone hurt my sister when she was 5 also. Was she being sassy or disobedient and maybe pushed down the stairs or smashed in the head? I’ll never know. But I didn’t want that to happen to me.

The first boy I remember was E. E was my best friend in

pre-school until my parents told me that he would not be coming to my birthday party because he had walked between two parked cars and was dead. "Oh, and don't walk between parked cars."

I started chasing boys around the playground trying to kiss them.

Then there was my best friend, GA. We made a super, amazing computer out of a refrigerator box that answered all your questions! GA moved to Arizona after 3rd grade.

All this time there was dad and the pictures and posing and yuckiness. And the huge blackness of nothingness and lost memories that I have only accessed in nightmares. And the music when he drank. I wanted a dad.

He was lost somewhere in the sex addiction and the music. So, my 9-year-old mind figured out that if I play music then daddy will love me the way I need it. I began to play the cello and while that protected me from his rages, so began a more complicated incestuous bond with him that would affect me even after he died.

What helped me survive as a child nearly killed me as a woman trying desperately to love and forge a healthy attachment to a partner.

As I grew up, I fantasized about all the boys at school. I wanted to be rescued from the hell at home. I hated myself and harmed myself. I morphed and changed myself into whatever might get a boy's attention. I shoplifted. I cut classes. I used my allowance for diet pills from the local pharmacy. At least I wasn't being beaten like my mother and sister.

I was depressed and suicidal.

"What is wrong with you?"
"Oh, and by the way, don't come home pregnant."

Pregnant? I'd never had sex, well at least not consensually.

"And your father loves you more than he loves me."

The children in orchestra chanted "incest is best" as my father fawned over me and hung on me, while I practiced until I tore a tendon trying to gain the approval that I so desperately wanted.

I was developed when other girls weren't. And I wasn't a

virgin but couldn't fully understand why. Then I met GC in 10th grade. We both loved music. We were both depressed. We were both suicidal. A match made in heaven! I thought he liked boys but didn't really understand what that meant. We kissed, we fooled around until I dissociated, and I think we had sex. I don't remember. I wasn't there.

This was the beginning of my long relationship with gay men.

Then GC was dead. Suicide. Then K, GC's friend, was dead. Suicide.

Next was DR. I fell hard for DR. DR was safe. He never kissed me, never touched me and we were inseparable. DR took me to both my proms. DR is married to a wonderful man now and we are still friends. His friendship was my lifeline but my obsessive love for him only fed my growing love addiction, my inability to have healthy intimacy, my attraction to unavailable men and my internal fantasy world. I obsessed over DR for years.

College. I ran from home. I didn't call my parents for a year. I quit playing cello and

kept my dad far away. My internal thinking: *I'm damaged goods, broken, unworthy of love.*

I met A. I adored A. A and I had so much fun together. We held hands and kissed. He didn't want to have sex. How sweet! We were inseparable until he told me he had a boyfriend.

Then GS. He smoked pot and tried to make me happy. I didn't realize that no one could make me happy. I wasn't happy with myself. He wanted to have sex. It hurt terribly. He dumped me. My life was over.

So, I ran into the arms of CB, who had been kicked out of the military, arrested, was jobless and addicted. Perfect! He moved right in! I morphed again. I had to figure out how to have sex regardless of the pain because to get love, I had to provide sex. It was transactional. Then after getting pregnant, he stole my car, took my savings and ran off with another girl while I begged and pleaded for him to stay with me, lowering myself to the gutter in my attempts to not be abandoned.

I was at rock bottom but not THE rock bottom. I was 19

years old and a mess. I hated myself at the core. I started to investigate what the pain during sex was and was sent to a hospital where I was diagnosed with vulvar vestibulitis syndrome. The answer, surgery. I was now pain free but felt like a freak with part of me missing.

Then I went on a blind date with CK. He had a job. Check. He even had his own car. Check. He got completely drunk on our first date. Check. Felt like home. Nothing in common. That's ok, I'll morph again. My surgery didn't bother him. He asked me to marry him! Then he had multiple affairs and dumped me after invitations went out. I tried to get my life together by playing cello again which only invited my dad to descend back into my life.

Thankfully, CK came knocking on my door saying he had made a mistake and did indeed want to marry me. I was overjoyed! A few days after the wedding he was arrested for supporting his addiction by stealing from his employer and said he knew if he married me, I would fix everything. And I did.

He continued to drink, use drugs and cheat on me. I left. He died a year later of cancer.

I ran right into T's arms. In my mind, I reasoned that God was missing from my first marriage and that is why it didn't work. So, I told T I wanted a Godly man. He stopped smoking pot and started going to church. As a matter of fact, he became completely obsessed with religious legalities. I morphed again. Somehow, I missed the conversation about gay bars.

