



the Journal

Issue # 202

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Recovery Suggestions

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,

There are some really great suggestions for newcomers (and old-timers!) in this issue of the Journal. I think I will create printable cards out of the short answers to the question of the day for the online issue. Newcomers can print them out and post them on their refrigerators to be inspired!

I've been a little worried because since the Pandemic started we haven't been getting as many answers to the question of the day for *the Journal*. But people really stepped up to help the newcomer in this issue! It gives me hope and I am grateful.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “What advice or suggestions for recovery would you give a newcomer?” 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 #203 – July/Aug. – *ABM Issue* – Self-Love as a Tool in Recovery – “How have you learned to love yourself? Combatting insecurity, self-sabotage, and self-destructiveness.” Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2023. And #204 –Sept/Oct – Messages of Recovery – “What is your go to passage from 12-Step literature, recovery slogan or saying when things are tough and why?” Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2023. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“What advice or suggestions for recovery would you give a newcomer?”

Top lines are everything. They keep you busy when all you want to do is shrivel up, obsess or feel dreadful. Even small things like some cosy socks, your favourite cup of tea, soundtracks to sing along to or an episode of your favourite TV show can help cheer you up. More ambitious top lines like trying something new solo like a brand new hobby or joining a meetup group can start to fill up your life with exciting new experiences and people.

– MIRA, UK

Your relationship with your sponsor is so important: you need someone you can communicate with. Trust is everything. Shop around and don't feel you need to take the first offer. Be fussy, be selective. Think new shoes: the fit needs to be comfortable or you'll get rubbed the wrong way and you'll get blisters.

– MARIA, UK

Question of the day

If you're going through withdrawal when you first come in, chuck yourself into the programme. I call it a S.L.A.A.venger hunt. All you need to do is get a sponsor and the trail will reveal itself! The tools will help you dig a bit deeper and there are prizes at every turn: an ever-growing circle of people who understand, free outreach whenever you need it and (in our group) social outings! Far better than calling a qualifier and crying.

— SHIREEN, UK

When you least feel like going to a meeting is when you should probably get yourself to a meeting or do outreach as your old coping mechanisms are fighting back. Routine and daily rituals are best friends at the start as you literally reprogramme all the ways you have been relating with pretty much everything (yay). Routine means less decision making!

— ALEX, UK

In the beginning, S.L.A.A. speaker tapes were really helpful to me as not many of the meetings have chairs each week so it fast forwarded the identification and brought me up to speed quicker. It also meant I could then Google words or ask in outreach if I was unsure of certain terms like avoidant, anorexia, qualifier and so on. Plus in withdrawal my head needed input and reading was hard.

— JODIE, UK

Question of the day

Don't feel pressured to change every single aspect of your life in your first few months of recovery. Small, simple changes like making your bed every day first thing in the morning, or writing a gratitude list before you go to sleep, or going for a midday walk really does make a huge difference. Baby steps! You got this.

— RIV, LOS ANGELES

Keep going. Even though it might feel like you are not making progress, or even regressing, stick with it. It takes time to change our thinking patterns that we've had for a lifetime. Be patient with yourself. Ask for help. We didn't end up here overnight, and we won't heal overnight. Don't give up. Stick with it.

— LORI

It took me two years after my first meeting to finally surrender and get the kind of sobriety I have now. My plan was to get my addiction 'fixed' and then confess (at least some of it) to my wife after one year of sobriety. Recovery didn't work that way for me. Some are able to surrender before they hit consequences - for me I had to get caught. Whether you think you have surrendered or not, I'd definitely recommend committing to the long road of recovery. Don't make the mistake of quitting thinking it doesn't work. It might take a lot longer than you think to know whether you've truly worked the program or not. Or, as we say, "Keep coming back - it works if you work at it!"

— ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

Keep it simple: "Avoid the deliberate manufacture of misery." Don't show up to play tennis with a ghost; if the person isn't showing up to be with you, walk off the court and don't ask them to do anything again.

— ANONYMOUS

Welcome them and their courage. Tell them to go to six meetings to see if the fellowship is the right fit for them. Get their contact information - give them my information. Later in the day send them info about the S.L.A.A. text, and the inspirational call-in numbers. Remind them of the next in person or hybrid meeting. I would also give them the link to the website. The point is to welcome them and give them the feeling of fellowship and that they are not alone in their recovery. - Peace and Grace

— RANDY, BERWYN

You are safe, welcomed, and encouraged to continue to come back to meetings. Get phone numbers and reach out to someone in the group. Be bold in your recovery and reaching out inside the group as much as you were in addiction. Keep the brochures, journals, and literature in your car, purse, and home so it's always available to read and speak into you. Be honest with yourself!

— CHRISTIE, DFW

Stay engaged in whatever way or form because S.L.A.A. is valid for all relationships.

— ISA, ORANJESTAD, ARUBA

Question of the day

Make a commitment to try and not engage for 24 - 48 - 72 hours and if you get there...30 days no contact, texts, emails, drive-by, and talking for no more than three minutes about them.

— PATRICIA, LA

Keep coming back. Reach out to safe members in the program.

Relax-It will take some time to feel centered.

Don't be too hard on yourself.

Take the time to care for yourself.

— JAMES B., SLC, UT

Attend as many meetings as you can to familiarize yourself with many different flavors of meetings, then pick one or two to attend regularly.

