

theJournal

Issue # 196

Single Issue \$4



Sponsor's Words

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

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

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble | 4 |
| The Twelve Steps | 5 |
| Letter From the Editor | 7 |
| Question of the Day | 8 |

Theme: Sponsor's Words

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The Courage to Change the Things I Can | 17 |
| Nothing Would Surprise Her | 19 |

Share Space

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| My Heart | 21 |
| Addiction Thrives in Isolation | 22 |
| Little Buddha Jan 2022 | 26 |
| Coming Together in a Safe Space | 28 |

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* ©1985 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities, which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise. **THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as *we understood Him*. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as *we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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

© May/June, 2022. The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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

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

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

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

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Managing Editor | Lisa C. |
| Art Director | Fiona |
| Outreach Director | Lisa C. |
| Proofreaders for this issue | Chris D. Beth L. |

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

For this issue of the Journal, we got twice as many short answers to the Question of the Day than we have for any other recent issue! Many of the answers gave me insight and inspiration. Some of them I thought, “I wouldn’t like it if a sponsor said that to me.” But that’s the beauty of sponsorship. I’ve always believed that we get the sponsors we need. They know us and can share with us the wisdom of experience. And I believe that a Higher Power has a helping hand in the relationship.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is “What’s the best thing your sponsor has ever told you?” 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: #197 — July/Aug *ABM issue* — Anorexia Withdrawal — “What is anorexia withdrawal in your experience? What tools helped you deal with the pain of withdrawal from anorexia without retreating back into anorexia?” Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2022. And #198 — Sept/Oct issue — Defects Higher Power Lets Me Keep — “Have you ever prayed for a character defect to be removed for a long time and found that it stuck around for you to learn a lesson or because it helped you or others in some way?” Please share your experience, strength, and hope. Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2022. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

What’s the best thing your sponsor has ever told you?

Here are some of the pearls that I find myself quoting more and more often, whether I am at work, in my family or at meetings.

— “The only wrong way to do it is NOT to do it” (referring to Step work or anything else that I am procrastinating on).

— “There but for the grace of God go I” (referring to thinking we are better than others).

— “When it comes to stupidity, you can choose to get off the ride, but when it comes to ignorance, just buckle up and hold on for dear life.”

— “If there is a word for it, that means you’re not the only one that struggles with it.”

— “No.” is a complete sentence.”

— “I accept your apology” (when I have missed our meetings or procrastinated on my Step work).

I don’t know where she got them, but I am grateful she has passed them on to me.

— LIZ, PENNSYLVANIA

Question of the day

As I was working the Steps with my sponsor, I shared my lack of faith that Steps Two and Three would work. I explained that I had worked those Steps in another program years before but I said, “Look where I’m at today,” implying that they hadn’t worked then, in spite of continuous sobriety in the other program. She simply said, “Well, maybe you haven’t hurt enough.” That was the punch in the gut I needed because I realized that I may end up having more pain if I didn’t work those Steps and that was enough to move me forward.

— CHRIS D.

So much wisdom to choose from, so I’ll pick one of many. I was ready to begin sober dating, but understandably scared as well. My sponsor suggested I try group activities that sounded fun to me. I could meet people who shared common interests. This was much less scary! I haven’t met “the one” (yet!), but I’ve discovered fun new activities that have changed my life. What a gift!

— NANCY, FL

“Don’t be hard on yourself. Be compassionate.”

— SAM, LONDON

“You need to welcome the idea that some people are not supposed to be in your life.”

— ROBIN, MONTROSE, CA

Question of the day

“I do not just go around dropping sponsees.” This was so important for me to hear to ease my abandonment issues. I had heard of plenty of members being dropped as sponsees from their sponsors. This allowed me to be honest, open-minded, and willing with my sponsor, not to fear doing something wrong in order to be dropped (as this was not going to happen), and allowed me to work a thorough, detailed, and honest program and complete my Step work in the same fashion.

— ANONYMOUS

“Have honesty, goodwill and openness.”

— ANONYMOUS

“Don’t beat yourself up.” It’s so easy for me to dive into shame when I do things differently (e.g., don’t check-in about something, don’t follow my dating plan to a T, decide not to date when I’m emotionally available). My sponsor reminds me that I’m not supposed to be perfect, and that life isn’t perfect, but if I *breathe* (that’s another one), I stay present to my Higher Power and come from a place of connection rather than fear and shame.