First born, a daughter. Next child, please be a boy. Nope, another girl. Trying to explain to T why we can't leave my parents alone with them.

Then my mom gets extremely sick. She's bedridden, calling the police that dad is beating her. They get there and leave with his lies and winks about difficult women. She dies. I have daughter #3. Dad drinks more. He finds various women. There is a car accident and kills the other driver. I am by his side protecting him from the police until he succumbs to his injuries.

Mom is gone. Dad is gone. And husband #2 watches gay porn. Oh, and there is another guy. Now I really start hating God. I act out with DE in revenge. T and I agree to stay together. I know, let's have another kid and move 1600

miles, because moving and children fix everything. We have #4 and move across the country.

The pot use starts. The gay porn never stops. What can I do? I can't morph into a man, though I practically try. I leave him and the real spiral begins as I act out with two more addicts until I finally end up with the most unavailable man of all my relationships, R, an alcoholic incarcerated for killing a little girl in a DWI that I meet through an online prison website.

I ignore the prior violent felonies and play jail girlfriend for 4+ years. Within 48 hours of his release, he assaults me. There was my dad, Jekyll and Hyde. Gone was the sweet man on the phone and visits all those years. Gone was the fantasy. He was a stranger. Terrified of abandonment, I cling to the ongoing mental and emotional abuse. I had hit THE rock bottom. I had found a person who was the culmination of my trauma as a child and my character defects and fear as an adult. I get help from a domestic violence organization, COVID hits and I crawl into S.L.A.A. by the grace of God. I didn't see my part yet, but I would eventually. I just knew I needed help.

My victim mindset would finally crumble in the rooms of S.L.A.A.

I realize now that I was victimized as a child, but I am not a victim. As an adult I allowed myself to continue to be victimized as I sought out and re-created situations that victimized me. But I'm not a victim.

Trauma is real. I still have a lot of healing to do. I have beautiful children and I daily try to teach them healthy boundaries, saying what they need and want, self-love and self-care.

It is no joke when I say that S.L.A.A. is saving my life. Working the Steps, I see how my addiction progressed and can't imagine what my life would be like otherwise.

I am a child of God; a God of my understanding and He can do for me what I cannot do for myself.

I am slowly but surely being returned to sanity, to the little girl who liked to draw cats and write stories.

I check my motives with everything.

Acts of service keep me sober. I love the quote: "I cannot think myself into right action, but I can act myself into right thinking."

Top Lines have saved me from acting out.

I am more present. The fog is lifting.

I keep working on healthy intimacy. I have a long way to go. I work to feel my feelings.

I work on not carrying the shame from my past.

I do 10th steps throughout the day even when I am kicking and screaming inside to not see my part.

I read my prayers and meditations every day and go to a meeting every day.

I remind myself that self-

pity and self-loathing still begin with the word self.

I am grateful. Growing. Learning. Making mistakes. Plodding through the mud of my past. Digging out weeds. Blowing the dust of shame off memories in the attic.

I keep my yard clean. I plant flowers and throw out debris. I have a rail fence that I can let people in or keep people out. I contribute to the stream of life.

I even have a swing to swing on every now and then.

— PJ, COLORADO

Desperate and Willing to Find a Faith That Works

This time had to be different. This time had to reach deeper into my spiritual being than I had been able to before. I was desperate.

I was willing. It was life or death for me. If I couldn't grasp a faith that works, I knew I would once again find myself running over with

obsession, neediness, lust, and intrigue - drowning in a sea of hopelessness and want for death. The Twelve and Twelve tells me the effectiveness of my whole recovery program rests upon how well and earnestly I try to come to this decision. I had decided. I completely and fully turned my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him.

I know the 12 Steps work. I have complete trust in the process. I have experienced their life altering freedom. In 2001, I entered a 12-Step program to relieve the bondage of alcohol. After a shaky start, through the strength of my Higher Power and the support of the fellowship, I have remained alcohol free and recovered in many deep and abiding ways for over 15 years.

I know God can do for me what I cannot do for myself. But in late 2017 and early 2018, I encountered pain and sorrow to levels I had not previously known. I had lost both parents to brutal and awful battles with cancer. My Mom had been my closest and dearest friend all my life. Through the many hours away from home and sleepless

nights walking through the journey with each of my parents, I had allowed distance to grow between me and my husband. On the wake of those losses, my younger son graduated high school and left home for basic training in the military and my older son got married — two drastic changes to the life I had known for 20 plus years.

