

the Journal

Issue #208

Single Issue \$4



QUESTIONS
AND BACKLOGS AND MORE... VISIT US ON OUR BLOG,
WWW.PETSINRECOVERY.COM. (A.P.A.)

Pets in Recovery

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.
3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.
4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
6. We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support.
7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.
8. We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.
9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.
10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.
11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

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Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition oriented fellowship based on the model pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous.

The only qualification for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. S.L.A.A. is supported entirely through contributions of its membership, and is free to all who need it.

To counter the destructive consequences of sex and love addiction, we draw on five major resources:

1. **Sobriety.** Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom-line addictive behavior on a daily basis.
2. **Sponsorship/Meetings.** Our capacity to reach out for the supportive fellowship within S.L.A.A.
3. **Steps.** Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sexual and emotional sobriety.
4. **Service.** Our giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely receive.
5. **Spirituality.** Our developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves which can guide and sustain us in recovery.

As a fellowship S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues and seeks no controversy. S.L.A.A. is not affiliated with any other organizations, movements or causes, either religious or secular.

We are, however, united in a common focus: dealing with our addictive sexual and emotional behavior. We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We need protect with special care the anonymity of every S.L.A.A. member. Additionally we try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media.

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The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.*

1. We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sex and love addicts, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

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

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In submitting such content to S.L.A.A., the member releases S.L.A.A., any other members of S.L.A.A. and S.L.A.A.'s officers, directors, employees and agents (collectively, the "Releasees") from any and all claims which the member may have against any of the Releasees in connection with the member's submission of content to *the Journal*.

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Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, Pets. “Please share how pets have helped your sobriety/special stories about what pets have

meant to your recovery.” 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 #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. And #210 – Sept/Oct – Anorexia vs. healthy breakup – “How did you know whether it was healthy behavior or hiding out in anorexia when you walked away from a relationship?” Please share your experience, strength, and hope. Deadline for submissions: July 15, 2024.

Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“Please share how pets have helped your sobriety/special stories about what pets have meant to your recovery.”

Our little poodle mix has helped me with getting out of my own head and being brought into the present by this affectionate little animal. I never thought I could take care of a dog and was always a little afraid of them. Just the act of walking her has got me out of the house and into the neighbourhood - chatting to other dog owners -in a safe way -and with boundaries (always very safe and always about the dog) - has been good for some gradual healing of my awkwardness and social phobia.

— DAVE H

Question of the day

I really didn't want a pet but my daughter (now 10) persuaded me - if truth be told I'd always been a bit afraid of them - having once been attacked by an Alsatian! We ended up with a little poodle mix - lovely soft personality apart from if you are a fox or a big dog! It has enhanced my spiritual connection to animals and other humans. As a socially awkward person it's now easier for me to chat to others on the street as there is a safe boundary as we just talk about our respective dogs - I am also more connected to my locality as I now walk everywhere. Being responsible for another little sentient being has (hopefully!) reduced my narcissistic tendencies. Needless to say my daughter hasn't followed through on her promises to take care of our dog but it doesn't matter as I'm happy to do that - just grateful that my daughter persuaded me!

—DAVE H, LONDON, UK

I have them to love me and to mother. I am still very hurt and struggle but they keep me on my toes and they stay in bed with me when I have no one else.

— NAOMI

Question of the day

My personal dog, Charlie, has helped me feel safe at home and helped me recover from PTSD. A German shepherd makes for a great guard dog and companion! As a survivor of domestic violence and a volatile childhood, “home” was never safe. He helped me through PTSD with his unconditional love, and frankly, he kept me busy and occupied with walks and general care that a high energy dog demands. I was able to start leaving my home with more confidence with him as a support, I took him everywhere. We would cuddle if I had panic attacks. I started dedicating my time to pets as a dog trainer to help people bond and heal through and with their pets. As a trainer I get a lot of reactive dogs who had gone through their own version of trauma. Diagnosing their behavior and explaining how to move through triggers made me realize I could apply this training onto myself and how I interact with people and situations. It’s been shown that taking an “unhealthy” dog and placing them within a “healthy” pack with the right tools and care can do wonders for unlearning bad habits and training new habits...Much like my current recovery status within these S.L.A.A./A.A. groups. I am forever grateful for my dog and my clients who trust me with their pets, and for the recovery journey I’m on with the help of my fellows and sponsor.

— ROSIE, LOS ANGELES, CA

Pet love is the closest I have come to unconditional love in my life. My pets have helped me to relax, decompress, and practice self-care. Plus, they help me to want to be the person they think that I am.

— CHRISTOPHER G., CLEARWATER, FL

Question of the day

One time I had this wild idea that if I walked my cat outside on a leash, then I would get attention from attractive women. Unfortunately, when I tried to take my cat Lisa outside on a leash and harness, she broke out of it and ran away. It was a very humbling mistake that I made with my addict mind. However, five of my friends in S.L.A.A. helped me in person to get her back, and dozens of fellows in S.L.A.A. showed their emotional support online. I couldn't have gotten her back home without them and my Higher Power. There is so much love in the fellowship of S.L.A.A.

