



# the Journal

Issue # 204

Single Issue \$4

*Messages of 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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## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “What is your go-to passage from Twelve-Step literature, recovery slogan or saying when things are

tough and why?” 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 #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.)” Deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2023. And #206 — Jan/Feb — Sponsoring “How has sponsoring helped you in recovery?” Deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2023. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

“What is your go-to passage from Twelve-Step literature, recovery slogan or saying when things are tough and why?”

Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man (person) that he (they) can get well regardless of anyone or anything. The only condition is that he (they) trust in God and clean house. A.A. Big Book, 5th Edition, page 98.

— CHRIS C., TORONTO

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My beneficent Power Greater Than Myself wants me to be happy, joyous, and free. So where am I getting in the way?

— GEORGE F., NJ

## Question of the day

There are two super important passages in A.A. literature that I love.

1st: "All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life."

2nd: "Burn into the consciousness of every man that he can get well, regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust God and clean house."

Today, I work on trusting God, cleaning house, whatever stands in the way of a closer relationship with my Higher Power. Thus, enlarging my spiritual life, I've learned that this is the most important thing I can do.

— SUSAN G., HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

One day at a time. I sometimes apply this as one second or one minute at a time. That gives me hope that whatever discomfort I'm feeling at the time will pass.

— CHRIS D., SAN DIEGO

S.L.A.A. Basic Text, page 100. "Our growing relationship with God... whatever life might throw at us." This paragraph serves as a great reminder that I am not alone, that I am loved and supported and never alone. It also speaks to the importance of a relationship with Higher Power, prayer and meditation.

My back-up page is 103, last paragraph. "We know, as we continue... chapters in well-being await us." This paragraph inspires me and gives me insurmountable hope.

— DEB W., CLEVELAND, OH



## Question of the day

But for the grace of God.  
This reminds me how I'm not always right and I can  
choose my suffering every day.

— DAYA, ICELAND

Acceptance prayer. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in  
God's world by mistake.

— LORI B., DALLAS

You are right where you're supposed to be.

— GIL H., WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA

Page 132, Big Book, middle of page, “We absolutely insist on  
enjoying life.” I love this emphatic focus and reminder.

— JUSTINE, LOS ANGELES

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Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I  
am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or  
situation— some fact of my life — unacceptable to me, and I can  
find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or  
situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be in this  
moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by  
mistake.

— ERIC D., PASADENA

## Question of the day

Just show up. Early in my recovery, filled with desperation and wanting to act out, I went to five meetings per day, all A's, until I found where I belonged.

— ALEX D, LA

Let go and let God. I tend to overdo things and often forget that my Higher Power can do what I cannot. I tend to push and push until I'm exhausted, thinking I have to hurry up and find solutions to all my problems.

— JENNIFER, LOS ANGELES

I loved the S.L.A.A. bracelets. My favorite had the words progress, not perfection on it. As a newly recovering sex and drug addict who always went on hookup websites seeking ads that read PNP (party and play), S.L.A.A. helped me to shift my perspective and make “progress not perfection” my new PNP.

— GLEN S13, HOLLYWOOD

We must meet ourselves. I was never able to access myself and through working the Steps, meetings, fellowship and sponsorship, I'm available to meet myself almost daily.

— PEGGY ROSE L., SAN DIEGO

## Question of the day

Thy will be done, not mine. We are all here to play the role God assigns. Lets me off the hook - lets things unfold as is. Helps me get into acceptance and to surrender all expectations and ideas of how things should be. Even lets me play the roles that I might not like.

— ANONYMOUS

### “Progress not Perfection”

Not perfection! In the depth of my addiction perfectionism was my nemesis. I had to have the perfect partner, the perfect job, the perfect friends, the perfect life.

My expectations were unrealistic I would act out or in depending on the unmet expectation. About two years into my recovery, I had a spiritual awakening; focusing on “Progress” would allow me to release the compulsion to have the “Perfect”. Understanding that my defects of character drove my perfectionism, making a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself showed me that maintaining a focus on “Progress” granted me serenity.

