

theJournal

Issue # 198

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Defects Higher Power
Lets Me Keep

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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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.

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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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Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is “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?” 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 #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. And #200 — Jan/Feb — “Acting as if.” — What does “acting as if” mean to you? How have you used it and how does doing this help your recovery program? Deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2022. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“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?”

I have a little story that I feel is relevant! When I was 10 years old, I was standing next to my brother at the side of a car I was about to leave in. Because we were fighting, and because I was then sulking, I moved away from him to sit in the back left hand side. My father, grandmother and I drove off, and several minutes later we were hit by a lorry which was going so fast that the entirety of the back left of the car was destroyed. I would certainly have been dead, had I not faught, and sulked. God uses our character defects in ways we cannot imagine. So, I think we can go easy on ourselves as we learn and grow together in recovery and surrender.

— ELISE, FRANCE

Question of the day

Jealousy is a character defect that I am revisiting right now. I've prayed for it to go away, but it's come back in all my relationships (including friendships and work relationships). Sometimes it's easy to get over it, sometimes it's more complicated. I used to let people I was dating know that I could be jealous, and at first, it helped to be honest. Then, it became a way to control their behavior and not face my feelings of low self-esteem and mistrust. It also helped me realize that I needed to be cautious of who I trusted. Right now, I'm taking it one situation at a time. This character defect may never go away, but I get a chance to deal with them better every time they get triggered.

— KELLY-JOY J., MONTREAL

I've found that as I work on the many layers of my recovery work, that several defects have lingered, which has helped me get closer to some of the root issues I've needed healing from since I was a child. It has also reminded me that it's my Higher Power's timing that matters, not mine. To keep working my program while relinquishing control over the timing of change helps me remember that my life is unmanageable, but that my Higher Power can be trusted. And, it's interesting to me to observe that by practicing such patience, defects of self-criticism and impatience (with self and others), perfectionism and other related coping mechanisms are being slowly healed. I feel so blessed to have the 12 Steps in my life, and to have fellow travelers to help walk this journey with me.

— ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

I get down on my knees to pray and trust my Higher Power to take away my compulsive and obsessive behaviors and I agree to surrender to the program. I repeat this phrase over and over: patience for things that take time.

— ANONYMOUS

Lately I am noticing that my inner child comes out to deflect responsibility or to be defensive and not own up to things in my relationship. I think for a long time my mother shamed me or stated how bad of a daughter I was for not spending time with her and I didn't know that a lot of what she was saying was manipulative and emotionally abusive--somewhat emotionally incestuous. It took a long while to NOT feel responsible/say sorry all the time to her for things I DID NOT do that now, when I have to say sorry for my actions in my relationship, it takes me a while to not shut down before I can take accountability. My strength and hope now is that I can stand back and say--oops, my bad, I'm sorry I did that and that it had that impact. My intent was this...etc. It takes a lot of courage to not avoid/feel shame in relationship. Sometimes I have to really pause and wonder if I am wrong or not when what I need to do is just apologize for my impact rather than think about if I'm right/wrong.

— ANONYMOUS

HP Uses My Character Defects



As a child, my mom had me baptized and take communion, but I was never forced to adhere to organized religion. Rather, these were actions she took in a Latinx household because, “What would people think?”

I didn't mind since this would mean I could hang out

with my cousins. It was in the S.L.A.A. rooms that I made a connection with spirituality and a Higher Power. My grandparents were back in Mexico, so it was nice to repent myself through my Higher Power.

I think of this spiritual force greater than myself as a

grandparent that's all genders, all races, all ages, all knowing, all loving all at once. Seeing my HP that way made it easy to believe that my HP would love me, help me, and have my best interest.

In my recovery I learned two things: 1) It is a Higher Power of our understanding not our approval. 2) God is not my "errand boy." I ask him for help, I don't demand. As I worked Step seven, the character defects that kept coming up were "male envy" and "defensive." In my acting out history, I have always had a fear of being dominated by men. My addiction convinced me that they had it better than women; poor me. If a man cat-called me, I retaliated with snarky insults.

Pre-sobriety (off bottom lines) I made some men cry and I got high off it. I asked my Higher Power to take those defects away all through Step nine and then some. I made amends in regard to those defects to men, qualifiers, family members and even myself. But I could still feel my skin boil when a man at work or meeting said something privileged, rude or condescending. I would not react, but my God box was

getting full with notes that read, "God, take male envy away. I had the urge to be mean." In my experience, making in-person amends usually lifts character defects – but this time it was taking longer. Some months after I turned in my Step 12, I stepped out of my house and into my car to get takeout.