— KELLY-JOY J., MONTREAL

“You are honest, reliable and sincere.”

— ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

It is difficult to narrow my answer down to one best thing. And I recognize as I write the answer how important that best thing is: he taught me to stop using the conjunctions “but” or “however,” and instead say “and.” It seems like a trivial shift in word choice, and I now see how negating my words have been in the past. The change caused me to watch my words and has made a big difference. It has also created more harmony in my relationships with others, as I have become less argumentative, and less likely to be unintentionally negating of feedback from others. I am grateful for sponsorship & fellowship!

— RAY O. (DON), HOUSTON

My sponsor pointed out that I would present statements and situations with a very dramatic delivery. She asked me to pause and take the drama out, just share the facts. I quickly learned that once I stopped feeding the drama in my own narrative, it started to drop out of my life altogether. I realised that a lot of the spiraling anxiety and catastrophizing that sent me into a panic and disrupted my moods was of my own making. I will forever be grateful for this observation as it has helped changed my life and helps me on my path to serenity.

— MIRA, UK

“Read the Basic Text — it will save you from your opinions, and everyone else’s!”

— ALEX, PLYMOUTH, UK

Question of the day

Before entering a building, park, location that could be triggering, pause and ask God (or your HP) to enter before you. This is a reminder that God is with you. So no matter the outcome, it serves as a reminder that my Higher Power is a part of it. The first time I used this practice was in 2015 (a little over a year into program) - I was going to have a table/booth at a small local park for a local fair. My ex-husband's business was represented on the list of participating vendors as well. When I learned of this, I gathered affirmations from many friends in recovery so I could have it with me during the few hours working the booth to help get me through the event. My sponsor had given me the suggestion, I followed it and with all the preparation I did the weeks leading up to the event, my ex-husband and the business ended up not attending the event. It was a gift from God (my HP).

— ARI F, NJ

I was stuck on Step 3. I was overthinking. Could I really 'turn my will and my life over to God'? I knew I could not do it perfectly. I couldn't give a clear answer. My sponsor said, "The answer is always YES. That way at least you've handed it over for five seconds." Brilliant. Of course, perfection is an illusion. But if I always respond with a "Yes" to the question, I will get more and more time in a surrendered posture.

— ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

The words of acceptance, honesty, and the ability to see my self-worth as valuable, to be heard and have someone to help sort out new lifestyle decisions. It is so very comforting to have someone listen to me fully and provide healthy feedback, even if I am uncomfortable with the information. I hold myself accountable to the process.

— CRYSTAL, GRASS VALLEY

The most pertinent thing my sponsor shared with me when we began working together was something to the effect of “try it and see how it goes.” It had a similar sentiment as “maybe you need to suffer more, and that’s fine. That’s where you are.” Indeed, I’ve “tried it” on many occasions since then, taking full responsibility that any residual pain, any sacrifice or compromise of my fullest facilities, any handicap, would be mine to own and mine to learn from. He didn’t judge me. He assessed the current circumstances, and for that I am grateful for his grounded-ness and handling of my crisis...

—ANONYMOUS

I am a female member who at the time I entered program, was a flaming love addict. A partner left me (what else is new) and I called a male grand-sponsor who had only met me once. I was acting out my love addict’s obsession, grief, despair, freak-out and self-pity. He interrupted me and said, “I know I don’t know you very well, but you sound mentally ill.” It shocked me and awakened me to how sick I was sounding. I have always appreciated it.

— ANONYMOUS IN GEORGIA

Question of the day

“You’re doing a great job!”- as a recovering perfectionist it means a lot that they say this no matter what kind of progress or setbacks I have in program. I had a few slips and I relapsed with my qualifier and I felt so much shame because I wasn’t doing the program “right.” I was scared to even share about my relapse with my sponsor because I thought they would want to end our relationship. And yet they did the exact opposite. They offered me compassion, experience, strength and hope, and they ended the conversation with, “If you didn’t know already, I want you to know, you’re still doing a great job.” I really love my sponsor and consider them physical evidence that my HP is always working for my greatest good.