I still must fight having expectations where my life is not working: disturbances? Frustrations? Dishonesty? Unforgiving / Unforgiven? Secrets? All foster unmet expectations.

Turning these over to my Higher Power and being willing to be honest with myself and others will promote “Progress”. Having an “Attitude of Gratitude” for the life I have in recovery today drives my “progress”.

— MAX B.

## Question of the day

The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, the opposite of addiction is connection.

I like this slogan because it reminds me that I am healing through not isolating myself from my fellows. I get involved by talking at meetings even when I feel uncomfortable and by doing service. We cannot heal alone, we can heal together.

— IRENA S.

The Serenity Prayer because it focuses my attention on acceptance of what I can, and cannot, do.

— ANONYMOUS, SACRAMENTO

Intensity is not intimacy, because it helps me realize passion and infatuation are not love.

— ANONYMOUS, SACRAMENTO

“Don’t take things personally. “

In practicing letting go and detachment, this slogan has been very helpful. It brings me back full circle to the message of the serenity prayer of focusing on what I can change and not what I cannot change.

A big realization: do deal with what’s on my side of the street. Slowly a change of attitude takes place within, keeping me more fully and at ease being in the present moment.

— JEAN, ABIQUIU

## Question of the day

Trust God. Clean House. Help Others.; Thy Will, not mine be done; It Works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it; Easy does it; Let Go, Let God; Progress, not perfection.

—MIKLOS Z.

The Serenity Prayer, because it says it all  

— ANONYMOUS

Spot it and you got it. This slogan helps me to think about what part of my conscience is triggered by what I may resent, fear or feel ashamed about. It could be a family member or a stranger even and if I am getting restless, irritable or discontented, then it is my emotions that are causing most of the turmoil, few other people may just smile it away.

— DHAWAN, BENGALURU, INDIA

Don't stop before the miracle happens.

—ANONYMOUS

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Let go and let God (Good Orderly Direction)

— SARA

## Question of the day

What works for me in order,  
-Step three!  
-Humility & willingness.  
-Easy Does It, This Too Shall Pass, Let Go & Let God,  
More Will Be Revealed  
-Acceptance is the answer. (p417/420 of A.A. Big Book)  
-We simply could not know. There were no guarantees.  
(Chapter 4, S.L.A.A. Basic Text)  
-I forgive you, I accept you, I wish you well.. I release!  
-It's not always easy but it does gets better  
I say the above and many more whenever things get  
tough to redirect my thinking into a state of calmness so  
that I may continue to practice my altered attitude that I've  
gained from Recovery.

—ALTON, DUBAI

The Serenity Prayer, it reminds me that I am not alone and  
it gives me strength, peace and hope.

— TAMARA

Serenity Prayer.

Slogans: This too shall pass. One day at a time.

— ROB, NEWPORT BEACH

## Question of the day

The Serenity Prayer and the word “acceptance” has changed my life from S.L.A.A. In relation to this, I particularly identify with the passage on page 62 of the A.A.’s Big Book that reads, “First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn’t work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director.”. I have spent so much of my life thinking I could control things, rather than accepting things as they were. This has caused me much pain and played into my acting out. However, now, when things are tough, I know I need to rely on life to unfold the way that it wants to unfold, as there is much out of my control. I need to “accept the things I cannot change”, “have the courage to change the things I can” and rely on Higher Power.

— EMILY, LONDON

This too shall pass. One day at a time. Progress not perfection. Let go, let God. You are not alone.

— K.C., LOS ANGELES

God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can and the wisdom to know that one is me.

— HUNTER, LOS ANGELES

One day at a time. Don’t quit before the miracle. Call three fellows. Do the tools. Pray and meditate. Read the Withdrawal Chapter.

— CARA L., NEW YORK



# Learning How to Better Support My Wife



There are two pieces of recovery literature that I'm going to these days when things get tough in my relationship with my wife.