On the way back, as I aligned my car to the curve, a man with a ski mask, gloves and rope tried to force his way into my vehicle with me still in it. I immediately started yelling insults at him. My blood was boiling with anger as I thought, "If I was a man, I would not have to be attacked by perverts."

When I saw him trying to break the hard top, I jerked the car and opened the door to slam him with it. I kept yelling and honking to embarrass him. He picked himself up and ran back to his car. I got my phone out and took a photo of his license plates. I then got my take-out, walked to my apartment building, and locked the door behind me. Minutes later I realized the gravity of the event. As I processed the attack, I puked and could feel tears running down my face. I immediately filed a police

report, and the criminal was eventually arrested. Was it fight or flight? Would a normal person do that? I don't know. I don't approve of the situation. I do know I am an addict. Me, defaulting to character defects makes me an addict.

My reaction to my problems makes me an addict. I do understand my Higher Power never left my side. I had some PTSD afterwards and I asked my HP to hold my hand and hug me like a grandpa would a child. I asked for courage. I thanked him for making me as imperfect as I am.

My HP also showed me that if those character defects scared off a violent aggressor, then maybe I do not need to

hold on to those to protect me from everyday people. In fact, most of time I was aggressive to nice people. I was envious of confident people.

My HP has replaced "defensiveness" with an "open mind" and "male envy" with "female empowerment." I am open to the idea that Higher Power only gives me lessons I am ready for. Because of the 12 Steps, I like myself now and I enjoy my femininity. I don't compare and despair about my struggles to those of the male gender anymore. To do so is to give away my peace. Today I don't feel abandoned anywhere I go because I know my Higher Power is there.

—JULIE M, HUNTINGTON PARK

Feeling More Balanced

Editor's Note: This is a transcribed share with light editing.

The first character defect that came to my mind is the defect of prioritizing other's needs over my own.

And this was a character defect that I not only got to keep, but I believe that Higher Power used to help others in the program. So, I guess, doing an exorbitant amount of service for several years was a combination of needing to do that as part of my recovery, but also because it was easier for me to show up for other people than myself. And the answers on how to show up for other people were spelled out.

The Steps are in order, for instance. So, if I sponsored someone, I could do what my sponsor did with me.

When it came to showing up for myself, that seemed so much more complicated, and I didn't see myself as worthy of the same attention.

I started to grow to love myself more. I just wasn't there yet.

Saying yes when I could say

no, people pleasing, prioritizing other people, codependency, whatever you want to call it-- these patterns ended up being something that not only helped me, but I also believe helped others, and that's based on what they've said to me about my service.

Now, I feel like I'm more balanced. I'm spending more time getting to know myself, spending time doing service, but not as a lifestyle- as part of my recovery, not as the only tool in my toolbox, the only thing I do. I'm still learning to care for myself on many levels.

I'm getting to like my own company. I'm finding that I can say no when it's best for me to do so.

I don't feel the need to do service to belong. I don't feel that I need to do service to make other people happy, or to rescue them.

That's another character defect that probably fit in. Service was feeling like, since no one else is saying yes to that service commitment, I have to do it, or something will go wrong.

That person won't get sober, or the meeting won't last. That's not true.

So that's the first character defect I can think of that Higher Power let me keep for a while. And the next one was the avoidance characteristic.

I think this characteristic goes along with the idea of showing up for other people, and not showing up for myself.

But there was also for me a lot of social and emotional anorexia.

I found that I had a lot of my social life wrapped up in my service work.

It was very enjoyable and very rewarding to me for many reasons. But I didn't have friends, and so when my husband died, I found myself having already scaled back my service to what I feel is a healthier limit. I found my self-love in many ways. And I found myself getting to know my neighbors, something I had not done since I was a child. I found myself joining groups which I did not like doing beforehand.

I found myself making multiple female friends. And if anyone told me 20 years ago that I would not only want to be in women's meetings, but also that I would have multiple women friends I would have

thought they were crazy. I never felt safe around women.

Now my life is emotionally vulnerable, socially connected, and physically active.

But for many years, especially when I was in my relationship, I found that most of my social needs were being met by that relationship, by that person.