— BROOKE R., ALBUQUERQUE

Create a “must do” list. This is a list of things that you will do before acting out. My list included drinking three glasses of water, taking a fifteen-minute walk, and calling three program family members with reasonable expectation of getting an answer. I also longhand wrote out the Lord's Prayer.

— JUANITA J., GREENBELT, MD

Question of the day

- #1. Get a sponsor.
- #2. Communicate with your sponsor.
- #3. Know that recovery is tough, but the lifelong benefits are endless!

— LYLE H., MORRISVILLE, PA

Keep coming back, it works if you live it! The promises are true and will come true if you listen to long-time, experienced members.

Time in program does not determine length of sobriety.
Trust the process!

— ARI F., NJ

Stay! Stay in the meetings. Stay in the literature. Stay connected. Stay in the work. Miracles will happen.

Also read the original Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book (4th Edition),” that’s where all 12-Step wisdom originated. It’s a miraculous and life-transforming book.

— CHRIS C., TORONTO

Don’t be afraid to ask what you think are dumb questions; keep coming back even when you can’t get sober. Strike that - especially when you are struggling. You are now not alone. For me, I was able to commit to recovery once I started to work the Steps.

— SUZANNE D., SAN ANTONIO

Question of the day

Get a sponsor and work all Twelve Steps!

— ANTHONY P., CHICAGO

Take it easy. Make friends. Forgive yourself. Have fun! I personally needed to just feel human and feel the love of my fellows for a while before I could begin the work.

— JAMES J., ANONYMOUS

Keep coming back, no matter what—sober, not sober, kind of sober... just keep coming back. No one, and I mean no one, comes into S.L.A.A. on a winning streak. One day at a time, one hour at a time, one minute at a time, one second at a time, and sometimes one thought at a time...

— RICK B., TAMPA, FL

Do a ninety and ninety (ninety meetings in ninety days). Don't give up before the miracle. Call three fellows every day. Don't give up. You are in the right place. Have a slow recovery.

— CARA L., NEW YORK CITY

Keep coming back and take what you like and leave the rest. What worked for me was finding a sponsor quickly and working the Steps slowly. I had to let go of pride and ego by being accountable and taking feedback and it broke the isolation in which my disease thrived.

— BECCA M., RI

Question of the day

Go to meetings. Get a sponsor. Go to therapy. Find activities that make you happy to replace acting out behaviors. If you need medication to help with your issues, get help. Stop dating for three months. Stop contacting your qualifier. Work the Steps with a sponsor.

— ANONYMOUS

I'd suggest that newcomers remember that this program is first and foremost about your connection to a Higher Power. Get ready to be surprised by where Higher Power takes you. While sometimes Higher Power's plan brings some pain, I've found Higher Power keeps bringing me blessings that have transformed my life and relationships with others in ways I could never have imagined.

— MARK S., NYC, NY

Sobriety is surrender, and it is not a passive state of submission but an active and voluntary letting go that requires intensive work on a daily basis. Willingness is an action. Daily actions of recovery: going to meetings, sharing in meetings, reading S.L.A.A. literature, and creating a new network of support in S.L.A.A.

— PHOENIX G., HOUSTON, TX

Besides "Keep coming back," and "Get a sponsor and work the Steps," my advice for the newcomer would be to be kind and gentle to themselves as they start this process.

— GIL H., WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA

Slogans Stand the Test of Time

I don't know
I need help
Acceptance is the answer to
all my problems

The two hardest things for an addict to say are “I need help” and “I don’t know,” but “I’m here to save my ass, not my face, and I can’t save both at the same time” continues to ring true for me. All the slogans really do stand the test of time!

Look for the similarities,

not the differences. The antidote to addiction is meaningful connection.

Get to meetings, talk to people, go for fellowship, find two or three recovery fellows to foster deeper connection with & commit to checking in with them once a week, have a home group; do all these

things even when your head and anxiety are screaming “I don’t want to” - just say “Thank you for sharing” and then act opposite all the way.

If your head says “Don’t tell your sponsor that,” definitely tell your sponsor that! Be willing to take on a sponsor’s suggestion no matter what. If you find you’re not doing that, get yourself another sponsor. The program is full of paradoxes, don’t try to “figure it out”, take note of the progress you’re making and what makes you feel better.

I’ve found that making outreach calls immediately after getting to a meeting helped with my anxiety about picking up the phone. And if you call a bunch of people, and no one picks up, that’s ok, it’s just a message to go to your Higher Power. I love the acceptance prayer, “Acceptance is the answer to all my problems, nothing absolutely nothing happens in God’s world by mistake,” including me, and you, and us taking our seats at the table in recovery.

—BECKY, UK

Find a Home Meeting

My advice for newcomers to S.L.A.A.: find a home meeting and connect with people before, after, and outside the meeting. Friendships with sober and sobriety-pursuing people create an avenue to give and get healing support.

As someone who relapsed a lot, my main advice is to always share it at a meeting and call your sponsor every day if you have to. Mentally/verbally walking through the relapses with my sponsor was uncomfortable, but turned out

to be the best way to find practical solutions and tools. I shared about my triggers and bottom lines in meetings, even when I didn’t hear stories quite like mine. If I understand correctly, my women’s meeting rarely talked about porn and masturbation until I shared on it. The more I shared, the more others felt safe and shared. The more they shared, the less alone I felt. I had to give something of my own.

