

# theJournal



Issue # 203

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~ABM ISSUE~

Self-Love as a Tool in Recovery

# 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 and Proofreaders

Dear Reader,

When I was compiling and editing this issue of *the Journal*, I was very aware of the topic of self-love. I listened for it in every meeting I went to. And through the shares in meetings and in this issue of *the Journal*, I saw that true sobriety and serenity can be maintained by having self-love. When I came to S.L.A.A. 25 years ago, my reserve of self-love was non-existent. Perfectionism made the self-criticizing voices in my head play on a loop. I recorded those voices in my childhood whenever anyone chastised me for “doing it wrong.” S.L.A.A., Higher Power, and therapy helped me turn those voices into accepting, loving voices.

This issue on self-love does the same. I hope you enjoy it.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

Dear Reader,

This is one of my favorite *Journals*. I’ve already put into practice some of the tips writers submitted. I’ll be referring to this again in the future. Thank you to all who submitted articles and answers to the question of the day for this issue.

Chris, Proofreader, *the Journal*

Dear Reader,

As I was commenting to Lisa, I almost missed the deadline for proofreading this issue as I was at an area assembly for my other Twelve-Step program.

Though I went fairly quickly through this issue with my little speech bubbles (proofreading marks), I especially appreciate the offerings from diverse continents and countries.

The Question of the Day always strikes me with the various ways people can say a lot with a few words.

Grateful for the opportunity,

Beth L., Proofreader, *the Journal*

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, Self-Love as a Tool in Recovery — “How have you learned to love yourself? Combatting insecurity, self-sabotage, and self-destructiveness.” 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 #204 —Sept/Oct — Messages of Recovery — “What is your go-to passage from Twelve-Step literature, recovery slogan or saying when things are tough and why?” Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2023. And #205 — Nov/Dec — The Struggle with Aging — “How have you dealt with staying sober while aging? (For example: feelings of running out of time; taking time off of dating when you are in the years of wanting children; feeling like you are losing your vitality or good looks as you wait.)” — Sept. 15, 2023. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

“How have you learned to love yourself?  
Combatting insecurity, self-sabotage, and  
self-destructiveness.”

Service has taught me about what I love to do and am passionate about. It has truly helped me to have the confidence to have self-love.

— ARI F., NJ

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Relax and separate yourself from the judge that claims space inside your thoughts.

— JAMES B., SALT LAKE CITY, UT



## Question of the day

Using bottom- and top-line behaviours. First, working with my sponsor since I had no idea what they were at first. Today I know and can control my well-being by minimizing bottom-line behaviour and optimizing top-line behaviour.

— DAYA, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

My Higher Power teaches me how to love myself most of the time through trial and error because of self-will. Higher Power is love, to me, and helps me learn and accept that I'm good enough and loved beyond my wildest dreams.

— BECCA M., RI

One of the ways I've learned to love myself is by creating space for myself to feel emotions I've previously ignored or pushed down. Whenever I feel insecure or have feelings of self-sabotage or self-destructiveness, I sit with them for an hour or so to process them.

— GIL H., WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA

I learned to love myself first by letting others in recovery love me. As I allowed this, the acceptance and love I received dissolved my shame and isolation. Thank you S.L.A.A.! I've never had it so good!

— SUSAN G., HUNTINGTON BEACH

## Question of the day

I have learned to give my inner child a name and also to give myself in recovery a name. My recovering self is reparenting my inner self when she is upset, angry, in denial, or anything or any emotion that is not in alignment with how I wish to present in the world. I also remembered my Higher Power has always loved me.

— SUZANNE D., SAN ANTONIO, TX

I believe it is all about self-acceptance and accepting all our so-called flaws and addictive behaviors. To combat the insecurities, I self-parent myself and give myself the support that I didn't receive until now. To help with self-sabotage and self-destructiveness, I use meditation to help separate those thoughts and impulses from my healthy adult who makes my decisions. I can self-parent and soothe those impulses to get my needs met instead of acting out.