My social connectedness was generally that person. I can't say my whole life was that person.

I don't think that it was that codependent. But my social life was mostly that person, and also my two cats.

I did enjoy staying home with my husband and my cats and just enjoying each other's company.

There were patterns of historical fear keeping me in social and emotional anorexia - fear of getting hurt, fear of being exposed or being embarrassed, and fear of being abandoned. I didn't want to be in a committed relationship because I was afraid to be abandoned.

I found that though it was excruciatingly painful, I could get through what felt like abandonment when my husband died. And I found that I could work through those feelings with my Higher Power.

God let me be socially anorexic for a long time.

But eventually, by working the program I ended up being part of women's groups, regularly sponsoring women, staying connected with my own female sponsor. I found myself having socially appropriate relationships with men with boundaries.

But once my husband died, that's when I told God that I refuse to go through it by myself, that my habit of doing things on my own by myself had to be smashed. That idea that I could get through things on my own with just one social partner had to be smashed. Every once in a while, I have a habit of telling my Higher Power how it's going to be because I still have the character defect of self-will - but I guess that's another story.

But once I told my Higher Power that I refused to go through grieving alone, I found a floodgate of support from people from every part of my life.

High school friends from 30 years ago that I hadn't really talked to were checking up on me.

Neighbors, friends, fellows --just a floodgate came forward. Even though I did not

ask my Higher Power to help me, and rather demanded it, I don't think my Higher Power cared. I think my Higher Power kind of knows who it's dealing with, so I don't think my Higher Power held it against me that I was rather demanding about my need for support. Honestly, if I was my Higher Power, I would have felt relieved because God knows it had been many years of self-sufficiency.

Old ideas have to be smashed for me to be in recovery. And the old idea that I can be isolated, on the periphery of recovery, on the periphery of social groups- that idea had to be smashed. The idea that I have to put other people before me had to be smashed.

I found that I didn't even know how to cook dinner for myself because before my husband died, I'd always cooked dinner for us. I was finding that there were a lot of things that I deferred to other people, even if it was not codependent to do so- like cooking dinner. I still found that there were many times where I didn't know what to do with myself, because that had been so integrated in a relationship, yet socially anorexic. I don't suggest it. I've

definitely grown, and I am becoming self-supporting, self-caring.

I've grown to care for myself. I've grown to want to put my needs before other people.

Not in that selfish way that I did in my addiction when I would say, "What I want from this relationship by God I'm going to get it." Not that kind of selfish trying to get my "needs" met. Needs are in quotation marks here because addict needs are different from authentic needs.

I care about my actual authentic needs- the needs that I have, that if met, I get to be in recovery. I get to still have joy in my life even though I'm still going through the grieving process.

When those needs are met, life is really satisfying.

So, I am asking myself when I go to the grocery store, "What do I want to eat? What would be a healthy choice for me? What do I look forward to making for myself?"

Sometimes finding out what my needs are is about asking myself, "Hey, self! Who are you, and what do you need?" It sounds strange to actually ask

that question in your mind. But I would ask myself the questions and get the answers.

So, there are simple needs like cooking what I want to eat for dinner.

And that sounds so basic. But that was one of the needs that I needed to find out was how to physically nourish self.

For me, you know, without somebody else. And then the other one was, how do I socially nourish myself?

And I saw that being connected to multiple people for multiple reasons was very nourishing to me.

So, my neighbors may not be my best friends. All the women in my sewing circle may not be my best friends; my mechanics not my best friend. But I found that each group of people or each person that I came in contact with that I needed, like my mechanic: that could be a good social interaction, and some friendships have grown more deeply.

Some are still socially community oriented but I'm finding the variety of social connection is very nourishing to me. Having five best friends and nothing else I don't think

would be as nourishing as having three best friends and a lot of neighbors, community, fellows, and groups.

The other need that I had was purpose. And I believe that doing service is a purpose in my life. I don't believe that it is the purpose in my life. I believe it is part of my recovery, but not all of my recovery.

Another need that I had was to be creative, and I found this need out by doing some work in therapy.

When I lost my husband, I sought out a counselor to work through my grief and my feelings of lack of purpose and lack of meaning.

We had lots of plans. My husband and I had lots of visions for how we were going to spend our lives together,

and all those died when he did. So, I felt empty. I didn't have a vision for my life without him.

I didn't have a purpose that didn't include him. He was my partner.

I've found that I need to be creative.