Lack of purpose, grief and loss became my constant companions. I threw myself into my A.A. recovery program and service work. But an old escape route I had abandoned in my quest for sobriety presented itself. A fellow member of my A.A. home group paid special attention to me and made sexual advances. I fell and fell hard. Before I even knew what happened, I was in full blown sex and love addiction.

It took me down a path of self-loathing and emptiness. Even though I hated myself and what I was doing, I could not stop. Even though I didn't want to engage in this sordid affair, I did, day after day, night after night. I knew it was only temporary relief from my reality, but it filled my every

moment and every thought. I lost weight. I lost friends. I lost sponsees. I lost work. I withdrew even further in my marriage. Then came the fateful day when we were discovered.

The pain intensified to levels I cannot even comprehend. I lost more weight. I lost more friends. I lost more work. And now I was facing the end of my 25-year marriage. Death seemed the only way out of this hopeless situation.

With each passing second, I became more and more hopeless, alone, and overwhelmed. But God intervened and got me into a treatment center. For months in treatment I cried as I withdrew. I dealt with the anger and scorn of my husband and sons. I felt the emptiness resulting from alienating my recovery support friends because of my deceit and dishonesty.

Even under 24-hour surveillance, I planned my suicide. Eventually, I started to feel the sunlight of the spirit shining through the literal sunshine in the Arizona desert. The possibility of life after active addiction and destruction opened up. I began to be

grateful that I was still alive and had not returned to alcohol. I began to see what my undealt-with pain and grief had led me to.

I more deeply respected the cunning-ness, baffling-ness, and powerfulness of addiction. I saw the error of my ways and the grace of my God. Now in S.L.A.A., I once again submitted myself to the 12 Steps and to the program of recovery from an enormously powerful addiction. I have stayed very far away from my qualifier and very close to women in S.L.A.A.

I now find myself standing at the turning point. I have asked for my Higher Power's protection and care with complete abandon. I immersed myself in the literature. I sought with my whole heart. I prayed. I asked for help. I listened to the sage wisdom of my sponsor. I fully committed myself to the process of Step 3. In [A Guide To The Steps: Companion to Chapter Four of the Basic Text](#), I was instructed to "Compose a prayer, in your own words, giving over your will and your life to your Higher Power so that you can let go of the sickness."

Here is what I came up with. My hope is that this prayer will lead me and others to a new freedom and a new happiness.

“Father God, I seek You with my whole heart. I know You restore to their right minds those who honestly seek You. I know You disclose Yourself to Your children when they draw near. Lord, I seek You. I need You. Please take over. I surrender my whole life strategy of and obsession with the pursuit of romantic and sexual intrigue and emotional dependency – specifically I surrender my longing for my qualifier.

“I give up my way of stopping the clock with pleasure and intensity. I lay down the illusion that I was alive and really living that I got from each addictive hit. I know that it is counterfeit and not from You. I surrender my emptiness. I surrender my pain, my quest for distraction from life’s tensions and responsibilities, my obsessive thinking, my emotional yearnings for intrigue, romance, and sexual oblivion. I surrender my desperation. I give up my physical appearance, my mannerisms,

the way I go about my career and other activities. I surrender my old patterns. I ask for release from the longings for the ‘good old times.’ I turn over my self-sufficiency – the bone crushing juggernaut whose final achievement is ruin.

“Father relieve me of the bondage of self. I surrender my insecurity, my loneliness, my lack of any abiding sense of personal worth and dignity, my neediness, my lust, my seeking intrigue. I turn over my remorse, guilt, and shame of yesterday, my bitterness of envy and hate, my financial insecurities.

“Please take away my longing to be wanted and desired by an unreal knight in shining armor. Please take away the feeling of being starved that leads me to try to turn crumbs into a feast. Please remove my selfishness that hurts the people that I love. I am convinced now that You can remove the self-will that has blocked me off from getting to You for far too long. I don’t want to switch from Scotch to Brandy. I am willing to go to any lengths to stay unhooked.

“I recognize my profound frailty and the magnitude and mind-altering nature of my addiction. I need You to stay at least one step ahead of this beast of my diseased intentions. I know the effectiveness of my whole recovery program rests on how well and earnestly I turn my will and my life over to Your care. I have been afraid I’d look like the hole in the donut if I let go absolutely. I need a faith that works.

“Please bring my will into agreement with Your intention for me. I ask for Your grace, Your redemption, Your gifts of spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being. I need Your serenity, Your comfort and Your security.

“I ask You to help me keep my commitment to exert myself, to sustain my willingness and Your power to engage in continued action.

Bless me with determined and persistent practice of Step 3. I ask You to conform my will to Yours. Build with me and do with me as You will. I want to better do Your will. Take away my difficulties that victory over them may bear witness to those You bring to me to help. Lord, let my recovery be an example of Your power, Your love, and Your way of life. Empower me to do Your will always. I pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the next right thing. Amen.”