— ANONYMOUS

I haven't yet. I am trying to manage this, each and every day. However, right now my addiction is getting the better of me.

— ANONYMOUS

I've learned to love myself by making my hobbies and self-care fit into my schedule instead of "making it work" with a partner in a relationship. By letting go of the idea of finding the perfect man, my schedule is open to having more time for myself.

— LIZ, BOSTON

## Question of the day

Connection to others has been invaluable to me. When I came into S.L.A.A., I found out that intimacy is actually an emotional connection with another. I learned from members in my home group how to befriend myself, engage in liking myself, and then learning to love myself. It has required a good deal of action: feeding myself healthy meals, getting a healthy amount of sleep, and giving myself time with people who acknowledge, accept, and give me approval. I have learned to practice treating me as I would treat the person I most respect in the world (Neil Armstrong) and use that as a tool to help me to act my way into a new way of thinking. I ask others how they learned to love themselves and use their experience, strength, and hope to inform my next right action. The last thing that has helped me is to remember that any work is worth it, that I will eventually receive the gifts that come from practicing recovery.

— CHRISTOPHER G., LARGO, FL

Trying to see what serves me and what doesn't. That has been and is still a challenge. To listen to my needs and distinguish what I need. To feel all my emotions and try to express them through creativity, dance, meditation and working with my bottom lines! And not be too harsh on myself when I fail. Try again, fail better! Be grateful for my progress. Try to see the progress. Learn to see thoughts or fantasies as something behind the curtain. What is actually happening right now!

— ANONYMOUS

## Question of the day

The ways I practice self-love:

- ◆ pause and meditate and ask for guidance from my Higher Power- especially when I make mistakes.
- ◆ listen to gratitude meditations and focus on that.
- ◆ take loving actions suggested by my Higher Power, through prayer and outreach with fellows.
- ◆ rest when I am tired.
- ◆ self-care.
- ◆ cook for myself.
- ◆ do laundry.
- ◆ Vision boards 🍀😊

— FATOU, DAKAR, SENEGAL

I haven't. It's a core wound.

— ANONYMOUS, ND

Talk to myself when things get tough. Being kind to myself and sometimes removing myself out of the anxiety and hugging myself.

Trying to eat better and keep an active routine. Enjoying baths.

— ANONYMOUS

Respecting time and knowing God can cut the cord at any moment. To have a purpose to represent the best version of truth I can obtain. To want to live a meaningful life.

—CHARLES, LOS ANGELES

## Question of the day

Admitting powerlessness over my disease then being honest with God of my own understanding about what I'm experiencing. For example: shame— telling God that I'm experiencing shame. I then ask God to remove it from me. For me, all of these things are coming up because I'm triggered in some way. Then I do some follow up actions depending on the situation. These may be: reading literature, doing Step work, calling up my sponsor or outreach people and praying for guidance about the situation. After some of these -when I see the situation clearer- I take the appropriate action to the situation where my disease flared up.

— MIKLOS, HUNGARY

Prayer, working the Steps, outreach, service and journaling.

— ANONYMOUS

Staying disciplined and learning to say no to the wrong things and yes to the right things, even against past behavior and habits. Learning the difference through taking a self-inventory of past events that caused unhappiness or vice-versa.

Say yes to things I don't want to do, do service for others, protect my time, learn to say no, do things alone, introspect, pray, write in a journal, find time to manage my time, do things that serve my purpose, love, help others.

— CHARLES, LOS ANGELES

# Mirror Talk



In S.L.A.A. I've learned some new techniques by which to better express love for myself.

One of these techniques is "mirror talk". This is where once a day I look at myself, right in the eyes, in my bathroom mirror, and tell myself that "I love you".

Another action I do is wrap my arms around me every day and give myself a hug.

It seems "hokey", but every grain of love I can send my own way may help "the cause." It may make it a little less likely that I look for sex and love in an addictive manner.

One grain at a time if need be.

Another action I take is that when I identify myself at S.L.A.A. meetings, I don't say, "I am a sex and love addict." Instead, I say, "I'm a grateful member of this program with the disease of sex and love addiction."

