

The background of the cover is a high-angle photograph of a fjord. The water is a deep, calm blue, reflecting the overcast sky. The surrounding mountains are rugged and covered in patches of snow, with some green forest visible at lower elevations. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds.

# theJournal

Issue # 205

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## The Struggle with Aging

# 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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## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “How have you dealt with staying sober while aging?” 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 #206 — Jan/Feb — Sponsoring “How has sponsoring helped you in recovery?” Deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2023. And #207 — March/April — Parenthood — “Has S.L.A.A. helped you become a better parent/prepared you for parenthood? — Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2024. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

“How have you dealt with staying sober while aging?”

I've been procrastinating on writing my submission for so long -- but I want to be included in this issue of *the Journal*. So, aside from the issues and struggles that would be more predictable, such as the limitation of feeling like time is running out for me, and I do have those fears -- I personally experienced the subject of my being older when I was trying to plan on a physically intimate encounter last summer. And what turned out to greatly affect my moving forward with this intention was my apprehension over my bodily appearance when anticipating being undressed in front of a person I'd be dating -- especially given that I and the person in question hadn't really gotten to know one another too well! So, it was a huge contributing factor in my not going too fast physically-- but in this particular case, that was a good thing because the prospective partner wasn't meeting my requirements as far as being stable and adjusted.

— S.B., LONG ISLAND

## Question of the day

The saying I'm right where I'm supposed to be helps me deal with staying sober while aging.

— GIL H., WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA

Staying sober is actually easier today than it was when I was newly sober. Not always, but most of the time, mainly because my mind is calmer.

— CHRIS D., SAN DIEGO

To say in short, imperfectly! I just have to learn how to let go and trust in my Higher Power. I try to practice what I preach to my sponsees. It is a real lesson in acceptance, and once I accept what I cannot change, I find peace.

— SUZIE D., SAN ANTONIO

Being a survivor of two cancers, when I came into S.L.A.A., I took off three years for working on myself. I'm 69 and I trust my Higher Power to let me know when I'm ready to start dating. It's my job to create the space for my Higher Power to make that happen. I'm looking forward to aging and I trust my experience, strength, and hope to get me there. Because of this program, not only am I healing, but I'm thankful for every day that I'm here. I have peace and love for myself and look forward to getting older and all that comes with it.

— LORI B., DALLAS



## Question of the day

I've really struggled with my appearance as I gained weight in my first years of sobriety. The program has given me so much more than what I "lost." I'm confident it will subside and I rest in my Higher Power that I trust with all my heart. I pray to see myself with His/Her eyes. And I trust the process. I'm enough and I've learned not to objectify myself anymore. To put it simply, I stay sober despite aging by working hard on my ideas about my Higher Power.

— DAYA, ICELAND.

### An Invitation For You

Enlarge your recovery by allowing others to get the same benefit that you get from reading *the Journal*. It is a great way to carry S.L.A.A.'s message of hope and practice the Twelfth Step. The fellowship needs volunteers of all skills and levels of availability. Here's what you can do:

- Become a Journal Representative for your intergroup or home group, encouraging the use of *the Journal* as a source of topics, letting people know that there are Journals for sale, and ensuring that plenty of Journal subscription cards are always on the literature table.
- Visit a local organization that deals with sex and love addicts in your area, bringing copies of *the Journal* along with a few pamphlets. The institution may be a treatment facility, a judicial entity, a large recovery club that welcomes varied literature, or a hospital.

**Contact info:** <http://www.slaafws.org/contact/journaleditor>

# God Says, “Let’s Take Things One Day at a Time”



I don't know if I have a whole lot of recovery to share on this topic. More like a lot of whining!

“Men my age don't want women our age.”

“People are not that excited about meeting up with me anymore.”

“My body is not the hot draw it once was.”

“There has been a steep downturn in interest in me.”

I guess this is yet another time to turn to God and ask for God's input. Yes, the reality is that most straight men are physically attracted to younger women. “Reality is where we find serenity.”

Yes, I do have to take additional actions to feel attractive

and sexy myself. What else does God say to me on this topic? "I don't think it's sober to give up (on finding a partner). You are much more loving and calm than you were when you were 37. You've gone a lot deeper in your recovery - working new programs and giving up more substances and behaviors."

Does God want me to explore the idea of never having anyone again in my life?

I think God says "let's not go there. Let's take things one day at a time. Who knows what miracles will unfold? I know you like partnership. I know you like physical touch and feeling seen and heard. I know you love loving. I know you like growing in your healthy loving skills. Work closely with me and we can find you a comfortable romantic situation."

**Backstory:** I came into S.L.A.A. when I was 29. I had been sexually active since I was 13. So, 16 years of acting out, feeling sexy/cute, feeling desirable and powerful, using my body to get what I wanted, getting used to the compliments - not quite a female Rich from our Basic Text but in that ballpark.... From 30 to now, 47, I have been sexually sober - only engaging in sex with people I'm in an exclusive romantic

relationship with. I am grateful for this. This is such respect for myself, such love for myself. I want to keep honoring this bottom line. And I've noticed just because I'm 47 and the pipeline of available, interested partners has come to a trickle, there are still threats to sobriety.

