



the Journal

Issue #207

Single Issue \$4

Parenthood

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.

Table of Contents

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble	4
The Twelve Steps	5
Question of the Day	7

Theme: Parenthood

S.L.A.A. Has Taught Me So Much	10
Helped By Top-Line Behavior	12
Parenting With the Steps	13
I Thought the Parenthood Question Was a Trap	14
CJC Discussion: Parenthood	16

Share Space

Humbled by His Humility	22
The Importance of Women at Meetings	24
Comment Je Suis Arrivée à DASA?	27
How Did I Get to DASA?	28

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.

©1985, 2003, 2012 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

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.

* ©1985 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities, which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise. **THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as *we understood Him*. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as *we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Conference Journal Committee, a service body within Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, publishes the Journal for the good of the international S.L.A.A. membership. Oversight and policy is provided in accordance with the Ninth Tradition.

© March/April, 2024. The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Stories, interviews, personal testimony, and other content contained herein are authored by members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. The opinions expressed in *the Journal* are not necessarily the opinions of The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., F.W.S. office, Annual Business Conference or any other Conference committee including the Conference Journal Committee or *the Journal* production staff. Motions adopted at the 1989, 1990, and 1991 Conferences chartered *the Journal*, but it is impractical for all of the content of a periodical such as *the Journal* to be Conference-approved. Each recovery group can determine its own position on the use of content from *the Journal* at its meetings.

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*.

The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. 2411 NE Loop 410, Suite 122, San Antonio TX 78217, 1-210-828-7900 Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT except for holidays (fax) 1-210-828-7922. www.slaafws.org.

For subscription concerns, please visit: <http://www.slaafws.org/subscriptionhelp>.

Managing Editor	Lisa C.
Art Director	Fiona
Outreach Director	Lisa C.
Proofreaders for this issue	Chris D. Beth L.

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “Has S.L.A.A. helped you become a better parent/prepared you for parenthood?” 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 #208 – May/June – Pets. “Please share how pets have helped your sobriety/special stories about what pets have meant to your recovery.” And #209 – July/Aug *ABM Issue* – Recovery through service. Please share any special stories about your recovery through service. Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2024. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“Has S.L.A.A. helped you become a better parent/prepared you for parenthood?”

The Twelve Steps and subsequent spiritual awakening have indeed made me a better father, but this has been no simple straight line upward improvement. Being a good dad for me is about often seeing my mistakes like self-centered resentment after the fact. It's about trying to work the principles of Step Four and Step Ten, identifying my fear, resentment and pride, and then apologising to my son. The Steps have not made me instantly into a perfect dad, but they are all I need for making spiritual progress in that direction. It really works if you work at it.

— ANONYMOUS, AUCKLAND, AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND

The French word for Sponsor is parrain for male, marrain for female—literally they mean “godfather, godmother.” I love these terms because they express the spiritual relationship between sponsor-sponsee in working the 36 principles. I might have a Step “marrain”, but a Traditions “parrain”, and who knows a couple Concepts “parrain/marrain”, or marrain/marrain.

—BETH L.

Question of the day

NO, because my child was grown and out of the house when I joined S.L.A.A. However, the skills and insights I learned from the program have helped me be more insightful and empathetic towards others. I know I am a much better person today than I was when parenting.

— SACRAMENTO, CA

Definitely. When I was acting out, I neglected my children, which I regret terribly. But now I'm sober, and can be much more present to them. I remember attending online meetings when I was rocking my infant son to sleep. Having two small children is still incredibly challenging to an addict like me. I'm also grateful for being able to pass the Twelve-Step principles to my children.

— GREG, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

S.L.A.A. has helped me learn to love myself unconditionally, learn to reparent my inner younger selves and offer love , kindness, compassion and curiosity to myself.

When I began to learn to truly love myself for where I am at, for the human I am, and not for what I do, I learned how to love others, including other people's children and it prepared me for the patience needed in parenthood and step-parenthood. My partner has three kids that are A LOT of work and it's not without its challenges - by staying in the day, taking it one moment at a time, I am able to be present with them and not overwhelmed, and have FUN! S.L.A.A. helped me prepare for parenthood by learning about my boundaries, how to say no, how to take good care of myself and know when I need to pause to connect with my HP. Now I can truly trust that each child has their own HP and to let go and let God.