There's no right way or wrong way to "qualify", but I've found that, for me, it is important to separate myself from my disease. I am not my disease. I am a person who has a disease, I am more than my disease. Verbalizing this is an act of love and compassion toward myself. Can you

imagine if I was at a social gathering and I was introducing a loved one by saying, "Hi, this is my diabetic. This is my arthritic. This is my schizophrenic. This is my alcoholic?" This doesn't seem to be particularly loving, compassionate or respectful. Giving myself the same verbal consideration as I would

another loved one is an act of love directed at myself.

We are not bad people trying to be good.

We are not stupid people trying to be smart.

We are sick people trying to be well. And that is worthy of love and consideration. I need to have my words reflect that.

— STEVE

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## Self-Love in Action

I did not know until I joined S.L.A.A. what was going on inside of me. The shame, fear, anger, and sadness, drove me to act out. I didn't think my sex and relationship life was a problem. What brought me out of that nightmare was taking some steps towards self-love.

1. Affirmations. First time ever. I was told to say these in front of a mirror. For that reason, I used the bathroom because I was afraid I was going to vomit. These helped me see how often I had negative self-talk.

2. Community. If I learned anything from retiring just before the pandemic, I need community (including family and friends). I told my spouse that if I'm ever in a challenging time like that again to tell me to go to daily meetings. I went to meetings but needed more.

3. Exercise. I've been pretty good about taking care of my body (if you don't count anonymous sex). I was too scared to play sports as a boy but it turns out I like healthy physical activity. Exercise remains a critical aspect of my

self-care.

4. Health and dental care. I'm 67 years old and my need for doctor and dental visits is only increasing if I want to be able to enjoy my life.

5. Intellectual stimulation. After being semi-retired for a couple of years, I went back to my former employer part-time. The intellectual challenges have really helped me feel good.

6. Meditation and prayer. The last place I wanted to be was alone with myself. But trying to meditate helped me accept myself as I am and grow. It's still a critical part of my daily life. Asking my HP for help through prayer always makes me feel better and improves my relationship with that power.

7. Meetings. I'm in another fellowship and I definitely need that program. However, that addiction doesn't talk to me as much as this one. I need to be reminded who I am and of the consequences of acting out – a lot. Meetings help.

8. Service. I'd love to say I do service because I'm kind-hearted but it's really because I can't take the chance of acting out. Plus, I can't thank S.L.A.A. enough for what I believe is some sanity in my life.

9. Steps. The Steps are the cure. I incorporate the Steps in my daily life. The most important word in my life is "powerless." The most important concept in my life is a higher power. I say the Third and Seventh Step prayers throughout the day. I look within to see what's happening with me and share it.

Last, but never least, is fun. I was told by someone when I was new that if I don't have fun, there's a higher chance of acting out. So, I enjoy reading, theater, movies, laughing, walking, mystery shows, the Wordle, Worldle, and Artle!

Bottom line is that self-love is where it's at for me and keeps me sober. Never thought I'd be saying that.

— CHRIS



## Love is a Verb

I spent nine years in another program before I came to S.L.A.A., and I worked it! But I still did not learn to love myself. My relationship with myself was one of criticism, fixing, and nitpicking. Love is a verb, as it turns out. When I put down my S.L.A.A. addictive behavior, I had nowhere to hide from the pain of my low self-esteem.

I was left with no other options. I had to fill my own cup and meet my own needs for attention and validation. I gave myself loving attention by practicing body scan meditation and mirror work. (I know. Boring!) But I love

myself today and if you want what she has, do what she did. I also did affirmations out loud. I said: "I validate myself. I approve of myself," and iterations of that. It changed me. It changed my brain. It worked. I learned to give myself the love and approval I craved my whole life. Attention is love and now anytime an addictive thought comes up, I treat my addict like a tiny, vulnerable, needy child that I love. And I shower her with attention, curiosity, and care. I validate her feelings and care for her needs. I am so loved today by the real, adult ME!