#1) Chapter three of our Basic Text, Sex and Love Addicts

Anonymous. This chapter, titled "Living With a Sex and Love Addict" is particularly important for me.

This is because the first time I read it, I couldn't identify with it at all. It was written by Kate, the spouse of

our founder, Rich. Chapters one & two of the Basic Text were Rich's story, and I could really identify with that. Chapter three was Kate's story.

Kate's story is so important for me because I need to internalize what it must have been like for my wife to process my addiction. My internalization of my wife's feelings is, I believe, essential for our relationship to survive. Kate's story is vital for the progression of my own recovery, and the repair of my relationship. I need to identify with what my wife is going through.

#2) Along the same "vein" is chapter eight in the A.A. Big Book, titled "To Wives".

Bill W wrote this for the spouses of those suffering from alcoholism.

My initial inclination was to take this chapter to my wife, saying "you need to read this, and do what Bill suggests!" This just further damaged my relationship.

What I've done with this particular chapter instead is to cross out the title "To Wives", and replaced it with the following title:

"To Steve: the husband of a spouse who qualifies for S-Anon."

S-Anon is for the loved ones of those who suffer from sex and love addiction.

Because of my addiction, my wife now qualifies for her own Twelve-Step program. It's not easy to live with anyone who qualifies for any Twelve-Step program. My wife qualifies because of me, because of the trauma that she experienced from my addiction.

That's the way I have to approach this chapter, not as a blueprint for how my wife can better support me. But, rather, as a blueprint for how I can better support my wife.

—STEVE, ONT., CANADA

# Share space

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## Recovery Meeting on the Topic of Withdrawal

*The following is an edited transcript of an S.L.A.A. meeting.*

This is the 8:00 PM recovery meeting and we're talking about topics that hopefully will be sent to *the Journal*. And our first topic is withdrawal. And who would like to start us off?

### **Mira**

OK. Hi, everybody. I'm Mira recovering sex and love addict. Withdrawal has really been on my mind today. I went to a really beautiful women's meeting this morning with a number of newcomers. Whenever newcomers share,

or especially when I note their emotional state, sometimes they come in and they're crying and shaking, it really puts me right back to when I came in. I think also, having been lucky enough to have a few sponsees on this journey and take them from Steps One through Three in the HOW program where you're looking after people and speaking to them every single day for 30 days.

And quite often they are really in the grip of it. I think of it like a pincushion. And every single remedy that I have for withdrawal, I just try and pin it like I'm going to remember it.

So, fill this pin cushion with ideas. People always want to



know what do you do? How do you get out of withdrawal and my main things I always say again and again are, “What are your top lines?” and I say how important it is to have super simple top lines.

You could have a drawer full of your favorite soft clothes

or your favorite tea bags or your favorite coffee. You could have a bath bomb if you love to have a bath.

Whenever I’m in withdrawal, that’s it. I need to be doing my three outreach calls a day. I’m going to do a meeting a day for 30 days, so I

try and trick myself when I start feeling withdrawal. I try. It's sometimes just putting the key in my car that needs to go to all these meetings.

I need to bring the top lines in. Withdrawal makes me do things like stay in bed, under the duvet. So, I tell myself, "OK, if you're going to be in bed worrying and thinking and shaking about this qualifier, you need to have your hot water bottle and your favorite cuddly Unicorn in there and a book and maybe Netflix. Because there needs to be things around you constantly and you need to just step out of the feelings. What helped was finding out my hobbies and what I liked.

Because before when I was just obsessed and an addict, I didn't have any interest outside of the person I was pursuing. So then when I didn't have them, I had nothing.

I was looking through catalogues of exes or trying to get a boy to speak to me, but then I figured out I like jigsaw puzzles. I like playing Dungeons and Dragons. Thank you.

It's that time. Yeah. So just to wrap up, it's about finding all the thing I love and using withdrawal as an excuse to

splurge on those things. Thank you for listening.

