



A Season, Reason, or Lifetime

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, “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. 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: #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. And #213 — March/April — Meditation Practices — Tell us about your meditation practice. How do you get started and how do you continue? Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2025. Please go to <https://slaafws.org/thejournal/> and click on “Answer Question of the Day.”

“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?”

It takes time to get to know another person, so at first there is no way to know. There may be some red flags like boundary violations but often it is necessary to get to know somebody before deciding to trust on an intimate level. Emotional abuse is a clear message it was only a season or a reason. Lifetime relationships take time. The amount of time depends on the amount and quality of time spent with the other person. Also, my level of openness or authenticity should be an indicator of growing trust or lack of trust. I need to maintain my spiritual health and remain aware of my feelings, trusting that my Higher Power, my sponsor and my Twelve-Step accountability partners will help me decide if a relationship has become toxic and should be ended to protect myself.

— KATHLEEN A., SACRAMENTO

Question of the day

By how much or little time I devote to self-care or doing activities I enjoy.

— LB

Only time will tell. Having gone through connections with many people over the years, I only learn which relationships are for a short time or a lifetime as I move through life. If they stick around for enough time, they make an impression on me. People come in and out of my life. I am trying to learn to cherish those who are in my life now!

— RICK B., LARGO, FL

I can't tell. I can only show up one day at a time. I will probably find out once it ends. I don't have to know.

— RACHEL W., LOS ANGELES

I'm in my first sober relationship. It started in 2000. We've been together through the deaths of our four parents, retirement, and a cancer diagnosis. We're in our 60s. It feels like at least this relationship is for this lifetime.

— ANONYMOUS, SAN DIEGO, CA

I am in an open relationship with my partner but I want to change that to non-open relationship

— DENNIS, TORONTO

Question of the day

I was in a committed relationship with a person who had sociopathic narcissistic tendencies for 13 years. I didn't realize it was based on my sex and love addiction until two relationships later. The first was an active drug dealer, and the second bit me on my neck, and not in a moment of passion. This got me into S.L.A.A.

— GREGORY J.

Definitely hoped every new sexual relationship would become a romantic healthy partnership for a lifetime - what a crash it was to get to know the person better and realize I was deluding myself - again!

— ANONYMOUS SISTER

I will only know in retrospect because HP's will is revealed to me moment by moment. My relationship with God is just that, it's not a formula. I listen for signs of serenity. Do I want to see this person again? If so, what's my motivation? Is it fear driven or love, service, expansion, peace? Challenges and doubt are natural, they lead to growth and faith when I keep HP number one in my life. A reason, a season, or a lifetime will be revealed over time, in God's time. I'm no longer running the show.

— ROSE, SANTA MONICA

Life Lessons



I was in a codependent marriage with a man that I did not love, but by him marrying me I

felt I was validated and worthy. An old high school boyfriend had reached out through

social media to reconnect and I was off to the races. He had been there for me years prior when I had experienced a sexual assault, but I had pushed him away feeling too much shame at the time. I now thought “he DID love me after all, it only took 30 years for him to come back to me”!

After some back and forth platonic communications, things turned sexual. I felt I was falling in love with him and could not see how my life was worth living without him in it. Through my guilt and shame of having an affair, I came clean with my then husband, who ultimately left me.

I got into S.L.A.A. and cut things off with the ex-boyfriend, which in hindsight was only possible through the grace of my higher power.

Through my recovery process I can see that although I hurt my ex-husband deeply and I would not consciously chosen to have ended things that way, I didn’t possess the strength on my own to end our

unhealthy marriage.

I believe my reconnection and ultimate affair with the ex-boyfriend was necessary for me to get out of a loveless marriage, get into recovery, and finally process that old sexual assault and all of the feelings of guilt and shame that went along with it.

Contacting the ex-boyfriend now is one of my bottom lines that I have been free from for over four years. And that reconnection was definitely instrumental in my path into recovery. I am very grateful for the part that he played in my life and the lessons that our interactions taught me.

And I know that it is not healthy or appropriate for me to have any kind of relationship with him now. He was truly a man I had two different relationships with for certain reasons. And I can let that go today and know that doesn’t mean he is the love for my lifetime.

— STEPHANIE W.,
NORRISTOWN, PA

Projecting Fake Futures

I'd venture to say that every committed romantic relationship I've been in was one I thought would last a lifetime. I think that's a classic hallmark of my fantasy addiction: the lightning-like nature with which I project fake futures onto people I hardly know. And every time, without fail, I think to myself, "This time, it's different."