— B.M. (D.C.)

“When you walk with God, you cannot set a foot wrong.”

— SARAH E

“You can get direction from Higher Power.” When I first started working the Twelve Steps, I felt distant from God and confused about His nature. This statement from my sponsor helped build hope that I would eventually be able to feel confidence in my ability to understand more about Him and His will and have peace in my relationship with Him.

— ANONYMOUS

“Trust that you are in recovery. Trust yourself.”

— KJ J., QUEBEC

Question of the day

“If we are what we do, what are we when we don’t?” This is in the context of workaholism, compulsive activity, and being a human being vs. a human doing.

— OCEAN M., OAKLAND, CA

“Put down the whole pattern! Trying to play with parts of your addiction always leads to relapse.”

— PHILADELPHIA

When I asked my sponsor what I should say to my qualifier if I ever saw him again, I was told all I had to say to him is “I’m not interested.” Simple and perfect. I never would have thought of that on my own! I use it as a mantra during the day and I often say it out loud, just to practice saying it should I ever need to.

— ANONYMOUS

My sponsor told me that I am unconditionally lovable.

— ANONYMOUS

Unsolicited advice is not good for building any social relationship. Some people in the program just work one and half steps: First Step and half of the Twelfth Step.

— DHAWAN, BENGALURU, INDIA

Question of the day

“1) I don’t take credit for your wins, and I don’t suffer your losses. I’m here to offer experience, strength, and hope, your job is to own your own decisions. 2) There is no such thing as too much information (TMI) with a sponsor. I’m not here to judge or criticize your *outsides*, I’m here to help you find and feel your *insides*. 3) I will never abandon you, but don’t test that theory. 4) I don’t expect you to be perfect, but I do expect you to TRY. 5) No new information, no new pain. Withdrawal is a slow exorcism, don’t reset the clock more times than you need to. 6) Look within or go without. 7) There’s no cure for crying.”

— ANONYMOUS

“Why can’t you just let ‘insert name’ be themselves.” He’s said this more than once, not as chastisement but simply posing the question and asking, what’s the harm in just being your recovered self? I love it and need reminding of it often, for myself and for my fellows around me.

— DAVID M., AUSTIN/HOUSTON/BOSTON

“If you ever run into your qualifier in a meeting again, mumble something unintelligible into your feet and walk away.” That made me laugh that I would look like a crazy person and gave me strength to not take myself so seriously when I actually did run into him. I didn’t have a panic attack, I stared at my feet, mumbled something, and chuckled as I walked away. He hasn’t spoken to me again in the last 20 years.

— ANONYMOUS

The Courage to Change the Things I Can



Every time we met, my sponsor insisted that we begin and end with the Serenity Prayer. After one of our meetings, I thought about what it really meant to change the things we can. That moment led to lasting clarity on the power of the recovery.

Sitting with this idea that I

can change certain things, I pondered what I actually had power over. I immediately ruled out my thinking, as my first thoughts still aren't pretty at times. With that out of the way, it became clear that my ability to assert power was limited to just a few things—my choices, my actions, and

my words. Over those, I realized, I do have real power. I remember the relief I felt in getting clear on that. Those are things I can definitely manage.

Years later, I also came to believe that I have power over my attitude. However, I've chosen not to add that to my original simple list of three things. Why? Because my attitude is a result of my choices.

How I choose to take care of myself, what I elect to do, and the words I decide to say all impact my outlook. The words I choose, in particular, affect how I view my place in the world. Especially those I tell myself. Whether said out loud or in my head, what I say has a direct impact over how I see things around me. Words that promote a dire perspective

steer me towards a negative attitude. Self-talk or speech that is positive moves me in a beneficial direction.

I am powerless over many, many things. Especially my sex and love addiction. But that does not make me a victim.

Quite the opposite.

Understanding the nature of my disease and how it limits my power has given me true power: the power to stay sober when I do the next right thing. Having just three things to focus on—choices, actions, and words—has made it easier to know how to choose what is right for me. That's one of the everlasting benefits of being an addict in recovery. My life boils down to a set of simple choices for how to live one moment at a time.