**Leader:** Who would like to go next?

## Marcie

I'll go. Hi, this is Marcie. Hi, everyone. Oh, let me start my time. Thank you, Mira. What came to mind for me was my first time going through withdrawal was freaking gnarly - so, so challenging.

I felt like I was out of my mind a good chunk of the time. I was doing things that were definitely harmful. I still lived close by where "he" lived and I went snooping around at his place. And it was funny because later on, he admitted that he was snooping around at my place.

But neither of us approached each other, so it's kind of an interesting thing. Anyhow, I finally came out of withdrawal. One of the things that I did to help me get through withdrawal was to dance.

I took some dance classes at a local community college and that was really, really helpful. I experimented with other things like a screen-writing class. I want to express a little bit of what my most recent

withdrawal has looked like. It definitely was not as extreme.

I would say it was more sadness and grief and a lot of replaying of what I could have done differently. It was a lot of self-criticism that I didn't do it right.

I was kind of drowning in some self pity around the mistakes I made - as if I hadn't made them, as if I could have controlled whether or not the relationship ended. I wondered how I could behave with more recovery in the future.

A lot of that had to do with being honest, sharing vulnerably. It's not as if I was lying to the person, but I was just withholding a lot of emotions, truth, desires, paranoia. But speaking to top lines: When I first started dating this person, I was pretty immersed in my top lines, taking music classes, hikes with other groups of friends, and fellows.

During the pandemic there were some circumstances that made me unable to do those activities any longer and I didn't really quite realize that as the relationship was unfolding, I was on the other side. That negatively impacted my relationship because I so wanted to be with him and

would make up stories when he wasn't available.

And it just kind of spiraled me out more into subtle acting out or acting in. So I'll just end there because that's my time. Thanks.

## Jake

Hey, Jake, sex and love addict. Let's see. I really liked withdrawal, which is different than the usual reaction. It may be because I have OCD, or it may just be that it was good to have some organization in my relationship with sex and love addiction.

And it was really comforting to know simply what I could do and what I couldn't do for a period of a few months in the past. I would maybe run into a woman in a public place and think *should I get her phone number* and then I wouldn't be sure if I should talk to her or not, or if I should have asked for the phone number, or if I did, maybe I should have said something differently. Then I would think about it all day long.

So it was really relieving to just be like, oh I can't even talk to women for a couple of weeks here, or I can't date for a couple of months here. And it

was just really relieving to have some black and white boundaries to give some structure to my recovery and it allowed me to let go.

Withdrawal allowed me to let go of everything that was giving me a hit that had to do with romance. And so it left me in a place where I wasn't getting any hits of any kind. I was in a place where I was either going to go crazy or go to God.

I was either going to relapse or I was going to develop a new relationship with my Higher Power and with myself. And thank God the latter is what took place. I found out what my actual hobbies are. I found out what my actual interests are.

And I met a new person thanks to withdrawal because I was no longer spending all my time trying to gather and get and prove and be, but rather I was just trying to be. I wasn't trying to be anything for anyone else because I wasn't allowed to be.

And in that space God came in and introduced me to myself. And I learned how to pat myself on the shoulder, give myself a hug. I learned how to pray to God when I felt desperate or obsessed and actually go through Steps One,

Two and Three.

I had prayed to God in the past for help with those things, but without being in that truly desperate place, I didn't have the impetus to truly admit that I was powerless, and the desperation to try believing in a power greater than myself. And so I came out of withdrawal. What's that?

Leader: 30 seconds.

I came out of withdrawal with a very, very different relationship with myself and God. It also awakened my awareness of my anorexia. I didn't know that I was anorexic before withdrawal. But when I came out of withdrawal, I was all of a sudden very hesitant to date, afraid to meet new people.

And the reason for that was that I was finally showing up with my authentic self and that is much more scary than showing up as the jokester, the performer, the being everything for everyone that I was before withdrawal.

I've had a lot of people who I tried to sponsor or who asked me for advice who want to try to avoid withdrawal because it sounds too intense and like too much to go through. But I wouldn't have the beautiful life that I have today without having gone through that



Crucible.

