

An aerial photograph of a wide, light-colored river meandering through a vast, dense green forest. The river flows from the upper right towards the lower left. In the upper left, there is a sandy, cleared area with a large, weathered tree stump. The forest is composed of various types of trees, including tall evergreens and shorter deciduous trees. The sky is overcast with soft, grey clouds.

# theJournal

Issue # 197

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*~ABM ISSUE~  
Anorexia Withdrawal*

# 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,

After reading the stories in this issue, I was inspired to write an article (see page 25). I think this will serve as my letter from the editor for this issue.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

### 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>**

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is “What is anorexia withdrawal in your experience? What tools helped you deal with the pain of

withdrawal from anorexia without retreating back into anorexia?” 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 #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. And #199 — Nov/Dec — Fun in Dating — “Is it possible for an S.L.A.A. member to get past fear and have fun in dating without acting out?” Please share your experience strength and hope. Deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2022. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

“What is anorexia withdrawal in your experience? What tools helped you deal with the pain of withdrawal from anorexia without retreating back into anorexia?”

Anorexia withdrawal is like acting out withdrawal because they're both uncomfortable. The degree of discomfort is often correlated with the degree of healing. The fear underneath the withdrawal, however, is different. In acting out, it's about being alone and vulnerable. In anorexia withdrawal, it's about being together and being vulnerable. Journaling, talking with HP and walking give me strength to trust that even though I'm together and vulnerable, HP will take care of me if anything happens.

— ANONYMOUS



## Question of the day

For sobriety, I put my behaviors in the hands of my Higher Power.

— ANONYMOUS

My default MO after acting out in a relationship is to act in and retreat from dating for extended periods of time. I'm often caught off guard when I'm finally interested in someone. I get scared and all of a sudden I cut and run. I really need to take time to breath, stay present to my body in order to not retreat into myself completely. I reach out to my sponsor and let her encourage me to go on dates. I try to stay open to her suggestions and have gradually been able to recognize signs of my acting in or acting out.

— ANONYMOUS

For me, anorexia withdrawal involves learning how to take (and actually taking!) contrary action when it comes to the well-worn stories, beliefs and habits that keep me in isolation that feels comfortable in the short term and horrible in the long term. "Playing the tape forward" by remembering the long-term consequences of anorexia rather than focusing only on the short-term payoff helps me to gather the courage and willingness to take the contrary action necessary to remain in withdrawal. Challenging the stories and beliefs that support my anorexia and its associated self-defeating behaviors also helps. And, of course, I couldn't do any of it without the willingness to turn over the outcomes of my actions to my Higher Power. My anorexia is at its most powerful when I think I know better than my HP about how the story will unfold.

— ANONYMOUS

## Question of the day

Other S.L.A.A. members suggested I read and reread the chapter on Withdrawal in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text. This helped me to understand what I was feeling that I was not mad, just healing, and to give me reassurance the withdrawals would end at some time! Keeping in daily contact with my sponsor and other fellows supported me a lot, and helped me to be self-compassionate, instead of self-critical. I went to as many meetings as I could. Knowing my fellows had been through withdrawal too gave me strength and courage to keep going. I prayed a lot and allowed myself to eat some not so healthy foods. I also made sure I got as much sleep as I could. Limiting my thoughts to one day or one hour at a time helped a lot to stop me panicking or feeling despair. Without the support of S.L.A.A. members I would have thought I was going mad as the sensation of withdrawal was bewildering.

— ANONYMOUS

Surrender to my Higher Power and trust. Write my Steps and share them with my sponsor with humility and honesty.

— FRIDA (LYON, FRANCE)

## Question of the day

Anorexia withdrawal is one of those conundrums of S.L.A.A. recovery, because in many ways, to me, anorexia is in and of itself a form of withdrawal. Withdrawal from life, and the risky, messy ways relationships (of any kind) can unfold.

I am most able to stay engaged and in connections when I do the following: holding myself with compassion and checking in with fellows who see me and see my goodness even when it is hard for me to stay connected to the best parts of myself.

My anorexic thoughts and behavior include a lot of self-judgment (I daresay, self-hatred), and a sense that the only way I will feel safe is by attempting to exert control on people, places, things, and my own emotions. The antidote to all of these things, I have found, is empathy.

I recognize that I came by my anorexic tendencies honestly, that it takes the time it takes to heal. Taking small but daily actions to connect with others, entering into social situations, and having the presence of mind to know how I really feel are crucial.

Giving myself time to rest and not always pushing myself is also important. Anorexia feels extreme inside me, so finding these balanced actions helps me shift into a new sense of possibility.

— ANONYMOUS

# Anorexia Defined

## My Behavior



**A**norexia defined my behavior with both food and relationships.

Looking back, it was not clear whether I was missing the personal character or the support from primary caregivers to handle the natural disappointments and rejection that come with growing up.