There are still people willing to have sex with me outside of a committed relationship. So, I do want to keep coming back, and working my program. It's quite the identity shift - to go from a fertile, desirable, powerful female to feeling invisible, undesirable, non-sexual. Welcome to Life, Kara.

This is what happens to the best of them! And of course, I'm thinking of how it's a privilege to age. Not everyone gets to make it this far. Also, I can take good care of my mind, body and spirit so that I can feel sexy through mid-life and beyond.

God does want me to feel sexy and sexual - these are gifts from him - to be used well and for good. I can thank God that I still have strong legs to run with, healthy teeth to eat healthy foods with, eyes to see God's beauty, ears to hear the sounds of God's world.

—KARA

# Not Dating Until Step Nine

Having a goal to not date until I'm on Step Nine (I'm currently on Step Eight!) hasn't been as hard as I thought, but I do get waves of urgency about dating. I've probably experienced a wave of urgency on each step until Step Seven.

For whatever reason, on Step Seven, I just felt more at peace with where I am currently, even though the desire itself (to be in a healthy relationship one day) didn't change. Other times (more often than not), I feel very relieved to not be dating and sometimes even anxious about starting to date again in the future.

Yet I still get that feeling that I'm running out of time, especially as I'm a woman in my mid-thirties and would like to have kids, but only with a partner (as my personal choice, as I saw how hard it was for my mom raising kids without my dad, and I would rather have the support of a partner, but I understand why some people would choose otherwise).

Recently though the feeling of running out of time has lessened a bit...one reason is I feel more at peace with my life



overall and I don't feel insecure anymore (usually) about being single.

The other reason is that while my age can limit having kids (whether it's a question of fertility or of being healthy enough to be around for the kids' lives if I adopt), I no longer feel like my age would prevent me from meeting someone I could have a loving relationship with. It definitely means fewer eligible and compatible people as compared to my twenties, but it doesn't mean no one. Other parts of aging and waiting are still hard, like seeing how much my face has aged in the past few years, and having my libido

drop while I've been in the program.

I don't know if that's temporary or not. What buoys me is

knowing how much better off I am since starting S.L.A.A. and the Steps.

— ANONYMOUS

## Not Keeping Secrets

A former beau of mine from about 40 years ago found me online. He has good qualities. But he smokes pot. It was a reason I didn't continue the relationship 40 years ago. He hasn't smoked in front of me. I've discussed this with program fellows.

He and I speak and text on occasion, but I am ambivalent about encouraging the friendship. Strangely, I noticed I was more accepting of the pot -- in theory. I suspect because of my age.

But I got very sad when I did my Step 11 about it --- grief. I am an active member of Al-Anon. My daughter is sober three years from cannabis and a survivor of sexual abuse by her stepfather, one of my qualifiers.

I feel my living amends to her is not to lower my standards and bring someone around her who uses drugs.

I haven't discussed this matter yet with my old beau.



But what is different from a S.L.A.A. sobriety point of view is: 1) in the past I would have ignored any issue; 2) now I don't keep things like this a secret; I talk about it with a sponsor and others; 3) I have not jumped in bed with him. My Al-Anon sponsor doesn't see any problem talking, light socializing.

But I'm suspecting this is another version of choosing "unavailable" men, and it's anorexic behavior.

— ANONYMOUS

# Not Wanting to be Seen

Hi, I'm Lisa, sex and love addict. When the Conference Journal Committee was first voting on this topic, I was kind of scared of it because I'm scared of aging. I've hit the age where females hit menopause and I have gained 30 pounds. I'm in a food program for 18 years. I've been 135 pounds the entire time and I gained 30 pounds eating exactly the same way. And so, I went to five different doctors. And I was like, what's going on? And it makes me feel like I don't want to be seen.

So my anorexia kind of runs away with me. Coming to the ABM this year, I look a lot different than I looked five years ago at the ABM. During that time, I was so happy to be seen and so happy to see everyone. COVID hit my anorexia pretty hard too. But I've been going on Zoom meetings every week with my sponsees, intergroup, and with my fellows in other meetings, and so that has been really great to feel connection.

I liked that they could only see me from the neck up in the Zoom video and I have a picture of my kittens as my background. It takes a lot of strength to have the self-love

to say, "I'm still me even with all the weight on me." And being a food addict makes it even harder because I want to leave my food program and starve myself like I used to and exercise three hours a day so I can get back to my normal weight. But I'm 55. I'm not going to get back to what I was when I was 20. But I still feel like a teenager.

And my husband and I are like little kids together sometimes. He's so kind and he's in the program also and we love each other. I'm lucky that I had a good example of a loving elderly couple (my grandparents) who seemed to be attracted to each other even in their 90's. And they were attractive people because they were kind, humorous, caring, and always had smiles on their faces. I hope that my husband and I are going to be like my grandparents, and I know I'm not going to survive as long as they did. They were married 80 years. I'm wearing my grandmother's wedding ring. But hopefully, we're going to be together until we die. Hopefully. Thank you for letting me share.