Leader: Thanks so much, Jake, who'd like to go?

## Dean

I'll go. I'm Dean, grateful recovering love addict. Hi, everybody. Yeah, thank you for everyone's share so far. I can really relate. So what I would like to add to that is, when I started the program and they told me to basically stop dating, going into withdrawal felt like the worst thing that could happen.

And then it turned out to be the best thing to happen to me. And the way I would put it is that I basically had to face all my fears. I did everything that I was afraid of doing, so I moved out and got my own apartment.

And I was alone for the first time in my life. I was 42 years old and I had never lived alone. And it was, it's kind of a little ridiculous, but it was true for me and it was a big deal for me. And then going through withdrawal pains - maybe this is a little dramatic - but I felt like Ewan McGregor in *Trainspotting*. I was not. I went through physical pain with my withdrawal.

I would sit at home and just shake. I thought I was going to

split apart. I thought I wanted to die and I thought it was just a physical reaction, like a drug. My drug of choice is relationships and love addiction because I'm a love addict. And then like everyone said too, I figured out how to do healthy activities to replace my acting out. I learned about what dating was. I had no idea what dating was. I thought dating was to meet someone to get into relationship and to find a girlfriend.

I started painting and I started doing sports and all sorts of activity and getting new friends and started traveling and all that stuff. So yeah, I can say that I did all that stuff too and it really helped and I would recommend withdrawal to everyone, even though it was the worst time of my life. So thank you everyone. Thanks for letting me share.

## Chris

Thanks, Dean. I'll go ahead and go. I'm Chris, recovering sex addict. So grateful you're all here. So, withdrawal is literally my favorite topic. Mine began May 10th, 1991 and it ended Christmas Day that year and it was horrific. I didn't know it was withdrawal

at first. I got to an S.L.A.A. meeting a month after I started withdrawal, got sober a couple of weeks later. My bottom lines were no sex period with anybody. No porn, no fantasy. To the best of my ability, no masturbation. And that was what I needed and that was a difficult time in my life that I was withdrawing from all the addictive behaviors that I had that were not addressed with substance recovery and I had a lot.

I was a mess. I had made a pact with God when I got sober from substances that if I ever was happy again, I wouldn't think about suicide anymore. I made a pact with God, and so I thought, *Oh my God, I can't even kill myself to get out of this.* And that was very depressing.

But I thought also the way my Higher Power works, if I killed myself, I'd come back as me and what worse insult could that be? So I knew I was just between a rock and a hard place. I'd never thought the withdrawal would end, and it finally did, but it was horrible.

But as was said, it ended up being the best thing that's ever happened to me because that showed me if I ever had a

question about how much of an addict I am, that withdrawal showed me I am a 100% addict and that I will always need recovery meetings.

I will always need to be here and that's good. So at least I know I can't. At least for today, I'm not up to fooling myself to think that anything else works.

I guess the next thing to talk about is what brought me in. It was that the man of my fantasies dumped me and I immediately went into an obsession that I had never had before.

It was worse than any other obsession I had ever had. And so it was kind of obsession that got me. And it was relationships. It wasn't just a sex addiction. And today's a better day. So thanks very much. Oh, sorry. Who'd like to go next about withdrawal?

## Rachel

**Leader:** This is being recorded for *the Journal*.

Oh, groovy. I love *the Journal*. I'm Rachel. Sex, love and fantasy addict. Super grateful to be here. I love fellowshipping with y'all. What I remember about withdrawal

is that something inside me was like screaming and thrashing and kind of fighting for its life.

For like ten months, something inside me was saying, "No, no." And it was super uncomfortable. And I had a hard withdrawal. I mean, I was like, no talking to men at all for any reason.

And so that really helped me to heal my people-pleasing, because I was like, I guess they're fine. I would have always felt responsible or like I needed to caretake their feelings or whatever and I was not allowed to do that anymore.