Bring facial tissue to meetings. If you don’t need to

cry, someone else might. If you're triggered during a meeting, it's OK to ask the sharer to redirect. If you're asked to redirect, it's not the end of the world. Don't be embarrassed; it happens sometimes.

Set the bottom lines you need. We don't have to copy other people's bottom lines, and piling on too many can be overwhelming. Write down your sobriety definition in your S.L.A.A. book and memorize it. We can minimize surprise sobriety date resets by knowing our bottom lines and having them easily accessible.

I like to say that I needed four big things for recovery: S.L.A.A., meds, psychotherapy, and a faith community/church. And now I have a second Twelve-Step program, too! S.L.A.A. is a great tool, but it's not a substitute for professional help and it's not the end-all be-all of our lives.

Finally, it's not Well People Anonymous. If you stick around for a while, it is likely you will see many S.L.A.A.s

screw up. Many folks will forget to call you back. Some will flake on their meeting commitments. Some will cycle through sponsors or sponsees. Some will relapse repeatedly and never seem to do any of the real work of the program. There will be disregarding the traditions, oversharing, judging others' sobriety, and arguing at business meetings. It's OK (maybe even good!) to be frustrated when you see this; but please don't give up. We're here because we are sick, dejected, messed up, and suffering. There will always be plenty of sane and sober folks in S.L.A.A.. Find them and build each other up. Ask your Higher Power to give you compassion for the S.L.A.A.s who upset you. These are opportunities to practice healthy boundaries and sticking up for principles over personalities.

This S.L.A.A. stuff is really hard work that we're doing. If I can do it, so can you.

— V.V., CA

Do the Twelve Steps

I was in S.L.A.A. for around nine years before I ever did any Step work. I just went to meetings and shared and got relief and didn't think my problem was serious enough to warrant my doing the Twelve Steps. Then I had a series of bottoms that drove me to finally do the steps, and I did them three times over the last 10 plus years. I also avoided doing service or sponsoring for like 12-14 years. Then in the last six or so years I threw myself into service and had the pleasure of being a sponsor and seeing others' lives transformed.

All this is to say, there's no rush and no judgment. You just keep coming back and do what you can when the time is right. You are always welcome at meetings as long as you have a desire to change and grow and heal. That's the only requirement for membership. You can act out every day and keep coming back. No one judges, and if they do, that's their disease.

As it happens, I acted out every day for around two years and just kept going to meetings the whole time. I would see acting out buddies at the meetings even. I was so powerless.

But I just had a deep desire to change and eventually I got sober and experienced exponential healing and growth. What a beautiful life it is on the other side!

I really wouldn't change anything about my path, except to just be kinder to myself, gentler, more forgiving. The events and circumstances of my childhood were incredibly difficult, and my sex addiction developed as a coping mechanism to help me survive. Today, I am grateful for my sex and love addiction and I say "thank you" to it for helping me get through an unbearable situation. I also say, "I no longer need your help" to my addiction. Because I have come to rely on a higher power and the support of the fellowship to cope with life instead of my addiction.

All of this is just a process to rebuild a healthy, happy way of life. Don't use S.L.A.A. or the steps or the dating plan or any of it as a weapon or a way to be mean to yourself or punish yourself. Insist of being kind and gentle. You deserve your own love.

Reading program literature really helped me to feel the

love that the founders of these Twelve-Step programs had for addicts. There is so much humanity and caring communicated. One of the things I did as a newcomer was to read every single story in the S.L.A.A. book. It really made me feel "normal" and at home. I felt so comforted by the honesty.

Another thing I did as a newcomer was to dive into my hobbies. I got really into writing fiction during withdrawal, and it just gave me something to focus on when I was in pain. Hobbies can bring so much comfort because they are experiences that no one can take away from you, a gift you give

yourself. Over the years I developed more and more hobbies, including learning French, photography, tennis, wardrobe styling, cycling, running half marathons, and many more.

Right this minute, I encourage you to write down 25 hobbies that sound like fun. You might notice a big shift in your mood just thinking about all the fun things you could do instead of texting you-know-who, intriguing, acting out, obsessing, etc.! Anyway, you are not alone and this too shall pass, as they say. Whatever you do, just keep coming back.

— ANONYMOUS.

Writing It All Down

Editor's note: During the Journal committee meeting at the 2022 ABM in Sacramento, delegates were asked to share on Journal topics. The following is a transcription of one of the shares.

Hi, I'm Risa, Sex and love addict.

The question is, what advice

or suggestions for recovery would you give a newcomer?

For many years I wasn't serious about my program, but when I got serious one of the important tools that I used was a journal, and I wrote down all the little tidbits that I heard. Anything that spoke to me, I wrote down in this journal. But

the second part of that that's super important is that I read it constantly. I read over this journal because repetition is how you change your brain.

So, I read all these things. That's one of my suggestions for a newcomer is to keep a journal, put down anything that speaks to you, read over it all the time.

Another important thing for me that I don't think is talked about much is that although it's very important to look for a sponsor who you relate to, it's also just as important, maybe more important, to find recovery partners or friends who relate to you in the program who you can call and talk to about all of your issues.

I have recovery partners who I've become very close with. They're super important to me.

I can't even imagine going through the program without them.