— LISA

## Dealing With Anorexia and Changes That Come With Aging

Hello, I am a very thankful and gratitude-filled member of this program.

The question came up about, I believe, how do you keep your sobriety with aging? And for me, it's the opposite. It's unfortunately getting easier and easier to keep my sobriety.

Until very recently, I hadn't been in any kind of relationship. No texting, no chatting. OK, except for intrigue. I was a big intrigue addict.

For me, intrigue means sort of a low level flirting with someone, usually a man at work where in theory, hopefully no one will notice what we're doing and it can be quite sexually charged sometimes.

And that, thank goodness, seems to have been lifted from me. Other than fantasy and intrigue, which are not good for healthy, normal relationships, I was in no relationship

whatsoever and not in any sexual relationship whatsoever. And now I've gotten so much better with my anorexia. With this program, I've embarked on sober dating and much to my dismay, I've discovered that my body has changed.

And it's no longer pleasurable to have intercourse. In fact, it's painful, and it makes me feel old and not desirable and angry.

Why? How?

Why do I deserve this?

Because I still have a sexual libido. So I'm trying to take it one day at a time. I'm going to inform any potential suitors ahead of time about my issue and if they aren't willing to work with me then I will move on to the next person.

There are ways that I'm dealing with my issue. I won't get into it, but it is helping. So thank you.

— ANONYMOUS

# Aging Is a Challenge

Hi everybody. My name is Sam. I'm a sex and love addict. And this is such a great topic and I really wanted to give it more consideration before diving in.

But maybe this is the type of thing where it's helpful to dive in. I would say that for me, aging is a real challenge. Aging all together, not just related to recovery, but in many areas of my life. My perspectives on life keep changing as a result of recovery, for example, but also just the number. I'm 64, by the way.

Let me get that out. I've been cutting back on professional work because of COVID and because of my age. This number. I'm not sure if I personally have been growing as I ought to have been. It's always been difficult for me to see myself, to see a mirror image of myself.

So, I'm conscious of how other people see me. I kind of have to force myself all through my life. It's been that

way where it's been difficult for me to imagine how other people are hearing me or seeing me — in their reactions to me. As I've grown older, I've tried to become more conscious of it, but it doesn't always work. I think it's a good effort. My girlfriend, who I live with, thinks that I'm still eight years old in emotional intelligence. I'm not sure if I'm eight yet.

And one of the serious discussions that we've been having lately is about goals. I used to have goals. I was in school as a kid and my goal was to get to the next class, the next year or to graduate, or to go to the next school, then professionally to get a better job.

Anyway, goals are important and it's a subject I have to consider.

One of my goals is to get back in touch with my family, with my children and grandchildren.

Another goal is to think more like a mature person. Thank you.

—SAM



## Am I Using My Recovery Tools?



I'm Dean, a grateful recovering love addict. What a great question.

Yes, and I will also admit to my vanity issues as I'm aging,

something I struggled with as I hit 40 and then I hit 50 - those big milestones. And in my 40s, I went through a midlife crisis and I acted out a little bit on

that. But I survived it and I think I came through better for that. My looks changing, losing my hair, and things like that, I had to learn to accept that. So those were, I would say, some of the challenges of it. Obviously, there are challenges with different age groups. For dating, things I must say that have helped - just being older and being more experienced-going through the program, going through recovery, learning tools, my experience from recovery and the fellowship and from a lot of work, self-development work, self-help.

It's becoming easier. One issue I had throughout my younger dating history was totally ignoring gigantic red flags. They were huge.

Everyone else could see them but me. They're so much easier to see. I can see so much more than I could before. I can say, "No," so much easier than I used to. It's actually like I want to say "No" because I would accept so many things that were not healthy in my life. And I can do it so much easier now. So, in that way, I would say it's easier. It still has

its challenges, of course. I've been doing less dating.

So, saying "No" so many times means there's less dating. And so now I'm questioning myself, "Am I becoming anorexic because I don't date as much?"

It used to be so easy to date. And compared to how many dates I went on before...it's so much less than it was.

Does that mean I'm becoming anorexic? I don't think so because I'm still trying. I ask myself, *How am I doing this? The healthiest way? Am I using my tools? Am I fooling myself?*

I always was really good at fooling myself and rationalizing my behavior.

Every day I have to question that. Every day I do my inventory. I must say it is so much easier being in the program. I'm so grateful for that. And it's easier in a way. It's harder in a way. It's always a challenge, but I'm grateful and I've got a lot of help and a lot of support. So, thank you.

—DEAN

# My Birthday and Aging



Hi, I'm Kim, sex and love addict.

So grateful to be here. I'll start by saying I just turned 60 and it was the very first time that I wasn't excited about my birthday. I've always loved my birthday. Not so much this year. I was away on vacation, so that was good. I didn't have to think too much about it. The reason I didn't look forward to this milestone birthday was

that I'd been noticing that my looks were changing. I was aging. I didn't like the idea of losing my youthful appearance. I could see it in the mirror and feel it in my body.