— AMANDA A (NYC)

THE JOURNAL THEMES AND DEADLINES FOR 2024

Submit your writing at www.slaafws.org

#208	May/June	Pets	Please share how pets have helped your sobriety/special stories about what pets have meant to your recovery.
#209	July/Aug *ABM Issue*	Recovery through service	Please share any special stories about your recovery through service.
#210	Sept/Oct	Anorexia vs. healthy breakup	Anorexia vs. healthy breakup — How did you know it was healthy behavior to walk away from a relationship and not hiding out in anorexia? Please share your experience, strength, and hope.
#211	Nov/Dec	A season, a reason, or a lifetime	How can you tell what kind of relationship you are in? Were you ever in a relationship that you thought was for a lifetime but it was for a season or a reason? Please share your story and any support that you got from S.L.A.A.
#212	Jan/Feb	COVID-19	How did you get through the pandemic sober? Dealing with grief, isolation, uncertainty, impatience.

S.L.A.A. Has Taught Me So Much



I wouldn't be a parent without S.L.A.A., as it taught me to have an authentic relationship with myself, and

knowledge of self, so that I could have my first truly authentic relationship with another.

Working the Twelve Steps in S.L.A.A. has taught me patience, at many levels, though I am still growing in that regard. Steps Six and Seven in S.L.A.A. helped me to deal with compulsion and impatience in all areas of life, particularly in business.

As the father of a ten-month-old daughter, I can say that the first few months involved a lot of crying and screaming from someone with whom one could not reason. And then there was the baby.

Thanks to the work I've done in S.L.A.A., I had learned to sit through discomfort, to accept others as they are, to patiently wait until the best time to take a break, and most of all, I had learned that I was not the center of the universe already.

Therefore, the difficult lesson that babies teach, which is that one's life is not one's own anymore, had already been learned to some extent, by working this program. I am not a unique entity, but rather a part of a group, and I do not

exist without the group. This I was taught through working the Traditions as well as the Steps in S.L.A.A., so when this harsh reality set in as a result of having a child, it was not such a difficult mental and spiritual transition.

I am so early in parenthood, I cannot predict if I am prepared. But S.L.A.A. has provided me a place to go with my fears and frustrations, so that the healthiest version of myself can be brought to the raising of my child. I wouldn't be a parent, in the healthy way I am, without S.L.A.A., and I wouldn't have as much confidence as I have about this incredibly difficult and daunting undertaking, without the presence of S.L.A.A. in my life, which has taught me much, and has taught me to keep learning.

I have learned that God runs things and I don't. I've learned that my child is not my child, but rather a child of God, as we all are.

— JAYK, LOS ANGELES

Helped By Top-Line Behavior

I am a mother of four. I am a completely different parent today because of working the Twelve Steps. It has helped me to understand the nature of unmanageability in myself and how until I was ready to relinquish control, there was no way I was going to be open to solution or open to surrender of my best laid plans to a Higher Power.

This has been an instrumental revelation in parenting because I can have compassion for my children who don't want to give up their way and at times are not open to hearing my perspective. As I practice gentleness with my own process in this program it helps me to offer my own children compassion with their processes. There's lots of opportunities to keep turning over my trust of them to their own Higher Powers. I also see how my kids relate in love addictive ways to others and rather than correct them, I'm able to relate and be a safe place if they have a question. As I model rather than tell my older children what to



do, I'm finding our relationship is stronger and they trust me enough now to come to me with their questions more. They don't always follow my experience, strength and hope, but I have no doubt they are watching and listening and absorbing the language of top line behavior, being rigorously honest, taking responsibility, healthy relating, and so much more this program has to offer.

— N, BURBANK

Parenting With the Steps

Yes to both. As a parent to a 17-month-old and currently trying to conceive myself, I could not be doing this without S.L.A.A.. I came into S.L.A.A. two years ago as a parent-to-be, and the tools I've learned have transformed my parenting.

In those challenging moments where my daughter has been screaming at the top of her lungs in teething pain, which is hell on earth for any parent, never mind an autistic one like me, the power of prayer (Step Eleven) has been incredible. The Serenity Prayer, Step Three prayer and Step Seven prayer invite me to focus on accepting what I can't change, handing things over to my Higher Power and looking at my side of the street to focus on being the best parent I can be in that moment.