— SCOTT W., TAMPA BAY, FL

Nothing Would Surprise Her

Dear newcomer,

When I first started working with my first sponsor, she reminded me that she was just another addict like me.

So, I couldn't bulls**t her because she is an addict too. She didn't just 'talk the talk.' Instead, she 'walked the walk.' Day by day, I realized that she knew me better than I thought. She knew my full story, so I went to her and my Higher Power before going to my fellows. She told me not to pick and choose or take pieces of her suggestions and directions to me either.

When I took those suggestions from her, I 'didn't die' from trying them no matter how afraid I was. She told me don't be without a sponsor.

She said to show up for my own recovery and not do it to impress her. She said, 'baby the addict, bury the addict.' And while sponsoring me and others, she said that she does love us as her sponsees. When I was a newcomer, my sponsor said I wouldn't know what to

do if a healthy person was in front of me. My sponsor also set my bottom lines for me which was my 'turning point.' This helped me get out of withdrawal.

She reminded me that my addiction wants me dead. However, it will settle for me being miserable. Most importantly, she said that 'my addict voice' sounds just like me and I should choose not to listen to it when it speaks to me. I am currently on the Fifth Step. So far, my sponsor helped me tremendously by 'not revising' what I wrote in the columns.

She said to knock out a couple of people from my resentments list per day to avoid sitting on the Fourth Step. She said that nothing I say or write will surprise her. She said if I didn't want the whole world to know, just tell her about it. What kept me going in my Step work was when she said that she won't pick sides. What also kept me working the Steps was still having a chance to stay

connected to my family as well. My sponsor told me to show up for myself by being on time. In other words, to get myself to a meeting.

She said to go where the recovery is. And pick up commitments that I like. With outreach calls, she said to call fellows I disliked.

She also warned me not to replace my addiction for another such as not manipulating people to like me at meetings anymore. As of now, my sponsor taught me that there is a committee that lives in my head. I bring me

everywhere I go. I also keep myself sober and it's my recovery to work on staying in the present and restart my day if needed. She said addicts are not satisfied with change and the way things are. Now, I can redirect my second thought or take a pause. My sponsor taught me that my Higher Power likes me and to bring God in instead of a human power. She said God is bigger than my problems too. My relationship with God is also important. She said to keep giving it all to God.

— ANONYMOUS



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

Get them at:

<http://store.slaafws.org>

Share space

My Heart

Dear You,

Together we can do this. I am here for you. We are a team. I'm pumping the blood you need every second. I'm standing behind you. You've stopped listening to me but I've never walked away. I've always been here. You don't listen to me but I'm talking to you right now. I'm not really talking to you, I'm yelling at you. Listen to me. Together we can handle this and whatever comes. Feel me. I am part of you. I am you. We beat together every second in this life to do what you came here to do. Every time you feel bad, talk to me. I don't give up. And since I am you, you don't give



up either, even if you want to convince yourself otherwise. Something inside you tells you to keep going. And that something is me. I am your life and together we have come to live. So don't think that much, trust your instinct, that's what I'm here for.

A warm hug,
Your heart

Addiction Thrives in Isolation

All my life I thought everyone thought the way I thought. I thought everyone had crushes. I thought you were supposed to have crushes. It started in third grade, I was obsessed each day about this boy in my class until he moved away in grade 6. Then for three years I was obsessed about this boy at church. I would fantasize about a future together. I barely knew them.

I was afraid of men, yet obsessed about them.

My father was violent and chaotic. He barely paid me any attention. I never remember him ever saying he loved me or even hugging me.

He battled a mental illness and his own demons from his childhood. I started dating in college.

I had been dumped a few times early on because I wasn't sexual.

So, my addict brain thought, "to be loved by a man, I have to be sexual." And that became the currency for me to buy affection.

I married my first boyfriend after knowing him a year. That

lasted 17 years. In my fantasy, he was a gentleman. The reality was he was repressing his sexual attraction to men.

In the last 7 years of the marriage I had numerous affairs just to numb out and feel alive. After the divorce, I got into one relationship after another with more men who weren't emotionally available.

But it was okay, I was never in a relationship with them. I was never present. I was with a fantasy of who they could be.

After three years of therapy, my therapist said, "You're obsessed. Nothing will help you but a 12-Step program. I can't work with you anymore." Talk about feeling rejected and abandoned! Little did I know she'd set me on the course to freedom. I didn't know much about love addiction.