I was also noticing things like my vision and hearing were not as sharp. Worse, my neck seems to be aging faster than any other part of me. I commiserate with my mom on the neck issue as we have simi-

lar genetics! I especially notice it when I am on a zoom call or a facetime call. I would be so busy looking at my neck, I would not be able to be present for the call. I recognized that my addiction was showing up as obsessive thinking in terms of my appearance.

I talked to my sponsor about it and she suggested I do a Tenth Step inventory on it. She had taken me through the Twelve Steps in S.L.A.A. using the *Big Book* of A.A. and the A.A. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* book. She often refers me back to the book when difficulties arise. Page 84 of *The A.A. Big Book* says, "Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, fear and resentment. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help." There's actually an A.A. app (My Spiritual Toolkit) that I use to write out my Tenth Step and then I send it to her and we discuss.

Doing the Tenth Step, I realized that there was a lot of fear surrounding my aging and the obsession with my appearance. Basically it has been a great way of looking at what is

lurking beneath my fear. It has shown me that my selfishness and dishonesty are running the show once again. I am able to ask God to remove these defects of character so that I may continue to be helpful by doing his will.

I have also found the Serenity Prayer greatly beneficial. Acceptance at this point is a must. I can't fight it. God has a plan for me. Hopefully, I'm going to continue getting older and that means looking older as well. Serenity Prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change (time moves on, gravity takes its toll) The courage to change the things I can (I could choose to have an elective surgical procedure) Wisdom to know the difference (The elective procedure comes with risks, am I willing to accept the risks and possible negative side effects or outcomes?) This is where more prayer and meditation come in. I need to look at God's will for my life. Does he want me to focus time and attention on my appearance? I continue to pray for God's direction. When I feel peaceful about a decision then I will know it is God's will for my life. :)

—KIM

# Letting Myself Be Vulnerable

Hi everyone. I'm Marcie, recovering sex and love addict. Aging - what a topic. Before I got in program I used to think there was plenty of time to meet "the" person, time for my career, and time to have a child.

And then I got to my 50s. I'm in my early 50s now. It's interesting to see how some of those things have panned out, and some of those things I don't really care as much about, and some things are still kind of in question. What I'm discovering about how I am in relationships is that there is a lot of fearful anorexia and dishonesty.

I don't even know what I'm feeling or what my needs are. And even if I do know, I'm completely terrified to share it. Today, I have a new commitment to be more vulnerable and to take more risks because I see little bits of evidence of how fulfilling that really is. I'd

rather have deeper relationships, whether it's in work or friendship or romance. I'd rather have depth than quantity. And I built a really amazing relationship with my Higher Power. I have so much more access to my own goodness and way of reassuring myself.

I have a willingness to take risks with others. How it relates to aging is that there's so much grief that I have over all of the years that I was not willing to be vulnerable, the wreckage of that or just the opportunities for some really incredible relationships that I just couldn't show up for.

I was the one who was actually unavailable. Who knew all this time it was me? I'm just sort of sitting with the grief and I'm just letting myself feel. And so, I think that's part of the beauty of aging and having more time in program.

—MARCIE

# I Can See How I've Changed

Hi, I'm James. I'm 53 years old and the topic is aging. I wanted to talk about aging in the program. I started 12 Steps over 26 years ago. I've been in these rooms since 1999, so that's 23 years.

Having done a lot of service, Steps, program recovery, and spiritual recovery, I can definitely see how I've changed and how the length of time does matter in terms of serenity, recovery, and being a changed person.

Having said that, I also see how like the nature of addiction is kind of like that movie 50 first dates because you wake up and you forget what it was like the day before.

And so having been in the

rooms of Twelve-Step programs for quite some time, I also experience the addiction part of it and I don't feel like an old timer.

I don't feel like I'm any more experienced or any less of an addict than somebody who walks in that door tomorrow.

I can recognize what they're going through and I sometimes feel very much like them.

It's a really nice experience to think about program and recovery in terms of time in program and age. It's always a new experience and that might be one of the benefits of being who we are. Thanks.

— JAMES

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## The Topic of Aging in Recovery Is Extremely Relevant to My Life

Although I am only in my mid thirties, the topic of Aging in Recovery is extremely relevant to my life. In 2018, I had

to have surgery which was supposed to be a two hour minor procedure.

During my surgical consul-

tation I was given all of the specifics. The surgery was going to be a laparoscopic robot assisted surgery and I was going to be on a table that positioned me upside down and the doctor would be a few feet away on a console operating the robot.

There were complications as soon as the doctor started and what was meant to be a minor procedure turned into an eight hour major surgery. When I woke up, still in a fog from the anesthesia, I remember telling the doctors and nurses, "I made a mistake, I want to go back," as if my body already knew that something was wrong.

Shortly after being brought into the recovery room the doctor came in to explain everything that happened. When the doctor placed the camera in my abdomen it was immediately evident that all of my organs were covered in scar tissue which was caused by an infection after a miscarriage I had when I was 20.