— RACHEL W., LOS ANGELES, CA

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## Self-Love is Real

In active addiction, I thought I was loving myself by assuring myself that my behaviour was 'not as bad as' the be-

haviour of others I (conveniently) compared myself to. The part of myself that genuinely loved myself and

wanted to stop was buried beneath a lesser, more addictive form of self-love that soothed myself by assuring myself that I would be able to stop or manage or hide or cope. Now in recovery, self-love is deeper and more real. It can look like not being too hard on myself, but it can also look like challenging myself to do the things I need to do to flourish. In recovery, and within the safety and loving embrace of “the

care of God as I understand God” I can have enough security to challenge myself, enough courage to sabotage my addiction (rather than my recovery), and enough wisdom to build healthy habits rather than be destructive. It's not always comfortable, and it sure isn't perfect, but it works when I work at it.

— ANONYMOUS, AUCKLAND NZ

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## Surrender Helped Me Find Self-Love

I went through a deep withdrawal during the first eight months of beginning S.L.A.A. and a large part of this experience involved sitting with the pain of accepting that I hated myself. Somehow, through 1) surrendering to this truth, rather than doing everything I could to fix it, and 2) praying to my Higher Power to teach me to be my own loving and nurturing parent, I started to love myself. Surrendering to self-loathing

was the start of growing true self compassion. Today I am consistently amazed by the compassion and love that I feel for myself and others. It all came from giving up my relentless pursuit of love and self-love practices, instead surrendering to and trusting in the program and my Higher Power. Loving myself is accepting myself and allowing myself to be in an intimate relationship with my Higher Power.

— ROOSJE, LONDON

# Many Walls of Denial Needed to Crumble



I thought I loved myself. I had been painstakingly practicing self-love for a decade. It wasn't until I entered S.L.A.A. recovery that I discovered that I truly didn't. There were many walls of denial that needed to crumble before I got to the root of my self-hatred, self-abandonment, and deeply held beliefs that I was fundamentally broken and a burden on others. In recovery, I discovered how powerful my inner critics were.

Although I had been working to shrink my inner critics for nine years prior to entering S.L.A.A., they became very

loud as I became more and more sober. Slowly over a period of the first six months of recovery, my bottom lines list evolved and grew. With no acting out behaviors and strategies left to use, I was finally faced with the depths of my fear, self-loathing, complex PTSD, grief, anger, traumatic memories, emotional flashbacks, and every emotion in between.

God has been with me all along. God led me to the right teachers and healers to help me see the truth of my trauma and sex, love, fantasy and codependent addictions. Early

in recovery, through medical help, I was able to learn the origins of my addictions that rooted when I was a child. I was also miraculously able to somatically (i.e., in my body) connect with my inner child. I attempted to connect with her for many years, as is the trend in therapy and psychology, but only got so far as connecting intellectually.

With medical help and a skilled healer, I felt my little one for the first time in my life. I felt how precious and brilliant she was for creating strategies to stay alive and feel good. That solidified my recovery as I vowed to remain sober and abstain from acting out sexually and emotionally for her and all my sacred parts. Out of that healing work, I began to truly forgive myself and be forgiven by my little ones.

In recovery, I have felt deeply that I am a mother and a child simultaneously. Although I have never given birth biologically, through S.L.A.A. recovery (meetings, outreach with recovery sisters, and working the one-two-step program with my sponsor) and somatic-based therapies (EMDR and IFS) for my complex PTSD, I have been able to

learn how to be a nurturing, protective, and loving guide to myself. Knowing that I am caring for a child who is exploring, learning, and growing slowly, who needs consistency, stability, and a calm nervous system, I've been able to show up for myself with tons of compassion, gentleness, and curiosity. I am literally learning how to be a good mom to myself and because it is of utmost importance to be a good mom, I am able to soothe and comfort myself in healthy ways.

