

A close-up photograph of a field of flowers. The foreground is dominated by numerous bright yellow, cup-shaped flowers, likely California poppies. Interspersed among them are several smaller, five-petaled purple flowers with prominent stamens. The background is a soft-focus field of similar flowers under bright, natural light.

theJournal

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Truth Being Revealed in
Higher Power's Time

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,

I came into 12-Step programs an atheist or at the least an agnostic. I searched for God in various religions and men, but never found anything to put my faith in. I would have laughed if someone had asked me about truth being revealed in a Higher Power's time. As I'm typing this letter into Word it keeps giving suggestions: "Higher education, political power." I gave so much weight to higher education. I thought if I got a degree, everything would be ok.

When I was a teenager, if I made a mistake, my dad always said, "As long as she gets good grades, we know she's ok." But I was suicidal and self-destructive. I can see now that I might have actually gone through with it if I didn't have various addictions to numb me out and fake Higher Power's to chase after to give me hope. I'm glad 12-Step programs allow us to come to faith in a Higher Power gradually. I think my faith is stronger today because of it. The articles in this issue of *the Journal* show our human struggle with belief in a Higher Power. We battle with ego and self-indulgence. We sometimes have twisted thinking. But Higher Power is always there, gently (or not so gently) nudging us to see that a power greater than ourselves exists. I hope this issue gives you insights or enjoyment as it did for me.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is on the theme Truth Being Revealed in Higher Power's Time. 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: #195 — March/April — Long-term Recovery — How do you keep your program fresh and growing? Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2022. And #196 — May/June — Sponsor's Words — What's the best thing your sponsor has ever told you? Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2022. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

"Have you found that Higher Power has shown you the truth about something important gradually rather than immediately upon your demands?" Please share your experience, strength, and hope with truth being revealed in Higher Power's time.

I have no delusion that I might be able to "demand" my Higher Power act on any demand I might make. No, that Great Spirit speaks to me, when I am ready and willing, through events that take place when my eyes are open, or through the words of fellows at meetings, conversations, or feedback... Again, when I am willing and able to take in the wisdom being shared or shown. If I'm not centered?... Most of the time, the discussion about that contains either the words, "Just do the next right thing. Take it one day at a time," or, "Are you keeping it in the moment?" Praying for His guidance, doing the best I can, and letting go of the results goes a much longer way than any demand of God I've ever made.

—ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

My Higher Power always knows the proper timing. I read a book once that made me realize that I might be gay, and it put my anxiety off the charts. I made an appointment with my therapist to discuss this book and my sexuality. In her waiting room, I was slowly banging my head against the wall in anticipation of this appointment. We talked (mostly me) for 15 minutes and then she asked, “Your anxiety was at an 18 on a scale of 10, where are you at now?” She talked me down and I didn’t face my sexuality at that time. However, six months later I was sitting in an S.L.A.A. meeting and the topic was that we are only as sick as our secrets. Everyone was asked to share a secret that the group did not know about us. I was the last one to go and my Higher Power would only let one secret thought into my head, that I was gay! This time I was ready to listen and accept the truth about myself. Being honest with myself has allowed me to thrive in recovery.

— JOE, AR

For sure, after two and a half years in program, daily Tenth Steps have revealed things about myself that I was unaware of. I needed a foundation of sobriety and comfort with the tools of the program before I could handle the heavier stuff.

—ANONYMOUS

He has allowed me to see things in a slow steady pace, and with clarity.

—ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

Yes, I've learnt that I've been a very abusive person with people and have had very little respect for boundaries and have mistreated the people close to me. I had always justified it as just something that has been happening from my childhood and there is no difference but now, I realize I'm a grown up and am supposed to be playing a very different role. I'm supposed to be a caretaker and not a dependent. I also see why I am fortunate to still have an opportunity to work on recovery. It was quite a while into the program that Higher Power, going layers and layers deep through repeated Step work, revealed to me that *I* was the one who was unavailable! I chose people who were unavailable because I was incapable of intimacy. This has truly been a revelation; now that I see it, I have a chance to heal it with the help of my sponsor, my home group, literature, and of course, my Higher Power.

—ANONYMOUS

I have my 12 Steps and good sobriety under my belt but did not feel confident enough to try and pursue a relationship. I was 100% sure I didn't want to use dating apps. I was happy enough staying sober and single. This changed when I went out on a sunny day with friends. The day was full of chatter, laughter and meeting new people and then I walked home alone. On my walk, I realised that I was assuming I would need to jump straight in at the deep end, on dating apps or begin working at finding someone. I realised that I am content as I am, and I can simply leave the door ajar to the prospect of sober dating and see who my Higher Power brings to the threshold. In my addiction I was always hunting for prospective partners and chasing, so this surrender was a big moment. I am reading sober dating literature and working on a dating plan so I will be prepared and confident when my Higher Power decides it is the right time. I'm willing to trust my HP however long it takes. There's no rush!