Humbling myself about my human imperfections, as I experienced in Steps Four through Nine and continue to experience with my Step Ten inventories, is helping me to find self compassion in those moments when I don't get things right. Now on my journey to trying to conceive (my



wife carried our first child), after five failed insemination attempts it's really all I've got to rely on a power greater than myself to get me through. The process has taken me right back to Step One: complete and utter powerlessness. I do believe that my Higher Power will restore me to sanity (Step Two) as long as I continue to pick up the tools of the program. I trust that this journey is happening this way for a reason, and that my struggles will become my service (Step Twelve).

— LIZZIE, MANCHESTER (UK)

I Thought the Parenthood Question Was a Trap



I didn't think I'd ever want to be a parent. My whole life, whenever someone asked me the question "Do you want kids?" I always felt like it was a

trap. My standard response was always the same: "I'll know I am ready to be a parent when I find someone I want to have children with." This state-

ment was half true. While living in my disease, I was actively choosing to focus my time and energy on men who were not emotionally available and would never be safe partners to co-parent with. The other half truth of that statement is that I didn't think I'd be a good mother. When I was living in my disease, I was selfish, calculated, manipulative, controlling, and unkind. I had no understanding of my own inner emotional world so I was not available to hold space for anyone else's emotions. I was impatient, judgmental, and dismissive. Those are not the characteristics of a good mother.

I knew that being a good mother required an emotional intelligence that I simply didn't possess. Working this program is what helped me become a woman of integrity. A daily Tenth Step inventory keeps me honest about secrets that I am keeping, fears or resentments that I am harboring, and it provides me with an opportunity to make amends when I have caused harm.

It is a practice of emotional awareness and regulation, which is how I want to parent. Working with sponsees fosters a safe space where I can prac-

tice listening without judgment and offer experience, strength, and hope when called upon. Having a daily (or sometimes hourly) conversation with my Higher Power keeps me focused on the next right action and empowers my faith and trust in Higher Power's plan for me. All that being said, I am newly married and we are planning to start our family soon.

I could have never imagined the life I am living now. My husband is a burst of sunshine in human form. He is emotionally intelligent and communicates his feelings with kindness and honesty. He is respected and respectful. He is excited to wake up every morning and enthusiastically participate in his life as well as mine. My Higher Power has chosen the exact person I would want to bring a new life into this world with. Recovery in this program is applicable to all areas of my life, and I anticipate that parenthood will be the next layer of my recovery onion. And while the future is unknown, I trust that the work I have done in this program (and continue to do) has prepared me for whatever comes next.

— MIRIAM, LOS ANGELES

CJC Discussion: Parenthood



The Conference Journal Committee discussed the topic for this issue. Here is an edited transcript of their conversation:

Lisa's share:

Hi, I'm Lisa. I'm a sex and love addict. The topic this month is parenthood. At first, I thought I wouldn't have any-

thing to share on this topic because I don't have children. And my husband and I are in our 50s and not going to have children. That was a conscious decision that we came to together. Before my sobriety in S.L.A.A., I used to think that I had to become a parent to be normal.

You had to get married, have three kids, have the house with the white picket fence. That was the goal in my life. I thought that was my reason for living. You need to look good. My sister married an international airline pilot, had two beautiful intelligent daughters, had the really successful life and I was never in that headspace. I was never that person. And there were a few times that I thought I needed to get pregnant to catch the guy. Parenthood, to me, was never being of service to a child, helping a child learn, or being a good human being. It was always about looking good because that's how I grew up. Children are to be seen and not heard.

You're supposed to get straight A's. You're supposed to be a child prodigy. You're supposed to play a musical instrument and get first place in sports. My dad used to take me

to my sporting events, and I remember him picking me up and running across the room screaming with me.

It's like, your children are accomplished. They show how good you are and that's what they're for. And they don't have thoughts of their own or anything like that. That's how I grew up.

And I probably would have put that on any children that I had. They would have been a status symbol and probably not much more. S.L.A.A. really helped me understand that I didn't have to buy into that idea that I must have kids, and that I have to look good. When I got together with my husband and we got to know each other, I realized that he never wanted to have kids.