Most of my life I was alone. I felt alone, like an alien, but now I have all these women who relate to me, and it's amazing. So, to me, that's just

as important as having a sponsor. Another thing I would say to a newcomer is to be gentle with yourself, you know, as addicts, we are very hard on ourselves. Something that I learned from my therapist is to be gentle with myself.

I am not a bad person. You are not a bad person. We're sick. If we had cancer, we wouldn't be angry with ourselves.

This is a disease. We're sick, so be gentle with yourself.

Recovery is peeling away the layers, peeling away the layers of the onion they say. It's going to be slow and you're going to make progress.

And you're going to go back and you're going to make more progress.

And just please be gentle with yourself. You are the most important person, and this is all about helping yourself and not hurting yourself.

Just be gentle with yourself, and just learn to love yourself. That's most important.

Thank you.

— RISA

Don't Play Tennis with Ghosts



“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a vale of tears, though it once was just that for many of us. But it is clear that we made our own misery. God didn’t do it. Avoid then, the deliberate manufac-

ture of misery.” – AA Big Book
Maybe you remember the Saturday morning cartoon where the coyote was always trying to capture roadrunner. In the coyote’s mind, the thinking probably went something like this: “If I try hard enough, I just KNOW that

ONE DAY, one day, I WILL capture that rascally roadrunner and THEN I will feel SOOOOOO happy.” Somehow, though, it never worked out that way, despite all the plans the coyote came up with and tried. The coyote was always manufacturing his own frustration and misery, but he didn’t want to give up trying.

If I dressed myself up as a coyote and put a dress and some makeup on the roadrunner, you would have my story as a love addict, especially the third characteristic of a sex and love addict: “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.” That is the problem statement, along with this: “We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.”

The third sign of recovery in S.L.A.A. is, “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.” That is the solution statement, along with this: “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.” And this: “We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.”

A newcomer might ask, “How do I go from drowning in the problem to paddling in the solution?” My answer would be, “Keep it simple, and focus on ‘radical self-care.’”

To keep it simple, I play a game in my head where I imagine whomever I’m interested in is like someone on the other side of a tennis court. If they stay on the court and keep hitting the ball back to me, then I know they are “into” me, that there is a mutual interest and a reason to stay on the court. So, if there is a mutual exchange of text messages, emails, phone calls, etc., then that is my sign that there is a mutual interest in developing some kind of connection. If I put out a message and it doesn’t come back to me, especially after I have expressly stated that I’m interested in getting to know one another, then I stop and “walk off the court.” That way, I stop making love pretzels in my head that will NEVER get any mustard spread on them, as much as I dream about that happening.

I said “paddling in the solution” because recovery in

S.L.A.A. takes effort. It's not like one day I went to a meeting and suddenly I was floating peacefully down Serenity River. Some days, it feels like I'm in a canoe and it's a smooth ride; I'm enjoying the view. On other days, it feels like I'm the captain of a whitewater raft navigating a Category 5 rapid, the really rough kind you can fall out of the boat and drown in, and the only thing I can focus on is how to avoid tipping the boat over.

I still have to navigate currents that got grooved in my mind over 50 years, going back to toddlerhood. I think my pattern of seeking out unavailable women (which a psychologist pointed out 30 years ago) can be traced back to my family of origin, where I had a mom who (I judge) was not available because of her bad attachment to my dad, whom she protected (more than us kids, I judge) throughout their marriage.

I believe that's where I developed the similar kind of hunger that the coyote had, a deep need to get what I most hungered for (a woman's love) that turned into a physical appetite (sex) as a substitute, which became like a drug in itself. Just as the coyote's "arousal template" was the roadrunner, I developed an arousal template too for my

"ideal (hot) woman." That led me into psychological hell, though, as I tended to find women very similar to me, namely those who had come from alcoholic or "para-alcoholic" homes and had their own sex and love addiction issues.

I am happy to say that today I can be friends with my first "qualifier" and that we can talk openly about our own recoveries from sex and love addiction. I can show up and truly love her as a person as opposed to the "hot babe" I had objectified her as. The same is true for other significant women in my S.L.A.A. journey.

My first qualifier models for me the kind of "radical self-care" via exercise, meditation, saving money and watching expenses, etc., that's reflected in S.L.A.A. Recovery Sign #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."

Certainly, doing the Twelve Steps helped clear away "the wreckage of the past," but I still have to avoid creating more wreckage now. I am human, and I want to be loved and touched. I think we are all hard-wired for connection, including a physical connection.

But, we are not hard-wired to play tennis by ourselves. No matter how much I want someone to show up on the court and play with me, it is foolish to try to play tennis with a ghost. And that's what I tell myself as a love addict. "If they don't show up, walk off the court."

That, again, is how I "keep it simple."

As an AA friend once said, "It's simple, but it's not easy." I am not out of the rapids yet, so to speak. That's why I value the S.L.A.A. fellowship because I need the support primarily of men but also women, "amigas" who will tell me the truth when I need it, like, "Dude! Why did you do that with her?? That was insane!"

I have seen men do the same crazy stuff I did who were blind to their pathology and refused to even consider S.L.A.A. I tried to help one guy (who was teetering toward legal trouble) "see the light," but

he made up a story about how I had "stole his girl" and messed up his chances of serenading her with "Love of My Life." Today, he continues being caught up in (frankly) a delusion that he had a relationship with her he never had, and he's STILL singing a "someone done me wrong song."