Regardless, I remember feeling devastated if a certain person chose to play with another person or engage in a different activity rather than stay loyal to me. I felt it as a deep rejection of who I was, and it was overwhelming. I would feel totally abandoned and paralyzed.

The best way I found to cope with these feelings would be to stop engaging with people except when totally necessary. This included dressing in a frumpy way, never making eye-contact with people, especially if I was interested in them, and avoiding social engagements. If there were people who seemed interested in me, I would also avoid those areas of school or work to protect my sense of control over my feelings. Behind this avoidance was a deep longing for connection and for a healthy sexuality.

Being in S.L.A.A. has helped me to face these feelings and know that I am worth loving. I don't feel abandoned anymore by others because I have learned how to show up for my recovery and not abandon myself, and I get the help I need through this program.

When I started dating with the guidance of a sober dating plan and my sponsor, I began experiencing withdrawal from anorexia.

For me, this withdrawal felt like a sense of panic, often making me nauseous or tearful. I would feel fatigued being around other people, and

sometimes I did cry, because these new interactions helped me see the damage I had done by practicing my anorexia for so many years. I had to grieve and keep doing what my sponsor suggested, which included to take breaks from dating at times, and to engage back in dating, even when I did not want to.

I kept doing my Step work with the Anorexia Step pamphlet created by S.L.A.A. Withdrawal took several months to completely resolve, but day by day, it became easier to pick up the tools whenever I would face a feeling of panic or nausea.

In this way, I was able to avoid sabotaging healthy relationships.

Going to a meeting, making out-reach calls, or calling an S.L.A.A. member specifically before and after a difficult conversation ("book-ending") have been the most helpful for me.

I look forward to seeing where the program can take me in the healthy, romantic relationship that I am in that has lasted six months so far.

— LIZ, PA

# My Experience of Anorexia Withdrawal

**M**y experience of anorexia withdrawal looks like this: setting an intention to notice my body and any sensations that are present, becoming aware of any feelings that might be present, then asking myself if the feelings relate to something (i.e., noticing I might have a headache, I might be feeling fear and shame, and I may be worrying about how to solve a problem and embarrassed that I have the problem).

If I have a problem to solve, withdrawal from anorexia is visualizing stating the problem to a person who may be open to listening, practicing sentences of how to state the problem, feeling the shame that might come up when I visualize sharing, acknowledging

the shame, bringing soothing to my inner child, visualizing having the person relate to the problem and viewing me as an okay person even though I have this problem, visualizing them supporting me to find a solution, choosing a possible person I could mention the problem to, trying out mentioning it, noticing what happens in my body when I try mentioning it aloud, celebrating the win of trying to share, no matter what the outcome.

And then if the person is not receptive, starting again and trying it again with another person or journaling (connecting with self) or telling God.

— ANONYMOUS

# Taking Action to Get Out of Anorexia

I came into this program a severe emotional anorexic. As a highly sensitive person and empathetic being, I feel everything around me intensely, as well as my own struggles and emotions. Some might say I was slightly agoraphobic, and I was severely vitamin D deficient from lack of natural light, having not left my house for months.

As an introvert in a pandemic, I thought it was dreamy to have to be required to shelter-in-place. However, as it became intentional isolation, I knew it was becoming unhealthy. When my thoughts began to downward spiral, I knew I needed to take action.

What I did, initially, however, wasn't helpful. At first, I got on a support app that was meant to help and give community to those struggling with mental health. The more I used it, the more I believed that I was getting "real connection" within the

community, more specifically, with individual people using the app, primarily males, especially those who lived far away. I quickly began to believe that those connections were more meaningful than my real life, long-term committed relationship and connection with those in my circle of care.

This led right into romance addiction. I would also check out of reality by excessively reading romance books – some of which could be considered written pornography, leading to unhealthy masturbation.

This area of struggle, coupled with the superficial online connections that I thought were "deep," quickly escalated into unmanageability.

My withdrawal experience has been tough. First, I had to cut ties with all online intrigue and romantic connections. I also had to delete all apps in which finding that was a possibility. With books, I had to remove my e-reader and pick up paper copies again –

that way everyone could see what I was reading, thus making me more accountable. I also created parameters for what I needed to do before I picked up a book during the day: completing daily tasks around my house, doing a daily spiritual practice, and spending meaningful time with my family.

Only after those things were cared for, could I pick up a book, so I wasn't checking out of LIFE, and using the gift of reading in healthier ways. I once shared in a meeting that my "qualifier" was a genre of books, and someone laughed, but I found the withdrawal from reading whatever I wanted whenever I wanted was really hard.

I relapsed several times picking up a book, quickly discovering it would be considered a bottom-line behavior to continue and read to the end anyway. I also really missed my so-called liaisons that I thought were meaningful, though they really weren't.