It never is.

My last relationship was with a person who, to no one's surprise, I thought I'd marry. My mom, who has two sons of her own, would joke at family parties that my partner was her "favorite son." So, I wasn't alone in this idea that I'd finally "found my person." Even my partner - for the first four-odd months of our relationship - imagined a long and happy life together as a married couple. We totally enabled each other's fantastical tendencies, and it felt f**king awesome. Until we got to know each other.

Once we spent real time with each other in a number of different circumstances, the glaring incompatibilities between us were almost comical:

I love weddings. He doesn't. I love spending time in nature, even in summer. He can't stand the heat. I'm queer. He's not. I'm a radical leftist committed to destroying capitalism. He's not. I'm in my late twenties and actively piecing together my career. He's in his late thirties and sitting pretty at a nine to five job. I'm sure that I want children. He's not. I was, perhaps, too eager to "do the work" to build a life worth sharing together. He wasn't eager enough.

So, it turns out that our mutual artistry, attraction, vaguely similar senses of humor, and fantasy-ridden ideas of a future together couldn't provide a solid enough foundation for us to build on.

We dated for a total of eight months and change. He was ultimately the one to break it off, and I was a wreck for months. I never thought I'd recover from that relationship, especially after miscarrying our baby and experiencing some of the lowest lows I ever have in relationship with another person.

Now, about 10 months post-

breakup, I feel more than at peace with the fact that we aren't together. Our relationship lasted two and a half seasons, and for perhaps one reason: Addiction.

I'm a newcomer to S.L.A.A., and I'm finally able to own the fact that the vast majority of my romantic pursuits have been riddled with bottom-line behaviors. As an adult child of alcoholics, this new knowledge is actually quite liberating.

I, too, am an addict! And this last relationship was one born of addiction, so, of course it wasn't sustainable. And it is for this reason that any relationship I pursue in the future must be free of bottom-line behaviors; I must be in recovery. And that's what I'm here to do.

Thank you all for your service, and for letting me be of service.

— JULES, ASBURY PARK

I Am Not a Fortune Teller

I was in a relationship that I thought would be for a lifetime, but in the wake of the breakup I realized I had serious work I would need to do on myself if I am going to be able to have a relationship for a lifetime. They had not been opposed to my PMO (porn, masturbation, orgasm) use, but I was not transparent or self-aware enough that my usage was compulsive and needed to stop. That strained our relationship because I was emotionally and sexually absent, and the shame of my secretive-



ness about how frequently I used made me feel so insecure. Ultimately, one reason they

were in my life was for me to hit bottom and realize my life was unmanageable and that I need to work the Twelve Steps to have a healthy relationship for a lifetime. I look forward to getting to Step Nine someday and having a discussion with them, if they want that. One final thought though, is that if/when we meet again, I do not want a new relationship with them to be a goal of mine, that would be a byproduct. If I were to try to manufacture a new

relationship with them, I would be slipping, because my love addiction is the pursuit of exes to try to make it work better this time.

If I can fix a relationship then I am trying in vain to fill the void. I am not a fortune teller, nor do I want to engage in fantastical thinking so it may be that the relationship was only for a reason and not a lifetime and I am content with that.

— ANONYMOUS

How Do I Know What Kind of Relationship I Am In?

I believe I know the answer to this question:

My family of origin - by blood, I am supposedly tied to my siblings, their children, and their children's children for life. I am not so sure about that. Being a single gay male, some of my siblings and some of my siblings' children categorically eliminate me from their lives.

Religious belief has had the strongest hold on them. I have

made innumerable attempts toward being a loving and supportive uncle by sending them birthday cards every year. When I learned that these cards were not delivered to my nieces and nephews, I stopped the effort. If I am to have any contact with them, I need to start that up again, regardless of what the parents do with the cards and money. When we meet in person, I make every effort to engage with each of

them individually to show my love, interest, and support.

I do have regular conversations with three of my siblings, less regular with three, and with the other three, only when necessary.

I have not made contact with my oldest brother in a while - not out of resentment, but out of laziness and a desire for reciprocity. Again, as a father and grandfather, he has his life full. I barely cross his radar. I do have a running phone conversation with his oldest daughter, and that gives me joy. There's reciprocity there.

So, what exactly is reciprocity in any relationship? How do I measure it anymore with all of the technology with which we are, so many of us, totally inundated? Do I use lack of reciprocity to determine whether a relationship I am in is indeed for a reason, season, or lifetime? I honestly don't know.