And I've been working very hard at that. I believe that God has been encouraging me to do that.

So now I need a purpose outside of everybody else, outside of service, outside of a partner, outside of a neighborhood, outside of a meeting. I need a purpose that's mine. And I believe that being creative, right now at least, is that purpose.

Thank you for letting me share.

— ANONYMOUS

My Character Defects

- Character defect: Addict behavior.

Some may say this isn't a character defect but it comes about with the character defects of immaturity, irresponsibility, sloth, rationalization, playing God, ego and a whole lot more.

- Length of time the character defect stuck around: 37 years.
- Lesson learned or how it helped me or others:

I probably would have killed myself or someone else if I hadn't had some sort of outlet to channel my rage and pain. Drinking, smoking, overeating and sex and love were compulsive but also used to calm me down and distract me from plotting my suicide. When I joined A.A., I used nicotine, food and sex and love to distract me from the pain of withdrawal from alcohol and drugs.

A year later I joined Nicotine Anonymous and S.L.A.A. I used overeating and sex and love to distract me from the rage I felt without cigarettes. If I hadn't had those addictions, I think I would

have driven my car into a telephone pole.

Four years later, I got sober in S.L.A.A. By that time I had a spiritual experience so I didn't need the food addiction as much as I had needed the others. I recognized it as an addiction that would pull me back into my old life. So, two years into my S.L.A.A. sobriety I joined a 12-Step food program.

I have sponsored people and been of service in those four programs for decades. All of which I never would have done had I not struggled with my character defect of addiction for so many years.

- Character defect: Jealousy.
- Length of time the character defect stuck around: All of my life but really intensely for one year while I was praying for it to be removed.
- Lesson learned or how it helped me or others:

I have a story around jealousy that I tell to sponsees or fellows who tell me they struggle with jealousy that has helped them realize that God was there for me with that

fear/character defect and that God could be there for them too. The story is too long to tell here, but it's a God shot.

- Character defect: Fear of being attacked.
- Length of time the character defect stuck around: Still around sometimes.
- Lesson learned or how it helped me or others:

I always joke that before S.L.A.A., I was always attracted to serial killers because I was always in relationships with abusive criminals. Fear of being attacked made me stay in withdrawal and away from dating when I was trying to get sober in S.L.A.A. It made me follow the dating plan my sponsor gave me even though I thought it was stupid. It made me share at meetings, with my sponsor, and with fellows every little detail about my sober

dating and the men I chose.

This went against my rebellious and independent nature and made me feel like a child, but the fear kept me in check.

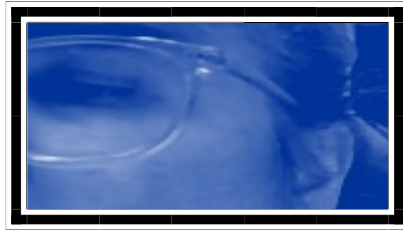
The fear made me keep myself safe by not making dates where I would be alone with a man before I got to know him well. It made me stay home at night instead of prowling the streets looking for a way to break my bottom lines. I didn't take rides from strangers because of this character defect. I would meet dates at a coffee shop during the day or drive myself to the restaurant to meet them until I got to know them and saw I could trust them.

With all my character defects, Higher Power guides me and is always there by my side to help if I ask.

—ANONYMOUS

Share space

Zoom Meetings During the Pandemic



I am definitely grateful for Zoom meetings during the pandemic. But they made for some humorous situations.

1. The inexperienced Zoom user.

Eyeball only in view on the video screen.

"Hi. My name is B__ and I am a sex and love addict."

"Hi B__. Please adjust your camera. We only see your eyeball."

"Is that better?"

Forehead only in view.

"Now we see your forehead."

Video shakes for 30 seconds

making everyone dizzy.

"How about now?" B__ screams into the microphone. Screeches from the microphone make everyone's ears ring.

"Don't worry about it B__. Let's get on with the meeting. Everyone please mute your microphones."

"Hey G__. Come here. Show me how to center my face on the video. They're telling me I'm only an eyeball."

People are visibly upset by the unmuted microphone.

"B__. You're unmuted. Please mute your microphone."

"G__ get over here. I need you to show me how to center my face."

"B__. Hello B__. You're not on mute please mute."

B__ is not hearing the secretary asking him to mute and B__'s screen shows a new eyeball.

"I don't know why it's doing that."