I still have the blues about love and sex sometimes, but I don't HAVE to "go down the alley" digging in dumpsters, so to speak, looking to feed my hunger. I know now I can reach out for help on the phone or show up at a S.L.A.A. men's meeting and discuss that hunger and feel supported knowing that I am not alone in getting through some rough rapids on the journey toward "un destino pacifico" (a peaceful destination).

Today, I know the solution is, "Keep it simple, and focus on radical self-care."

— SCOTT M.

Share space

Answering a Step 10 Question

Read from, “The portion of S.L.A.A. meetings...” on page 98, Step Ten, of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, S.L.A.A.'s basic text to the end of the paragraph. Discuss and reflect on the importance of getting current.

This talks about getting current to “process our emotional reactions to situations in our lives and our relationships as they occurred.” This has been a fundamental part of my recovery in S.L.A.A., with access to outreach chats feeling like it’s saved my life in the last year and a half. I need to be able to deal with present moment pain and inner conflict as it arises, because it not only helps me to connect to HP and get closer to sanity and serenity, but also acts as a portal to the trauma trapped in my body that needs

releasing bit by bit. It allows me to learn one day at a time, moment by moment, how to respect and love myself, how to connect to the present and how to treat others with love and kindness, owning my faults and mistakes, and recovering from them. I’m really grateful to S.L.A.A. for this unique and beautiful manifestation of HP.

The book says “we could not achieve partnership with anyone by our own solitary efforts.” This is a reminder of Step three, that the most sane and dependable entity around

me is my HP, and that I need not feel alone as long as I can connect to that entity from waking in the morning, throughout the day, till I go to sleep at night. It reminds me that striving and pushing my will to make things be the way I want them does not work, but just goes against me. Higher power's will be done, humble and change me, bless those I wish to change.

The text also says that it takes "practice and cooperation to learn how to respond to the needs of others without fearing sacrifice of our own dignity, and to be open and honest without defensiveness or destructiveness."

As with all practice, we need to be able to look from without to see where we could improve, and also what we are doing well.

We need to keep trying patiently, handing over our inevitable mistakes and having compassion for ourselves when we make them.

I understand from this text the double consequence of the word 'dignity'. We must have dignity, self-respect and that our boundaries be respected.

However, in fighting the world for our dignity, we can become hubristic, willful and allow our defects of character to take over. The remedy to this is openness and honesty, first with ourselves and HP, and then with others. When I come to actually be honest about my feelings and needs, so much of what I unhealthily cling onto is released, and I feel relief.

Things start to flow better, and the energy around me shifts to become something much nicer to experience. My mind seems to go through a blocking process to stop me from getting to this point of honesty, and needs some prompting and negotiating.

This work is what takes practise and encouragement from within and without. Getting current allows me to hear myself in this struggle with my ego, and allows me to hear my HP through others' feedback and shares. I can also get current by journaling and doing two-way prayer, which gives similar feedback.

It's amazing to have these tools and watch it float me along the river of recovery.

— JULIA, UK

A Getting Current Topic Meeting

The following is an edited transcript of a getting current S.L.A.A. Zoom meeting.

DEAN

I'm Dean. grateful recovering love addict. Thank you for letting me share. I'm not really a public speaker, but that actually goes well with the subject today, getting current, because getting current is one of my favorite tools in my recovery toolbox.

The reason I say that is because I'm not always comfortable sharing in the general meeting, especially when there's a lot of people in the meeting. When I first started in the fellowship back in 2008, and then started doing it seriously in 2009, I went to a meeting where there were over 25 people consistently. I was a little shy to share but it was only an hourlong meeting with 25 people who all wanted to share. You basically run out of time before you run out of people to share. Getting current

was my time to share. It was my time to do my recovery on a weekly basis.

Well at first, when I started in early recovery, I was going to a couple of meetings a week, and I really needed that time to share. And what I was told was that the value of getting current was to ground my feelings before acting out, before doing accessory behaviors, and before going on a slippery slope to relapse. So, that was my time to get my feelings out about what was going on with me, and the challenges I was facing. It was my lifesaver, my last resort. I could talk to people in the fellowship instantly, make an outreach call; I could do all that but I always looked forward to that weekly meeting.

It ended up being one of my consistent meetings. I did actually get to a point where I was doing it monthly, and that wasn't enough, so I find going weekly works for me. So, what does that mean when I say I

needed to ground my feelings? I need to tell people what's going on with me. I need to be fully aware of what's going on with me and what my behaviors are. What are my impulses?

For me, it's rationalization. I always had a good excuse to act out or do accessory behaviors because I needed to. My addiction has always been something I needed to help myself and it's always been the unhealthy way of helping myself fulfill my needs.

And that's the thing - it's using other people to get my needs fulfilled. But through recovery, I'm learning healthy ways of taking care of myself. My self-care requires telling about my feelings which requires opening up and being vulnerable.

That's something that I had a real big problem with. Not asking for help was part of my addiction. I thought I could do this recovery stuff without any help, that I could use people without consequences, because I was entitled to. I was a victim, and I did all that stuff when I was acting out.

Through recovery and through talking to people in the fellowship, I learned healthy behavior, getting cur-

rent and telling my feelings. Opening up and telling my feelings was so hard for me at first, but now I look forward to that intimacy.