I do know that I am responsible for my part only. If I never call anyone because they never call or attempt to reach out to me, then there's the first action which will keep me isolated from others, whether for a reason, season and/or lifetime.

So what reason do I have for

not contacting someone in my life? This is a tough one. "There are too many of them". I have nine siblings, and each of those siblings have children, and many of those children have children, and one of my grand-nieces is in the process of adopting a girl, so I will soon be a great grand-uncle! That's worth celebrating! Right?

What's so difficult about sending out birthday cards to them all again? I loved myself when I did it. I resented my siblings for the actions they took to keep me from having any possibility of a relationship with them as children. Granted, I am not blaming them. When I look back at the actions that I took as an active sex and love addict - the situations I got myself into - I, too, would physically keep me away from children.

Seasons - If we talk about seasons being four in a year, I have had 240 of them. My first seasons were with neighborhood kids. They sort of all were part of the package, and so I never really learned how to "make" friends - they were just there. Our house was where all of the other neighborhood kids came to play. In fact, my mom just told me recently that she had to put up a "no visitors" sign on the gates and front

door which she kept there until we got our chores done! What a great mom!

School season was always a challenge. Socially awkward, being a liar from my first day of school, I did have a friend from first grade until seventh grade. I had no other real friends than Tim. I did everything I could to spend as much time as I could over at his house. His family had so much more than ours in the way of material possessions. I always let my mom know how much “they” had. I made amends to her later in life when I realized I was always telling her that she “wasn’t good enough”.

As a sex addict, there were many “seasonal” and “reasonable” “relationships”. Far too many to count. The most neglected was the relationship that I had with myself.

Regardless of reason or season, I spent my lifetime pursuing release as a ways and

means to “feel good” about myself without being really aware of it until joining S.L.A.A. This selfishness and self-centeredness was the foundation of the innumerable permutations of personality and behavior which basically ruled my life.

How can one have, indeed, any TRUE relationships with others if one is still lying to oneself? I have come to believe that rigorous honesty with SELF is far more important.

For what reason? If I am authentically myself, I have no reason to lie to anyone about anything. Especially if I have no idea what I am asked. If I have no experience, simply saying “I don’t know, I don’t have the information or have not had that experience” is tantamount to my being honest with myself and others. That can last a reason, season, or lifetime. One day at a time.

— GREGORY, LONG BEACH

Reflecting on Past Relationships

I determined that I was in a relationship that did not have clear boundaries or did not establish a foundation. I have found that it is difficult for me to really understand a situation that I am undergoing. While this may seem as though I am without awareness, I have better learned about past relationships by reflecting on them.

When I was 19 years old, I was in a relationship that was for a reason. The reason was it was convenient to have the funds for rent as he would cover that part of our expenses. Considering I was a freshman in college, I found comfort in pursuing this man who was eight years older than I.

I began to develop a friendship that I was willing to call a romantic relationship for the sole fact that I wouldn't have to live in my parents' house any longer. I thought I had found freedom.

The man and I were engaging in sexual intercourse on a daily basis.

I began to be egotistical about my sexuality and a relationship that had started from a want for freedom and for the benefit of rent being paid became a sexual relationship. There was no real connection outside of our physicality.

The way that I determined that this relationship was for a reason was the fact that I was not physically attracted to the man.

This seemed odd to admit to myself at first, but I know that a man who has my interest will not be somebody I can or even want to call ugly. My memories of telling this man that I did not want to marry him and that I thought he was ugly was proof enough that the relationship I was in was for a reason.

— ELIZABETH,
RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA

Possibly Diving Into Love Addiction



I was definitely in the throes of addiction and emotionally unavailable in my fourth relationship with G, after leaving

my previous girlfriend due to my fear of intimacy, and feeling inferior to her, because she “had all her ducks in a row”

more so than I.

After one date with G, I wanted to see her again, quite possibly diving right into the limerence of my love addiction and avoiding the fear of being alone yet again. As the relationship went on, I really dove into love and sex bombing, in an effort to keep the relationship together.

We went camping, to Cedar Point (rollercoaster park in Ohio), to karaoke, concerts and everything in between, even having her move in with me and my parents.

One thing that kind of irked me the wrong way, was always having to bail her out of minor financial issues. She really didn't want to work much, meanwhile I was going to school and working full-time. The relationship seemed to hit a wall towards the end of it, and I finally realized that we had settled for each other, yet she was the kind of girl that throws everything into the relationship, no matter the red flags, kind of like me, so she would never break up with me.

