

the Journal

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Anorexia vs. Healthy Breakup

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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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, 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?” 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: #211—Nov/Dec - “A season, a reason, or a lifetime – How can you tell what kind of relationship you are in? Or 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. Deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2024. And #212 – Jan/Feb – COVID-19: “How did you get through the pandemic sober? Dealing with grief, isolation, uncertainty, impatience.” Deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2024. Please go to <https://slaafws.org/thejournal/> and click on “Answer Question of the Day.”

“How did you know whether it was healthy behavior or hiding out in anorexia when you walked away from a relationship?”

I knew my decision to walk away from my nearly three-year long relationship was healthy and sober because I felt that staying in the relationship where I was no longer happy was my anorexic tendencies coming out. My disease tells me I don't deserve to be in a happy, healthy relationship and my Higher Power, as expressed through my fellows and my intuition, tells me I absolutely do. As scary as it was to end the relationship, I knew it had to be done. I called my sponsor and my close circle of S.L.A.A. friends daily while planning my exit and am now navigating this breakup with so much support and love not only from people in program, but also from my Higher Power.

— ARI, LOS ANGELES

Question of the day

I quit my relationship because I couldn't stop obsessing about another toxic relationship that I had (besides her). And I didn't feel in love with my partner anymore. It became too much. I'm still not clearly understanding what happened.

— MANU B

When I'm not sure whether some decision is my own self-will (a.k.a., my addiction/anorexia) vs. my Higher Power's will (a.k.a., healthy behavior), I pause. My first sponsor told me that "Higher Power's will is never urgent." So, if it feels urgent, like "I must get out of this relationship right this instant," that's usually my self-will. In that case, I pause. I pray for guidance. I wait to hear the still, small voice that is how my Higher Power's guidance usually shows up.

I've also noticed that if I'm building a case, like, if I've got a whole argument and a bunch of reasons and evidence to back up my decision, that's usually my self-will, too. When it's my Higher Power's will, it usually just feels calm and simple, like I don't need to explain or prove anything, like I just know in my soul what's right.

So, whenever I'm making any big decision (whether that's a break-up, a new job, a move, or whatever), I just pause - for as long as it takes. And sometimes it can take a long time before I'm clear. It once took me six months of turning it over to decide to leave a sober relationship! But I know that if I continue to turn my will and my life over to the care of my Higher Power, almost nothing is ever truly urgent.

— M., LOS ANGELES, CA

Question of the day

For me it was with my ex. We were friends when I came into recovery. I did my amends and since then I noticed he was treating me like a doormat. I thought about ending the friendship however something in me felt it could be me hiding out in anorexia. After careful consideration and reflection on our friendship, I decided to go no contact. Reading “The Withdrawal Experience” (chapter 5 of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text) indicated this for me. Where it mentions the third signpost and assessing relationships and friendships in the reading, I knew he was an “extension” of my addiction. I thought we could get married in 20 years. That’s when I knew it was healthy behavior for me to walk away. It sucked, but it felt good. I’m happy to have a life without him.

— ALTON (DUBAI)

Because of my anorexia, it is important for me to check in with my sponsor, another S.L.A.A. program member, and my Higher Power before I end a relationship or decline another date with someone. It is all too easy for me to find a reason that someone is not a good match for me. So, checking in with others to run my logic by them helps me to differentiate my wants from my needs in relationship. I also put the future of the relationship into my God box as a way of connecting the decision with my HP’s plan. In addition, I have written a vision for what I want in a partner and I check off what traits the person has and remind myself that there are still a lot of blanks on the list, the things I don’t know about the person. This helps me to stick around to get to know the person better before making a rash decision based on my anorexic tendencies.

— ANONYMOUS, OAKLAND, CA

Question of the day

When I saw no change to behaviour despite my repeatedly stating my needs and boundaries.

— ANDREA

I realized that a relationship with the potential to be healthy should not feel as difficult as ours felt. Living sober was essential to coming to this realisation because a part me of always wondered whether or not we would get along better if alcohol was no longer an issue.