And I went to my sponsor and said, "Well, that's a deal breaker, isn't it?" She pointed out the fact that I struggled with the character defects of immaturity, irresponsibility and selfishness and encouraged me to look at my motives around having children and even marriage.

I decided that I would be okay not having children because I was always a tomboy, fiercely independent, and refused to babysit or play with

baby dolls when I was young.

I was still at the age where I could have had kids. I also was suffering from fibroids. Before we got married, I had to decide whether to have a hysterectomy or try to save my childbearing years that were left. I shared about my feelings around parenthood at every meeting for two months and had discussions with my fiancé. We decided that we weren't going to have kids, so why not have the hysterectomy? But there was part of me that was like, I don't want to go into a marriage knowing for certain that this is totally cut off. And so, I decided to have the surgery that would preserve the ability to have kids if I changed my mind later on.

So having that surgery was more difficult than having a hysterectomy, but I went into the marriage with more hope than I think I would have felt having a hysterectomy.

It's like saying my youth is definitely over. I didn't know the future and wasn't certain what God's will was for my life so I kept the conversation about parenthood open.

It ended up that we didn't have kids and I'm grateful for that. I know I could have been a responsible parent, and I would have cared about a

child. I know that I could have been kind to them and helped them learn.

But I was able to have all the fun of children with my nieces and nephews at holidays and Disneyland and none of the excruciating worry or time sucking responsibility. But ultimately, I feel like my purpose in life is more to help my sponsees and be of service to my programs, my family, and my co-workers. My purpose is to be in my marriage and to be the human being that I am today. God had a plan for my life and this is what it is and it's a really good life.

S.L.A.A. also taught me how to self-parent. Before my sobriety, I was not good at self-care. I didn't even like myself enough to have some self-care or to take responsibilities in my life.

My dad used to pay for my gas when I was 29 years old. They paid for my entertainment. I would always go to my parents for everything. I would drive up to the desert to go do whatever they wanted to do. I didn't have my own life.

Everything was under their control, and I didn't feel like I knew how to take care of myself. S.L.A.A. showed me how to self-parent by taking responsibility for my behavior,

being of service to others and engaging in self-care.

When I slipped, my sponsor would have me listen to soothing music and meditate and be kind to myself. And then the next morning, we'd get into the Steps again.

I cut up the gas card that my parents gave me. I had a 30-day no contact with my parents and that helped me to start to learn what I liked to do. I took myself on dates. I cleared up my credit card debt. I became a supervisor at my work. I sponsored eight women. All of these things helped me become responsible and to say no to things that were going to hurt me. It taught me all the little things that children don't know how to do but parents do. And I think that's how I learned to self-parent.

So, I'd like to hear from you guys. Maybe some of my thoughts brought up things for you to discuss and maybe not, but let's see. Who would like to go next?

Chris's share:

Chris, recovering sex addict. Thanks so much, of course, Lisa, for your share. When I saw that the topic was parenthood, I felt that I had nothing to offer. Prior to my initial recovery in another pro-

gram, I literally never had a happy day. So there's nothing in my growing up that led me to want to ever be a parent.

Plus, a very important factor is that I'm gay. And when I first got into recovery, I had a hard enough time, especially being active in this addiction, to deal with myself-never mind dealing with a child. Since I've been sober in this program, I still have not been interested in having a child. I've now been in a relationship that I got into when I was 43 and he was 38. Certainly, we had two incomes and certainly could have considered adopting a child. But it just kind of didn't come up. What I can see now in recovery is how the parents in our little condo complex parent their own children. I really appreciate how present they are for their kids.

My parents may have been as present as they could have been, but I still had an unhappy childhood. I don't know what caused it, but I think it was God's gift to me. It made me desperate enough to seek recovery programs for myself. Now, when I see parents who are so present and active in their kids' lives, I feel it's very heartwarming.

I also enjoy being around little kids because they are fun.

Before, they were scary to me because I was tortured by other kids when I was growing up. But now, I can appreciate little humans for who they are, and that's a complete gift of this program.

I also have learned here how to take care of myself. When I first got into recovery and I heard about self-care, I thought that was an Al-Anon concept and not worth my time. Of course, I was wrong and ended up here. You guys are continuing to teach me how to love myself and take care of myself.