S.L.A.A. recovery has been miraculous and vital to this parenting journey. Early in recovery with the help of my first sponsor, I began praying daily for God to relieve me of my self-will and destructive life strategies so that I may heal and better do His Will. Through working the Steps, I finally understood and experienced a healthy partnership; the one I have with God. We are co-parents to my precious parts. I turn to God to help me be compassionate, a better listener to my little ones, and to be slow and gentle in life. I check in daily, multiple times a day, with God and my little ones. I ask them what they need and go from there. They are worthy

of love, no matter what I learned throughout my life to the contrary.

I collaborate with them, and life has become more fun, mysterious, sweet, and playful. I feel safer in my body and because I truly care about taking care of myself for the first time in my life, I make more healthy life choices. I feel safe exercising. It feels good to stretch, drink more water, dance, sing, garden, and spend time with caring friends. These activities were not as accessible to me as I spent most of my time acting out, fantasizing, escaping reality to numb pain and chase pleasure, and punishing myself. Now I ask "what would be good for my kid? What kinds of food are good for her? How do we want to play today? What does she want to learn? What does she love?" I am learning to trust myself and my little ones are starting to trust me. We are all feeling safer in the world. It's huge!

I'm finally caring for something greater than myself and it's worth the hardship and unraveling of my entire life. As I care for and love myself daily, I am more aware of the ways I sometimes want to punish myself. I feel all my feelings and

gently find ways to soothe myself in healthy ways. I am no longer interested in acting out. When I'm in pain, I turn to God and inward. I turn to my sisters, sponsor, and friends to help me sort things out.

Most importantly, I remember that it's ok to make mistakes. When I do, I remember that I can still keep trying. I can be honest and make amends whenever necessary. Making mistakes and subsequently genuine amends temper the inner critics and addict within me.

It is with forgiveness that I love myself. It is through committing to reality, to this present moment, that I love myself. It is through turning my will over to God and letting Him love and guide me that I love myself. It is through facing fear, advocating for myself, asking for what I need from others, setting boundaries, and leaving unsafe relationships and situations that I love myself. The road is very long and I am very new to recovery. Yet, it has been the greatest gift of healing and love I have ever given myself and I'm going to keep going forever.

— SOPHIA, PORTLAND, OR

# Growth in Self-Love

Over the many years I've been in recovery, the last four years have been the most growth in the area of self-love and combating self-sabotage. It happened somewhat gradually over time as I implemented many different new tools such as meditation which allowed me to release a lot of my negative mental chatter that had been subconsciously dictating the negative outcomes in my life.

Slowly, as I learned to re-program myself towards a more self-loving self-talk, I was able to rediscover things that I used to love that I hadn't been doing such as art and writing and even rediscover entirely new hobbies like learning about herbalism and how to use natural remedies and food as another source of self-care and love.

In 2020, I got into S.L.A.A. but it wasn't until this year that I really committed to it again because I could see how I was still struggling with how to maintain that level of self-love since my codependency took a lot of my me time from me. S.L.A.A. was the final piece

that I needed in my recovery to help me realize that I was completely allowed to focus entirely on me. I could do the things I love and not feel guilty that I had to set bottom lines about which people were not in alignment with my growth. I couldn't be happier about this decision I made to commit to S.L.A.A. I am 30 years old and about to turn 31 and my entire 20s were filled with so much terrible sex and love addiction and other addictions and all the pain that comes with that.

I am at a point in my life where I have so many tools in my toolkit that I can see and even feel how endless my potential is when I just allow myself the freedom and the nurturing to grow. I am so excited to continue the rest of my life committed to my recovery so I can help others struggling with a lot of the same issues and show them that not only is there hope, but there is also a life waiting for you that is beyond your wildest dreams and it all starts with you loving yourself from the inside out.

— ALISSA, NORTH HOLLYWOOD

# Self Amends



Unoriginally, most of my amends in Step nine were self amends for forcing myself to try to become a 'product' that was non-rejectable. I was bullied at school and had a very avoidant dad so I arrived at S.L.A.A. with decades of programming and behaviour to be released. S.L.A.A. taught me how to know myself deeply, by discovering my patterns and to be compassionate towards myself as I went through the process of surrendering those that weren't helping me to love and

be loved. Now, when I am in danger of shame (which is the ultimate block to me loving myself) I give myself a cuddle around the waist, I tell myself 'it's understandable you feel...' and get in touch with how I'm feeling. Then I outreach, until I've processed the emotion and then if any action is needed, I take it. I also pray for assistance with the difficult emotion. The spiritual toolkit app is so helpful for all of this.