— HS

I learned it only in S.L.A.A. I'd stay in painfully destructive relationships trying to get my needs met, not knowing how to heal and be healed and come from a place of healthier relationships with myself. I'd struggle. S.L.A.A. said if you want to be healthy you have to choose the healthy way and stay in the solution. So I learned that meant to take contrary action daily and sober myself up. Addictive relationships aren't healthy. If I cannot stay present in my body and mind for a relationship that means I am in trauma land. I cannot be in a relationship with someone I'm constantly not present with.

— MANJU K.

I have been in a narcissistic abusive relationship and discovered it was not me but him who was giving me nothing else than insanity and mental crisis and a damaged nerve system because he was lying non stop.

— THERESA S.

Question of the day

I know its self-loving behaviour when I act out of self-love and not out of fear. I can sense the challenge. The courageous thing to do is to dare to stand as my own friend, even if that means taking a pause or walking away, and not continuing or staying out of codependency or fear of abandonment.

I communicate courageously, honestly and kindly about my needs using nonviolent communication and am open to hearing others. I outreach about the situation and talk it over with my sponsor until I find clarity. I ask the powers about the situation, what is the self-loving thing to do, what is their guidance?

I have the courage to show greater powers that I am willing to stand by my principles of selflove and needs in relationships. I let go of what I am holding on to out of fear, so that my hands and heart can be free to receive something else more aligned. I'm not so full of holding onto a relationship out of fear or low self-esteem that I'm not free to receive.

So I can show that I will stand by my selflove in relationships and self-lovingly take responsibility to fulfill the needs I have, by not holding onto what is no longer serving me, even if that means being with me, alone for a while and having the courage to feel the grief or anger that comes up.

I don't allow others to be, have needs or act in ways that at the time clash or would harm me if I stayed. I continue to walk on my path of selflove and connection. This program, for me, is about growing.

—ALEXANDRA SHE/ZE STOCKHOLM

Question of the day

During my S.L.A.A. recovery experience, I dated a man who became emotionally abusive after four months. I asked him what he wanted in his life at that time. He indicated he wanted to live alone and go to college. I was able to tell him I understood I was not in his plan with my son and I ended the relationship amicably.

— KATHLEEN A., SACRAMENTO.

I made a commitment to myself that I wanted to be in a committed partnership before having sex. I dated a wonderful man for four months before starting a conversation about commitment. I thought I was going to finally have sober sex! But the conversation fell apart. Our communication had been so great up until then. I wanted to ghost. I wanted to punish and judge. That would have been anorexic. I was sponsor-directed to have a conversation with him, so I did. It was a beautiful healing conversation and I agreed to visit him and stay overnight. But no sex. He accepted. We had an affectionate emotionally intimate weekend after which we agreed the partnership was not in our future without agenda. I was available for connection. I didn't have to make him wrong and bad because he was not able to commit. And I didn't compromise my commitment to myself! Everyone wins when I can show up and be of service. I knew my breakup was healthy because I talked about it in meetings, with my sponsor, and with fellows. I paused and brought it to my higher power. I took my own inventory about it and checked my motives before. Taking action, having worked my 12 Steps, I feel I know my patterns and what drives them. I trust my gut now and not my fears.

— SUZANNE D., SAN ANTONIO.

Question of the day

I can tell it is a healthy breakup if I feel sad, and am in pain, yet maintain my sense of self, my will to live and can remain single, thus willing to walk through the feelings as opposed to an anorexic escape. Anorexic avoidance has a shell of emotional numbness and isolation.

— ANONYMOUS, HOPEVILLE, AR

Are You Interested in Reading More Personal Stories of Sex and Love Addiction?

There was an item for discussion at the 2024 Annual Business Meeting regarding addition of new personal stories for a second edition of the Basic Text of Sex and Love Addiction.

Nineteen new stories have been included in this draft. Topics range from long-term sobriety and how to work the program successfully to how to date and build healthy relationships in sobriety. The new stories convey messages of hope to those suffering from manifestations of our disease such as anorexia, addictive fantasy, and recovery in the digital world, and represent diversity in terms of nationality, race, gender identity, and sexual expression.