If I can do that to the best of my ability, then I have a lower chance of acting out. You guys have taught me that I'm running away from myself in my addictions, not from you. So, if I can develop a loving relationship with myself through self-parenting and other means of self-love, I have a greater chance of living the promises and living a sober life. That's it. Thanks.

Kim's share:

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

My addiction didn't really kick in until my boys were all in school. Before that, I was very present with my kids. They were my life. I was a stay-

at-home mom. Anything that they were interested in, I was interested in. I took them to the library, and researched science with them.

But when they went to school, I had less to do. That's when my addiction started. I began working out at the gym and getting attention from men. They filled the space that opened up when my children weren't around. And then, as the addiction got worse, I became less present for my kids. I wasn't the mom I wanted to be. Just recently, over the Christmas break, I mentioned cooking dinner for them when they were young. My son said, "You mean when you were on your phone?" He didn't know about my addiction, but he knew I was distracted. He loved to cook, but I would leave the stove and go message my current person, waiting for a reply.

And so, I was really not present. My son ended up doing the cooking a lot of the time. I'm sure he's grateful now that he can cook, but that was sort of what happened and it was because I wasn't present for him and he did feel it. So that's a really painful example of not being present for my child.

I was also absent from my kids' lives when they got older.

I remember going to a theater presentation and texting someone else in the back of the theater. I wasn't paying attention to my son's performance. One time, I even missed a performance entirely. I was so out of touch with my life. But now, things are different. My kids are grown and married. I have three kids and a fence, but not a picket one. Now that I've gone through the Twelve Steps and I have my Higher Power to help me, I can be present with them. I love spending time with them and I'm not distracted by anyone else. It's such a blessing. It's so nice to be in a space with them and to enjoy them. To listen to what's going on in their lives and to be helpful to them. I'm so grateful to this program for that. To have found that again. It was there and then it was lost. And I found it again thanks to my Higher Power and this program.

I was doing well in the program, but I had this one person that I couldn't let go of. I realized that I was depending on my husband to take care of me like a parent. I grew up with great parents who always took care of me. I moved from my parents' house to my husband's house when I got mar-

ried. I never lived on my own, except for college dorms.

My husband is a great caretaker. He pays all the bills and does all the extra stuff. My job was the kids. I didn't know how to do anything. I barely wrote a check.

I didn't pay any bills. Our money was together and he handled everything. I think I was afraid of losing him, especially when he was sick or when things were not going well because of my addiction. I think this other person was my backup plan. I thought, if I don't have my husband, at least I have this person. I kept them on the back burner. That prevented me from having a better recovery. But then, I recognized that I have a Higher Power and God is the one who can take care of me.

I don't need anybody else outside of my Higher Power. So that kind of catapulted me into better recovery. Am I grateful for that piece of it? I guess I have to be because I don't think I recognized that God can take care of me. I thought somebody had to do it and it wasn't going to be me because I didn't know how. But now I recognize that and so I am grateful.

Share space

Humbled by His Humility

Conversations with S.L.A.A.'s Founder

My name is Sharon, and I am a sex and love addict. I came into the program 12 years ago, desperate and lost and miserable. I knew I couldn't live as I'd been living but I had no idea how to change. I cried through my first few meetings; sure that no one there could understand my pain or shame. They encouraged me to get a sponsor and to keep coming back. Then someone gave me the book — the S.L.A.A. Basic Text — and I started reading.

The terminology was foreign to me, and I struggled to get through a single page. Slowly though, with the help of my sponsor, the fog began to lift and the words began to click. I related to the very first sentence of Chapter One: "I believe that when I was small, I

was a sensitive child." That was me. The more I read, the more I related. How could the author have known my life? How could a book so accurately describe my fears, my weaknesses, my ache? The book became an indispensable resource to me — my partner in working the Steps, working with my sponsor, and working to stay sober.

Fast forward to today. As a member of S.L.A.A.'s Basic Text subcommittee and its Style subcommittee, I have had the privilege of collaborating on a possible second edition of the Basic Text. We worked on it for more than three years, meeting weekly, carefully considering every word in the book. Our goal was to preserve the beloved text, while updat-

ing it for modern times. Part of our process was to review Chapters One and Two – the founder’s story. A daunting task to be sure. We approached it with reverence while keeping today’s newcomer in mind. As we worked, we often thought about the founder. Would he be comfortable with our changing words he so carefully chose nearly 40 years before? Would he approve of the edits? Were we on the right track? We needed the answers.