The vulnerability saves me. The only way I can get better is by sharing it, by opening up and being vulnerable. The only way I can be aware of what I'm going through, and then being able to take care of myself is being able to share it. I don't know where I would be without this.

This is one of my best tools. I would be in so much trouble. I've done it consistently. I haven't done anything else besides going to meetings and getting current for the last 14 years on a consistent basis, because people come and go in the fellowship and it's hard to rely on other people.

There's always someone there to listen to me at the meeting.

There were months where I would see the same exact people in every getting current meeting even though it was random which meetings I would go to. Higher Power said that we need to get together and talk, we need to share these things with each other, and we need to support each other.

I've had people who would come up to me months later and ask me about something I shared in a getting current meeting because it made an impression on them, they wanted to know and they cared about what happened to me. And that feeling that someone listened, acknowledged and was supportive of me, I don't know of a better feeling. And that makes such a difference to me - that I've been heard.

For me and my issues of low self-worth and low self-esteem, there's nothing better than to be seen and heard. There's nothing more valuable for my recovery.

This is one of the biggest tools for me, something that I need to protect. And I need to protect the safety and sanctity of getting current and vulnerability.

For example, dating other people in the fellowship: What happens when I'm dating someone who is going to the same meetings?

This is something that is very important for me, that I remember never to be in the same getting current meeting with someone I'm dating or someone I used to date. It's very important to protect the safety of my meetings. If you

break up what happens? Who owns the meeting?

Whose meeting those belong to? It's like a divorce. It's like who gets the meeting. So, you have to figure that out, because it's very important with safety, being able to share is so very important to be able to be vulnerable.

And it's like you can't feel comfortable if you're sharing about your ex and they're sitting right in front of you. I had a girlfriend who went to meetings with me and when we broke up, we said, "Which meeting are you going to? I'll go to the other one." And we did that on purpose. It was most important because there were times when I'd be curious to see her or hear what she was saying.

I couldn't do that. It's so important to protect the sanctity of it. So even to this day we still do it, and we've been broken up for years, but it doesn't matter. Feeling safe and being able to open up and share is the most important thing. I don't know of any other fellowships that have an issue like that but it's something in sex and love addiction that is very interesting.

I'd like to hear what other people think. Thanks for let-

ting me share.

But before I go, I often say thanks for letting me share but I also like to say thank you for sharing because I believe that Higher Power speaks through other people.

I always get something out of what other people share. My problems aren't the biggest thing in the world. Sometimes I hear someone say in a getting current meeting that they are about to go to prison and I think "Wow, I don't know how I would handle that." I hear in meetings that people are going through prison or divorce or all of the insane things. It's a reminder of how serious our addiction can be. I've heard of people getting killed because of our addiction. This is a serious thing and to hear what other people go through always brings me back to how blessed I am to have this program and that I'm grateful for what I have.

So, with that, I'll say thank you so much for letting me share and thank you for sharing.

"Thank you so much Dean.

"The meeting is now open for sharing. Shares are two minutes.

MIRA

One of the gifts of hearing people's shares in a getting current meeting is that it makes me feel more a part of real life. I loved what you said about being human. I want to know everything. I really related to the feeling of going into a meeting feeling like, oh my gosh, everything is terrible and then hearing what fellows are going through.

It gives you that perspective and it makes you feel that you are not alone. I really liked what you said about when you get current that can really help people because sometimes I feel really guilty about getting current especially if the meeting is on a theme like if it's a Traditions meeting or a Steps meeting. Sometimes I don't want to reflect, I just want to talk about what's been going on with me recently. For me to get current now, I've been sober dating, which I kind of hate. There have been five gentlemen who have expressed an interest. And I'm like, "What the f? Where did you come from? Why is this happening?" And I'm not really massively physically attracted. But they seem to be my equal or they have an interest we're sharing. It really feels like work, like

exercising that muscle being interested, being fine when they don't want to see you again, saying, "Thank you for the lovely day and good luck." It doesn't hurt. I feel like my wings are made of steel now. I really don't like it. I enjoy the good moments like when you have a good laugh or go on a walk together and experience the beauty. It makes me see how judge-y I am. Thank you for your share. Next up is Jay.

JAY

Hi Jay, sex and love addict. I'm seeing people who are clearly in sunshine and I've identified where they are from and getting sun. So, I'm feeling some jealousy. And the message at the bottom of my screen says, "The sleet will stop soon." (laughter). That's my good news for today. I appreciate getting current more and more the longer I am in the program. I really appreciate everything that I've heard today because it's so valuable. I realize in some form that I need to get current regularly. I need to say to somebody, particularly people who are in the program, "Here's where I am today," particularly with my addiction but on anything in life. "Here's where I am right now," first of all because I

would not have defaulted to that full disclosure like that. My default would have been to clam up. Second of all, it's a tool for recovery. But I also realized it *is* recovery. It's not just a tool of recovery, it's evidence of recovery. The fact that I will do that, will take stock of myself which is necessary. To share where I am I have to recognize where I am and then share it. It's a tool but it's also an act of recovery. I appreciate the reminders and I'm going to pass.