— MIRA, UK

Question of the day

In my experience, my desire for instant certainty is a huge liability in the pursuit of sobriety and serenity. Wanting perfect knowledge, comprehensive understanding and immediate truth all end up being a way of trying to control things I am not supposed to be trying to control and is therefore a hallmark addictive trait for me. I know enough to change myself, and to get to a meeting, admit my part, make a phone call, pray and seek God's will for me and the power to carry that out. Anything I need to know will be revealed when I need to act on it.

— ANONYMOUS

The pause for clarity and guidance is one of the most beneficial things I have learned to be able to really love in recovery. All of my addictive and compulsive behaviors are motivated by my desire to control the timeline of how quickly my feelings or circumstances change. Healthy partnership was something I prayed for guidance about, and then immediately tried to control the timeline of it being presented to me. Rather than working the program and waiting for God, I jumped in and out of relationships thinking I was on some deadline that dictated when I was "supposed" to be married. Once I truly turned it over, focused on living in recovery, and accepted that I didn't know if partnership was in God's plan for me, I met someone amazing. God's vision for healthy partnership for me was not what I expected but has been better than I ever knew was possible to imagine. If I had continued to force my will, I never would have known that God's will for me was better and more wonderful than I knew to hope for.

— ANN, DENVER

Question of the day

With the work of the Steps, I understood that God loves me unconditionally. I don't have to ask for forgiveness anymore, because I can't disappoint him. He puts no conditions on his love for me. In these conditions I can begin to accept myself as I am and do the same with others.

— CHRISTIAN A., TOULOUSE, FRANCE

Well, the phrasing doesn't suit me, but I understand the question. Every aspect of awakening has been far more about a fog lifting. In truth, a fog in itself is not dense enough to hide the details directly in front of us, such that walking through it is illuminating in itself.

And there comes a moment in the morning when those far-reaching details that were hidden become clearer, when we belong again to the larger landscape. All of my recovery has been this way.

I've never been struck by lightning nor hit rock bottom. It's been a steady climb, because I chose to tread through that fog. Happiness, clarity, integrity, wholeness are consequences of living a devoted life of practice and courageousness and inquiry.

Like that fog, moments in life are full of surprises and wonders, and isn't that what life is all about?

— ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

I was in a relationship when I found S.L.A.A. At the time I would have told you it was the healthiest relationship I'd ever been in, and that was probably true. In the past I clearly had relationships with qualifiers — persons to whom my reaction clearly qualified me as a love addict. “But this one isn't like that,” I said at the time.

Over the course of several months, I endured break-up/make-up cycles that were familiar reminders of “those other” relationships...you know, the sick ones. “But this one,” I would still say, “isn't like that.”

The Universe was showing me the signs, yet I couldn't see them. It wasn't until I realized that I had broken the spirit — though thankfully not the letter — of one of my bottom-lines that I finally recognized that this “healthy relationship” was yet another, less obvious expression of my love addiction.

While I am grateful for the gentleness of this lesson from the Universe, its gentleness is also what made it hard to notice. The deeper lesson I take from this is to be silent and still, pay close attention, and be open to receiving what may be heard only as the softest whisper of Loving Reality.

— ANONYMOUS

What is God Trying to Show Me?



For most of 2018, and 2019, I had one question for God: “Is he ever going to leave her?” Every time I thought it, I couldn’t help but think of all those pathetic, sad, female characters I had laughed at, mocked, brutally mocked in those horrible romantic comedies, who just

pined and pined after those married men, who were NEVER going to leave their wives.

And here I was, one of them! I had somehow, unwillingly, joined the club. There is nothing more painful than the denial of that reality. And it wasn’t that God hadn’t

totally revealed that reality to me, it was that I was in complete denial about it. And God had not yet revealed to me my own denial. There was *plenty* of proof, if not very obvious suggestions that my qualifier was not going to leave his girlfriend of now three or four years and their pets (who she called their children).

But every time I saw him he would hint that he might leave for good and God help me, I kept believing him!

“I’m miserable there. I can’t sleep. I’m depressed. I’ve quit my survival job. I’m just trying to focus on my work,” he would say. That would be coupled with longing, sad eyes, and fishing for my feelings. Crumbs. And I took them for meals.

One day, I finally said, “No more crumbs for me!” I was done. I could no longer accept the crumbs. I was beginning to accept, or so I thought, the things I could not change, and I had had enough of this subpar relationship.