Stephen, the leader of our editing team, emailed the founder, “Rich,” to ask if he would consider being involved. It was a leap of faith. Rich quickly responded and agreed to read our edits to his story and give us feedback. We were going to speak directly with the founder!

The first time we talked to Rich on the phone, I thanked him for saving my life. He responded with grace and remarkable humility, which set the tone for our work together. He approved our edits and made additional changes of his own. He wrote a new foreword. He even asked “Kate,” the author of Chapter Three, to review edits to her writing. Rich

is an accomplished writer, so we dove deeply into the meaning of certain words and phrases. He was patient and flexible and kind during our conversations, sharing his perspective while deferring to the team. What was most remarkable, though, was his open heartedness. He seemed truly honored to have been asked to participate, and grateful to the Fellowship for embracing his work.

Rich sent Stephen and me a message on December 28th reminding us that on that day, 47 years before, S.L.A.A. came into existence.* Here’s what he wrote:

“On that day a group of four people—two women and two men—got together for the first time to discuss at some depth their distressing experiences in the realm of sexual and emotional ‘acting out.’ The meeting took place at an apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The meeting started at 8 p.m. and concluded 3 hours later, with the unanimous agreement to meet again. S.L.A.A. was born that evening.”

Rich could not have imagined then what our program is today. He didn’t dream that

the book he eventually wrote would sell thousands of copies and help countless addicts. He only knew he needed help, and that perhaps others in similar situations could help one another. And we do.

Rich still attends meetings and practices the principles of our program. I found his humility surprising and inspiring

and I am forever grateful to have been given the chance to work with him.

*An added benefit of working with the founder was the discovery that in the first edition, he had inadvertently used an incorrect date for the first meeting. It will be corrected in the second edition.

— SHARON S., SAINT LOUIS, MO

The Importance of Women at Meetings

I wish to take the opportunity to thank all the women in S.L.A.A. who attend coed meetings.

I regularly attend four S.L.A.A. meetings in the Tampa Bay area--all of them coed. I attend these particular meetings out of necessity--they happen to fit my schedule. However, all things being equal, I would choose to attend coed meetings over men-only meetings, and this is why:

In my addiction, I viewed women in one of two ways:

Either I put them on a pedestal --a font of wisdom, beauty, grace, gentleness, and sensuality--or they were nameless bodies with which to play and throw aside. The first image was a function of my love addiction and the second of my sex addiction.

In my recovery, my exposure to women at meetings has helped me to understand that women are neither of the above; they are simply human. In these meetings I have seen with my own eyes and heard

with my own ears that women are not perfect. They are just as fragile and subject to pain and suffering as I am, have experienced a surprisingly similar history to me, and make the same mistakes that I do. They are people with feelings and imperfections. They get mad sometimes, get hurt sometimes, get silly sometimes, and are wise sometimes; they are pretty much just like me.

Experiencing this new reality has been vital to my recovery. Now, when I meet an attractive woman and begin to "pedestalize" her, I can take a step back and realize that no matter how she appears on the surface, she is just as human as I and probably has plenty of character defects that I just can't see. And, conversely, when I see a woman whom I begin to sexualize, I can project onto her the sorrow and pain that all of us experience and thus see her as a fellow, frail human being rather than just a body. Another benefit I receive from attending meetings with women is that women are generally more in touch with, and better able to express their emotions than men. Expressing emotions is something that was frowned upon both in my family, and in my profession.

I never learned, nor cared to learn how to do it because it was considered a sign of weakness.

I think this experience is common to many men. I know differently now. Yet, while I realize that learning how to express my feelings is crucial to my recovery, I still find it extremely difficult.

I marvel at most women's ability to be so in touch with their emotions, and even more at their ability to communicate those feelings. The women in the meetings provide the examples I need to learn to express my own feelings.

I have also seen a woman's open and honest expression of feelings completely change a meeting for the better. One of the meetings I attend, while nominally coed, is attended almost entirely by men. I find that men-only meetings have a different flavor--leaning a bit toward reporting of events and plans to improve, etc. Occasionally a woman will drop by this meeting, and if she is courageous enough to share her feelings in a room full of men, it can have a noticeable affect on the rest of the meeting. Her sharing honestly and emotionally from the heart--and in doing so making herself vulnera-

ble to the group--"loosens up" the meeting, making everyone else more willing to be vulnerable, too. Such emotional input enriches the meeting significantly.