In the past, I would have turned that pain into a remod-

eling of myself. How could I be different? More attractive? More likable? Less repulsive? Now I know that I just have to sit in my feelings and not pick up my drug of self-shame and self-blame. Then obviously to

Let Go and Let God. Sometimes the answer to me loving myself is to trust and to know that everything that is happening is in some way 'perfect'.

— SHIREEN, LONDON

## Spiritual Practice is the Foundation

My spiritual practice is the foundation of my self-love. Each morning I do my best to do the following - a reading into a WhatsApp group from a spiritual text, a short period of journaling and then two-way prayer, then I meditate where I also pray to hand over the day to my Higher Power's guidance and to be helpful to others and to myself.

Sometimes I do an inner loving parent exercise, feeling what is happening with my breathing, my body and emotions and reassuring my inner child.

As a result of my medita-

tion, I am given a word for the day - today was "self-approval," yesterday "solid" and the day before "chance." Sometimes these words give me a little steer during the day.

The spiritual text I read often provides for me shorter meditations to do during the day. These are so helpful for me to feel my feelings, become calmer, and more still, and able to be responsive rather than reactive and resentful throughout the period that follows.

I listen to my mood throughout the day. I check in with myself - is what is hap-



pening right now  
“reasonable”? Am I over giving?  
Am I staying centred? Emotionally sober?  
What am I saying to myself?  
Am I being loving in my self-talk  
and in how I am responding and interacting  
with others?

I try to eat well - fresh unprocessed  
foods and avoiding sugar and sweet foods.  
Am I participating with others and getting  
enough social interaction? Am I awake to  
my work priorities, private financial  
priorities, communicating in my

dating world, sleeping regular hours,  
doing regular outreach calls, getting  
exercise in nature?

Have I been my own inner cheerleader  
today? Have I done something for  
someone else today? Have I arranged  
something I am looking forward to?

These are my ways of loving myself  
and staying useful to myself, my  
Higher Power and others.

— ANONYMOUS

## What Would Loving Myself Look Like Right Now?

I've learned to ask, “What would  
someone who loved herself do in this  
situation?” or “What would loving  
myself look like right now?” The  
answers seem so obvious when viewed  
from a third vs. first person  
perspective. Often those answers are,  
“Say no. Rest and recharge. Don't go  
there/do that,” or, “Put your own  
oxygen mask on first.” Loving myself  
looks like being

self- vs. other-focused — not  
selfish per se, but making sure my  
tank is full so that I can give from a  
place of ease and joy instead of  
depletion.

I have learned to love myself the  
“hard way” by first NOT loving  
myself. From that contrast has come  
a clear view of how self-hatred and  
self-sabotage appear. Whether with  
money, relationships, time or  
substances, NOT loving myself

feels like filling up on junk food and empty calories vs. cooking and eating a healthy, nourishing meal. NOT loving myself looks like a quick hit providing only instant gratification; loving myself sacrifices short term satisfaction for long-term sustainable gains. When

I over-extend, over-focus, over-function or obsess about others, I do so at my own expense. It's a price I'm not willing to pay anymore, because the gifts of loving myself are so rich: bounty, self-confidence, self-respect, and peace.

— DILLON, COLORADO

## Steps in the Right Direction

One day at a time I show up for myself by simply taking steps in the right direction all from a place of love. To love myself - defects and all, I see myself as a whole person, one who is loved and capable of love. With true self-love, trust, openness, a willingness to change - all of course with my HP around me, my old friends; insecurity, sabotage and self-destruction are slowly moving away and being replaced with respect for self, action, healthy choices and hope - a lot of hope. I'm now doing things I have literally been putting off for years; without self-love I

doubt my dreams would have turned into action with clear vision.