Eight of the 17 stories from the First Edition have also been retained. They were edited for clarity and style. These stories were selected based on their ability to convey experience, strength, and hope to today's reader.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the stories and providing feedback please contact: tmwg50bts@gmail.com

Asking Higher Power for Discernment



How did I know whether it was healthy behavior or hiding out in anorexia when I walked

away from a relationship?

This is a difficult question, and because of that it is a good

question. The short answer to it is simply that I don't know for sure. How I do my best to determine this is that I ask my Higher Power for help, for discernment. In my prayers, one of the things I usually say is something like, "Please help me to discern between my will and your will, God. Because it isn't obvious to me much of the time. I need some help here." My experience is that this discernment comes through my gut instincts. I feel it, I don't think it. I've heard God referred to as G.O.D. "Good Orderly Direction." I think of it more as G.O.D. "Gut Orderly

Direction." Could my gut instinct be wrong? Sure it could. There are no guarantees. But, I've learned to trust my gut a little more than trying to reason it out in my head.

After working through the Steps, I've found I can trust myself a little more. Working through the Steps has had a profound impact upon me. They have helped to develop my "discernment muscles." The Steps have given me capabilities that I didn't have before. Situations that used to baffle me I intuitively know how to handle now.

—STEVE

Pattern of Relational Anorexia

When I look at my pattern of relational anorexia, I feel it contributed to walking away from a relationship that needed to end. It was a familiar pattern of pursuing someone unavailable who I idealized, only to be disappointed when he was a real, flawed, imperfect human. I'm sure intimacy avoidance is part of it.

These days, I am reconnecting with him, this ex boyfriend from another program, for

friendship and fellowship. The history between us was life changing. This week, I reflected on a journal entry about it 13 years ago. Dating him was a major motivation to get into S.L.A.A. to figure out how to date healthier. I had gotten a court order of protection after breaking up with him. I had met him in another program and the breakup led to three months of being stalked and a terrible case of PTSD, not to

mention choosing to leave that home group. It was such a terrible time for me and my mental health.

Few people knew what to do with me. My social anorexia skyrocketed. I talked to my counselor today who also helped me during that time with a boundary class, and I got healing through EMDR.

I did tons of domestic violence therapy groups (stalking is abusive) and I developed insight into my personal pattern of sex and love addiction in S.L.A.A.

I found myself crying in counseling today as I remembered the woman who ran so far from someone whose love had turned to obsession.

I know his obsession was more about his own sickness than about anything I had to offer. But the sad part of me never grieved this human who

I genuinely liked before our combined sickness got in the way. I went through healing and forgiveness and today I can reconnect with him instead of being terrified like I was for so long.

Today my tears and my counselor helped me remember the anorexic part of me who chose, and chooses, to avoid. I have been without a real mutual love interest for several years, far longer than any time in my life.

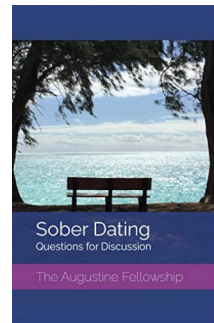
I have started a career helping others (running my own therapy groups), I am active in my faith, and I have a fur family. I have more intimate friendships.

I no longer tolerate abuse. And I find myself longing for my ex-boyfriend a little. God bless you all in S.L.A.A. Thank you.

—ANONYMOUS

Sober Dating: Questions for Discussion

Sober members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (S.L.A.A.) share their experience, strength and hope around dating in recovery. \$6.99
Also available in Kindle Paperback \$9.99



Three Main Ways I Differentiate Between Anorexia and a Healthy Breakup



There were three main ways I found I could differentiate between social/sexual anorexia and a healthy breakup. 1. Talk-

ing over my dates with a sponsor or other people in recovery usually made it clear if the person I was dating was someone

who brought good things out in me and my fear of rejection or accountability was simply causing me to want to "shut things down" before I had to grow or take risks OR if the person I was dating was simply not a good fit.