"As the host you can mute B__'s microphone for him."

Secretary/host: "How do you do that?"

At the end of the meeting, the secretary had to apologize for technical difficulties taking up 30 minutes of the meeting time.

But through all of that I was grateful to see B__'s eyeball and know that he was still sober and healthy and participating from across the country. I was able to reconnect and see B__ every week on Zoom during the pandemic.

2. The selfish Zoom user.

"If you'd like to share please raise your virtual hand and I will choose speakers in the order they appear."

"Hi my name is C__ and I

am a sex and love addict."

"C__. Please raise your virtual hand and wait your turn. I was going to call on D__."

"Hi. My name is D__ and..."

C__ interrupts.

"I've been coming to these meetings for weeks and I never get to share so I'm going to share now. I'm in a lot of pain and need support."

The meeting is held hostage for a 5 minute complaint about S.L.A.A.

Secretary: "Thank you for your share C__. D__ would you like to share?"

"Yes. Thank you."

I am grateful for S.L.A.A. members being gracious when others show their character defects. I'm grateful they show tolerance and love and don't need to always be right or in control. I'm grateful we had rooms of S.L.A.A. to come to even during a pandemic.

3. The meeting-goer who logs in right when the meeting is ending and interrupts the Serenity Prayer.

"I thought this meeting started at 6:30!

— ANONYMOUS

EN FRANÇAIS

Je Ne Suis Pas Seul

J'ai poussé la part Dasa en 2014. Deux ans auparavant, j'ai attrapé une hépatite B, suite à une fréquentation d'une prostituée.

À l'époque père de deux petites filles, marié, ma femme découvre ma maladie, ma dépendance. Je pensais avoir touché le fond, mais non... Pas encore. Malgré cet épisode traumatisant qui a failli faire exploser ma famille, je suis retourné voir une prostituée. Face à mon impuissance et celle de mes précédents thérapeutes, j'ai cherché sur le web et suis tombé sur Dasa. Je me suis rendu à ma première réunion et ma vie a commencé à changer.

Je suis né dans une famille qui —je l'ai appris par bribes d'informations et reconstitution— a une histoire avec la sexualité hors norme. Ma grand-mère paternelle était homosexuelle. Mais elle continuait à vivre avec mon grand-père et sa maîtresse sous le même toit, tout en y recevant ses amantes.

Mon père était un séducteur permanent, avec une tendance

à sauver les femmes qu'il croisait. Secrètement, il avait une sexualité hors normes, notamment homosexuelle.

J'ai hérité de cette sexualisation de la vie. Dès 4-5 ans, je me masturbais tous les soirs pour trouver le sommeil. À 12 ans, je découvre la pornographie avec des revues prêtées par mon cousin. J'ai pour meilleur ami S____, qui vit seul avec son père adoptif et libertin. Des posters de femmes nues décorent sa chambre. Il me montre les photos des parties fines que son père organisait avec sa mère, décédée, accessible dans une boîte à chaussures à la cave. Il me montre mes premiers films pornographiques sur le magnétoscope de mon père.

La pornographie envahit ma vie et je n'ai cessé de vouloir l'expérimenter pour de vrai.

Parallèlement, je tombe amoureux transi de jeunes filles que j'idéalise. Je n'ai que des élans romantiques et quand elles me quittent, effrayées par mes démonstrations affectives, je

suis désespéré à en tomber malade.

Le dédoublement de personnalité se creuse et s'installe durablement. Je vais vivre toutes les expériences sexuelles en clandestinité, loin de ma vie sociale et familiale. Et par ailleurs, je vais être romantique, au service de mes petites amies, niant mes besoins profonds.

Dans les 2 cas, le sexe et la dépendance affective me permettent de fuir les soucis de la vie — notamment une mère malade psychique— et la honte de moi-même. Dans une même soirée, je peux enchaîner un dîner romantique et une nuit dans un sauna gay.

En pleine épidémie sida, je vis des véritables drames en attendant mes résultats de tests qui mettent à l'époque 15 jours à arriver, me jurant que c'est a dernière fois que je pratique une sexualité dangereuse. Mais ma volonté ne pèse pas lourd face à l'addiction sexuelle qui est dans ma tête et que je peux activer à tout moment, comme une pompe à morphine.

Après moult expériences douloureuses et une psychothérapie sans effet, je finis par pousser la porte de DASA.