OK, the old friends tap me on the shoulder from time to time but today those scary depressed friendships only last a day or two. I send them on their way with love as they remind me of my addictions, how far I have come and my ability to love myself. On the days that self-love is hard I tell myself, "I like you." No matter how I feel I always connect with my programme and end my day with gratitude, all building me in self-love.

— ANONYMOUS

# Connecting More Deeply with Others and Myself

My ability to connect more deeply with others and build and re-build friendships (non-romantic relationships) helps me feel more secure, combats self-sabotage and is self-positive rather than self-destructive.

Firstly I am improving my connectedness with myself, awareness of, staying with my feelings, giving my self-love and approval, knowing I am doing my best, finding out about things like autism, so I have more self and other compassion; secondly I try to work less and have more time to relax (luckily am older with finances fairly well organised). I join local communities like choir and dance class, spend time with people without any agenda other than being with them and letting what happens happen. I call people I haven't called in a while.

As I write this last, I am aware that I did find this (calling people) very difficult for a while because my self-esteem was low and my shame

high. So a third thing, and possibly my first priority, is to do things to build self-esteem (I have increased a sense of self dignity through discipline in my eating through mild intermittent fasting; showing up for things and communicating when I am unable to show up, i.e., I treat myself, and more consistently expect others to treat me, as someone who matters).

When I have follow-up thoughts after a conversation with someone, I communicate those thoughts to them; I make efforts to be more generous with time, money and in my communication.

Reduction of shame comes in the same way as building self-esteem and also in noticing the feeling of shame when it comes up and realising that whatever engendered this feeling is nothing to be ashamed of, or not anymore. I let go of this feeling (after allowing myself to truly feel it) and I love and accept myself. I notice that others love me anyway. I am

more transparent with them.

When I move to connect with someone, I use my awareness and intuition as to how to do this. For example, with one old friend it will be a coffee and a fairly light conversation, I know it is not for me to expect more, and to limit the time, by warning in advance that I only have a limited time (and using alarms in my phone so I keep an awareness of time). With another person, I may need (in order to feel able to call) a particular purpose, i.e., a reason for the call, e.g., to explore a

local facility together which we may know we each have an interest in. What I mean here is that I use my awareness and intuition (I ask inner HP guidance) for how to set things up for success so that both I and the other person feel good. I am learning to send follow up messages. And I am learning to see that feelings of being too much or not being enough after a social interaction are just that - feelings. They pass. These are all ways I love myself more.

— ANONYMOUS

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## Being Kind to Myself

There is a photo of me on my mirror, I'm about seven years old and I'm holding my baby cousin and smiling for the camera...my eyes look completely dead. I remember exactly how this little girl felt about herself and the world around her. It's heartbreaking to know how deeply unhappy and lonely she was. Now it is

my absolute privilege to give her all the kindness, all the presence, and all the love she always deserved.

I talk to her every day using kind encouraging words, I dress her in nice clothes, I ask her how she is feeling and what I can do to make her happy. Sometimes we ride our bike fast through the woods, some-

times we hula hoop to great music, sometimes we feed the squirrels right from our hands. We jump in puddles and dance like lunatics, we get colorful and messy, and we sing at the top of our lungs. Sometimes we swim in rivers and have hot chocolate to warm up after. There is no end to the adventure and creativity my inner child brings to my life when she feels safe and free to fully express herself.

She is so unbelievably kind and understanding and holds real wisdom.

Once I was feeling really down, I'd been in my head and felt so overwhelmed so I just slept to avoid my feelings when I woke up I felt even worse so I decided to tune in and ask, "What's wrong?" and she said, "You kept me in bed all day and I wanted to see the sunshine." (This made me cry.) She teaches me what is good for me .

This little girl has brought so much joy to my life and to those around me since I started listening to her.

I tell her I love her every day that she is the very best part of me and I try my best to parent her the very best way I can.

We brush our teeth and shower everyday now, we don't drink alcohol or take drugs or act out as it makes her feel unsafe. I am waiting for someone who can love her as much as I do and until that time comes, we always have each other, and we are both very happy about that.