I relapsed twice with those, before I stayed away from any form of online/app chatting ability completely. I feel like my brain had been wired, for so long, to believe that these two things were what made a

difference to my isolation and depression, that withdrawing from them was so hard! Where most people share about a person as a qualifier, I had books and strangers on apps I would never meet in person. Even so, I knew, for me, these were valid qualifiers. My next challenge was to withdraw from a life of hermit hibernation, so to speak, and back into socializing.

That was also very hard for me. What I discovered, when I examined why I was avoidant, was that I was so afraid of feeling hurt or burdened, that I didn't want to risk connection in real life and with authentic meaning.

Because I am a highly sensitive person, empathic burn-out was real. Yet, I couldn't get better in isolation. My first move into S.L.A.A. was the online meetings that are all chat based. Once I was more comfortable with that, and learning more about S.L.A.A., I tried a video meeting.

After a few weeks of getting acclimated to those, and realizing I was not alone and would not be judged by anyone, I decided to attend an in-person meeting. Little by little, I got out of my house, made effort to connect with



other people, however difficult, and dived into the Step work with a sponsor who I sought out (also a challenge). After a few weeks at the in-person meeting, I started doing service work, both in person and at online meetings.

I came out of my shell a bit, ventured into finding my voice with more confidence, and started seeing the promises coming into my life. In fact, through connections in the meetings, I was able to find a part-time job that is perfect for me, my schedule, my skills, and in an environment ideal for growing in connection, while still having space to not get overwhelmed by too much interaction.

The five resources in the preamble are so legit! Defining my sobriety (and top lines to focus on), engaging with my sponsor as well as meetings, working the Steps weekly, offering service, and having a daily spiritual practice are ALL hugely important tools to me. There have been a few times since I began in this program

where I've wanted to isolate again – especially after something emotional takes place, either within myself, or with others around me.

Through the program, I have learned to reach out to my sponsor, my accountability partners, and other fellows. Attending meetings, as much as I am able, sometimes more than one a day, in those times when I'm tempted to go into bottom line behaviors or feel triggered is also important for me.

I'm learning tools of the program and working on boundaries to protect my emotional tank from becoming depleted. And I know I will continue to grow in healthier ways as I progress in my recovery journey. I am so thankful for this program. Withdrawal is SO hard – yet taking small steps to the next right thing, has given me a healthier grasp on my life, relationships, and being able to LIVE!

— ARIA, GIG HARBOR, WA

# Anorexia Withdrawal Is Uncomfortable

**A**norexia withdrawal is uncomfortable — the fear of being seen and drawing too much attention to myself was hard at first. While in active states of acting-in, I would prefer to not be seen and hide away in isolation.

Stepping out of this abyss of darkness, I put myself out there to be seen and heard. At first, it was frightening and I felt defensive when people would say anything regarding my physical appearance or be sarcastic - I am more sensitive than others due to growing up in dysfunction and being a survivor of child and domestic abuse for over two and a half decades- but slowly, with the help of S.L.A.A. and an anorexic Step group, I am learning to protect my inner child while spreading loving kindness to others along my journey. I am trusting in best intentions and setting healthy boundaries with humans I cross paths with. Withdrawal was uncomfortable in the

beginning of recovery, but I realized that if I was honest with myself and those around me, it would be easier than walking this road alone. Telling my family and friends of what I was experiencing and the program I was working provided outside support that helped tremendously.

I do daily self-care actions and top lines to embrace the joy that is accessible to all of us when we're willing to let go and let HP bring us the love and support that we desire and deserve.

I talk openly about my struggles rather than suppressing them and dealing with them all on my own (suppressing them would make me fall deeper into depression, anxiety, and isolation, continuing the vicious cycle).

Withdrawal was precious and beautiful, because it allowed me to finally feel my pain and hurt that I had avoided, numbed, and escaped for decades. I was able to begin

the journey of learning who I was, what I desired in life, and able to finally connect to others on a deeper level - not just a surface level without platonic intimacy. Now, I connect with others so much deeper than I ever thought possible, show up authentically with an open heart and mind, and experience life more fully.

I practice tremendous gratitude to be able to live this newfound life and be consciously awake to enjoy all the goodness this universe has to offer, as well as face hardships sober (physically

and emotionally), with the support of others, reminding myself that I am not alone. Learning to listen and respect my inner child's wants and desires has allowed me to walk a path in life I never thought imaginable. I am thankful to my anorexic support group, working the steps, and the worldwide fellowship that allows me to give back, not only to others, but to myself. Gratitude is stacked on gratitude for this new life that continues to unfold, one day and moment at a time. It works if you work it, so work it - because YOU are worth it.