— DAVID G.

When I was away from home my dad used to feed my rabbits, Monkey and Moomin. He told me they would come out because he sang to them. I didn't believe him. So, one day he demonstrated. He went into the garden singing and lo and behold the two bunnies poked their twitching noses out of their hutch and ran to him. I was amazed. I watched, eyes wide, mouth agape until my mum joined me at the window. She said, "He's adorable. He thinks they came because he is singing but it's because whenever he goes out there they know they're going to get fed!" I often think of this when I am spiraling or worrying or heading into intrigue: what do I think is happening, what is ACTUALLY happening?

— MIRA, LONDON, UK

My sex addict husband brought a dog home one day without discussing it with me beforehand. Four years later, the dog was still with me and my son but my husband was gone. I learned that pets are more loyal than people sometimes and fiercely accepting. When he died, I cried.

— KATHLEEN A., SACRAMENTO

Question of the day

My dogs are love addicts and my cats are anorexics. The unconditional love that I get from them and physical touch, heals me in a way that my S.L.A.A. social network cannot. Dog spelled backwards is God. I feel my Higher Power's love with my animals. Caring for them is like caring for and healing my younger self.

— PHOENIX (THEY/THEM), HOUSTON

My dog taught me everything about love. She was causing trouble and biting people. This caused me so much stress and pain. But I got help from a dog trainer who taught me that the problem was me, that I was not seeing her or reading her cues, that I was not serving her well. That was humbling. Once I learned to speak her love language and see her goodness, trust came from her. She let me love her and I learned how to be loving by tending to her as she needed. She is a really good dog who was previously misunderstood by me. Once I learned this, I let her love in. But part of me still thought of myself as a treat ATM and nothing more. But I loved her. Eventually she got old and blind and became sick. I loved holding her and she waited for me. The night she passed, she and I fell asleep together on my bed in spite of her labored breathing. At 5:00 in the morning, I awoke to a tap on my arm. I turned on the light and saw her gasp for air. The next gasp was her last. In that moment, I knew she loved me. She woke me up for this final sacred moment in order to show me that.

— RACHEL W., LA

Pets in Service of Recovery



Hello, I'm Dean, a grateful recovering love addict. Today's topic is about pets in recovery, and pets in service of recovery. Although I don't have a pet, my experiences with pets, service,

and sponsorship have all contributed to my recovery. They've helped me step outside of myself and serve others, whether people or pets. It's been a really great boon for me

to get out of myself. As a love addict spending time with someone who wasn't a potential love interest was something I previously had no interest in and considered a waste of time. Recognizing that these relationships can be rewarding without being romantic has been a revelation, almost miraculous.

Regarding my pet story, I don't have pets or cats, but I do live in a building with two women who are proud 'cat ladies'—a term they embrace. I've resided in this four-apartment building for about six and a half years. My two neighbors on the east side, who have lived there longer than I have, introduced me to a community of cats when I moved in. So, while I don't have my own pets, I've become part of a cat-loving community. They've helped various strays and street cats that lived nearby, and these cats quickly realized they could hang out near our building because we have cat ladies who are more than happy to feed and care for them. Over time, these cats have adopted us, and they've adopted me. Of course, this didn't happen all at once, as that's not the nature of cats. I had to earn my way in and gain the trust of

these street cats, who are naturally more skittish than house cats.

Gradually, I earned their trust and affection, and we became friends. With a bit of my stubborn streak, I was determined to win them over, especially since they ignored me for so long. I set it as a personal goal to gain their friendship, and eventually, I did. It was quite a beautiful and beneficial experience. Once you earn their affection, they are incredibly affectionate and cuddly. Once they allowed me to pet them, they would contentedly sit there for as long as I was willing to continue. Being able to share affection with them, as a love addict, was meaningful. It allowed me to spend time and connect with beings in a non-romantic way, which was very fulfilling.

Exploring different types of relationships has been transformative for me, extending into service work within the fellowship and beyond. Volunteering at food banks and aiding those without homes were steps I never envisioned taking. Yet, these acts of service have become integral to my recovery and, after that, becoming a sponsor. I never thought I would be able to do

that.

I see them all as being related to helping in my recovery. They allow me to step outside of myself, to connect with others—people and animals alike. Every connection I've had is also a connection with Higher Power. I've witnessed this higher power speaking and acting through others, including cats, serving as constant reminders of my connection with Higher Power. It may not seem significant to some, but for me,

it's so important for my recovery. Each aspect is special, each is crucial, for they collectively sustain my day-to-day journey in sobriety. Over these years I'm so blessed to now have 14 years of sobriety. To me, that's a miracle too. Thank you, Higher Power, for everything in my life, cats included. Thank you so much for the opportunity to discuss this topic and thank you for letting me share.