2. A second way I was able to distinguish between anorexia and a healthy separation was to go back to a compatibility profile I had made with my sponsor before I started dating. It included things such as religious beliefs, hobbies, spending habits and how I prioritized work/ family/ alone time as well as "deal breakers."

If the person I was dating had significant incompatibilities (especially a "deal breaker"), I knew that separating from the person was what was best for the two of us; however, if I did not know the person well enough and things were still ambiguous, my disease of anorexia would like to try to intuit things I thought I knew about the other person.

These were usually very trivial things that in no way pointed to a significant incompatibility. But, out of fear of the unknown, my anorexia would cause me to want to end things as quickly as possible with a potentially compatible partner. Again, going over

these things with my sponsor helped me gain accountability because my sponsor would ask questions like, "Did that person actually say they didn't like..?" or "Did the person actually tell you they would never..?"

Most of the time, the answer was simply I needed more time and to continue to put myself out there, which helped me stay out of my anorexia.

3. Finally, the ultimate question I would ask myself about dating a person was "Is this person helping me be of more or less service to my Higher Power?" If the person was helping me be of more service in ways such as helping me work a better program and accepting my recovery, helping me be more a part of the lives of my family and friends, helping me be a better co-worker and friend, then that person was helping me come closer to my HP and wanting to avoid that person was my anorexia kicking in. However, if the person was causing me to isolate from family and friends, perform worse at work, be of less service to my community or feel farther from program and those I could help in S.L.A.A., then it was healthy to separate from the person.

— EB

Today, I Feel Different

Years ago I either could not walk away from a man and was in destructive, painful relationships, usually with men I did not fancy or who I knew were not right for me-or both! Or I compulsively avoided them. I went from one extreme to the other -pursuing them and wanting to climb inside their skin and live there, or doing all I could to stay completely out of their way.

Both were anorexic behaviours. Both denied me of the intimacy and love that, deep down, my heart craved. Today I am not clinging to a relationship that is not right for me. I am not in a destructive, painful relationship and I am learning to walk away from what is not right for me, whether that be a relationship I have been in or in the dating process I am currently in.

I know today, when I do this, it is healthy behaviour and not hiding out in Anorexia. How do I know? Good question and not one I have found easy to answer. But my answer is this-today I feel different. I

am conscious and awake and my decisions to walk away from people and relationships are coming from a place of love and not from a place of fear-that is the difference.

I am becoming more convinced that everything comes from love or fear. Sometimes I ask myself, "Am I doing this out of fear or love?" If it's fear, it's my own self will running riot. If it's love, it's God's will.

When I am running away and hiding, that is a fear response. I am giving in to fear and believing the lies it tells me.

When I walk away with my integrity and dignity intact and respecting both myself and the other person, that feels like recovery to me.

My recovery journey continues to be very human and imperfect. I don't always get it right. But, just as I have been told that the disease of sex and love addiction and anorexia is progressive, so, thankfully is my healing and my recovery and I am very grateful.

— NATASHA U.K

Share space

S.L.A.A. Phone Meetings: Help is Just a Phone Call Away

I came to S.L.A.A. as a last resort.

After three years of working with my therapist, she told me that she could do no more for me and wouldn't see me anymore. She told me only the 12 Steps could help me.

I felt I failed therapy. I felt abandoned, embarrassed, broken, and wrong. But I had hope still.

I was confused because I wasn't a substance addict and to me that's what the Twelve Steps were for. Then I saw the characteristics of S.L.A.A. and I fit every one of them.

That was scary to me. Sex and love should be natural and instinctual. Why am I broken at something that is a basic human experience?

I have been working the

Twelve Steps with S.L.A.A. for nearly four years now. I started going to meetings on the phone.

At first I had some people in in-person 12-Step meetings tell me, "That's not a 'real' meeting." Some said, "Well when you're ready, you can go to the 'real' in-person meetings."

I had so much shame and pride – addicts have both a God complex and an inferiority complex.

The phone meetings were very low-stakes and convenient for me. Progress not perfection. Baby steps were for me.

The S.L.A.A. website meeting finder makes it easy for me to search phone meetings up by day, time, women/men only, or theme.