— HAL, BROOKLYN

# Discovering Another Side of Our Addiction



*Editor's note: as I'm transcribing this share from a recording, I notice the speaker is walking and I hear birds*

*chirping in the background. She's engaging in top line behaviors by recording her share for the Journal and walking in nature on a beautiful day.*

Hi. I'm Robin, sex love, fantasy, anorexic and validation addict recovering in this program. My experience with anorexia came about six months ago, after having been in S.L.A.A. for six and a half years. It was a slow awakening to the process of this side of the addiction after realizing that I was acting in rather than acting out in a way that could be potentially as harmful to me as the ways that I would act out with a qualifier. I had gone to a few anorexia meetings.

In fact, one of my recovery partners identified as an anorexic.

But I still was looking upon my behavior of not wanting to get into a relationship as healthy rather than as a characteristic of my anorexia. There were also dual addictions going on that I felt powerless over, and my food addiction, compulsive eating, goes hand in hand with anorexia, because I don't trust human relationships.

Therefore, to keep me safe, I think I have some power and

a payoff with food, and it's a form of nurturing myself.

And so, my twisted thinking around that is that it's more helpful than harmful.

So, when the side effects started outweighing the benefits of both those addictions - both my food and my anorexia - is when I began to want to surrender both of these addictions and seek recovery, big time recovery from them. The desire to seek recovery also came from peer pressure as well and being with a circle of women who were actively dating, and I had this pull to isolate. And yet, I had FOMO, which is fear of missing out. These feelings were pulling me in two different directions, so I knew that I needed to seek help.

Otherwise, this healthy behavior, this healthy interest was getting squelched by my food addiction. Similar to an alcoholic, which I am as well, who has the five o'clock happy hour, I would have my happy hour with food. My happy hour would begin sometimes as early as three o'clock. And then I would just kind of batten down the hatches, pull the shades, turn off the phone, and get my comfort foods and watch TV. And this was a

learned behavior from childhood. Although at the time I didn't have addictive food in the home. My mom only had healthy foods around.

But I definitely watched a tremendous amount of TV. That was my companion. That was my parent. That was my connection that began my fantasy of possibly a life that I could have once I got older.

I think the reason it was very hard for me to identify with anorexia was because I thought of myself as very outgoing, very friendly, and I loved people. But over the years, more and more mistrust developed, and finally, when the shell cracked or the denial cracked, of the kind of toxic relationships that I'd always been in, I knew that my picker was broken. Therefore, how could that ever be healed?

I had been in AA for 17 years prior to finding out about S.L.A.A. And AA was a spiritual program, so why didn't Higher Power help me in this area? So, to protect myself, I just took myself out of the game. And any time that I had ever excelled in life was when I was not in a relationship. I very much had looked at anorexia as a positive for a very long time. When I hit my bottom in anorexia, which

for me was about six months ago, I had a fellowship of women, and in the pandemic we decided to get together on Sunday afternoons to have a meeting and social distance and connect with one another. And the aftermath of that get together on Monday morning was just full of uncontrollable emotions and overwhelming negative thoughts.

My thoughts were, "What were you thinking? Why did you say this or that?" My brain would relentlessly beat me up, and I could not shake the negative thinking that would occur.

And so, I started religiously going to a Monday morning anorexia meeting, and they started calling out these certain characteristics.

They asked, "Are you overwhelmed when being around others? Do you judge others and assume they judge you?" And it was like, "How do they know this?" I was devastated, as devastated, if not more, as I was when I found out about my sex and love addiction. But this was not sexy at all. This was, "You are secretly a big nerd and have no social skills and you just pretend like you do." That's what I felt like I was being called out on. And then

on top of that, friends began to become qualifiers for me. I knew that I needed recovery in this area, and simultaneously, I was working my Steps, which had been about three and a half years doing them over again very, very slowly, working on six, seven and currently eight.

So, my defects were being pointed out to me on a consistent basis, and I had written them down on note cards, and I was praying over those character defects to have my Higher Power remove them.

It was pointed out as well that there are other ways that my disease shows up after I go through withdrawal - there's longing, there's drama, and there's judgment.

So how do I keep these alive without a relationship? Well, with watching romantic movies and crying and wailing and getting all caught up in longing and drama. I had to stop watching those movies. I had to stop listening to certain songs. I had to stop doing behavior that kept this active addiction alive.

And I thought it was always just grief. But my grief was exacerbated by my behavior. I was divorced and my sponsor worked with me, but it was

about five years of nothing changing. It was as if I had just split from my husband two weeks ago. And she said, "I think that you need to add on your bottom lines talking about your ex-husband," and I might have taken a whole five minutes.

I don't know if that's an exaggeration, but I was floored, and I was speechless because I knew this was the missing link and this could change my life forever.