I started in Codependents Anonymous. There I met an alcoholic with 9 years sobriety. I asked her to be my sponsor. After some time with me, she shared with me the characteristics of sex and love addiction. Well, by golly, there I am. I was so reluctant to go to SLAA meetings, but meeting

after meeting, I heard someone share my story. I spent a year working the Steps.

My therapist said I had a disconnect to self. I didn't know what that meant at first. Well, my identity was built around whatever I thought would appeal to the man I was obsessed about at the moment. To build my self differentiation and connection to self, I created top lines.

My top lines include:

- daily fear and resentment journaling,
- always asking God to release me from these and to support me in following his plan for me,
- meditation,
- grounding and breath work,
- gratitude lists,
- manicures,
- steam room,
- bike rides,
- regular SLAA meetings,
- daily sponsor and fellow contact,
- reading Twelve-Step literature daily,
- going to the gym,
- painting, and
- time with family and friends because addiction thrives in isolation.

Top lines are about my needing to fill my own cup because all my life I would obsess about "the one" — the man who would rescue me and reparent me. I needed to grow up and parent myself.

This includes being responsible, organized, and self-compassionate.

The way I talked to myself previously was unacceptable.

No wonder I was living and dying based on the approval of whatever man at the time I gave magical qualities to!

I then created bottom lines. For me this meant no texting sexual selfies, messages, videos, or links.

In the past, this was manipulation. I would try to perform to secure what I thought was love.

I didn't see any other reason anyone would want me. So I led with that. And I attracted people who just saw my value as sexual.

This is the insanity of addiction. I was creating my own misery and it was compulsive. I wasn't even aware of my own contribution. I thought this was how everyone dated. A bottom line for me is to not go into performance mode to attract or

keep a partner. I also had to keep away from romantic movies, series, and music. Another bottom line for me was to stop contact when anyone said they didn't want a relationship. In the past, I would take it as an invitation to earn, perform, become the special chosen one to change them. There were plenty of men who just wanted me to keep seeing them and see where things went. I would self-abandon.

Then when it went nowhere, I would be near suicidal. Once they would end things with me, I would text them to change their mind. I did this until they'd tell me not to.

Then I'd text or call from a different number and write them emails and letters. I realized this was a pattern and it had nothing to do with the men. Another bottom line for me is to cease contact with anyone who blatantly pushes my boundaries. In the past, when men rolled over my boundaries, I would think "They must really like me to be so bold and persistent." I would self-abandon and acquiesce only to find once they achieved their carnal

goals, they vanished. In addition to this, I blocked communication with any man that had a partner. I created a dating plan. I learned that real love starts slow and is calm. I limited my communication to a few texts a day.

I limited times I would see a person to once a week. I have a hard rule of nothing sexual in a car and nothing sexual for the first month. Obsession is a word that always used to bother me. But I was obsessed. Now any time I see that word, I know the article is for me.

I focus myself on keeping myself right-sized and the person I'm dating right-sized. That means no one-up-one-down dynamic. That means no creating a fantasy of them or assigning them magical qualities.

It means not buying into this scarcity mindset social narrative of "the one." It also is important for me to keep holidays right-sized too. In the past I would really build up expectations around any man I was seeing and my birthday, Christmas, and Valentine's Day. The insanity is that I would never feel worthy of receiving any gift. So whether or not they made any gesture, I

wouldn't feel worthy regardless. These days would just be opportunities for me to indulge in self-pity.

I limited my time on social media and dating apps. I made sure my profile focused on my intelligence and creativity instead of anything sexual. I avoided any profiles of men who were not relationship minded and had sexual references in their profile.

I embraced being single enough to say no to unhealthy situations. Previously, I would

chase breadcrumbs of any attention whatsoever. The most important thing for me while dating is knowing that I am never alone. I am always safe and okay regardless of relationship status because my Higher Power is always with me. I have fellowship, family, friends, and plenty of hobbies. I have a full life. I am the one I always wanted. I found inside of me what I spent years looking externally for.