— DEAN

A Cat Named Lucifer

My name is Julie, and I'm a sex addict, love-avoidant, anorexic. I've been off my bottom lines for six years, following seven years of attempting recovery on my own. It wasn't until after completing the Steps that I realized I had a pattern of abandoning every pet I had to my family. I would start caring for them, but then my mom would end up taking over. I never saw it as looking after someone; I was too self-centered to see the responsibility. My mom pointed out that I treated our childhood home like a pet shelter, which I denied, attributing it to incon-

venience. However, the transformative process of Step work, sponsorship, and self-reflection in meetings helped me see the truth.

Now, I have two cats, despite always being a dog person. I have a black cat and a Siamese, both of whom adopted me. It was during the Twelfth Step that I experienced a spiritual awakening and recognized some underlying resentments towards my dad.

And just when I decided to make amends or, at the very least, put my thoughts down on paper, I found myself revisiting an old Facebook account.

My intention was to trace him, to reconnect somehow. I realized that he had been missing for eight years out of the nine years that we hadn't been talking.

I'm a love-avoidant and I love cutting off people. A therapist once told me that family can be chosen—that's all the validation that I need and I'm off to the races. That enables my avoidant. So, I severed ties with him, convinced that it was the right path.

And then, there it was: a letter. He spoke of bad business deals, and of something illegal happening and he said his goodbyes and kind of making amends. And this is a person who has never said, "OK. Maybe you're right. I was wrong." That did not exist in his vocabulary when we had an active father-daughter relationship. I wouldn't have been able to understand that he was trying to make an amends if I hadn't received that letter at that exact moment. Higher Power's timing is everything. I remember being sad and not knowing how to grieve.

Halloween was coming and this black cat showed up at my doorstep.

I eyed him skeptically. "You've chosen a terrible time

to be missing," I thought. But I'm no cat person, so I did what any rational human would: I created signs, plastered them around the neighborhood, hoping someone would claim him. I looked at the tag on his collar.

His name? Lucifer. My first thought is, Great. I'm housing the devil. I took him to the vet, checked for a microchip—nothing. I tried giving him to my cousin but the cat was scared of kids. He would run and hide.

Yet, he persisted. People in recovery meetings told me, "He chose you." I'm the kind of addict that even if Higher Power is putting a sign right in front of me saying this is the next indicated action, I'm still thinking, I know you've been right, Higher Power, all these times. But what if you're just wrong this time? And that wasn't the case because he's been a good cat. And I think he was part of that phase I was going through during the grieving process of realizing that my father had been missing. I wouldn't be able to turn these amends on my terms, you know? And I still don't know; maybe I'll have to hold on to those. More will be revealed.

And it's COVID, so I'm at

home. I'm learning how to interact with this cat, learning to take care of something else. It's been a journey—a lot of asking for help, which was new for me. As a love addict, I used to think, "No, I don't want to burden anybody." I believed that being lovable meant not inconveniencing anyone. But no, my fellowship was there to help me. The women's meetings, the women—they were there to support me. And now, as I prepare to get back to work, I carry these lessons with me.

My cat starts not eating and doing weird things. I thought, "Well, with a computer, you can press a reset button, but what do you do with pets?" So off to the vet we went. I'd been diligent about his vaccines and neutering, but now something was wrong. The vet looked at me and said, "Your cat seems depressed."

My immediate thought was, oh my God, he caught S.L.A.A. from me. Thankfully, my sponsor set me straight. "You made it about you," she said. "Maybe your cat is feeling your stress as you head back to work. Call fellows who are vets."

I reached out to vets. Not seeking freebies, mind you, but tapping into their expertise. Their consensus? Get him a

companion. And there it was—the dreaded cat lady label loomed. But sometimes, life nudges us in unexpected directions. So, here I am, embracing my role as a feline matchmaker.

You know, immediately as soon as I said, "OK, God, we'll see if this works," I turned to my mom. "You know what, Mom?" I confessed. "I think I might need to get Lucifer a companion." She said, "Actually, the neighbor's cat just had Siamese kittens."

Within a day, I welcomed the Siamese kitten into our home. Training them, coaxing them to get along—it became a process. One night, frustration got the better of me, and I addressed Lucifer directly. "Buddy," I said, "you don't get along with this new cat, and I got him because of you. Both of you need to figure it out. Otherwise, I'll list you both on Facebook Marketplace."

And you know what? Those cats seemed to understand. After that stern talk, they started getting along fairly well. I'd assumed the Siamese was a girl. Off to the vet I went, signing in for Luna's neutering. The vet looked at me, amused. "What's his name?" he asked. I hesitated. "It's Luna," I replied.

His response? A gentle correction: “I hate to break it to you, but Luna is a boy.”

Time after time, Higher Power showed up, nudging me. My addiction, my stubborn certainty—it often led me astray. But through this series of events, I’ve learned that maybe, just maybe, I’m not always right. Those blinders I wear—the ones shaped by my addiction—sometimes they obscure the truth.

So, I turned to Luna, “Okay,” I said, “I’m sorry I misgendered you. Would you like to pick a new name?”

And I threw out a bunch of names. He wasn’t responding. Finally, I thought, maybe there’s a theme emerging here. We already had Lucifer. So, I started tossing out biblical names. And then it hit me: how about Saint? And he stepped forward. Now, I have Lucifer and Saint. It wasn’t intentional, but perhaps it was guided by a Higher Power—the balance between extremes, and how we get to live in the middle with program.