And just as an example, I knew that someone could have a resentment for a lifetime or a longing for an ex-partner, because that's what my mom had - a longing for my father. She had never gotten over him.

I just followed in that pattern with my ex-husband, so I knew that my way of doing it was not working.

I was open to this suggestion. So, we started saying that if I caught myself after ten minutes talking about this person, I needed to stop talking about him. Otherwise, I'd be breaking the bottom line. That was a huge milestone. So, what I was currently dealing with was something very similar and I didn't know that. Addiction for me is the chemicals produced in my brain. I was suffering

from judgment about myself and others and that the action of not continuing the behavior would stop producing that addiction, because there is a payoff to what I was doing, even though it was a form of suffering.

There is somehow that chemical addiction to that. And, by the way, this was just pointed out to me a few weeks ago, but I have developed a new skill through another suggestion from my sponsor of not caring about what people think, and actively turning my attention over to caring about what my Higher Power thinks and knowing that my Higher Power will be there when nobody else is.

With Higher Power, I feel this comfort that I never experienced before, and also taking the addiction away, and going through withdrawal of sugar, and flour for me I am kind of free falling into the

arms of my Higher Power.

I only have fifty-six days off sugar, and I don't know if this is going to last forever.

But it is happening and I'm having a new experience today. Nobody can ever take away the experience that I've had in the past fifty five days, because it's strengthened my relationship with my Higher Power, strengthened my recovery from anorexia, and helped put me on a path that I'm having a new experience and I'm not in this constant pain of trying to actively do top line behaviors by being with others yet still experiencing excruciating pain while doing that. I am actively having healthier thoughts about it and am in the mental effort of changing my thinking.

I thank you for listening.

—ROBIN, CA



## Stages of Anorexia Withdrawal

The four stages of anorexia withdrawal:

1. What my anorexic addict mind tells me.
2. How I stay out of anorexia (counteracting the addict thoughts).
3. What anorexia withdrawal feels like.
4. How recovery feels once through the pain of withdrawal.

Characteristic of Anorexia:

A. Do you go for long periods without being involved in a sexual or romantic relationship?

Before sobriety in S.L.A.A., I never went a week without being involved in a sexual or romantic relationship. After four years in program, I had a spiritual experience sufficient to keep me sober. I told my sponsor I might want to live alone like the Basic Text talks about. My sponsor said she was okay if I didn't date for two years. My Higher Power had other plans.

1. The anorexic thoughts were: If I get involved with anyone else or try to date, I'll probably act out like I did in the past (not trusting God or myself that I have enough of a spiritual connection to keep me sober). Relationships are

too difficult. It's easier to stay single. (I was indulging in the character defects of laziness and immaturity.) My picker's broken so I would choose a serial killer or abuser like I had in the past. (Not trusting God, not seeking God's will.) When a man who I had been friends with for two and a half years asked me on a date I thought it was too soon in my sobriety in S.L.A.A.

2. I stayed out of anorexia by praying for God's will, asking for obvious signs, and talking to my sponsor. She said that I had been friends with him for a long time and although I had been sober only a matter of months, she knew I was sober for good because I was a changed person. I was sober in AA many years and NICA for many years. I had been in S.L.A.A. and doing all the work (Steps, service commitments, meetings, sponsoring, and being sponsored). She thought I would be okay if I went out with him and gave me a dating plan. I was skeptical. I told her I would think about it. I was sitting in a Nicotine Anonymous meeting listening to the friend who asked me out share (he had the long share in

the speaker meeting). I heard a small voice in my head that said, "Why not just go for coffee with him?" I thought it was my God voice instead of the addict voice. So, I doubled up my meetings, went on the dating plan with my sponsor, bookended every date and today I've been married to him for 15 years.

3. What anorexia withdrawal felt like: Before the first date (coffee during the day for 1 hour, no physical contact), I completely hallucinated. I was walking back to my apartment after a meeting and about to get ready for the date. I saw a group of people who lived in my apartment building standing in a circle and listening to someone telling the story of how someone hopped over the security gate and was pounding on a neighbor's door and yelling at two o'clock in the morning. I was instantly convinced it was my qualifier stalking me. I was in a panic. I felt pain in my chest and couldn't breathe. I felt dizzy. I thought I needed to call the police. I immediately called my sponsor. She calmed me down and said it probably wasn't him.

I prayed to be protected. I told the thoughts in my head to

go away and put makeup on and changed clothes, preparing for the date even though I felt like I was walking through sludge. I kept telling myself, "I'm just doing this right now." It kept screaming at me that the world is not a safe place. I'm crazy for acting like nothing is going on right now. I shouldn't be getting ready for a date when the world is falling apart. By the time I was ready to walk out of my apartment, I was a nervous wreck.