I wanted more, and I finally began to feel that I deserved it. And so, the summer of 2019 went by. I worked hard on my program and my Step work and stayed off my bottom lines: no contact. No pursuing unavailable people. Period. In

the Fall and Winter of the same year, I ran into him on two different streets in New York on two separate occasions.

“He’s supposed to be on the West Coast in his super cool apartment with his super cool girlfriend, in their super trendy neighborhood. Why is he here?? Why God!? Why are you doing this to me??”

I demanded answers from this cruel God. “Why do I have this awful Higher Power that is tormenting me??”

Alas, my sponsor reminded me, “God is not doing this to you, God is doing this for you.”

Rebelliously, I thought, “Perhaps. Perhaps God is doing something for me. But what? What could it be? What is it that God is trying to show me?”

And on previous occasions when my qualifier had broken our long standing no contact agreement, I would ask the same questions: “Why? Why is he doing this? Why are YOU doing this to me, God? Why am I being tortured like this? I’m trying to stay sober. I’m trying to do the right thing. Why does this keep happening?”

The answer to all of these questions was simple, but I was simply unready, and I can now admit, unwilling to accept the answer. The reality was,

with each breach of our no contact, with every seemingly cosmic run in on the street, I was, deep down, hoping that the words he would say were, "I'm moving back to New York, and I'm not in a relationship anymore."

Additionally, I would have loved if he followed it up with a John Cusack, '80s film, kind of apology and a recommitment to his own recovery, and possibly a heartfelt admission of his undying love for me.

But despite my time in program (about a year and a half at that point), and despite my sobriety up to that point, I could not and would not accept my own denial of the reality that I was secretly holding out a candle for this person.

The answer to my question, "Is he ever going to leave her?" came in the form of: "Are you finally willing to admit that you've been waiting for him to leave her, even though you've done all this work?"

Moreover, I was being shown that the work was just a part of recovery. The cellular level of recovery, the more profound, inner child recovery, fear of abandonment recovery, fear of rejection recovery would come now, with accepting this truth about

myself, and finally, once and for all, blowing out that candle. That truth was unpalatable to me before Step Two. I could accept that I was an addict. I could come to believe in a Higher Power restoring me to sanity.

But I had not yet FULLY turned my will over, and there I was, on the precipice of Step Three being asked if I was ready to finally do so and turn over that last missing piece.

Now that I had come to believe in this Higher Power, the truth of my candle-holding ways could be revealed to me without me falling apart. It wasn't enough that I had stopped contact. It wasn't enough that I had let go physically of the relationship by not having contact, not seeing him, not pursuing him.

I had to let him go in my heart, and in my mind, and I hadn't done that yet. It wasn't until I confronted him about my resentment that he had not left her yet, that I could face the reality that I hadn't really let him go. And that was a bitter pill to swallow. It was there, in my anger, in my resentment, in my attack on his character that I saw myself playing the role of a woman who had not given up the

ghost. With the help of my sponsor, my fellows, my home group, and my God, one day at the end of January 2020, I

turned to God and said: “Here you go, I don’t need this candle anymore.”

— VANESSA V.



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Titles available: (Audio Issues— MP3s)

Step 6 Focus

#136 - Recognizing Red Flags [Anorexia Focus

#137 - Sex and Love Addiction in Today’s Society

#138 - Family Issues

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#143 - How do Newcomers Become Old-Timers?

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#182 - Thank You AA

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Taking Responsibility for Myself for the First Time

My Higher Power gradually showed me the enmeshment with my mother through various traumatic life changes I've experienced in recovery. In my first year of recovery, my mother chose not to be in direct contact with me as a result of the harm caused by my active addiction.

Although I struggled with that at first, in hindsight it was a gift from my Higher Power. The separation interrupted our enmeshment, giving me the opportunity to stand on my own and take responsibility for myself for the first time.

Tragedy brought us back together when I lost my beloved father to lung cancer in my second year of recovery.

Although that had been the saddest day of my life, it was also my biggest spiritual experience. Not only did it reunite me with my estranged mother, but it also allowed me to be present and offer my service to my family... the ultimate living amends. My

Higher Power transformed our relationship overnight, and we were closer than ever. It felt great, and I didn't see anything wrong with it since our relationship dynamic wasn't harmful and unmanageable anymore.

In my third year of recovery, my mother was the victim of an armed robbery overseas, suffering a gunshot wound to the leg. That experience gave the worst day of my life a run for its money.

I dropped everything to go to be with her and help her in her recovery. My Higher Power opened my eyes to our enmeshment and its unmanageability when I tried to care for her.