— ANONYMOUS

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>

Little Buddha Jan 2022

Little Buddha
Dancing with the stars
In your own little world
Among Jupiter and Mars
You want to be seen, you want to be heard
You want to be king of the castle,
when really, you're a frail little bird
Little Buddha
Alone in the dark
Even the golden silk that bound you
Still leaves a mark
You cut your hair and ran away,
From the pain you thought would leave you,
but remains to this day
Little Buddha
Cry for your mother
Scream for your father
Bang those pots for your sister and your brother
Nobody sees you, nobody cares
Your white light falling, to the depths of despair
Little Buddha
Retreat to your cave, alone
You want to be safe
Your friends have all gone
Isolated, you try to flush the pain away
He enters the room, enticing you to play

Little Buddha
So innocent, so pure
Who do you turn to
When hope is no more
Driving a knife, into your soul
Only to leave an even bigger hole
Little Buddha
Crying tears of Two Trees
Anything to mask the truth
The beginning of the dreadful disease
Waking up in a stranger's bed
Twenty euro is all I have, he said
Little Buddha
At your fingertips, you played with fire
The captain of the ship
The conductor of the choir
Weaving your way from dad to dad
Searching for the man you never had
Little Buddha
You craved connection, intimacy and love
But the life you were living
Included none of the above
The hurt, the shame, the guilt and pain
The never ending cycle of going insane
Little Buddha
Brick by brick
You built a wall so high
A familiar place to look death in the eye
A whisper of hope, a hand to hold
Come into the light and out from the cold

— SIMON C., VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA

Coming Together in a Safe Space

I often wonder what life would be like if everyone in my community were a Twelve Stepper, or if I went to live in a Twelve Step community.

This idea comes dangerously close to being fantasy and interrupting my recovery, yet I know along the way I have wished my own experience of relief from the bondage of self for those I see, and those I don't, who suffer their addiction and affliction.

The closest I have come to this utopian dream was the SLAA Women's Retreat held at Douai Abbey, Berkshire, England at the end of February.

Eleven women gathered together for a weekend of connection to self, other and Higher Power.

We read and shared around selected SLAA Basic Text and Anorexia Steps.

We ate together, talked, held meetings, walked the frosted grounds, and I felt my spiritual life grow in a loving

community. The anonymous nature of the Twelve Steps meant that eleven strangers could come together in a safe space where they could share their deepest insights into the Steps and their own lives.

The democratic infrastructure meant that practical issues could be dealt with in a calm, peaceful manner where expression and emotion were respected.

At the first meeting the entire focus of the retreat was put into question by a fellow who felt that solely reading the Basic Text Steps that weekend would exclude her, as she qualified as an anorectic.

The discussion was open and a compromise was found in which we read both Basic Text and Anorexia Steps.

The initial shock to all of the discomfort of asking for needs to be met was later transformed into real gratitude. The Anorexia Steps are beautifully written, inclusive to addict and

anorexic SLAA fellows, and were an inspiration to us all. We stayed for just two nights in the peculiar architectural mish-mash of this serenely functioning Benedictine abbey.

The monks greeted us and fed us so well that that alone made it hard to leave the retreat behind.

My return to the real world, my home and daily life, was tough at first. I missed sharing a space and time with the experiences of people with whom I could so easily connect; people who I had no compulsion to judge as I felt I was not judged, only guided by my Higher Power. It gave me an insight into the more communal way I'd like to live in the future, God willing.

It helped me understand how much better life flows when I'm loving and generous to those around me, what honesty brings to the table, and how commitment to my

recovery brings so many unexpected and miraculous rewards. The feeling of despair at not having this at home becomes new wisdom, and somehow a deeper connection with my Higher Power, who has been showing me daily insights ever since.

I'm so grateful to the organizer and host of the retreat, the wonderful women who accompanied me, and to the monks who made our stay so comfortable.

One of my fellows, a newcomer to SLAA, questioned how anybody gets through life without the Twelve Steps, and I honestly wonder the same thing.

If I work my steps and keep being grateful, maybe I'll attract those people to the path to sanity. Meanwhile, I'll just stick to cleaning my side of the street.

—ANONYMOUS



THE INSPIRATION LINE

Your 24-Hour Sponsor

215-574-2120

CELEBRATES

500,000 CALLS!

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

S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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



theJournal