These moments—they’re like golden nuggets scattered along my path. Working the steps, intimacy, embracing vulnerability, caring for others, admitting when I need help. If I shared these stories with

someone outside our recovery circles, they might raise an eyebrow. “You’re digging too deep,” they’d say. But here’s the thing: when I open myself to something greater, when I seek guidance beyond my own understanding, these kind of things happen.

After that situation happened and I decided to re-enter the dating world following a break, I confided in my sponsor. “You know,” I said, “when I initially drafted my dating plan, I didn’t have cats. Who’s going to want me with cats?” She said, “It’s up to your Higher Power, but you’ll find someone.” And indeed, others chimed in—people like Lisa, who assured me, “Yeah, you’ll find someone. My husband likes cats.”

So, on my dating plan, I made it clear: one of the assets I’m seeking is that my potential partner must like pets. Sure, they can adore dogs, but if they’re exclusively dog people, I need to honor myself and what brings me joy. If they don’t appreciate cats, perhaps it’s time for me to gracefully step away.

I’ll admit, I feared perpetual singledom. But that’s okay. Acceptance became my practice. And then, when I least expected it, I met the person I’m

dating now. On our first date, I broached the topic: “How do you feel about cats?” His response? “Oh, I have a dog, but I think all animals are great.”

It’s one of the things that just happens in program, if I choose to make faith bigger than my fears and my grief.

—JULIE

Trusting in God and His Timing

In 2011, I got the first dog of my adult life. One of my sons had started college and the other two were getting close. They didn’t need me as much anymore, and I began feeling a little empty.

I pleaded with my husband to get a dog, and finally, he agreed. By that time, I was already in my addiction. My dog felt the impact. I wasn’t always there for him, just as I hadn’t always been present for my boys because of my addiction.

A year later, We added another dog to our family. So now I had two frenchies: Mac, my boy, and Tosh, my girl (Mac’nTosh). I genuinely loved

and adored my dogs and I always worried that something might happen to them. I didn’t fully recognize this fear as unhealthy. Now, having gone through the program, (I started in 2018) I understand that fear plays a significant role in my addiction.

Fast forward to 2023, the dogs were now 10 and 11 years old. Tosh had lost interest in eating so we took her to the veterinary office owned by a good friend. Our friend wasn’t available so we saw a different doctor there.

She ran some tests and determined that Tosh had fluid build up in her abdomen. She recommended that we go to



the emergency facility to get further testing and have the fluid removed. Also, she suspected that the condition

was worse than what she could tell.

On the way to the emergency clinic, I was fearful

that I would lose my baby girl. Now in recovery, I immediately asked God to remove my fear and then prayed specifically for God's will to be done. I placed her in his loving arms.

The ER doctor did more testing and returned with somber news: Tosh had three tumor growths and an abdomen filled with fluid. She said "I can do a procedure to drain the fluid, but because of the numerous tumors, it will inevitably refill, subjecting her to repeated procedures until the tumors take over her body.

There is the possibility that she may not make it through the procedure." I asked the doctor for her advice. She said "If it were my dog, I wouldn't subject her to the procedure. I would let her go."

My husband and I didn't take long to make a decision. We had already prayed, and we both agreed that "to let go" was the unselfish answer.

We went home to pick up Mac so he could be there with us to say our goodbyes. The three of us returned and entered the room where "the goodbye" was to take place. As soon as we walked in I saw a single framed photograph sitting on a table. It was a picture of a dog that looked

just like my childhood pet. I gasped because of the resemblance. My "muffin" was a mixed breed and I rarely saw dogs that looked like him! On the wall above this single photo were a few more photographs of dogs.

All of them were swimming and most of them were under water "smiling." I gasped again. Muffin had drowned in my backyard pool! Since that time it was usually painful to see dogs in the water. But here was a group of happy dogs SMILING underwater.

It was as if God was saying "muffin is happy!" It made me smile and gave me comfort. Then, I noticed another wall with a few more pictures. One featured a french bulldog with the same coloring as my first "Frenchie love" (my friend's dog) who had also died tragically.

I could not help but feel that this room was created for me by my higher power. The goodbye was sad yet peaceful.

We returned home. I felt a deep sadness and then doubt crept in. Did we make the right decision? Maybe we should have tried the procedure. But the image of that room appeared in my mind. I believed it was a sign from

God. A confirmation that this was meant to be. The memory of that room brought me peace.

The next night, we had plans for dinner with some cousins. When we were on our way to the restaurant our veterinarian friend called. He wanted to know what had happened. I recounted the conversation with the ER doctor and her recommendation and our decision.

He basically stated that he could have easily done the procedure and that she could have likely lived 6 months with minimal discomfort!

His words were like a stab to my heart. Resentment and fear flooded my mind and body. After all, it was already done—how could he suggest I could have had six more months with her?