There were times when I felt like her punching bag, and it was extremely painful. I was forced to face a new level of my work in recovery — old family dynamics resurfacing.

I started to practice showing up in my relationship with her with boundaries. I entered trauma therapy to process my

own trauma from her shooting. The spiritual lesson of my enmeshment with my mother will be an evolving journey. My

most painful experiences in recovery have been my biggest growth opportunities.

—DOROTHY H-J, HOUSTON, TX

Couldn't Accept That I Had Put My Addiction Before My Daughters

For a long while in recovery I had always believed that I had put my daughters first. Yes, I acknowledged that I had been unfaithful to my partners and lovers. Yes, I quickly came to realise that I had no concept of healthy love.

But I believed my love towards my daughters was supreme, even greater than my addiction. I have 2 daughters who I adopted with my ex-wife when I was very much in active addiction.

As I worked through my Steps, I was aware of my defects and the harms I had done. I did have a sense of those harms, but it took until

Step Eight for me to realise how I had avoided difficult conversations with my daughters, how I avoided really looking at what was going on for them and how difficult life was with their mother.

There were many times when I wasn't really present for them. But I still couldn't accept that I had put my addiction before my daughters. I finally got there on the cusp of my Step Nine. It was painful to accept that. I wasn't open to that truth early on. During the early Steps I had a lot of self-hatred for who I was and what I had done. I doubt I would have had the strength to accept the real impact on my

daughters of my addiction. When I was ready to accept that and had the tools to be able to sit with that, then my

Higher Power finally revealed that truth to me.

—ANONYMOUS

When I Put Too Much Focus on Myself, I Have Very Little to Offer the World

Ever since I was a child, I always found reading very difficult. I was quite sensitive and would desperately seek validation from a very young age.

I have a memory of being about seven years old and going on a day trip with my mum and some family friends who had a son who was much younger than me and could read extraordinarily well for his age — at the time I compared myself to him and interpreted my mum's surprise at his reading ability as disappointment in mine.

I felt totally shamed. From that point on I stopped reading and told myself internally that I wasn't intelligent. Only

recently have I realised that no one was shaming me on that day; it wasn't about me at all. It was the day my mum realised her best friend's son was Autistic.

How is this story linked to Higher Power and truth slowly revealing itself? Even though I didn't have the courage to read much, I distinctly remember having the thought as a child that I would be the youngest published author ever to walk this Earth. I had huge dreams of being adored and showered with success as a writer even though I wasn't able to open a book. Over time, Higher Power has taught me slowly that when I put too much of the focus on myself, I have very

little to offer the world. Higher Power has taught me that the narratives I tell myself hold huge power and quite literally create my reality. Higher Power reminds me that often those narratives I'm telling myself are false.

Usually when I'm stuck in a false reality, it's because deep down there's a part of me — my inner child perhaps — who is fearful of not being loved enough, or loved too much, or is scared of rejection, or doesn't feel worthy.

In that chasm of fear, false narratives consume me. Reading and writing are closely linked. Because I didn't read, I couldn't write. I would stop myself because nothing I could write would be good enough. But I desperately wanted to write. I still want to write.

I battle to put my voice on a page even now. Not to be famous or loved or adored but to process the world. Writing helps me explore a fantasy realm in a healthy way. It helps

me connect to myself and humanity, intimately. Since being in recovery, Higher Power has helped me slowly unpeel the old, false narratives that have been holding me back from being able to live, and love myself, and go for my dreams — with humility by my side.

Higher Power has given me my voice back. And with my voice I can ask questions and unpack my reality, slowly, to see the truth underneath, which is usually - 'You are worthy, you are enough.'

As someone once said, "No spiritual decision is ever made in haste." Perhaps so is my journey with writing. However long it takes to find and use my voice, I now have the strength to keep going.

I can meet the world with an open heart and welcome all that is to come. I hope Higher Power helps guide you to your inner voice of truth too. Thank you for reading...

— ANONYMOUS

Throwing Letters Out of My Sunroof

You know, when I first came into program I secretly and willfully kept trying to do things my way.

For example, I was on no contact with my ex while going through a divorce and separating property — that's tough. Really, I didn't want to divorce, but I had gone too far and had done too much.

I didn't want no contact, but I knew I needed to change my ways and deal with my sex and love addiction. I had tried in the past and it never worked. I was never able to maintain the boundaries or be a man of integrity.

On my ex's birthday every year in early recovery, I would write out a birthday card, address it, stamp it and then

get on the 101 freeway and throw it out my sunroof.