And this leads to another important reason why I like coed meetings: I learn to be vulnerable with women. Healthy intimacy is impossible without vulnerability, yet exposing my emotions has always seemed so incredibly dangerous that I am extremely reluctant to do it.

However, as I have slowly gained the courage to share very personal feelings, struggles, successes and failures in a room with women, and see them not running out of the room screaming, or snickering, but instead nodding their heads with understanding, I learn that I can be open with women and not be hurt.

This understanding is one of the most valuable prizes I have received from S.L.A.A., because without the ability to be open and honest--to be vulnerable--with women, any relationship I hope to have someday is doomed to failure.

And the last reason I like coed meetings is that, indirectly, the women in the meeting have deemed me worthy of

their trust.

Of course, everyone attending is trusting me to some extent: to honor their feelings and struggles, to not take their inventory, to honor anonymity, and so on.

But, the women are trusting me not to cross healthy boundaries--to not take advantage of their vulnerability, to not try to manipulate them, to not engage in intrigue by phoning them instead of a male member under the guise of needing support, to not offer myself in the role of the rescuer, or any number of things my addiction wants me to do.

And, because I have been graciously granted this unspoken trust, I find myself striving to be trustworthy and honor those healthy boundaries--another ability that is essential for me to learn in my recovery. Of course, attending coed meetings isn't always easy for me, especially if I'm attracted to any of the women attending.

It is easy to get distracted, and I sometimes struggle to keep myself open and honest when sharing, instead of trying to impress.

Yet, learning this, too, is necessary for my recovery and growth. I have to learn how to be myself even if I'm around an

attractive woman. And, usually by listening--really listening to what she's sharing, I can change my mental state from one of wanting to impress to one that simply cares for her as a fellow addict struggling with life.

So, to all the women to at-

tend coed meetings, I thank you! I know that you don't attend to help me out personally, but I appreciate your presence tremendously.

Without it my recovery would not be anywhere near where it is today.

—BARRY C.

French

Comment Je Suis Arrivée à DASA?

Après plus de 15 années de relations amoureuses chaotiques, un mariage désastreux et une incapacité à atteindre une stabilité dans aucun des domaines de ma vie, j'ai rencontré la fraternité des Alcooliques Anonymes. Mon estime de soi n'était alors pas très brillante et le sentiment de dignité ne m'était pas très familier. Une fois abstinente de l'alcool, j'ai quitté ma relation amoureuse dysfonctionnelle, et mes dépendances affectives et sexuelles se sont montrées plus virulentes que jamais, particulièrement incarnées dans des obsessions romantiques. J'ai heureusement rapidement eu vent de l'existence de DASA.

Un an plus tard, j'apprends un jour à la fois à vivre, et non à survivre... comme une deuxième naissance ! Je suis capable de regarder à l'intérieur de moi-même avec plus d'honnêteté et d'explorer mes blessures, je vais à la rencontre de mes émotions et découvre que je peux me construire une vie riche et plus sereine. Je cultive de nouvelles amitiés nourissantes, développe une vie spirituelle, ce qui me fait dire que je ne suis plus seule et que j'ai accès à des ressources insoupçonnées jusque-là ! De nouvelles possibilités s'offrent à moi et je suis chaque jour inspirée par les amis, revenus de loin, qui se rétablissent et me

donnent espoir et confiance en l'avenir.

Dépendance Sexuelle

J'ai commencé ma vie sexuelle accompagnée par l'alcool, qui ne m'a pas lâchée pendant 18 ans. Très tôt, j'ai multiplié les relations de manière compulsive, sans pouvoir m'en empêcher. Ce qui me paraissait un amusement pendant l'adolescence s'est rapidement transformé en activité honteuse. Comme une drogue, j'étais sans cesse à la recherche de partenaires, souvent interchangeables, qui ne me plaisaient même pas, pourvu qu'ils veuillent bien de moi. A la recherche d'une façon de remplir mon sentiment de vide démesuré et de miettes d'affection, je me suis retrouvée dans des situations d'abus, et en conflit