Je découvre que je ne suis

pas seul dans mon cas. Que d'autres hommes, et même des femmes, sont victimes de leurs comportements sexuels. Je sors du secret, je peux partager, presque sans honte, sur ma maladie. Je découvre aussi le concept de comportements limites et de sobriété. Je me sens entouré et soutenu avec des réunions plusieurs fois par semaine et des ami(e)s que je peux appeler à toute heure du jour et de la nuit.

Très vite, j'ai un parrain avec qui je peux commencer le travail des étapes qui est une très longue et lente déconstruction de moi-même. Ce que je découvre ? Que depuis mon enfance, je suis incapable de reconnaître, d'accepter et d'exprimer mes émotions qui sont les marqueurs de ma personnalité profonde, que je me nie moi-même profondément. Que cette barrière que j'ai construite autour de moi m'empêche d'être vrai.

Dans la fraternité, j'ai pu, petit à petit, raconter ma déchéance, la déposer et, allégé, commencer découvrir qui j'étais vraiment, notamment en écoutant les ami(e)s de la fraternité raconter leur vie qui rassemblait en beaucoup de

point à la mienne.

Aujourd'hui, j'apprends à être moi, à être fier de moi, de mes émotions. Et je n'ai plus besoin de les fuir dans le sexe. Je suis sobre de mes comportements les plus dangereux depuis plus 6 ans.

Je travaille ma dépendance affective et je construis ce que Dasa appelle la complétude personnelle qui fait que je ne peux aimer quiconque si je ne

pourvois pas en priorité à besoins fondamentaux qui sont une estime de moi-même avec tous mes défauts et qualités, une rigoureuse honnêteté et une vie spirituelle.

Gratitudes à Dasa et aux Alcooliques Anonymes pour ce programme qui m'a sauvé la vie.

—M, FRANCE

IN ENGLISH

I Am Not Alone

I joined S.L.A.A. in 2014. Two years before, I caught hepatitis B from a prostitute.

At the time, I was the father of two little girls and married. My wife discovered my illness and my addiction. I thought I had hit rock bottom, but no — not yet. Despite this traumatic episode that nearly blew up my family, I went back to see a prostitute. Faced with my helplessness and seeing that

my previous therapists couldn't help, I searched the web and came across S.L.A.A. I went to my first meeting and my life began to change.

I was born into a family that has a history with non-standard sexuality. My paternal grandmother was gay. But she continued to live with my grandfather and his mistress under the same roof, while receiving her lovers

there. My father was a permanent seducer, with a tendency to save the women he met. Secretly, he was homosexual.

I inherited this sexualization of life. From the age of 4-5, I masturbated every night to find sleep. At 12, I discovered pornography with magazines lent by my cousin. My best friend was S___, who lived alone with his adoptive and libertine father. Posters of naked women decorated his bedroom. He showed me the photos of the fine parties that his father organized with his deceased mother, accessible in a shoebox in the basement. He showed me my first pornographic films on his father's VCR.

Pornography invaded my life and I couldn't stop wanting to experience it for real.

At the same time, I fell in love—transfixed - with young girls whom I idealized. I only had romantic impulses and when the girls got frightened by my emotional demonstrations and left me, I fell ill.

The split personality grew deeper and became permanent. I decided to live all sexual experiences underground, far from my social and family life. And

besides, I thought I was romantic, serving my girlfriends, denying my deepest needs.

In both cases, sex and affective dependence allowed me to escape the worries of life — in particular a mentally ill mother — and the shame of myself. In the same evening, I would go to a romantic dinner and a night in a gay sauna.

In the midst of the AIDS epidemic, I saw real drama while waiting for my test results, which took 15 days to arrive at the time, swearing to myself that this was the last time I would practice dangerous sexuality. But my will didn't weigh much against the sexual addiction that's in my head and that I can activate at any time, like a morphine pump.

After many painful experiences and ineffectual psychotherapy, I ended up walking through the doors of S.L.A.A.

I discovered that I am not alone in my case — that other men, and even women, are victims of their sexual behavior. I came out of the secret. I can share, almost without shame, about my illness. I also discovered the concept of borderline behavior and sobriety. I feel surrounded

and supported with meetings several times a week and friends I can call at any time of day or night.

Very quickly, I got a sponsor with whom I began the work of the 12 Steps which is a very long and slow deconstruction of myself. What do I discover? That since my childhood, I have been unable to recognize, accept and express my emotions which are the markers of my deep personality, which I deny myself deeply. May this barrier I've built around me prevent me from going back into addiction.