There are many times each

day during which there are phone meetings.

There are even meetings focused on a specific element of S.L.A.A. such as: fantasy, higher power, LGBTQ, healthy partnerships, sponsorship, specific steps, triggers, withdrawal, and more.

There are meetings offered in a variety of languages. Some meetings are for women only. Some are for men only.

I like that I always have my phone and can still listen in if it's not convenient to speak. I can even fit in a phone meeting while driving. I also like that it's very anonymous since it isn't face to face.

"Phone meetings are the best I could do now. So what if they were not 'real' meetings in-person" I thought. I'll get to those when I am more brave.

I did a 90 in 90 – 90 meetings in 90 days.

At first I was overwhelmed. Sometimes I was so overwhelmed I'd hang up in the middle of a meeting. Sometimes I'd forget the time and call in twenty minutes after the meeting started. Again I thought, "progress not perfection."

For quite a long time I didn't introduce myself. I said nothing.

I heard a S.L.A.A. fellow on the phone meeting say, "Even just listening is providing a service." I liked that.

Eventually I got up the courage to introduce myself as a sex and love addict.

The more meetings I went to and just introduced myself, the more the shame started melting away.

At some phone meetings people would introduce themselves and say their top and bottom lines.

Top lines are things you do to take care of yourself work your program.

Bottom lines are things you stay away from because they lead you back into old addictive patterns.

I had never heard of bottom and top lines before and I got some great ideas for some of my own from just listening to other's introductions.

I realized these top and bottom lines are pretty important to sobriety if some people were sharing them in their introductions.

I found when I affirmed my bottom and top lines on a phone meeting, that public announcement to my S.L.A.A. fellows acted as a rededication to those top and bottom lines. It was a form of support and

accountability from my phone meeting group.

One of my bottom lines is no romantic media. I was fueling my addiction with comparing my life to Hollywood actresses, plots and musical lyrics. To compare in S.L.A.A. is to despair. Romantic media fuels my sex and love addict fantasy, obsession, and compulsion.

One of my tops lines is affirming publicly in meetings that I love myself and I'm enough.

I was inspired to do this because I heard men introduce themselves at meetings, "My name is ___. I am a sex and love addict. I love myself and I'm enough." That moved me – especially hearing men say it.

I knew at the very core of my sex and love addiction was the opposite – I hated myself and I wasn't enough. It took me years to add "I love myself and I'm enough" to my S.L.A.A. phone meeting introduction. But I did.

At first I felt like a fraud saying "I love myself and I'm enough." However, the more I added it to my introduction at meetings, the more I feel it to be true.

I certainly didn't share at first. Some meetings were

packed and there were definitely no shortage of shares.

Some shares I resonated with more than others.

I heard a lot of stories with people who had similar family of origin stories and similar patterns of acting out.

I heard shares from men. I was very reluctant to even go to phone meetings which men attended. I really disliked men because I had so many bad relationships with them, starting with my own father.

In the phone meetings I developed a new understanding of men – they had feelings too. I used to think no man had any feelings. That is why I objectified myself with men. That was part of my sex and love addict acting out.

I was the common denominator in my sex and love addiction. I could see my own sex and love addict patterns clearer with each meeting I attended

I felt compassion when I heard many shares and thought, "Well they're not a bad person. They just want to feel validated. Woah. I just want to feel validated too. Wait. Maybe that means I'm not a bad person either." I started contributing my own shares. I started volunteering

to read. Reading the literature with phone meeting participants is more impactful for me than reading it alone. Hearing someone else read S.L.A.A. literature always sends the message home to me in a new way.

Repetition builds mastery.

I love hearing over and over at the phone meetings the Steps, blessings, promises, characteristics and the Serenity Prayer.

For me, I learned routine keeps my addiction at bay. I usually hit one phone meeting a day.

My addiction thrives on anxiety and not knowing what will happen next. That's when my willfulness sets in. That's when I give in to the acting out. So routines are great for me.

I love the routine parts of each meeting – it's comforting knowing the exact order of the phone meeting and what part is coming next is almost like a magic incantation.