I didn't send it, but I hoped and prayed that someone would find it and drop it in the mail and my ex would contact me and thank me and a princess castle would appear at sunset, and everything would be ok. Everything is okay, not for those reasons, but because I work a solid program and my HP never delivered that mail or that other male.

My HP has held me with great love, honor and respect. HP has allowed me to work a program and find my love and worth through my fellowship and service in this program and has given me a relationship with me. Thank you, HP.

—ANONYMOUS

The S.L.A.A. Basic Text eBook
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God's Timing



I have often reflected on how I came to be in my current partnership and have understood it as a lesson in the concept of “God’s timing.” God’s timing is very hard to understand for an addict who wants everything now. Contact on demand.

Relationship on demand. Sex on demand. Instant love. The ramen noodle soup of romance. Being a sex and love addict, I never had any patience for getting to know someone slowly. If I did become friends with a man, the intimacy in the friendship

was a huge turn-off for me and I would run away — fast. For some reason with my partner, it was different.

We began as program friends and started to spend time together in a platonic fashion. This was part of my recovery from anorexia to have male friends and I didn't think too much of it since I was sober dating and didn't consider this man to be a potential partner.

During our two-year friendship, I was very angry with God for not providing me with a partner. I was sober dating left and right and I had already been single for about five years.

I felt totally abandoned and betrayed by Higher Power. People were falling in love all around me and I was so jealous. I actually cried to my male friend about it more than once.

Toward the end of the two years of friendship, I started to develop sexual and/or romantic feelings for my male friend. It was very uncomfortable, and I hid it from him. I didn't want to lose the friendship. But eventually, the

bubble burst and I was forced to tell him the truth. That was a very definitive moment for my recovery because I felt like if I declared my feelings, I was the "loser."

I felt so much shame telling him how I really felt. I thought I was going to die. I thought he would be so disgusted by me and would never talk to me again. During that very uncomfortable and terrifying conversation, it was revealed that my male friend had feelings for me too.

I was not expecting that at all. We talked and decided to try sober dating. After 60 days of no contact, we began our dating plan.

It was the first and only time I was ever able to stick to the dating plan, as my partner was very disciplined in following the plan to the letter. Now I have been in this loving, close relationship for two years and I look back often on my anger at God.

I realized that long ago, I had written my vision for a partner, which was to get to know someone very slowly and go on like one-thousand dates with them before having sex. I

realized that the whole time I was sober dating and complaining about it, God was fulfilling my vision in my male friend. I just didn't identify him as a potential partner at the time, but God gave me my wish to find someone willing to take things slowly.

Very slowly: two years of close friendship before ever even kissing or holding hands. When it did finally happen, it was really what I could only call "divine." Now and then I get ungrateful. My partner has flaws, and I complain about them, and I question the relationship.

But I know that the foundation is solid and is God's grace. So, I'm sticking with it and learning how to adapt to changes. I'm also learning how to stop demanding things from Higher Power.

What God has given me is far better than "instant" anything. The time I had to wait for a healthy relationship refined my character and made me grow in many ways.

So, I try to apply this to other areas of my life where I feel like God is depriving me or holding up my plans. Sponsees complain to me that recovery isn't working or it's taking too long. I understand this all too well.

"God's timing. It sucks sometimes," I say. But then I smile because I know that God's timing is the best thing for me whether I like it or not.

The more I can surrender and stop demanding my way, the more beautiful, magical, and serene life is.

Higher power never lets me down. All the delay, longing, and deprivation in my life has gradually healed one day at a time in program.

I hope that you don't give up and that you just focus on self-care and top lines just for today.

Great things lie ahead. The promises always come true, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

For me, it's been slowly.

— ANONYMOUS

Truth Being Revealed in Higher Power's Time

I first walked into a room of recovery in 2004 when I kept picking men to be in a relationship that were emotionally unavailable. At the time, I was on “the other side” of the hall from sex addicts, focusing on codependency. One of the reasons the men I chose were unavailable, is because they all had some form of sex addiction.

In those meetings, I came to know that my behavior was influenced by growing up with an emotionally unavailable and anorexic father.

I had been recycling the relationship I wish I had with him by attracting those very similar to him. My mother had also been the model example of codependency.

I learned many unhealthy ways of accommodating others to keep the peace, in my family of origin.

So, what was the solution? To work on myself – learning boundaries, healthier ways of relating to men, and hopefully, I could learn to attract healthier people.

That program grew my understanding of a Higher Power as well. I was raised to believe in a God who was harshly judgmental, difficult to approach, and who I would never be good enough for. I learned, through program work, that I was projecting human qualities, very comparable to those of my father, onto a Higher Power, and the religion I was raised in reiterated that.