He went on to tell me I would never be able to have children of my own. The recovery from that surgery was difficult and although I had told myself up until that time that I didn't want kids, my heart was

broken. On top of all that, due to the physical trauma of the surgery combined with several pre-existing conditions, I was left completely disabled. I lost my career, most of my favorite activities (anything that required significant physical activity) and most of my independence.

I was so used to being strong and athletic that I didn't stop to think about what hanging upside down on a table for hours would do to my spine. I inherited osteoarthritis of the spine from my father's side of the family and I herniated my first disc when I was 15. After eight hours of being inverted my spine was never the same. My next MRI would reveal another damaged disc in my lower spine next to the first one and four new damaged discs in my neck.

For the last four years, I have spent most of my time in doctor's offices and hospital rooms. I am in constant physical pain and use a walker or a wheelchair anytime I have to move around spaces larger than my home.

The pain, fear and stress of all of it has had a major influence on both my addiction and my recovery. Spending so much time in hospitals and

deeply afraid of how my life will turn out has a way of intensifying that deep need for someone to rescue me.

My logical brain knows that it's a fairy tale to believe anyone could "rescue" me from things the doctors can't heal. My logical brain knows that there are no magic elixirs or fairy godmothers to wish it all away.

My logical brain knows that this disability and physical pain aren't some mythical beasts for a knight in shining armor to slay, but my addiction doesn't exist in a world of logic. My addiction tells me that I can't get through this on my own. My addiction tells me that I need something outside myself to heal what's broken within.

My addiction tells me that if I just try one more time I will find my chivalrous knight and we'll ride off into the sunset on his unicorn and live happily ever after. As I get older the sense of urgency to live my life as fully as I possibly can intensifies.

The idea that my time is "running out" has ruled my life since long before becoming disabled. It was the thing my addiction told me the most. Everything became justifiable

when I raced against the imaginary clock in my mind.

I didn't know until S.L.A.A. that the sense of urgency I felt was created by the relationships I forced in my attempts to appease that same feeling. I wasn't really listening to the feeling, just reacting to it. What it was really telling me was that I needed to focus my efforts inward and stop erasing myself to be whatever my obsession at the time wanted.

As a result of my constant physical pain I am prescribed prescription pain medication which I take exactly as directed. Because of this I was told early in my S.L.A.A. recovery that if I continued taking the medications I was on, I would never truly get well.

That idea made me feel hopeless for longer than it should have.

I remembered how impossible my life seemed when my pain level was at a 9 or 10 out of 10 all day and that created a new fear in me — the fear that I would one day have to choose between my recovery and relief from pain that neither I or my doctors could control.

After some time I allowed myself to accept that I wasn't doing anything wrong by wanting a better quality of life and



doing everything I could to improve it. It helped me learn how to let go of outside opinions and follow what I felt was right for me.

As much as this disability makes my addiction more difficult, it makes my recovery easier too.

Not working or having kids gives me all of my time to work on my recovery or practice top-lines. Going to the doctor or the hospital on my own has taught me a new independence and meetings on Zoom have brought connections into my life I never thought I would experience. I've made jokes a few times that I'm so stubborn my Higher Power needed to physically stop me so I would take the time I needed on myself.

There is a certain level of honesty in that joke. I was so wrapped up in my job and running away from my feelings by taking care of others I would have kept going like that until it killed me.

The more I recover the less aging has a negative effect on me mentally. As I learn to love and accept myself I learn to accept the things I can't do anymore and appreciate what I can do (the twelfth promise of recovery).

S.L.A.A. has given me the space I needed to accept all of myself and learn how to adapt to the constant changes that life throws at me. I have a life of peace and happiness when I never thought I possibly could.

I am so grateful to this program and everyone in it. Without the connections I've made in S.L.A.A., I don't think I ever could have dealt with what was once my biggest fear. Aging is never easy but being a sex and love addict and aging can feel almost impossible without safe and healthy support in the program. If you are reading these words right now, know that I am eternally grateful for you whether we've met or not.

— PIX H

# Brave Enough to Be Myself



Hi everybody I am Mira, recovering sex and love addict. I am 45 years young. Very recently my colleague came over and said, “Ooh, I love your hair. I can’t wait until I get to be salt and pepper.” And I made a thoughtful and committed decision to stop dying my hair. In that moment I regretted it. During my sex and love addiction, I didn’t even

think about how I use my body or how I let other people use my body.

Now, as I’m growing older and the emphasis has been taken off attracting guys, I just was happy to be waking up sober, existing, doing top lines and learning about myself. And now I’m entering into dating. I am looking at my body. Like what the... I don’t want to say

the F word in *the Journal* because I respect it.

But I'm waking up and looking at my body and sometimes it makes me sad because I think about how I used to look and I didn't care, and I didn't appreciate myself and the skin I was in. And now I eat much more healthily, and I take care of myself. I guess the other thing is on dating apps. I look at men my own age and due to my sex and love addiction, I am very, very drawn to the young looking dynamic. It's always musicians or creatives or movie stars. I am able to be me and not worry about how I look on dating apps.