I thought I shouldn't go on the date because my mental state was too fragile. I walked out the door anyway. There was a new group of people in the courtyard saying the incident at two a.m. was handled by the police. It was my next-door neighbor's ex-boyfriend, and he was arrested. Instantly the sun was shining, and the world was safe again! I went on the date and had a nice time talking to him. It was an hour full of warm conversation and smiles.

4. How recovery feels once through the pain of withdrawal: I felt like the world was a safe place. I knew that I could be supported by my Higher Power, fellows, and sponsor. I felt cared for and loved unconditionally. I felt the

self-esteem of getting through anorexia withdrawal and taking care of myself. I knew I didn't have to give in to crazy thoughts, I could trust my Higher Power.

Characteristics of Anorexia:

B. Do you feel more comfortable or more in control when you decline sex or relationship or social invitations?

C. Does being in the presence of others exhaust you, even if you like them?

D. Do you feel uncomfortable when offered nurturing, affection, or love?

E. Do you regularly disown your physical and emotional need for others?

F. Do you have an overwhelming fear of being socially, sexually, or emotionally exploited or used?

G. Is it so difficult for you to set healthy boundaries with others that you withdraw entirely?

In the first few years of sobriety in AA, I spent a lot of time in my apartment watching TV, doing jigsaw puzzles, and smoking cigarettes until late into the night (on weekends, I would stay up until 3 a.m. and smoke 3 or 4 packs a day). I was afraid to meet new friends in

AA because of past experiences with friends using me or cheating with my boyfriend. I never trusted women. People in AA knew that fellowship (going to dinner after a meeting or having parties with fellows) helps addicts recover. I tried to avoid people. S.L.A.A. broke me of that habit.

1. The anorexic thoughts were: Turning down social invitations from program fellows is good because they're all crazy and can take advantage of your vulnerability. They will all hurt you. I get headaches when I go to dinner with fellows, better to avoid that. When people offer me nurturing, affection, or love they are not sincere. They're just working an angle and trying to take advantage of me. I need to put myself down and point out my flaws before they do, it will hurt less that way. I don't need physical or emotional attention, I'm an independent woman. It's better to be strong than to need flawed human beings. If I set healthy boundaries people will leave me anyway.

2. I stayed out of anorexia by following my sponsor's direction to take a greater service position. I went to fellowship after every meeting

even though I didn't want to. I listened to my fellows when they told me I wasn't allowed to beat up on myself anymore. I prayed that I could tell the difference between someone who was exploiting me and someone who sincerely wanted to be my friend. I started setting healthy boundaries instead of retreating into fantasyland and isolation. My fellows in S.L.A.A. led by example with healthy boundary setting and I wrote fear inventories about my fear of abandonment. And once I started practicing setting and keeping healthy boundaries, it got easier to do and it got easier to tell if someone was exploitive or not.

3. What anorexia withdrawal felt like: I was very uncomfortable taking compliments from fellows and saying to myself what my sponsor said, "The only appropriate response to a compliment is, "Thank you." I don't have to sleep with them, I don't have to run from them. I don't even have to figure out how they are trying to scam me. I can just believe them and say, "Thank you." My sponsor always said, "Take them at their word unless they prove otherwise." But I still cringed when given a compliment. I

squeezed my body into a ball and leaned away from the person. I practiced and over time the reaction lessened and went away.

4. How recovery feels once through the pain of withdrawal: Today I can confidently say, "Thank you" and take it in. I hold my shoulders back and my chin up. I believe what they say because I actually like myself today.

Characteristic of Anorexia:

H. Do you have a hard time playing and having fun with others?

I. Does everything have to be perfect before you get involved?

J. Do you think that no healthy, attractive person or group of people would want someone like you?

K. Do you think you are not "enough" - smart enough, attractive enough, young enough, successful enough, healthy enough, \_\_\_enough to deserve a relationship?

L. Do you stay in relationships because you feel you don't deserve anything better or can't have anything different?

M. Do you find it overwhelmingly difficult to show emotion or to tell the truth to someone you wish to

be involved with?

N. Do you drive others away by coldness? aggression? timidity?

O. Do you suspect that your capacity to move toward intimacy with another is damaged or dead?

P. Do you feel sex is only for healthy people and will therefore never be for you?

Q. Are you tied to your family of origin to the exclusion of others?

R. Do you consider it not worth the trouble to engage with others because past experiences have been threatening or painful—especially if others want to get close to you?

I stayed in an abusive relationship for nine years from the age of 12 to 21. I didn't think I deserved anything better and even if I did, he would kill me if I left. I couldn't tell the truth in that relationship because he would beat me if I did. I spent a lot of years after that relationship thinking everyone would treat me that way. I had PTSD and thought I would never be healthy enough to stay with a healthy man. I spent all my time with my parents going out to dinner, the movies and the theatre because they were duty bound to love me and no one

else would. When my sponsor in S.L.A.A. directed me to go out with fellows instead of my parents, I had a difficult time letting go. So, she gave me a 30 day no contact with my parents. It was very healing for me.