I hear the Preamble which begins the phone meeting and feel instant relief.

Sometimes my addiction will say to me, "Nah. You aren't a sex and love addict. You're like the 'normal' people. You don't need this phone meeting." When I listen to the characteristics read at the phone

meeting. I remember. Ahh, yes. This is me – sex and love addict.

I love knowing specific times there are phone meetings which I can hop on.

It was cumbersome to always go to the S.L.A.A. website meeting finder, so I typed the phone meetings in my contacts by day. I type Tuesday in my contacts and up pops different Tuesday phone meetings, their times, and passwords.

On hard days I say to myself, "Okay. I only have to make it until that 3 p.m. phone meeting."

Sometimes it isn't one day at a time for me. Sometimes it's one phone meeting at a time. Sometimes I attend more than one phone meeting a day.

I started to hear the same voices and names at different phone meetings. I was beginning to feel like part of a community. I belonged.

So much of my sex and love addiction was driven by not feeling I could belong anywhere. I was yearning for acceptance and validation. I looked for acceptance and validation through sex, love, fantasy, and obsession.

I found acceptance and validation at the phone meetings.

The S.L.A.A. fellows there invited me to read, to contrib-

ute, to introduce myself, to share. They thanked me for my service. They told me to keep coming back because it works if I work it and I'm worth it.

I found a particular group of phone meetings run by the same fellows. Eventually this group became my home group.

I noticed the more meetings I went to, the less I acted out.

I noticed the more phone meetings I shared and was of service, the less I acted out.

Other women sometimes asked for my number after a meeting. I found quite a few sobriety fellows with whom I'm in daily contact with now for years.

After about four years in the program, I was hoping I could provide more service. I was so shy to even offer to chair a meeting. I prayed and meditated on it. What's your will on this, higher power?

My higher power made it happen.

I decided to make a donation to my home group. After I made a donation to the group, the organizer of that phone group reached out and invited me to be a regular chairperson for the group! Once I started chairing, I reached another

level of sobriety and peeled away another layer of the core wounds and faulty beliefs which fueled my addiction.

One of my faulty core beliefs was that I didn't matter.

The group organizer recently said, I hope our chairs provide a loved one with my number because I want to know if they're sick or anything happens. I worry when people disappear. I want to be notified if anything happens. That meant so much to me. The phone meetings have been a much needed salve to many of my core wounds which fueled my acting out.

The phone meetings have provided me with low-risk opportunities to be of service, find community, develop a sobriety routine, and grow my self esteem.

The phone meetings are very much real Twelve-Step S.L.A.A. meetings. It was a silly fear of mine that I wasn't doing "real" S.L.A.A. Step work if the meetings weren't in person.

With S.L.A.A., hope is truly just a phone call away. It works if you work it and you're all worth it.

— ANONYMOUS

Dating With a Dating Plan Versus Dating Without a Dating Plan



Sober dating in S.L.A.A. was very different for me when I had a dating plan. When I first came into S.L.A.A., no one was

talking about dating plans, so I had no idea what a dating plan was or that I even needed one. But what a difference it made

in my relationships! I came into S.L.A.A. when I was 30 years old. I had never had a healthy relationship before. All of my relationships were insane and dramatic. Some were long-term but most of my previous relationships almost killed me. I did the Steps in A.A. and Nicotine Anonymous a few times before joining S.L.A.A. My fourth time doing the Steps was in S.L.A.A. When I did my Fourth and Fifth Steps, I met with my sponsor every weekend for eight hours a day. It took us three months to get through all of my resentments and fears. My sponsor told me my character defects in each situation and had me write them in red ink on my Fourth Step. I was very thorough. It was difficult but rewarding. I felt truly sober when it was over.

My sponsor told me I could date after I finished my Seventh Step.

I went to my office Christmas party at a fancy hotel in downtown Los Angeles. I met a friend of one of my co-workers who was visiting from England. He was tall, good-looking and friendly. He asked me to dance and we danced and talked until the Christmas party ended.