We are told that (a) we are addicts and cannot manage our own lives; (b) no human power can relieve our addiction; and (c) God could and would if He were sought.

Seek. Seek. Seek.

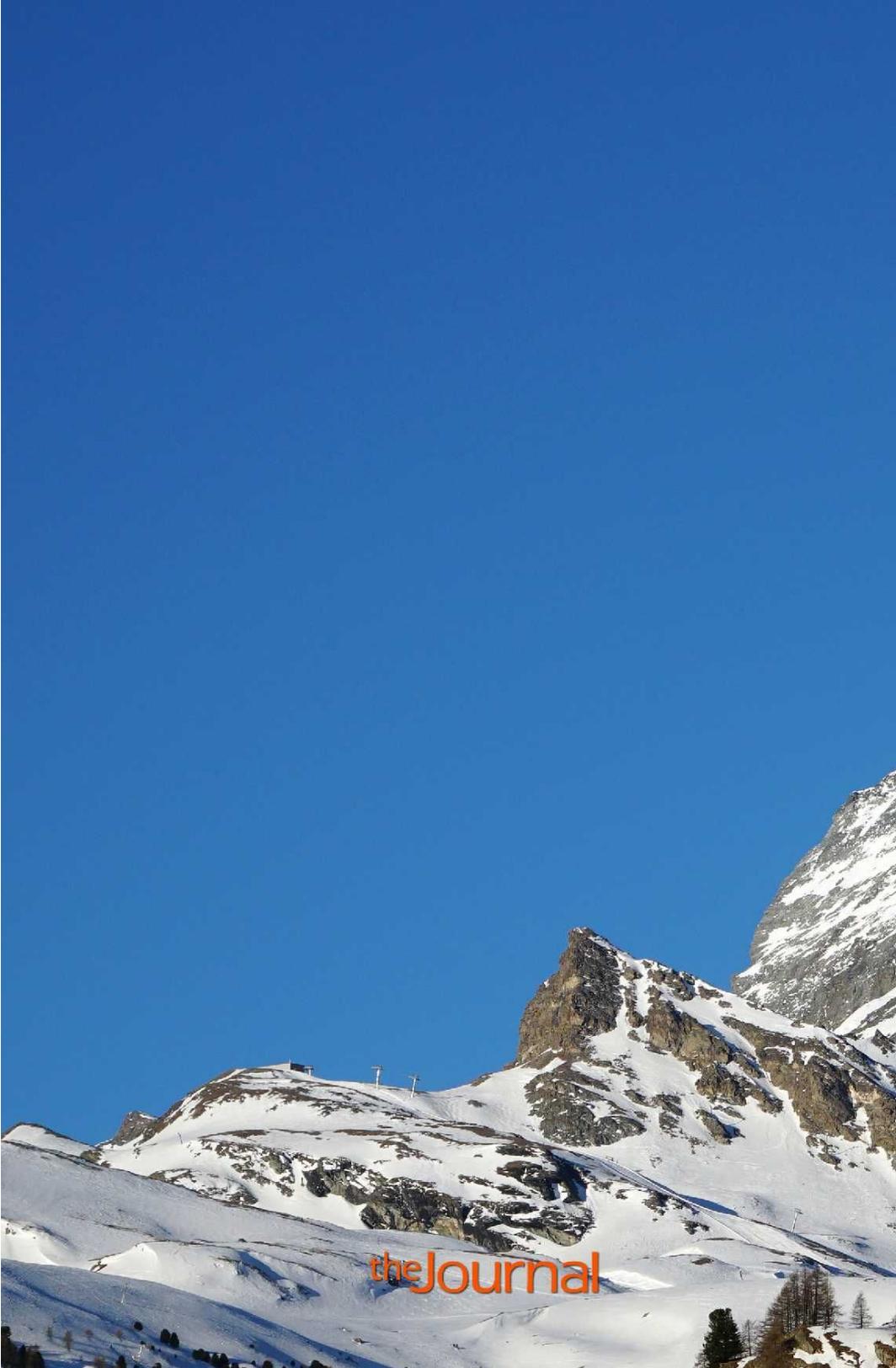
— SHANNON A., HOUSTON, TX

Service opportunities for *the Journal*

The Journal is a basic recovery tool for S.L.A.A. groups and individual members, and it is a key outreach tool into areas that do not yet have an S.L.A.A. presence. We’re looking for people with writing, drawing, outreach, web design, production, and printing skills to assist in the creation of the new, deeper, more refreshing publication. Please assist us in creatively carrying the message of recovery. Go to <http://www.slaa.fws.org> to submit your writing.

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