ARI

Ari, sex, love, fantasy addict. Hi everyone. I'm in sunshine and I'm extremely tired and so the thought that I want to go lay down is a weird thought. Back in April of 2022 we signed a three month lease to be here in Southern California and it happened. I'm so grateful. It was spectacular. Three days after our arrival we ended up at the emergency vet with one of our dogs who had gotten cactus thorns in his eye. He's okay. Always an adventure. Because I don't have a schedule it's hard to say I can make it to this meeting. I know I need one meeting a week. I was really hoping for meetings in person here. The two meetings that are local have not

gone back to in person. I'm here for three months but the thought of opening my mouth and asking local people to meet with me, feels like too much energy. I love my in person meetings that I have at home in the Jersey, Pennsylvania area. So for now I'm going to do Zoom meetings as much as I can. Thank you for this meeting. Even though I am tired, I'm glad that I can be present with all of you, it's something that I need.

RACHEL

I am Rachel, I'm a grateful sex, love and fantasy addict. Yes, this idea of getting current: Thank you Dean for your share. I agree with what others said, getting current is a type of emotional availability. I've been taking classes on how to be more relational. What we focus on in being relational is present moment awareness — what is happening for me right in this moment. And we also say the body is in the present moment but the mind is off in the future or the past. And that helps me focus on my heart, my breathing, my feelings, my emotions, my present moment. Getting current helps me feel connected to other people, to know what's going on with

them. It keeps me honest. It is a little inventory of what's happening in this moment. I'm also talking to several people in sober dating. I'm judging them. I want to avoid them. There's one who's a little unavailable and that feels kind of "crack-tack-ular" for me and I'm like, "All right, I still need this program." One day at a time. I get phone calls from sponsees which is great. Thank you for letting me share.

KIMBERLY

Hi Kimberly, sex and love and fantasy addict. Hi everyone, so great to see you all. Thank you, Dean for your share. I heard some helpful things during the meeting and it made me think about how I've used my own stance of feeling safe or not in getting current on how honest I can be in the meeting. I need to understand if a meeting is safe for me or not which can include if I have feelings for someone in the meeting. Getting current, this last week has been hard for me after the holidays which were fabulous. I did have a lot of energy spent with people I love and connecting with them. But I kind of overdid it. I had a houseguest and forgot to take care of myself. So this week,

after the holidays are over, it's a let down. I wasn't in a great space. I fell back into some old love addict patterns of seeking attention. I'm just trying to get back to self-care. I finally made the decision to stop dating altogether. I need to be there for myself. I'm so grateful for doing the Steps in ACA. It's helping me learn how to be there for myself. And it's helping me deepen my worth in S.L.A.A.

which is still my home group. I know I need to be here. And I'm so grateful that I know I can come back to meetings.

The meeting ended with a 10 minute meditation.

French Share: Mon témoignage

Trigger warning: some may be triggered by references to childhood abuse.

Je suis resté 21 ans avec la première jeune femme qui a bien voulu de moi pour une histoire « sérieuse ». Au fil du temps et à travers cette relation, j'ai découvert « la volupté » du sexe. Cette femme avait beaucoup plus d'expériences dans ce domaine que moi.

Lorsque j'avais des relations sexuelles, j'avais la sensation de me shooter, de me droguer,

une explosion se produisait en moi, et j'en voulais toujours plus. Je souhaitais performer, contrôler ma femme afin qu'elle devienne dépendante de moi dans ce domaine. Je la considérais inconsciemment comme une prostituée. Elle était aux services de mes fantasmes. Le sexe était devenu un dû et ma femme était un self-service sexuel.

Pour cette femme, je me suis mis en danger physiquement, financièrement, psychologiquement et

spirituellement.

Finalement, elle est partie, me laissant deux adolescents à charge, une maison en construction en chantier, des crédits, des dettes considérables et une dépression morbide.

Cette femme était à la fois mon cauchemar et ma raison de vivre.

J'étais à deux doigts de me flinguer et de tuer toute ma famille. Dans un dernier appel au secours, j'ai contacté une réunion DASA à une centaine de km de chez moi.

Pendant des mois, en réunion, je pleurais. Je pouvais uniquement entendre les caractéristiques et certaines étapes. Les témoignages de rétablissement dans les conventions et congrès de différentes fraternités m'ont aidé. Puis le programme m'a travaillé. La capitulation et le travail des étapes peu à peu m'ont révélé le déni qui entourait ma vie depuis 41 ans : les violences de mon enfance dans une famille dysfonctionnelle au niveau relationnel, sexuel et vis-à-vis de l'alcool.

Dans l'attraction sexuelle, sensuelle, dans cette beauté irrésistible, il y avait quelque chose d'insupportable.

C'est comme si les abus, traumatismes passés ne me donnaient pas la dignité d'y avoir droit.

Alors, dans un premier temps, je m'exclus du droit de vivre ; puis par réaction, par colère, par revanche je me sers, je prends un shoot et je m'anesthésie.

J'anesthésie la mauvaise estime de moi-même, la profonde honte de ne pas avoir été celui, celle qui était attendu(e) par les autres et surtout par moi-même à différents carrefours de ma vie. Ça a l'air contradictoire mais c'était ma réalité !

Pour être plus clair, je me souviens régulièrement de cette anecdote : j'ai environ 8 ans, et après l'école je vais jouer au foot sur un terrain vague avec les copains. Je me prends pour Platini, Zico et j'entends l'angélus, quel beau nom n'est-ce pas pour évoquer les cloches qui tintent !