Thank God, I love myself because I can look at my face with my freckles and my growing hair and think, "Oh, she's cute. She's doing her best. She's really funny and kind. She's lovely."

And I'm brave enough to just put myself out there. I received some wisdom from a fellow yesterday. I'm always moaning about how men seem to date on the Leonardo DiCaprio graph.

So as women age, we look for age-appropriate partners, whereas as men age they tend

to keep going for women in their 20s. It's science. It's not a judgment. So, a fellow said to me yesterday, "But the right guys will be looking for the right women in your age bracket."

And I was like, "Wow!" So I really loved hearing that and being reminded that I'm not in a rush. I'd rather be sober and single until my 60s and wait to meet the right person. I'd rather be with S.L.A.A. fellows who are single and who are in relationships.

Yesterday, someone said to me, "Bid for these two mugs in the S.L.A.A. (ABM) auction because it allows you to think of a partner in your life." And someone else said, "Yeah, it's true. I bought a family car. I drove around in it for 2-3 years. And now I have a baby on the way."

So, I think it's about believing in the process and worrying less about my appearance and thinking more about my heart and my mind. I'm hoping to meet someone who spiritually matches me in those aspects. So, I'm still going to worry about aging but not as much. Thank you.

— MIRA

# Share space

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## Recovery Meeting on the Topic of Obsession

CONTINUED FROM THE LAST ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL

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

So who would like to start us off talking about obsession? This is being recorded for the Journal.

**Mira**

I can go, Chris. Hi, it's Mira, recovering sex and love addict. It's so funny because when I first came in I didn't think that

I was ever obsessed, I was like, *I don't get obsessed*. And then as I kind of untangled my addiction, I was like, *OH*. One of the biggest amends I had to do before I got through Step Nine was to go see my best three girlfriends that have known me since I was 11 and apologize to them for every single conversation we ever had being about a boy I was obsessed with or dating or in a relationship with. or breaking up with. I realized

how I channeled so much of my energy just into these men and my poor friends had to listen to hours, days, weeks, months, years of me talking about some men I never even dated or men I'd been split up with. Thank God they forgave me and hung in.

I will make a lifelong amends trying to be more interested and listen to them more. But my whole life was this one track of obsessing about men.

I cite this story often. I knew I was in love with a musician. He was married. I knew that he liked tennis, so I had my band do a photo shoot where we all wore tennis clothes and I lied and I said I played tennis in order to have him invite me to Vienna, where I flew with a tennis racket.

And then as I was getting better, I used to have these wonderful patient sponsors and I would really try and intellectualize or get deep into the reasons why I'm obsessed. I would say, "But when he did this, it made me do that." And I got some really great feedback. My sponsor said, "You're trying to intellectualize, deconstruct or understand why you're like this. You're still milking that poor cow that just

wants to be going and eating grass on its own.

So, I have to be super careful now. When I go into the obsession, I have to really get back to meetings. Growing up as a little girl in a household where my mum was always mad at me, I was always scared and worried. So in relationships I transferred that. So that's where my obsession came from.

I need a man and now I've dropped that and I've let it go.

It comes out in anxiety cause my body still wants me to be worried, so the obsession changes from being in love and attracted to chasing a man, to worrying about made-up disasters in my mind and I'm having an anxiety attack or a panic attack, but also that's me in my obsession because it's not real.

It's not me in a meeting or sharing or doing an outreach call, it's me in my head. Thank you so much for your time. I'll just finish the thought. It's me in my head imagining the worst and reacting to those feelings and emotions again. So I'm still learning how to deal with obsession in its new disguise, but great to be with other people who understand obsession can be a lifestyle. Thanks so much.

### **Chris**

Thanks so much, Mira.

And who'd like to go next? OK, I'll just go ahead and go. I'm Chris, recovering sex addict. I was just reminded by the prior speaker of early boy-friends. I'd be in class or something like that, and I would be writing their name, maybe with hearts or something. But even then, I saw that I was doing the same thing all the time just with a different name.

Like all the actions were the same. However, it was worse with Mr. Angel qualifier -- an Angel in my life now because he got me here. He was a good looking guy, just so sexually triggering for me and he said, "Save me a dance," and those words changed my life. I went.

I danced. He said he was going to England to work. He had legal working papers. And I thought, "Oh. I can get him to fall in love with me so that I can go with him because I'd love to travel. I'm too scared to travel on my own." And that's what happened.

I worked in London under a different name. I worked under his name because he had legal working papers. And I was sober a dozen years in A.A. and I had a master's degree. But I

was nuts, nuts, nuts. But today I'm not obsessed. Meditation is what saved me. I meditate 30 minutes a day but started with an hour a day

So glad to be here. This is a much better life than working under another name and in another country. Oh, and who'd like to go next?

### **Jake**

Jake, sex and love addict.

I was having a conversation with a newer guy that called me the other day about this, and it just reminded me how intense my obsession was when I came into the rooms with a person who I thought that I needed to be with or needed to fix this relationship or needed to figure out whether I should or should not date this person.