If I had a dating plan, I wouldn't have been able to do that. I would have gotten his phone number and made a date for coffee during the day or I would have talked and danced for only an hour and excused myself to go home.

But after having so much fun dancing, I couldn't pull myself away even after the party ended. I suggested an all night coffee shop in Hollywood.

We got to the coffee shop a little after 10 p.m. and sat and talked until 3 a.m.

I was tired and my defenses were down. I told him that I couldn't have sex without a committed relationship. (Even in my haze I remembered the part of the Basic Text that said, "Gaining sober perspectives in the areas of trust, sex and intimacy was difficult. True intimacy, we found, can not exist independent of commitment.")

The Basic Text (p. 103).

He said he was going back to England at the end of the week. He felt like he knew me well enough to know that he wanted to be in a committed relationship with me. Had I not been so enthralled with him for so many hours and had I not been so exhausted, I might have seen that it was too

soon to make a commitment. I didn't even really know him!

That started a week full of sex and I told him all of my secrets. I even took him to an A.A. meeting when he was drunk and falling asleep (we went from dancing at a nightclub to an A.A. meeting.)

He did stick to his word and stayed in a committed relationship for a year though. We talked on the phone for hours every day, even with the time difference. He came to America every two months and we went to the Grand Canyon (we went hiking down the canyon without any food or water and almost died— that should have been an indication of how irresponsible we were).

We went to Las Vegas and London and Paris together.

He asked me to marry him over the phone and when I got to Paris expecting a ring, he told me he couldn't get married yet.

I cried but stayed with him.

We got into S&M. He said it was twisting his mind and he thought he might come to America and kill me.

With some help from my fellows, I knew I had to break up with him. When I did, I was like a crack addict, rocking back and forth in my chair at

fellowship in S.L.A.A.

That's when I met my last qualifier, hit bottom, and had a spiritual experience.

My sponsor took me through the Steps again in sobriety.

She gave me a dating plan. It sounded horrible to me. I thought if I made a man jump through hoops like that they would definitely leave me in the first week of dating.

I told my mind to shut up and followed the dating plan anyway. I felt like I didn't want to date. It felt like it was too soon. My sponsor was convinced that I was sober for good because she saw the change in me but she was willing to let me abstain from dating for two years if I felt I needed that.

I said I did.

But the man that I had been friends with in Nicotine Anonymous for two and a half years kept asking me out for coffee.

I told my sponsor I might be willing to try the dating plan with him.

I went for a coffee date with him. It had to be during the day for one hour, no physical contact (that meant no hugging even though we hugged each other in Nicotine Anonymous every time we saw each

other for years before that.) We laughed about that at the end of the date because it was a little awkward. I felt lucky that I could share my dating plan with him and he understood because he was in different Twelve-Step programs also.

Each date was spelled out in my dating plan and I bookended every date with my sponsor (calling her before and after every date.)

There was a set amount of time in between each date and I couldn't have marathon telephone conversations with him. (When my sponsor told me this I remembered my past relationships where I would stay on the phone for hours and end up falling asleep on the phone.)

Before we could have sex we needed to get to know each other well, have a commitment, a method of birth control and an AIDS test. My sponsor said we needed to go together to a clinic to get the AIDS test. My partner said that was ridiculous. If we were going to trust each other enough to have sex, we should be able to trust each other enough to go to our own doctors and

show each other our results.

I was afraid he would abandon me because I was setting a boundary and asking for what I needed.

He didn't like blood tests. He fainted from a blood test once. I remember standing in front of the clinic convinced he wouldn't show up to take the AIDS test.

When I saw his car turning the corner near the clinic, I cried. No one had ever shown up for me like that. We walked into the clinic holding hands and the doctor was bewildered that we even thought we needed a test. (It was negative.)

My dating plan made me feel supported and helped me communicate better. The boundaries it set gave me space to deal with my emotions and it gave me self-esteem when I followed instructions.

Higher Power worked through my dating plan and I've been married for 17 years to a really great guy because of it.

I'm glad my Higher Power spoke to me through my sponsor and gave me a dating plan that was perfect for me.

—ANONYMOUS



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

S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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



the **Journal**