C'est l'heure de revenir, c'est environ 19h. Je fais un petit détour pour retrouver mon frère et rentrer avec lui. Il est 19h05, tout au plus 19h10. Ma mère nous attend sur le pas de la porte avec une branche, un rejet d'arbre auquel elle a enlevé les feuilles. Elle nous demande de passer, certainement nous dit

que nous sommes en retard et avons tort. J'ai peur de passer. Je n'aime pas ce coup de fouet sur mes jambes nues ou sur mon dos. Parfois je passe vite pour esquiver mais elle me coince ensuite dans le salon. Parfois, je passe en même temps que mon frère aîné et c'est lui qui prend le coup, les coups. Il me protège.

Aujourd'hui, je me rends compte de la confusion qui s'est construite en moi : Le moment de plaisir sain (foot entre copains) s'associe à l'humiliation (un coup de fouet). C'est l'histoire de ma vie ! Chaque fois que je m'autorisais un beau moment, une belle rencontre, une réussite professionnelle, j'avais besoin de la saboter avec un shoot, alcool, drogue, travail, projets démesurés, sexe dysfonctionnel.

Dans le passé, je ne me suis jamais senti reconnu et accueilli au sein de ma famille, dans mes relations amoureuses, dans ma profession. J'ai toujours eu l'impression de jouer un rôle, d'être un « Monsieur » Bovary

qui fantasmait sa vie au lieu de la vivre.

Aujourd'hui, par la grâce de DIEU, ma vie se transforme chaque jour dans tous les domaines : Une grande partie de mes dettes est réglée, mon attitude addictive dans mon travail s'est transformée en progrès professionnel, mes relations avec mes proches s'améliorent et j'expérimente une relation amoureuse saine, choisie consciemment, en étant accompagné par mon parrain et les amis du programme. Ma priorité reste le programme en 12 étapes et ma relation à ma Puissance Supérieure.

Ma PS, le service, être filleul, être parrain, le travail des étapes, le lien avec les amis, les appels soutiennent mon rétablissement et je peux voir à quel point dans le passé, mes blessures dirigeaient ma vie.

Je suis infiniment reconnaissant pour le chemin parcouru et l'espoir du chemin à parcourir.

— FABIEN 28/04/21

English Share: My testimony

Trigger warning: some may be triggered by references to childhood abuse.

I stayed 21 years with the first young woman who wanted me for a "serious" story. Over time and through this relationship, I discovered "the voluptuousness" of sex. This woman had much more experience in this area than I did.

When I had sex, I felt like I was on a high, on drugs, an explosion was going on inside me, and I always wanted more. I wanted to perform, to control my wife so that she would become dependent on me in this area. I unconsciously thought of her as a prostitute. She was at the service of my fantasies. Sex had become a given and my wife was a sexual self-service.

For this woman, I put myself in danger physically, financially, psychologically and spiritually.

Eventually, she left, leaving me with two teenagers to support, a house under construction, credits, considerable debts and a morbid depression. This woman was both my

nightmare and my reason for living. I was this close to shooting myself and killing my whole family. In a final cry for help, I contacted a DASA meeting about 100 km from my home.

For months, in meetings, I cried. I could only hear the features and some steps. Testimonies of recovery at conventions and conventions of various fellowships have helped me. Then the program worked for me. Surrender and working through the Steps gradually revealed to me the denial that had surrounded my life for 41 years: the violence of my childhood in a dysfunctional family in relational, sexual and alcoholic terms.

In the sexual, sensual attraction, in this irresistible beauty, there was something unbearable.

It's like past abuse, trauma doesn't give me the dignity to be entitled to it.

So, initially, I exclude myself from the right to live; then by reaction, by anger, by revenge I use myself, I take a

shot and I anesthetize. I anesthetize the low self-esteem, the deep shame of not having been the one expected by others and especially by myself at different crossroads in my life. It sounds contradictory but it was my reality!

To be clearer, I regularly remember this anecdote: I am about 8 years old, and after school I go play football on a vacant lot with my friends. It's amazing!

It's time to go home. My mother is waiting on the doorstep with a branch, a sprout from which she has removed the leaves. She asks us to pass, certainly tells us that we are late and wrong. I'm afraid to pass. I don't like this whiplash on my bare legs or on my back. Sometimes I pass quickly to dodge but then she corners me in the living room. Sometimes I pass at the same time as my older brother and he is the one who takes the hit, the hits. He protects me. Today, I realize the confusion that has built up in me: The moment of healthy pleasure (football between friends) is associated with humiliation (a whiplash). It's the story of my life! Every time I allowed myself a good moment, a good meeting, a professional suc-

cess, I needed to sabotage it with a shot, alcohol, drugs, work, excessive projects, dysfunctional sex.

In the past, I never felt recognized and welcomed within my family, in my romantic relationships, in my profession. I always had the impression of playing a role, of being a "Monsieur" Bovary who fantasized his life instead of living it.

Today, by the grace of GOD, my life is transformed every day in all areas: A lot of my debts are settled, my addictive attitude in my work has transformed into professional progress, my relationships with my loved ones have improved. I experience a healthy, consciously chosen love relationship, accompanied by my sponsor and the friends of the program. My priority remains the Twelve-Step program and my relationship to my Higher Power.

Service, being a sponsee, being a sponsor, step work, connecting with friends, and outreach calls support my recovery and I can see how in the past my wounds ruled my life. I am infinitely grateful for the path traveled and the hope of the road ahead.

— FABIAN 04/28/21

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.