At dinner I couldn't focus on anything but my resentment. I had recently completed the 12 steps for SLAA using the AA Big Book. I knew that this resentment was dangerous for my sobriety. Excusing myself from the table, I called a recovery friend to help me do a Tenth Step inventory based on the exact instructions in the AA Big

Book on page 84 where it says "Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.

We discuss them with someone immediately... Love and tolerance of others is our code." It is basically a mini 4th step inventory.

My friend helped me to recognize MY PART in the resentment and the fear. I had wanted my Veterinary Friend to tell me that I had done the right thing or at least not suggest that I had done the WRONG thing! He was not behaving the way I wanted him to behave.

He was not following MY script of how friends should be and how life should go. I prayed and asked God to remove my character defects. Also, I realized that there may have been some ego involved on his part. We are all human after all. So, I prayed the Sick Man's Prayer (also in the AA Big Book).

I was able to walk back into the restaurant where my family was waiting and finish the meal. It felt like a miracle that I was able to let go of the resentment toward my friend considering the circumstances.

The next morning, I woke up. I heard it—I was either still asleep or had just woken up. I heard the little pitter-patter paws of Tosh outside my bedroom door. I heard her say, “Trust God.” (I guess dogs can talk after they cross the Rainbow Bridge.) It was as if she was reminding me that no matter what anybody says, this was the right time for her to go. “Trust God and his timing in all things” was the overall message I received through this experience.

I’d also like to say something that I have heard others say in the rooms before but I have never said out loud. I am grateful to be a sex and love addict because otherwise I would never have found the Twelve-Step program that is truly the answer to all my problems- not just my sex and love addiction, but all my problems. Thank you for letting me share.

— KIM

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>

A Dog and a Home



Hi, everyone. I'm Marcie, a recovering sex and love addict. Right as I was first getting into the program, I mean, for many years, I would cross the street to pet any dog I could see. I would pause a conversation and run across to befriend this little animal. When I was really

dissolving prior to coming into this program, I was living with someone who had a dog. He persisted in getting the same breed of dog, and the one he adopted when we got together was a puppy that had digestive issues. We were up in the middle of the night; it was just hor-

rible. I thought, “Oh, puppies be gone.” But I still had these templates of dogs that were companions. One was a woman I had dated many years prior. Her dog went everywhere with her and had been an emotional support animal that really saved her life. She adopted a dog when she was really low and suicidal. Just getting a dog to get out of the house to walk this dog and put her attention on something else other than herself. That sort of stuck as like, “OK,” plus it went everywhere with her. It would leap in and out of the car. My best friend had a funny-looking little Chihuahua terrier that she would take everywhere with her. George would often travel in her bag. And I was like, “OK, small dog. OK.” So, I was gathering information for a dog that I wanted to get at some point. And as I was leaving this relationship right when I first got into the program, I remember him saying, “you know, I expressed I wanted to get a dog.”

So, I moved out and started looking for housemates who had dogs. During my withdrawal, a young Chinese student moved in. She was incredibly generous with her dog, who would come and snuggle with me. Eventually, she real-

ized she couldn't handle the dog as she was moving out and working more. I was devastated when she didn't ask if I wanted to adopt the dog before giving it to another family. I wept when we said goodbye to Loli, that was her name. She was part lab and went to live with another lab and had a pond to run around in, rather than staying in a houseboat without open space. Ultimately, I had to accept that her owner did what was best for her.

Fast forward, I moved to Oakland. I found different ways to connect and feel whole, which were like Higher Power experiences. One daily practice I added was petting dogs. I was also trying to find suitable housing after moving out of the houseboat.

It was hard to find a place because my finances were such that I had to live within my means to be fully self-supporting. This meant I had significantly less money for rent. So, I was looking for shared places, and most of them, if they allowed dogs, already had one and no room for more pets. I thought some dogs around is better than no dog of my own. After choir practice, I was sitting in a car with a friend from the pro-

gram, discussing my housing search. She asked me, “Marcie, do you want a dog, or do you just want to want a dog?” I started bawling and said, “I want a dog.” She told me, “Then you have to stop looking at places where you can’t have your own dog.” That’s when I realized how much I had limited myself by allowing outside circumstances to dictate what I wanted.

At the end of this meeting, we had a five-minute meditation, which was part of the structure. During that meditation, I had an epiphany about getting a job at a local health store and creating a line of healthy foods for them. So, I approached the owner with my idea. “Are you curious?” I asked. He replied, “Sure. Let’s sit down and talk about it.”

So, we ended up not going through with that idea, but he hired me to be sort of like the bulk section concierge, putting recipe packs together. It was really fun creating my own thing back there. Then, this local neighbor who was a customer came in looking for someone to rent a little cottage at the back of her house. I checked it out, and without me even asking, she offered to lower the rent. She was about to retire and wanted to keep

life simple, but she said no animals. I asked if she would consider a small dog, and after thinking it over, she agreed, knowing how important her own pet was to her.