I just had to let it go and let them take care of themselves. So that was a huge part of my withdrawal.

So finally after ten months it went really quiet inside me. It's just like the Basic Text says, part of me had to die, or at least risk dying so that I could experience life in a new way. And also, when I came to program, I was in so much obsession. I was completely powerless over my brain. And so I was constantly praying to, like, bring myself from my head back into my body.

Going into my head was a way of escaping my body, escaping the present moment. Right.

That's the fantasy addiction and the obsession. So withdrawing from that behavior was just a constant redirect. It was so hard for me to be in my body.

But yeah, it took ten months of that weird thing inside of me to finally just go quiet and peaceful and I'm so grateful that I got through it.

I mean, I haven't been the same since. I've just really been someone else ever since then and that's pretty much all I have to share. Thank you so much for letting me participate.

**Leader:** Thanks so much, Rachel. And just to make clear in case it's not clear, so we're doing three minute shares. Withdrawal is our first topic, then obsession is next and then if we get to it, open systems relationships versus closed system.

So is there anybody else who would like to share about withdrawal before we switch topics to obsession? Oh, also this is being recorded for *the Journal*.

## Susan

This is Susan G. I'll go.

So this is going to sound like a soap opera drama, I swear. But I was being blackmailed at work by my lover and I became suicidal and homicidal.

I wanted to murder that guy. I had a plan and I surrendered to God and I said, "You're either everything or you're nothing. And I choose to believe you're everything." And I let go of that slender rope that I had been hanging on to and suddenly this peace, this incredible peace, came over me and I knew I was done.

And so for me, withdrawal just meant hard, bam, no contact at all with this person that I was addicted to, and usually there was, like only one person at a time. So it was easy. It was just one thing I needed to do, and that was stop all contact with that person. I immediately changed my phone number and that was hard because, we live by our cell phone. All our contacts are in there.

Everybody knows how to reach us, but I said I'm willing to go to any length, so I cut my phone off. I changed my e-mail address.

I mean I did everything and of course I couldn't prevent him from contacting me at work, but I told him if you do, I'm just going to hang up the phone. I asked that he be transferred to another supervisor and within three days he was gone.

And I was just like, thank you God, thank you and all the legal repercussions I thought I would face at work didn't happen.

I told him, do your worst. If you're going to turn me in, go ahead, and he didn't. And I was so grateful to God. And then I knew I needed to get into service.

I'd heard a million people say there was nothing as sobering as service, so I threw myself into it wholeheartedly. Within 30 days I started sponsoring girls and I have loved being a sponsor ever since I started. Probably within a couple of years, I started serving on conference committees. I didn't even know they existed at first, but somebody invited me and that began a snowball of just more and more service.

And to me, service is sobering. And I love to say that

slogan because it's so true and I highly recommend that for anybody going through withdrawal, it's never too soon to get involved in service.

You might think you have nothing to offer. But you do - you have all kinds of perspective of being a newcomer, of being recently in withdrawal.

And so I really think you can lend a fresh perspective, especially for those of us who've been around a while to not forget how awful it was. I don't ever want to go through another withdrawal. And I tell you what, there is happiness on the other side.

I said God, I'm done. That's

it. I don't ever want to be in a relationship again and God said, "Oh, I've got other plans for you."

And I've been happily married for almost 15 years, which is a miracle to a healthy person, and I never dreamed this was possible and not to say that marriage is the goal or the be all end all.

But that's what God had in mind for me. And I'm so grateful to this program to all of you. Thanks for letting me share.

Thanks so much. Anybody else would like to chat about withdrawal before we move to obsession. And so the next round will be about obsession.

**TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL**

# The Difference between Judgment and Judgmental



What's the difference between judgment and judgmental? That's come up with several sponsees. Recently I was trying to explain several ways of evaluating potential dates for a sponsee new to sober dating. Her response was "I can't do that, I'm not judgmental." I was trying to illustrate good judgment and her response indicated she didn't understand the terms. Despite their similar appearance there is a world of difference.