de valeurs permanent. A l'inverse, lors de mes relations amoureuses plus stables, je perdais rapidement toute libido. Après avoir arrêté l'alcool et alors que des obsessions et pulsions sexuelles ne me laissaient pas de répit, j'ai rencontré la fraternité DASA. Rapidement, ces pulsions ont disparu et j'ai pu découvrir une façon de vivre plus saine et plus épanouissante, recentrer mon regard sur d'autres aspects importants de ma vie que j'avais négligé. Je n'ai plus eu de relations sexuelles depuis un an et je conçois aujourd'hui qu'il est possible d'envisager des rapports épanouissants dans le cadre d'une relation stable, dans le partage et le respect de chacun.

— ANONYME

English

How Did I Get to S.L.A.A.?

After more than 15 years of chaotic romantic relationships, a disastrous marriage, and an inability to achieve stability in any area of my life, I encoun-

tered the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. My self-esteem was not very bright at the time and the feeling of dignity was not very familiar to

me. Once abstinent from alcohol, I left my dysfunctional romantic relationship, and my emotional and sexual addictions were more virulent than ever, especially embodied in romantic obsessions.

Luckily, I quickly learned about DASA. A year later, one day at a time, I'm learning to live, not to survive... like a second birth!

I am able to look inside myself with more honesty and explore my wounds, I go to meet my emotions and discover that I can build a rich and more serene life for myself. I cultivate new nurturing friendships, develop a spiritual life, which makes me say that I am no longer alone and that I have access to resources that I have never dreamed of before!

New possibilities open up for me and I am inspired every day by friends who have come back from hitting bottom, who are recovering and giving me hope and confidence in the future.

Sex Addiction

I started my sex life accompanied by alcohol, which didn't let me down for 18 years. Very early on, I was compulsively in

multiple relationships, without being able to help myself. What seemed like fun to me during adolescence quickly turned into a shameful activity. Like a drug, I was always looking for partners, often interchangeable, who I didn't even like, as long as they wanted me.

In search of a way to fill my feeling of inordinate emptiness and crumbs of affection, I found myself in situations of abuse, and in a permanent conflict of values. On the other hand, during my more stable romantic relationships, I quickly lost all libido. After quitting alcohol and when obsessions and sexual urges didn't give me a break, I joined the S.L.A.A. fellowship. Soon, these impulses disappeared and I was able to discover a healthier and more fulfilling way of life, refocusing my gaze on other important aspects of my life that I had neglected. I haven't had sex for a year and I now understand that it is possible to have fulfilling relationships within the framework of a stable relationship, in sharing and respecting everyone.

— ANONYMOUS



THE INSPIRATION LINE

Your 24-Hour Sponsor

215-574-2120

CELEBRATES

500,000 CALLS!

Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup, originators of the Inspiration Line, want to thank Fellowship Wide Services and *the Journal* for supporting the Inspiration Line. GDVI wants to acknowledge the 15 volunteers from all over the US & Canada that leave inspirational messages on the Line and credit them for making this huge milestone possible: Alicia, California, Alyce, Montreal, Canada, Alyson, Pennsylvania, Bob, Pennsylvania, Brenda, Maryland/Florida, Chris, California, John, Florida, Kip, Connecticut, Leah, New York, Mark, New Mexico, Matt, Pennsylvania, Natalie, Pennsylvania, Rich, Massachusetts, Sean, New Mexico, Shelly, New York, Steve D., Pennsylvania, and Zoe, Pennsylvania.

S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

1. We seek to develop a daily relationship with a Higher Power, knowing that we are not alone in our efforts to heal ourselves from our addiction.
2. We are willing to be vulnerable because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power.
3. We surrender, one day at a time, our whole life strategy of, and our obsession with the pursuit of romantic and sexual intrigue and emotional dependency.
4. We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.
5. We learn to accept and love ourselves, to take responsibility for our own lives, and to take care of our own needs before involving ourselves with others.
6. We become willing to ask for help, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others.
7. We allow ourselves to work through the pain of our low self-esteem and our fears of abandonment and responsibility. We learn to feel comfortable in solitude.
8. We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects.
9. We begin to substitute honesty for self-destructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings.
10. We become honest in expressing who we are, developing true intimacy in our relationships with ourselves and others.
11. We learn to value sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership.
12. We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery.



the Journal