In S.L.A.A., I was able, little by little, to tell about my decline, to lay it down and, lighten up, to begin to discover who I really was, in particular

by listening to the friends in S.L.A.A. tell their life stories which were similar to mine.

Today, I'm learning to be me, to be proud of myself, of my emotions. And I no longer need to run away from my emotions into sex. I have been sober from my most dangerous behaviors for over 6 years.

I work on my affective dependence and I build what S.L.A.A. calls personal completeness which means that I cannot love anyone if I do not primarily meet basic needs which are self-esteem with all my faults and qualities, a rigorous honesty, and a spiritual life.

Thanks to S.L.A.A. and Alcoholics Anonymous for this program that saved my life.

—M, FRANCE

Sober Break Up Plan

I attend a weekly “Sober Dating Questions for Discussion” reading and writing meeting. In one of the articles that we read, the author mentions that she can’t date someone unless she’s willing to break up with them.

The article says, “Some members have included a break-up or termination plan in their dating plan — setting forth how they conduct themselves during a break-up or terminating a dating connection.”

The plan can include a list of valid reasons to break up with a dating candidate. Some of us suffer from anorexia and will leave a promising candidate for reasons that may not be healthy for us or even true (addiction may have twisted our thinking). Others stay in destructive dating scenarios due to active sex or love addiction (or both).

The Augustine Fellowship. Sober Dating: Questions For Discussion (p. 31). Kindle Edition.

I didn’t have a break-up plan in place when I started sober dating in S.L.A.A. I don’t

think I would have been so fearful of a break-up if I had known beforehand how I was going to react. I thought I would freak out and break my bottom lines or at least overeat like I used to in the past. If I had written a break –up plan beforehand it would have looked like this (according to what I actually did in the sober break-up):

If he breaks up with you:

- Listen when he communicates his reasons for breaking up with you.

In the past it was always a dramatic scene that didn’t include communication or reasonableness, just a lot of crying, screaming and throwing things.

- Write about the reasons he gives you for breaking up with you and any other reasons you can think of that he didn’t communicate to you. Share your writing with your sponsor and fellows.

Questions to ask yourself while you’re doing the writing:

1. Is this a valid character defect of mine?
2. Did my behavior hurt the

- relationship?
3. Would I have broken up with someone if they had displayed this behavior?
 4. Was I aware of my behavior?
 5. If I was aware that it was hurting the relationship, why did I engage in the behavior anyway?
 6. How can I change my behavior in the future?
- I thought about my past behavior in breakups and set boundaries around these behaviors.

Past behaviors	Boundary for my break-up plan
Used the fact that they wanted to remain friends to act how they wanted me to act in order to manipulate them into coming back to me.	I will tell my partner not to contact me unless he wants to get back together. I can't be friends with my exes because I know myself too well now. I will try to manipulate them into getting back together.
Used sex to manipulate them into staying with me.	No sex at any time before or after having break-up conversations.
Had big dramatic fights with lots of crying around break-up.	Told myself to stay out of fantasy and to try to avoid beating myself up.
Got emotional revenge by trying to make them jealous with someone else or by destroying material things that were important to them.	Didn't allow myself to destroy anything or seek out another relationship. Forced myself to grieve the loss and feel the feelings.
Isolated myself and cried a lot, allowing myself to get lost in longing.	Forced myself to pray, meditate, write, read 12-Step literature, go to meetings, and to be with friends and family instead of isolating.

Past behaviors	Boundary for my break-up plan
Engaged in addictive behaviors like overeating or accessory behaviors in S.L.A.A. like flirting or watching sexy shows (bordering on porn).	I will eat nutritional meals and follow a food plan. When I feel like indulging in addictive behaviors I will visit my brother in the desert or be with sober S.L.A.A. fellows. Whenever I went to visit my brother in the desert I was in awe of the quietness and beauty of nature. It calmed me.
Broke up too soon over little things that I blew out of proportion.	I will write a pros and cons list and discuss with my sponsor and fellows. I will give it time before I rashly make decisions. I will share and pray about it. I will ask my Higher Power to give me signs about the next indicated action to take.

I'm sure I'm forgetting a lot here, but if anyone else has their own plan to add, I'd be

happy to read it in *the Journal*!
— LISA C.



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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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