I was able to get into a relationship in sobriety and I thought it had to be perfect. I worried about every little bump in the road, every time he showed human flaws. My sponsor said, "You're with a good guy who Higher Power chose for you. If you came to me every week and told me he did something bad again, I would tell you to run. But it's not like that. He has proven that you can trust him. Let's give him the benefit of the doubt and give the results to Higher Power. Seek God's will."

I tried to drive him away with aggression in the beginning of the relationship. I was so convinced that he would eventually leave me that I started having arguments with him when he wanted to get off the phone at night. I think I thought any attention was good attention. He called me on it and said, "You're trying to get in a fight so I won't get off the phone again." He showed me my character

defect and set a boundary with me. I looked into my behavior and prayed for the fear of abandonment to be removed. I listened and changed my faulty idea that any attention is good attention.

1. What my anorexic addict mind tells me: Relationships are supposed to be serious, playing and fun can lead to acting out. If everything's not perfect, I will get hurt in a big way like I did in the past. No healthy attractive person would truly like me, they will just use me. Everyone will hurt me. Unless I starve myself, I won't be attractive enough to get or keep a relationship. I'll never be healthy enough to keep a relationship for any length of time. I have to keep my partner engaged even if it creates negative attention.

2. How I stay out of anorexia (counteracting the addict thoughts): I examine my character defects, pray for them to be removed, and remember that my character defects are not me. They are something I can recognize with help from others and remove with help from my Higher Power. I remember the

humorous words of my sponsor, "When you feel lesser than or scared that people won't like you, look at who you're trying to impress, they're addicts just like you." It reminded me that I'm not alone. Progress not perfection. Fellows in S.L.A.A. loved me unconditionally until I could love myself.

3. What anorexia withdrawal feels like: I get exhausted looking at myself and sometimes it's boring to be vigilant about self-examination. My ego takes a hit and I must sit with uncomfortable feelings. Fear paralyzes me when my perfectionism isn't realized. Paranoid thoughts can make me short of breath until they pass. They usually make my stomach upset.

4. How recovery feels once through the pain of withdrawal: When I pray and meditate and let go of worry, I feel safe and protected. I feel that Higher Power will always be with me even if others can't be here. I thank God and S.L.A.A. that that's enough for me today.

-- LISA C.

# Share space

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## Making a Commitment to Honesty

*Editor's note: this story contains language that may be triggering to some.*

**I**n a week I will mark the three-month anniversary of joining S.L.A.A. I have attended 83 meetings in 83 days. I would love to say I have 83 days sober, but that would be an addict lie. I choose not to lie anymore. I have made a commitment to honesty and trying my best to work on becoming the person my addictive personality tries to keep suppressed.

The S.L.A.A. program has shown me so many qualities

about myself that I am both proud of and at the same time deeply ashamed. This has actually been a blessing in ways I would have never imagined. I have been able to connect and start a relationship with my new Higher Power.

Through S.L.A.A., I was able to define my God in a way that I believe in, not what has been forced upon me by my patriarchal upbringing. My God is a God of love and acceptance, not damnation and eternal punishment at all turns in life. As I was listening to

Apple music days ago, a song by the band Mercy Me randomly came on the radio. The name of the song was "New Lease of Life." As I listened to the lyrics, I truly believe it is meant for me at this time in my life. I DO have a new lease on life.

A new life that includes honesty, love, faith, and acceptance. These traits I have struggled with in the past. S.L.A.A. has woken up the authentic me and opened my heart to the reality I desperately want to run from on a continual basis.

I have legitimate reasons for the fight or flight response that is my normal. My early life until now consisted of parental abuse, rape by a track coach, death of a child, brother and father and ongoing validation and abandonment issues that are a result of my unfortunate experiences.

I will not use these incidents as an excuse for my addictive behavior, but I do acknowledge they are a factor included in the understanding of this addiction. Staying on the Mercy Me, faith-based theme, I will complete my 1st Step by penning a letter to the Younger Me...

Dear Younger Me, As a young girl, you had no voice in choosing the family you were born into. You did not get a choice of a family that unconditionally loved you for who you were. You did not have the gift of knowing that when there was a disagreement or argument, that the people you loved and relied on would be alive when the fight was over.

You didn't get the blessing of being taught that telling the truth was honorable in life. You were taught to lie about your mom's broken arms and black eyes. You were forced to lie to school administration about bruising on you and your siblings.

You couldn't experience the excitement of a pool party due to the fact that you developed a woman's body at a very young age and were told you looked like a slut and if you ever were raped, you were to blame. It happened and you didn't have anyone to tell.