The very next day, I found this stray dog, all matted and with ingrown toenails. I took it to the vet, cleaned it up, and found out it had no microchip. I wondered, “Is this my dog? Is this a sign from a higher power?” I had already bonded with the dog within 24 hours when a neighbor came out and claimed it might be hers. The dog didn’t seem overjoyed to see her, but when she brought out their other dog, the one I had found went crazy with happiness. So, I let it go back to her, feeling guilty and questioning if I did the right thing, as this person clearly neglected the dog. It was a small dog, less than 20 pounds, just left in the yard.

That night, I went to a free-style dance event and found myself on my knees, asking God, “What do I need to learn from this experience with the dog?” Then it hit me that the dog was not available, just like my pattern in S.L.A.A. of dating people who are not available. I thought, “Oh, Jesus.”

A couple of weeks passed, and one of my neighbors met a

dog walker who had found a sweet little dog. I went to meet it, and it was like love at first sight. However, the dog walker mentioned that she would need to take it to the shelter because she couldn't take in any more dogs. Naturally, I offered to foster it. Everything lined up perfectly for fostering—the crate from a friend and even the microchipping by the dog walker. I checked Craigslist and called shelters to see if anyone was missing a dog, but there were no signs of it being lost. The dog walker assured me it hadn't been well cared for, so I felt fine about taking the dog in. And now, she's the little dog I have. She's incredibly sweet, and I take her everywhere. I have this backpack that she fits into like camouflage. I love it when she pokes her head out, and people on the street find so much joy in seeing her. When we reach a street corner, I set the backpack down, open it, and she hops in so we can cross the street. People in cars seem slightly awestruck and delighted by us. My friends in recovery often ask when I'm going out of town next because they want to take care of her. She's

become like a fellowship, an emotional support animal for many. I love to share the joy she brings. I brought her to the ABM meeting because I'm planning to stay longer and visit family. I wanted her with me, and I was initially unsure if I could have her at the hotel, thinking it was only for service animals. But I found out at the last minute that they permit all animals.

No, you know, all animals are allowed; you just have to pay a fee. But even before I knew that, I had arranged a boarder. Yesterday, during one of the committee sessions, I stepped out and met this boarder who lives just 8 minutes away. She raises tarantulas, has two cats, and calls herself "Furry Poppins." So, I took my dog there because I needed a break. I wanted to be fully present here at the meeting, and I knew she would receive a level of attention that I couldn't provide while I'm here. I'm so grateful for her; she truly is such a gift to my recovery.

Yeah, I think that's it. Thank you.

— MARCIE

Cats are a Part of My Story

Hi, I'm L, a sex and love addict. Thank you for letting me share with you guys today, my pet story. Cats have played a large part in my recovery in different ways. I hold my bottom lines on the back of a picture of a cat that looks really mad. He's been groomed or something, and it's kind of a lion cut. It's weird, but it does reflect what I did to my cat because of my sex and love addiction. My sponsor always told me I have to share my cat story because it's insanity, Step One to its core. So, my bottom lines are: no contacting qualifiers, no sex shops, no pornography, no sex outside of my relationship, no violent or unsafe sex. When I share, I pass around my 21-year sobriety medallion. My sponsor always passed around medallions when she shared.

I've been addicted to fantasy my whole life since I was a child. My dad was in the military, so we moved a lot. I would always read books, hide out in fantasy, make up things about how the next place was

going to be. My dad would make up stories about how much better the next place we moved into would be, but it was base housing, so it was exactly the same everywhere we went. I always had to leave my friends. I wore glasses as a kid. I was pretty smart. I got good grades, perfect attendance when I was young, and I was a gymnast.

And I got third all-around in the state of Maryland for gymnastics. I was pretty much an overachiever, seeking the respect of my parents and hoping to earn their love. When I was 11, I met a guy who was the leader of a gang in the area where I lived. I got into a relationship with him, even though I didn't like him. It was only because I was bullied at school; I was unpopular. I wanted to be the popular girl, and he was the most popular guy in town. I thought being in a relationship with him would make me popular and protected, but it was the exact opposite. He verbally and sexually abused me, cheated on me, and physically

abused me for 9 years. I stayed in the relationship, even though I didn't live with him, didn't have any children with him, and could have left. But I didn't.

So, when I was 20 and in college, he stalked me. I didn't think I would be able to leave. Then, he killed my best friend. He shot him, killed him, went to jail for it, and married the girl who paid his bail, whom he was cheating on me with. I plotted my suicide. For a month, I smoked cigarettes, played video games, and had a friend from my gymnastics troupe who would force me to go out of the dorm to eat and wanted me to see a therapist. None of it helped. I was in a bottomless pit of suicidal thoughts. I was going to jump off the ninth floor of my dorm building when I got a call from my parents. They said California is different. 'We'll buy you a car, pay for your master's degree. You can do anything you want here. It'll be a much better life.'

And so, I came out to California. I quit smoking for a while and quit drinking. I met a guy who was 17 years old, still in high school, while I was 20. We started dating. He had never been with a girl before;

he was a churchgoing guy. I found myself in an eight-year relationship with him. I was so controlling, so scared of everything, and so fearful of abandonment that I was just consumed by it.