That program taught me about the possibility of a Higher Power being loving, kind, understanding, even accepting of me; defects and all! It was a beautiful beginning to being able to understand a Higher Power that would and could help me heal.

Fast forward several years, through two years of that program, two years in another similar one for codependency, and then two in a faith-based program of recovery. All the while, I was growing in healthier ways, pertaining to relating to others and to my

Higher Power... yet, I never fully trusted or surrendered to that Power. I would allow HP to help me and show me love at times, but at the end of the day, I was still holding onto so much.

In March of 2021, after a surgery, depression, and feelings of isolation (due to pandemic AND being socially anorexic, without realizing it), I went onto a mental health app to find others I might be able to relate to. My husband of 13 years was wonderful, but didn't understand depression, having never experienced it.

However, that app ended up being more detrimental to my mental health than helping, as many of the people that were on there were looking for romantic or sexual conversations. At first, I avoided those kinds of people.

But a particular "friend" stood out, feeding my need for affirmation and appreciating some of my art on a level that felt meaningful. Both of those areas felt lacking in my marriage, so I clung to this person. Soon, an emotional affair was fully in play.

After a few months, a "break up" took place, though we had never met in person and lived on opposite sides of the world – AND there was no

relationship to break up, really, as I was a married woman. It felt like one though. It ended spectacularly and I grieved this loss as deeply as any other significant relationship I'd ever lost.

Soon after that, I found myself searching for someone else to share this experience with, all the while keeping the nature of my conversation and connection with men secret from my husband.

He believed I was only getting support for my mental health. And I justified my connections like a champ – I truly believed they were "helping" even if temporarily, though a deeper part of me knew it was wrong for me.

I finally decided the app was unhealthy and tried another, hoping that I might find some authentic help for mental health, rather than just bids for long-distance relationships.

The next app was more structured, seemed like a lot of people truly seeking to become more aware of becoming healthier individuals, and encouraged healthy mindsets. Yet, again, there was a man who sought to know me better, and there began another emotional affair. This time, the man was in the same state I

lived in. And the conversation we engaged in included sexual content. I contemplated how I could run away from my family – my husband and kids – and form a new life where I wouldn't be a burden to them because of my mental health AND be with someone who “got” me.

When those thoughts nearly became action, I finally broke down with the realization that I was truly sick with an addiction for sex, romance, and validation. I needed to come clean and get help.

Sharing what I had done with my husband was one of the hardest conversations I've ever had. I fully expected him to ask me to leave. His response was one of heartbreak and grace – one I deserved, the other I didn't, I believed. He feared he would never be enough for me, but he loved me and wanted to try.

This whole time, I had an amazing man right in front of my eyes, and because I had assumed a “no” for him and not asked for what I needed (connection and appreciation of my art), I had sought it elsewhere. Yet here he was willing to do whatever it took to help me and do what he

could to connect with me in meaningful ways I desired. I acknowledged to him that I had a “God-sized hole” in my heart, and it wasn't on his shoulders to fill. No one could. It was up to me and God. I needed to believe I was worthy of love and love myself.

The issue of me trusting a Higher Power had arisen again. Could I really trust that the God of my understanding could be surrendered to? At this point, I had no other place to turn.

I promptly began a program of recovery, anew, in S.L.A.A. I acknowledged that I hadn't wanted to accept, throughout my life, the signs that pointed to sexual, romantic and validation addiction. I didn't want the stigma of being a “sex” addict.

I didn't want people to know that I had struggled with pornography – visual, written and audio. That I had learned to masturbate from the age of two and used that as a tool of comfort into adulthood. That I fantasized about the ideal romantic relationship and imagined how wonderful it would be from the age of nine forward. That as a young adult, I had gotten the best grades,

become an amazing musician, and sought to be a leader among my peers, so that the validation I craved would be given.

And guess what? It was never enough. Why? Because I didn't love myself, nor did I actually believe a Higher Power could or would love me, because of everything I'd done in my life that was contrary to the core brain pathways that were grooved into my mind from childhood.

This time, I dove in and willingly and vigorously committed to this program of recovery. I attended meetings every day, sometimes twice or three times a day.

I started working the Steps and found a sponsor to share my work with. I reached out to people in the program for help and support when I was feeling triggered, especially in my withdrawal period, where the temptation to go back to seeking a hit finding validation from a man online was prevalent.

I found opportunities to serve in the meetings. AND, I began a fresh relationship with the God of my understanding – one where I fully embraced

that I was lovable and worthy of that love. As I gained trust in my Higher Power, the ability to surrender was there. By the completion of Step Three, I had a relationship with HP like I had NEVER experienced before and I better loved myself as well.