None of this is your fault beautiful girl. No matter what they said. Coming to terms with a self-diagnosis of sex and love addiction has been a long time coming. You have put countless hours and incredible



determination into developing this disease. Years and years of lies and manipulation are the result of your perfect score on the S.L.A.A. questionnaire. You have always been an overachiever. Your personality has forever included a 100% or nothing attitude. Fear was never a factor.

Your drive has been beneficial in achieving things some people just imagine. From various graduate degrees, high level corporate positions, athletic achievements, beauty pageants and many other journeys, all while raising three beautiful children.

This hard work should be rewarded. Conversely, the dark side to these accomplishments is the hidden relationships that have totally taken over your life at times. The time when your son and your husband passed you while making your way to your qualifier, and you flatly denied it.

The time that your daughter was able to see a suggestive text you were sending to another qualifier and told your husband. The time when you told your daughter about your qualifier when you decided telling her would make things better. The time you went away

with your qualifier when your son was in trouble at school, and you had someone else deal with it. The time when you had another breakdown after a qualifier break up and were suicidal and your six-year-old daughter witnessed your sad distress and didn't understand.

These things are just a few of the incidents that have resulted in shame, pain, embarrassment, and depression. You could not stop this behavior regardless of the personal effort you constantly put into it. The adrenaline rush was way too much.

The need to be rescued was always calling from the back of your mind. The need to control high powered men was too hard to pass up when the opportunity presented itself. And there were many opportunities. You did resist the majority, but you had a few you could not hold back with. The chase always started with a look.

You know your eyes can capture a man. You then charmed them with your ability to make these unfortunate victims feel like they are the only person on the planet that matters. After that you used your greatest asset,

physical female attention. At that point, you have them. You are in the control you desire. The games begin. You push them as far as you can. You want them to commit to unrealistic promises. You see how far you can go.

When they no longer can meet your expectations, you treat them horribly. You make them feel like failures, over and over. At this point you end it. You are devastated and lonely and the cycle continues.

This is your truth. You need to take responsibility for your actions. Your past cannot be an excuse to act out. You need to look around you and notice the wonderful life you have built in conjunction with your troubled past.

You need to give your life to your Higher Power that you now understand and continue to build this relationship. This will be a lifetime journey for

you. You will need to take one day at a time and be proud of the days that are successful. You may fall, and that is ok. You are human. When this happens, pick yourself right up and lean on the community that has gotten you this far. Reach out for help.

You cannot do this alone no matter what. This new family wants to help you. They need you as much as you need them. This is how a caring and loving community works. Don't be ashamed anymore. Remember when you made that first call to S.L.A.A. You were told you would never walk alone with this addiction again. You will not if you keep reaching out. You've got this beautiful woman. Be proud. Lean on God. And live your life to the fullest.

Love,  
Me



## Blossoming

**H**ere is a picture of me gently holding my first newly opened rose bud from the Gertrude Jekyll rose bush I paid for in October and planted in December! It smells dizzyingly wonderful already. I'm so excited for all of the flowers to open. I would \*never\* have imagined that these beautiful babies would be part of my life but thanks to S.L.A.A. they are.

It all began when I started taking walks in nature for my

top lines and I'd smell all the roses. When I stumbled across this particular rose it smelled so wonderful, just like Turkish delight, that I wrote the name down and bought myself a tiny baby one! When I think about it, it echoes my recovery journey. I just started sober dating as these started blooming. Poetic licence and all that but I just love it and it's made me so happy. Thanks for letting me share!

— MIRA, UK

## French

# 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.

— ANONYME

## English

# Learn to Do Things Differently?

Today I measure the result of the work of the program. Three years ago, I went out to bars to bring someone home; my fantasy was a romantic story of a one-night stand. I forced myself to please others to desperately beg for affection. The program taught me to be alone, to focus on myself, to listen to my needs. I was thus able to change jobs, do improv, pass a competition and every day I progress. Sometimes I still resist the

suggestions of the program, I have difficult times, but thanks to the tools, to the enormous network of support, I never feel alone. Hope returns and little by little my life is improving. I'm amazed to see that it works and that the promises arrive even if it doesn't go as fast as I would like. I am learning to do things differently and to accept happiness in my life. Thank you.

— ANONYMOUS



## **THE INSPIRATION LINE**

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Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup, originators of the Inspiration Line, want to thank Fellowship Wide Services and *the Journal* for supporting the Inspiration Line. GDVI wants to acknowledge the 15 volunteers from all over the US & Canada that leave inspirational messages on the Line and credit them for making this huge milestone possible: Alicia, California, Alyce, Montreal, Canada, Alyson, Pennsylvania, Bob, Pennsylvania, Brenda, Maryland/Florida, 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.



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