Connecting with my inner child has been the most beneficial healing practice for me.

I get to give myself all the love, all the fun, all the attention and validation instead of being reliant on others.

— ANONYMOUS

# What is Love?



How have I learned to love myself?

Did I not love myself from the beginning? Is it not self-love that in my childhood I was

dreaming of being a successful entrepreneur in my future?

Is it not self-love that I used erotic movies for learning about man-women relation-

ship and started to dream about having an engaging and passionate relationship?

Is it not self-love that I used porn for disrupting my painful feelings or my feeling of loneliness? Is it not love when I tried to kill myself to stop my unbearable anxiety?

Do you not want to stop the suffering of your loved ones? I did. I wanted to stop the suffering.

But the basic instincts worked, and I continued to live and the suffering continued as well.

Later I made a decision: suicide is not an option.

So who is I who loves and who is Me, the loved one?

And what is love?

These questions were rolling in my mind over and over day by day in the past twelve years, since my last attempt to stop living my life to abort the suffering.

A famous physicist said: "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding."

I worked on understanding myself. Empathy became my flagship.

Trying to understand my feelings deeper and deeper. Be with myself in my pain and in my tiredness and in my highest moments, too... And failing

and trying again.

And crying again and again. Several times because of pain, sometimes because of happiness.

And as the picture became cleaner and cleaner, I became more and more peaceful and serene.

Then I started to be myself freely, without shame. And do the things as Me.

And I started to look for positive affirmations from others and from myself.

It is astonishing to hear: "The world is a good place, because there are people like you."

"You help me because you are present," 12 years after trying to commit suicide, and while I still lived with self-harming thoughts.

The self-harming thoughts have faded away. I hope forever.

Grief also belongs to love. We mourn our loved ones who are gone. Even if they didn't do any service for us. We had an attachment between us. And the bond has come to an end.

Sometimes we need to mourn some parts of ourselves which we left behind.

Nowadays I am in deep grief. I mourn my insecure and self-destructive part.

— ROBERT, BUDAPEST

# Being Part of the Fellowship is a Powerful Tool

Coming to S.L.A.A. meetings and being part of the fellowship of this program has been the most powerful tool in combatting insecurity, self-sabotage and self-destructiveness for me.

Even when I was working my Steps with a sponsor, the feelings of insecurity would only worsen. I would want to back out of the program and return to old, isolating, self-injuring behaviors.

When I would go to an S.L.A.A. meeting, whether online or in person, I would have the courage to share about these experiences. I realized that my journey and struggles were seen as courageous by others, and I would have the strength to keep going in my recovery. I started to feel more fear as I worked through the Steps and moved towards an even scarier step-- dating! Dating in a healthy, sober way was only bearable because I

realized that whether I had a positive or disastrous experience, I still had a good story of "showing up for life sober" to relay to my S.L.A.A. home group.

The more I "practiced" dating for myself and my group, the more I was able to gain self-confidence and shed the insecurity that clung to me like my own skin.

After months of dating slowly and soberly, I began to feel a sense of ownership of romantic relationships. No longer was I stuck in the chaos of high-stress, knee-jerk relationships, being attracted to people that any sane person would have recognized were not good long-term partners. I was able to show up for myself in this dating process and get to know what was a good fit for me, because I kept showing up for my S.L.A.A. group.

—ANONYMOUS



# Reaching Out for Love and Support



In my childhood, I experienced feeling empathy and connection with someone who was suffering in being abandoned and shamed by a parent while I was present.

That other child blamed me for his feelings and took it out on me physically. As a result, I internalized and turned that person's rage on myself. In recovery, I have had others reach out to me for support and I experienced their self-love in

reaching out to me, a random stranger, to express their feelings and needs.

In the course of conversations like that, I felt empathy and connection with them, I learned things I hadn't known from them and felt self-love take hold in me, and I felt the need to reach out to them and others for love and support. I can also share this experience in meetings.

—PHILIP, LOS ANGELES



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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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