The seed had been planted, with my first meeting all those years ago and the growth had been very slow going, sometimes with major setbacks. But now, after seventeen years, there was the makings of a small tree that was becoming healthy, thriving and taking root, to continue to grow in these ways.

I've heard, through the years, people say that recovery is a lifelong journey. Clearly, I didn't believe them, when over the course of years, only two year stints, three different times, did I reach a point of unmanageability and come back to a 12-Step program.

This time, I'm one of the people saying it: this is a lifelong journey. Until I am no longer on this earth, I will keep coming back. I can't healthily live any other way.

— ARIA

Share space

Discuss and Reflect on the Meaning of Love

I think this is the most difficult question I've encountered so far in S.L.A.A. The meaning of love is the meaning of life, really. How you love is how you live. We absorb it from birth from the environment around us, and we go from there.

In my eyes, a multitude of factors deemed me unlovable and that's how I operated in the world. Survival mechanisms distanced me from what love is in its truest form. Love, I

decided, was dangerous and to be avoided. But I'm learning that love is not what I thought it was. It starts from within and grows. Yes, I heard all the slogans and affirmations about self-love and could understand it in theory, but I did not feel it until I came into recovery.

With surrender and acceptance came the first steps to self-love. I don't know what love will look like

when it comes to any relationships in the future. I do know though, that I will be bringing something different to the table when the time comes. I will be bringing a deep, respectful, and ever-growing love towards myself. If I can accept the love I have for myself, perhaps I can accept the love from others.

Today, I demonstrate the effort to love with my family, friends, and fellowships. The daily practice of self-love encourages me to

show up and connect more with others. It gently pushes me out of my comfort zone, and to try to be of value not just to myself but to the people who matter.

At times, I find this very difficult, but progress has been made. Addiction is still there, encouraging me to 'love' via my defects as opposed to my recovery. Love begins as an inside job, before it can expand. If I can practice that daily, I feel I am living the meaning of love.

—CAROLYN

An Invitation For You

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

- Become a Journal Representative for your intergroup or home group, encouraging the use of *the Journal* as a source of topics, letting people know that there are Journals for sale, and ensuring that plenty of Journal subscription cards are always on the literature table.
- Visit a local organization that deals with sex and love addicts in your area, bringing copies of *the Journal* along with a few pamphlets. The institution may be a treatment facility, a judicial entity, a large recovery club that welcomes varied literature, or a hospital.

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

People as Drugs

Through sex, charm, emotional appeal, or persuasive intellect, we had used other people as ‘drugs,’ to avoid our own personal inadequacy.”

S.L.A.A. BASIC TEXT PAGE 74.

“Please share your story of using people as drugs and your experience strength and hope in overcoming the desire to use people as drugs.”

I woke up in an apartment I barely recognized, with someone I barely knew, and it wasn't consensual, and it wasn't the first time I woke up under these circumstances. That was the moment I realized I had preferred to lose myself in someone than go home alone and face my

loneliness, my grief, my trauma, and definitely my inadequacy. Being with someone was always better than being with no one. Even when I enjoyed my own company and a book at a coffee shop or otherwise over dinner, I always felt the experience would be better with the thought that someone was coming to join me, or I was going home to someone, even if it wasn't my home. Having been rejected by someone who

was profoundly unavailable, I refused to feel the rejection, and instead clung to a new romantic and sexual relationship with a musician who couldn't care less if I went home with him or not.

But he did seem to care whether once I was in his home, that I give in to the demands of his own needs, wants, desires, otherwise, why did I agree to go home with him?

"Because I need someone to hold me while I try to fall asleep. I haven't slept without someone for years," I could have said.

But this was not the type of person you say that kind of thing to. Neither were any of the plethora of men before him.

They were all cut from the same cloth, the deeply unavailable, emotionally and/or physically, individual type of cloth. I kept banging on these windows hoping to transform them into doors, and really at this point in my life, I didn't even really like this window.

I just didn't want to be alone. With every person I had to use a different tool. With one, I had to bust out the intellect, be sharp as a knife,

quick with the jokes, and hit right back with the political dialogue of the day. With another, I had to be the charming, sweet, docile, playful character from whatever fictional based story they had in their minds. For yet another, I had to manage exuding just the right amount of sexual appeal to be captivating but not too much to be "slutty," and also that calm, cool, collected, uninterested aura that lures all the unavailable wolves of the world together.

If I managed to achieve just the right balance, there was a good chance I'd get a hit of the validation and attention I needed verbally, and later sexually when he took me home.

There was always a combination to every man, a secret code I was destined to discover, and I made it my mission to do so if I decided that he was my new drug or my new dealer since the old one stopped working or left me high and dry.