Fast forward, I realized I had been an alcoholic my whole life. My sister-in-law, who was attending A.A. meetings, introduced me to A.A. She suggested I watch my drinking, especially not to drink on medication, among other things. I went to A.A. with her and felt at home. I had never believed in God before that. I walked into the rooms completely atheist, having searched for religion. I had tried every religion there is—Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventism. I even got baptized in a Spanish-speaking Seventh-Day Adventist church because my boyfriend spoke Spanish. But none of it ever really resonated with me. I was only doing it for a guy. Guys were my Higher Power; relationships were my Higher Power. I didn't have room for a Higher Power at the time. So, when I joined A.A., I just took the rooms and the people in them as my Higher Power. I attended a year's worth of A.A. meetings and used to complain to my

A.A. sponsor about men. She eventually said she couldn't listen to my stories about men anymore. I started acting out in the rooms of A.A. because of my sex and love addiction. Eventually, I found S.L.A.A., and for four years, I did everything everybody told me to do.

I took on service commitments, went through the Steps, and attended meetings—three meetings every day for nicotine, sex and love, and alcohol. It wasn't just a 90-in-90; it was every day, three times a day. Yet, I still couldn't grasp the spiritual side of the program. I couldn't find a Higher Power strong enough to handle my sex and love addiction. For four years, I kept slipping, unable to get past 114 days of sobriety. Then, I met a guy in S.L.A.A. who wanted to get sober. He was married and wanted to quit smoking. I thought I could help him quit, so we started going to Nicotine Anonymous meetings together, as well as A.A. and S.L.A.A. meetings. We would go to fellowship, and he would order food for me. Without realizing it, we were dating for six months, which led to us having sex and acting out. We tried to break up repeatedly. I kept turning in my chips, getting new ones, from one-day chips

to two-month chips. Nothing seemed to work.

We were considering moving in together, but he was allergic to my cat, so I faced the possibility of having to give her away. I got this cat because my A.A. sponsor said I needed a pet to care for something outside myself, to be less selfish. I've always had dogs and didn't want a cat, especially not a black one—I wanted an orange cat. But the only option available in the litter my sponsor took me to was a black cat, so I was somewhat forced to get her. After she was fixed, which I suspect wasn't done at a reputable place, she became very nervous around people.

After getting her fixed, taking Princessa to the vet became a challenge; they needed two vets to hold her down due to her vicious clawing. I even had to give her anti-anxiety medication just for the vet visits. Despite these difficulties, Princessa was essential in helping me look beyond myself, caring for another living being, and she kept me company during my attempts to quit smoking. She would bat at my cigarettes as if urging me to stop. However, I considered giving her away to my parents, who planned to declaw her and let her roam outdoors, neither of

which I agreed with. She was an indoor cat, but my sex and love addiction clouded my judgment. I was fixated on moving in with a married man, believing it would fix my life and we'd become this ideal couple with S.L.A.A. books on the shelves and a spiritual connection. It was a complete delusion.

Just before moving in together, after putting \$2,000 down on a lease, he called to end things, saying he couldn't abandon his wife and needed to get sober in S.L.A.A. He said he needed a no-contact with me. My mind snapped. I irrationally blamed my cat, thinking if I could somehow make her dander-free, he would come back, as if his allergies were the sole reason for leaving. It was an absurd thought.

It was my Step One, a moment of sheer craziness. I tried to shave my cat, Princessa, with an electric shaver. Terrified, she ran under the bed. I put her in a pillowcase because the vet said it would calm her down, but she was having none of it. She clawed her way out, leaving me with scars all over my arms from the ordeal. It was half an hour of madness, chasing her around the house, leaving her with patches of hair and me covered in band-aids.

I knew then that I was powerless over my situation. I was going to see him again, and it felt like nothing else mattered, like the world was ending. I was on the floor, crying, screaming, and hyperventilating. I called a fellow in S.L.A.A., who reminded me that prayers are powerful. I asked for a prayer to lift my obsession with him, and she said one over the phone. After that prayer, a calm washed over me. I call it my lightning bolt spiritual experience because I became a completely different person afterward. I was responsible, sponsoring eight women, became the literature person at my intergroup, sold literature for eight years, and wrote literature for S.L.A.A. I went on a sober dating plan, got married, and became a supervisor at work. I transformed from a self-centered, obsessed, suicidal person consumed by sex and love addiction.

After that incident, I continued to care for Princessa, much better than I had before during my struggles with sex and love addiction. I was sober dating, checking in with my sponsor. I started dating my now-husband for six months. He struggled with how to handle my PTSD episodes, reacting

with anger, and he doubted his ability to be with me due to his own anorexia. When we first started dating, he told me he wasn't the marrying type. He was 40 years old and had never been married. So, after he broke up with me, I told him to only contact me if he wanted to get back together; otherwise, please don't call. He took two months to work on his anorexia and other issues. Then, around Christmas time, while I was away with my family, he left a message asking me to call him back. He had a cat for 20 years, which he considered his longest relationship. After the cat passed away, he didn't want any more cats, and he was somewhat anorexic about that. When he called me on Christmas, I returned his call a week later. I reached his answering machine and heard, "G--- and Bonnie and Clyde can't come to the phone right now." I knew then that he had gotten a cat, which meant he was open to a relationship with another pet, and perhaps with a person too. That turned out to be true, and we had those cats for 17 years.