I think that our addiction is often based in addiction to indecision. I remember years into recovery being stuck on whether or not I should get into a relationship with someone that I was dating for months.

And that was after working the Steps and everything. I was still just stuck. I want to just sit around and journal about things and try to figure out

what the correct solution is and there's not always a correct answer. And it's such a relief to realize that - that there's not always a correct decision to make, or that both decisions might be correct and that can really relieve me from the idea that there's one right decision to make.

The solution that I offered the newcomer and the solution that worked for me, albeit slowly and steadily, is a prayer :“God, please remove my obsession with such and such from my mind and from my heart.”

And you put the name of the person in there. You can put the name of whatever it is you're obsessing about. I used to say that prayer all day long while crying.

And then, over time, it turned into something that automatically comes into my head. I pray that prayer and I put my mind on something else.

That's a really important part of the set of actions - not only do I pray to have the obsession removed, but then I go do something else.

There's really something to be said for going to watch a movie. You come out of the

movie and you're in another world, you're refreshed. There's something to be said for reading a book, going for a walk, doing something else. You could get addicted to staying up all night watching streaming television or something and have your addiction go another way.

But do something useful. The thing with our addiction is that it wants us to not live our lives.

It wants us to not be present for our lives, and it will do anything it can to make us not participate in our own lives.

So I will obsess about so and so 24/7 all day long for weeks or months rather than building some useful project that's going to move my career forward or finishing my education.

I have mostly a relief from obsession today thanks to God's help so that I can actually show up and participate in my own life.

And when obsession takes me over today I have a solution in Steps One, Two and Three and letting God come in and provide divine intervention between me and the vortex inside my mind.

### **Susan**

I'm a sex and love addict. My name is Susan. When I got sober, I realized obsession was totally destroying my life. And this was like a pattern that was happening over and over again. And with the last person I was obsessed with, I found myself on a roller coaster, the breakup and makeup, breakup and makeup and feeling horrible in between.

Later looking back in an inventory and my Fourth Step, I realized that this was withdrawal. Instead of going through it just once and for all, I was going through it over and over again. No wonder I felt suicidal and homicidal. When I started to get sober and I began working the Steps, I really had to inventory what was going on with me.

What I identified was that the obsession, possession, the neediness, and the clinging that was an instinct gone awry from the original instinct I had been born with, which was to love. I believe I was created in love to love. And so I had an imperative to love, but it was warped. I can just as easily go the other way now into anorexia.

But what I determined is

that I really needed to get into real love, which was not all about me. It was about others. It wasn't until my Higher Power filled me up with love that it began to spill out over on to others and I started to live out the fruits of God's spirit in my life - love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. Oh my gosh. Faithfulness - I had not ever been faithful- first of all to myself, let alone really to someone else.

I was never fully present. I didn't know how to love. I didn't get love growing up. I got a pseudo love, but I really began to heal when I started to have these instincts guided by my Higher Power. With the help of a sponsor and meetings, I began to grow up. I began to learn about what real love is and I became less selfish and more other-centered, not in a codependent way, but in a giving, loving way that nurtures me and others, and I believe helps me to fulfill the purpose that my Higher Power gave me, which is to love and that's all. Thanks.

### **Jay**

Jay, sex and love addict. But I'm getting so much out of listening and learning so much,



but I'll keep it quick. I guess at times in the program, I've been obsessed with sobriety. And maybe because it's sobriety that I was so focused on that it's not an obsession or maybe it's a good obsession, if there is such a thing.

On one hand, one could interpret so many of the lessons of the program and suggestions as being obsessed. I was at a face to face meeting today. We were reading the Third Step in our Basic Text. It talks about starting the day with a meditation or prayer and ending the day with a prayer of thanks for another day of sobriety.

The text talks about checking into my motives and actions throughout the day - seeing the world through a Twelve-Step lens. It is pretty intense. I hadn't been sober for decades until I got into this program and was working it, so if it's an obsession, it's healthy. And if it is an obsession, I would like to have an obsession with top lines. I don't have the same intense work on top lines as I do on my bottom lines.

I need to focus on top lines more. And it's not for any shortage of hearing other people talk about them directly

and indirectly of what could be a top line. And I do have, if I sat and defined it, top line behaviors, but I don't have the same focus at the beginning of the day or the end of the day of what I am going to do and what I did, as opposed to what I wanted to do. I wanted to remain sober. Through the help of you all, the program, Higher Power, pharmacology and talk therapy, I've put several years of sobriety behind me. I wish I were as focused. At the beginning of the day I would like to say not only that I'm not going to violate bottom lines, I'm going to be sober. God help me. And thank you God at the end.

Thanks so much. Anybody else like to share on obsession?

### **Rachel**

Thank you. Rachel, sex, love and fantasy addict. Yeah, obsession. I can go into obsession today like that is still available to me if left unchecked, unmitigated. It's just what my brain wants to do. It is kind of a mess. It's a coping mechanism. It's like a misguided way to escape pain, which is in my body. Let me just go into my head so I don't have to feel and also I think I'm solving something. It's an attempt to solve a real

problem and it doesn't work. I don't have to solve everything because I have a Higher Power.