According to the Webster Dictionary Judgment is "the

process of forming an opinion or evaluation by discerning and comparing; an opinion or estimate so formed; a formal utterance of an authoritative opinion; or a divine sentence or decision." Some synonyms are perception, intuition, and discernment.

Judgmental can mean "of, relating to, or involving judgment" but what we usually mean is a tendency to judge harshly. Some of its synonyms are critical, faultfinding, hypercritical, overcritical, and rejective.

So essentially judgment is a positive thing, a tool to keep us safe, a necessity of life and judgmental is a harsh recreational sport.

In active addiction I had no judgment or if I did I ignored it in favor of an easier way, or rejected my own intuition because my trust in myself was so undermined in childhood. I trusted sociopaths, addicts, the mentally unwell, because that was my family and that's what I knew. I also often chose whoever chose me way too often as if I had no choice. My picker was totally broken. I expected abusive one-sided relationships so that's what I got.

The most critical responsibility to myself is safety. It was precisely my lack of judgment that aided and abetted my addiction. If I don't evaluate and judge others or situations I cannot be safe. I HAVE TO JUDGE. Even in S.L.A.A. I had to judge my safety in the rooms. Is it safe to talk to the men? Can I trust myself not to act out with him? Is it safe to give this man my phone number? Of the women in this room who is safe? Will this sponsor be a good fit for me? So many decisions.

Judging to help someone is what our sponsors do. Mine

tells me when I'm unwise or headed for disaster. I listen because I can't recover based on my old stinking thinking. I have to be humble and learn from her. I also have to judge my sponsor's advice! One dearly loved sponsor told me to disclose my entire sexual history on a first date. I did not and any sane person hearing that would run away, fast.

I have to judge whether to tell a friend I'm in S.L.A.A. I have to judge my friendships to tell if they are based on shared interests or values, not on some agenda, theirs or mine. I have to judge if they will further my growth and sobriety or if they are a threat to it.

The stakes are really high in romantic relationships so I must be extra careful. I have to judge the other person's character before I let them get close. I have to make judgments based on their actions, behavior, words, and their relationship history. I have to put a lot of thought and effort into it. I must evaluate if their values are in alignment with mine. Then, if it turns out poorly, it won't be for my lack of thought or effort.

To learn good judgment I've leaned into the program and asked fellows for their opin-



ions, I pray, meditate, journal and write pros and cons analyses.

Although judging is necessary, I must remember I have limited information and I can ask the other person rather than make assumptions about them. Assuming gets me in trouble and is actually judgmental.

Judgmental is when I make assumptions about others based on their appearance, or when I inwardly criticize another's recovery so I can enjoy a hit of smug superiority, because of course I'm a better judge of what is right for everyone else. I am judgmental when I gossip with a friend and criticize another or disapprove of someone for their behavior in addiction.

Judgmental people are defensive, have black and white thinking, are unable to trust others and have social anxiety, all mindsets common to active addicts. Both perfectionists and pessimists are judgmental!

Judgmental opinions say more about the person making them than the person being judged. Of course I am human so I'm not free of all judgmental

thoughts. When I am criticizing others I am, for sure, self-critical so when I hear myself judging I know to shift the focus onto myself and my needs. Self-love, compassion, curiosity, gratitude, and kindness are the antidotes to being judgmental.

Working the Steps especially the fourth has really helped me to understand and reduce my judgmental thoughts. I, to my surprise, was not lacking in defects!

Being judgmental isolates me from others behind a wall of false superiority while it distracts me from focusing on myself and working on my own self growth and recovery. It keeps me from getting to know others, from understanding how they see the world, and ultimately from learning.

Judgment is self-protection. Operating without good judgment led me to bad choices, addictive relationships, shame, and chaos. Good judgment tells me not to walk down a dark alley alone at midnight. Why wouldn't I want to bring judgment into my relationships with friends and romantic relationships?

— DIANNE

# *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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