When I was about to move in with G— after three years of dating, I still had Princessa,

and he had two cats. His landlady wouldn't allow three cats, so we faced a tough decision. Should I not move in with him, or give Princessa to my sister-in-law who lived in the desert? She planned to make Princessa an outdoor cat among other rescue cats she had, and I feared for her safety outdoors. For a month, I agonized over this in every meeting I attended, feeling like a horrible person for even considering giving my cat away. I prayed, talked to my sponsor, and sought advice from fellows. Then, I watched an episode of "Joan of Arcadia," where Joan talks to God and receives signs. The episode about feral cats suggested that cats want to roam free. Inspired by this, I decided to give Princessa to my sister-in-law. She thrived there for nine years, became friendly, and even got a boyfriend. Before, she would glare at my sponsees during our work, but afterward, she became so kind—she loved people. It's like everything with cats and pets was a God-shot for me. They're really a part of my story, so I thank you guys for listening to my share.

—ANONYMOUS

Share space

One Word at a Time

My name is Sharon S, and I am a sex and love addict. I am privileged to be part of the team that edited the Basic Text for a possible second edition, and want to share my experience with you.

I love the Basic Text. It got me sober in 2012 and with my Higher Power's help it keeps me sober today. Having said that, though, I also struggle with the Basic Text. Sometimes it's confusing. Sometimes I hear people stumble over complicated phrases when they read them aloud. Some of the language is too graphic and can be emotionally disturbing. I find that some of it is sexist and outdated.

I volunteered to be on the team because I think it's vital that our Basic Text be current and inclusive. Our understanding of sex and love addiction has dramatically evolved in the 40 years since the first edition was released. Newcomers need to see

themselves in our book, and it should reflect changes in our culture and language.

The idea of publishing a second edition took shape in 2017, when the S.L.A.A. Board of Trustees proposed the idea at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM). Two years later the 50th-Anniversary Basic Text Subcommittee (50BTS) was formed. The 50BTS surveyed the entire Fellowship to find out what we wanted in a second edition, and heard from more than 600 of us. The project moved forward.

Delegates at the 2021 ABM weighed in on how far the editing should go. Three options were considered: no changes, light editing, or heavy editing. Conference members voted for a light edit, concerned that a heavy edit would result in a completely revised and new book.

As discussed at the ABM, "light editing" meant

“corrections of misspelling, grammar, punctuation, and typos (which could include spacing and alignment) as well as edits to remove triggering, suggestive, and exclusive language, and, in some cases, to provide clarifying descriptions.” “Triggering” was further defined as “racist, sexist, misogynistic, or graphic language.”

In 2021 our team’s work began. We had a single mandate: Change only what is necessary in order to deliver the most accurate, inclusive, and understandable recovery book possible.

We read every word aloud more than once and endlessly debated phrases and meanings. We turned to Garner’s *Modern English Usage* (Fourth Edition) and the *S.L.A.A. Guide to Usage and Style*, and relied on group conscience and our Higher Power for guidance. The deeper we dove, the deeper my respect for the Basic Text

became. So did my conviction that it needed updating. It took a long time and a lot of patience, but we kept at it.

In response to concerns about editing the founder’s story (Chapters One and Two) we reached out to him. I had the life-changing opportunity to speak with “Rich” several times. He was humble and helpful and supportive of our efforts, which meant the world to me and the team. He approved our edits to his story, and added a few of his own.

The draft of the second edition is now complete, and will be considered at the 2024 ABM. To request a copy, please see our webpage at slaafws.org/50BT.

I know the second edition isn’t perfect (because nothing is) but I’m proud of the work we’ve done. We put our hearts and souls into it. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

— SHARON S., ST. LOUIS, MO

INSPIRATION

- LIFE'S TWISTS AND TURNS OFTEN LEAD US TO MOMENTS OF REFLECTION AND SELF-AWARENESS.
- SOMETIMES, THE PATH WE CHOOSE IS BOTH PAINFUL AND NECESSARY—A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN LOVE AND LETTING GO.
- LIFE'S MOMENTS OFTEN INTERTWINE, REVEALING DEEPER CONNECTIONS AND GUIDING US THROUGH DIFFICULT CHOICES.
- SOMETIMES, LIFE WEAVES UNEXPECTED THREADS—CONNECTING PAST AND PRESENT, JOY AND LOSS, IN A TAPESTRY OF SHARED EXPERIENCES.
- REMEMBER, PROGRESS IS A JOURNEY, AND SELF-AWARENESS IS KEY. KEEP MOVING FORWARD!
- SAYING GOODBYE IS NEVER EASY, BUT SOMETIMES IT'S THE MOST COMPASSIONATE CHOICE WE CAN MAKE.

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