Basically, so long as I didn't have to deal with myself, I would be getting high around the clock: texting, info seeking, dating, having casual sexual

encounters, using accessory behavior to achieve the emotional validation, the physical validation, and on and on it went. But that morning, when I woke up in that apartment, having been in that headspace years before (that time with a married man who forced himself on me at a party in his home while his wife was out of town) and asking myself, "How did I end up here, again?"

I knew I had to give up the dope. There was absolutely no way I could keep living like that. Anything could have happened to me that night. I didn't even remember getting to his apartment.

I just remembered saying "No. I don't want to. Stop," and not having the physical strength to push him off. As desperately as I had wanted to use men as drugs before that night, the following morning I never wanted to use that drug again. I tried the rooms back then, but couldn't commit.

I wasn't ready to take the steps and do the work that seemed to be required. I was desperate for change, but I didn't know what it would look like, and I wasn't sure that program was right for me. So, I ended up in a very safe, very boring, very anorexic relationship where I barely

ever had sexual contact. There was some emotional intimacy and friendship, but on the other end of the pendulum, I was using this individual as a way to not deal with my trauma, much less my inadequacy, my shame, my guilt, my past, my present even.

It was much easier to focus on his life, his needs, his new pursuit of a standup comedy career, his writing, and his OCD recovery than my own needs, my own career, my graduating college with three degrees, my writing, my creativity, my recovery.

So, I stayed in that bubble for about 2 years when I fell in love with my best friend (who was in his own relationship) and realized I was about to use yet another man who I claimed to love for the emotional support I wanted and as a band-aid for the deeper recovery I really needed.

I gave both of them up. I stuck to the advice of my sponsor. I stopped contact. I walked away from all the connections. I've never used someone like that again. The desire to stop using came with the very painful realization that I had hurt my previous partner, who was a wonderful, kind, loving man. And toward the end of that relationship, I

hurt my friend and his relationship. That’s a lot of damage to be in the face of, but it was as much of a wakeup call as that morning in that apartment. My Higher Power was showing me that no one, no matter how good or kind or loving, or how many years of friendship exists between you, can be the cure for the past. Only God can be that.

—VANESSA V.

THE JOURNAL THEMES AND DEADLINES FOR 2021-2022

Submit your writing at www.slaafws.org

Issue #	Month	Theme	QOD	Submission deadline (articles and QOD)
#195	March/ April	Long-term Recovery	How do you keep your program fresh and growing?	Jan. 15, 2022
#196	May/ June	Sponsor’s Words	What’s the best thing your sponsor has ever told you?	March 15, 2022
#197	July/Aug *ABM Issue*	Anorexia With- drawal	What is anorexia withdrawal in your experience? What tools helped you deal with the pain of withdrawal from anorexia without retreating back into anorexia?	May 15, 2022

French Share

Apprendre à faire différemment ?

Aujourd'hui je mesure tout le résultat du travail du programme.

Il y a 3 ans, je sortais dans les bars pour ramener quelqu'un chez moi, ma tête se faisait une histoire romantique d'une histoire d'un soir. Je me forçais à faire plaisir à l'autre pour mendier désespérément de l'affection. Le programme m'a appris à être seule, à me centrer sur moi, à écouter mes besoins. J'ai pu ainsi changer de travail, faire du théâtre d'impro, réussir un concours et chaque jour je progresse,

parfois je résiste encore aux suggestions du programme, j'ai des moments difficiles, mais grâce aux outils, au réseau énorme de soutien, je ne me sens plus jamais seule, l'espoir revient et petit à petit ma vie s'améliore. Je suis étonnée de voir que cela fonctionne et que les promesses arrivent même si cela ne va pas à la vitesse où je souhaiterais. J'apprends à faire différemment et à accepter le bonheur dans ma vie. Merci.

— LUNDI

English Translation

Learn to do differently?

Today I measure all the result of the work of the program. Three years ago, I went out to bars to take someone home. In my mind, I was making a romantic story of a one-night stand. I forced myself to please the other to desperately beg for affection. The program taught me to be alone, to focus on myself, to listen to my needs. I was able to change jobs and do improv theater. I won a contest. Every day I progress. Sometimes I still resist the suggestions of

the program. I have difficult moments. But thanks to the tools, the huge network of support, I never have to feel alone again. Hope returns and little by little my life improves. I am amazed to see that it works and that the promises come even if it does not go at the speed I would like. I am learning to do things differently and accept happiness in my life. Thank you.

—LUNDI



THE INSPIRATION LINE

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CELEBRATES

400,00 CALLS!

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

S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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



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