I needed outside help. I really needed to rewire my brain. I needed medication. I still need medication sometimes to help relieve my tendency to obsess. My mind will obsess about any relationship in my life. But what I don't have to do today, and this is thanks to the program is believe it, I don't have to believe what my brain wants me to keep mulling over. I can practice prayer. My sponsor offered me this prayer, "God, please take these thoughts and drop them into my heart. Let me come back into my body. Let me not abandon myself. Let me be with myself. And God, please take these thoughts and replace them with you."

And also meditation is a way of training the brain. And one thing that it helps to train my brain to do is to just not take my thoughts so personally and not take them so seriously. I don't have to believe every thought I have or act on every thought that I have.

Thanks to meditation, I get a little space around the thought. I'm not identified with the thought. I'm like, oh,

that's a thought. Is this thought useful? Is it kind? Is it well timed? Do I want to choose a different thought? And it is a way of self abandoning to go up into my head and think and think about something that doesn't serve me - that's me being in my will. Let me practice surrendering to a power greater than myself, and just even feel my body relaxing. Just saying that it's not all on me, I'm a part of something larger. There's hope. There's help. Let me let go and let God. So thank you so much for all the shares and for letting me share.

### **Marcie**

Hi, I'm Marcie, recovering sex and love addict. Obsession, yeah. That is definitely one I have a very long history with. I've often thought about some of the girlfriends that I've talked endlessly about obsession with, who were so patient and showed up for me endlessly.

Like what patience they had. My God, they're like superheroes. Some actually don't associate with me any longer. And I have a sense it's because of that. I'm not entirely sure.

Maybe one day I'll find out

when I'm ready to make some amends. Yeah, I remember as a teenager dating this person for a little bit and then he broke up with me in my head. I had it because I was too much of a prude - I wasn't ready.

He was sort of more advanced in terms of intimacy, physical intimacy, than me. I would stand outside my house and look towards the corner. He would drive by because he lived just a few blocks away. It was intense, just that level of not being present. It's very, very painful.

Lately, I've been noticing the obsession that I've been going into after the most recent relationship that I had ended. Because of this tendency to ruminate, which I found out is a symptom of depression.

It's probably some other psychological conditions as well, but I did go on medication.

I finally let myself go on medication because when I get off of doing my top lines, when I'm getting into a funk, I'm not willing to actually do the top lines anymore. It's like this whole sort of icky feeling. But one thing that's been working for me very well is doing a Step

Ten as it's written in the Big Book of A.A., noticing if I'm feeling unsettled.

It could look like anything. But last night it looked like obsession. I pause. Then I reach out to someone to discuss, and thankfully we have fellows on the other side of the world that can handle those different time zones when we're in the middle of the night.

And then I make amends where necessary, and then turn my attention towards someone I can help.

I may not even go and help, but just turn my thoughts towards how I can be helpful. It's really an incredible recipe for serenity.

And I just want to add one last thing - in the last relationship when I started getting obsessed with the person and put more focus on their lives, what they were doing, how they were putting attention on me or not, I came to a conclusion that the person wasn't a good fit versus trying to handle my obsession, which has nothing to do with the person.

So, that's an inquiry. It's so easy to say, I'm addicted to that person, but is it really that person? So, thank you.

### Chris

Thanks so much, Marcie. It's looks like we have time for another share. Is there somebody else who would like to share about obsession?

OK. Then in that case is there somebody who'd like to do a fairly brief share probably about closed- and open-system relationships?

Well, then I'll just go ahead and jump in. I'm Chris, recovering sex addict.

When I did go over to London with my qualifier, I was thrilled because I was going to have him all to myself in a country that we were not from.

And in a city that I certainly didn't know.

I don't think I'd ever been to London. No. I had never been to London. And I thought contact on demand was just what I wanted.

I mean, what a perfect way for an addict to have a relationship! There's a photo that we took in a photo booth. It's long gone now, but I mean the photo. And my eyes are wide and I

think I look like I'm high on something and I think I was. I didn't know it at the time. So that's that. Was that a relationship? I just needed contact on demand so I wanted it to be closed.

That really made sense to me. Today, in the relationship I'm in, we each have our own interests.

We have our own friends. There's a lot of overlap. We've been together a while.

One of the things that is different in this relationship is that if he were to come to his senses and say, "Chris, I never should have gotten involved with you. Get out," I have you guys, I have myself. I didn't have myself in the past. I had other people, but I didn't have myself in that relationship with the qualifier in that closed relationship. The open system relationship makes sense to me.

That is the 75 minutes for the meeting and I can't thank you all enough for coming to the meeting today.

God grant me the Serenity  
To accept that  
I am getting older,  
The courage to take care of my health  
and stay sober  
even though I am aging.  
Help me grow into the wisdom of  
decades of recovery  
instead of sinking into depressive  
thoughts around aging.





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# *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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