I broke up with her after many attempts to replace her with other women I was talking to on a dating app, or even

sex workers online, for some strange reason I still don't understand to this day.

We ended things with breakup sex when she recently found someone. I hated myself for doing this, so much so that it drove me to a psych ward thereafter. As the years went on, I found out they built a house, then got married, and by the time I ran through my 9th step in program, found out they had two houses and a large marijuana farm back home in Michigan. It turns out us breaking up was the best thing I could've done for her, even though it destroyed me in the end.

Through my recovery process, I no longer am that same old F-Boy, and S.L.A.A. really helped me discover my spirituality as well as help me become a better person, one day at a time. It's been over four years free from fantasy, lust, sex, love, romantic intrigue and relationship addictions so here's to keep coming back, sending a message of recovery to the still suffering addict, and giving back what I'm continually given freely through S.L.A.A.

— NICK B., VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

Feeling Unlovable



I met Christine as a senior in college. She, a freshman, had sparked my interest from our first interaction, and interest soon turned into a fascination. We'd both been raised in pretty conservative faith communities that highly valued the ideas of being married for life, some of life's deepest meaning coming from marriage and creating a family/home together, a central goal of pre-married life being to find "the one that God has for me," etc. That upbringing really primed me to quickly invest huge parts of

myself in even the idea of a relationship, which seamlessly translated to huge investment in a person if I felt that we connected and there was potential for an actual relationship.

I'd only had one girlfriend before meeting Christine, and that relationship lasted from the summer between freshman and sophomore year of high school through the holiday season of sophomore year. That rather short-lived relationship provided real-life experience that a relationship could feel both like escape and

awakening to bigger life all at the same time. In the years between that relationship ending and meeting Christine, It wasn't like I'd not been open to or looking for or hoping to develop relationships. I definitely had. But with shocking regularity, I'd repeatedly been met with some version of "I would like to end up with a guy like you. But not you and/or not now." Talk about being primed to think something about me was fundamentally unlovable. And couple that with my parents moving to Hong Kong right after I left for college...not only unlovable, but acutely leave-able.

Until Christine. We dated for about five months and in that time, I completely lost myself. Then she moved across the county and "didn't do long distance," so we broke up. But I kept trying to win her back and after about a year and a half, I did just that. Then following a 10-month engagement, we began what would become a 15-year marriage. Our marriage was marked by the normal ups and downs, fertility issues, eventually parenting two boys...and a string of infidelities. Some of these she eventually came clean about

(by choice or by circumstance forcing her hand), and others she carried on in secret for years, gaslighting me or flat out lying when I asked about the sense that something was wrong.

All that time, she was my drug. She was how I knew I was lovable. And as long as she didn't leave, she was proving I wasn't as leave-able as I felt most of the time. She was how I knew I was worth something. So with each issue, rather than examining us or asking myself the hard questions about why, I kept doubling down harder and becoming ever more invested in "making this work." Both because that's just how we'd been raised, and because I genuinely only ever wanted one relationship. Maybe it started as social programming or religious brainwashing, but by the time I could really process the possibility of a different relationship (outside of the tragic death of a spouse), it had just truly become the way my heart functioned. I had no interest in going out there ever again. No matter what happened, I only saw the upside of working through or past it, and never the downside to my own heart, mind, and nervous system of staying where I was clearly incurring

net damage. I had no frame of reference for seeing myself as worth more. Furthermore, I had no sense that I'd find anyone else who would love me without leaving, and spending life alone sounded like purgatory at best, hell at worst. I'd found my one and I'd stopped looking or wanting anything else.

And yet...the day came when I chanced upon crystal clear evidence of another affair, and in the tortured conversation that followed, I found out about another that had lasted throughout all of our years of trying to have kids, through past the conception of our second. I was shattered. And yet I would have kept trying to fix it, doubling down again and again. But in the days that followed, she would eventually tell me in a calm, point blank, almost passionless way that she had never been in love with me..."not a day in my life." She was set on divorce. And there I was, somehow right back where I'd started 18 years before. Again unlovable and acutely leave-able.

In the three years since, I've come to see the way I functioned in our relationship was absolutely like a love and

fantasy addict. And while I try not to take Christine's inventory, my therapists tell me that my description of her actions is consistent with those of a love avoidant sex addict. I don't know if she's ever come to that conclusion herself. This "lifetime" relationship, in hindsight, was clearly only for a season. Albeit a season that has stretched nearly half my life. The only reason I can make out is to reveal my love and fantasy addiction. But I frequently ask myself if it was even worth all that, and if I was nearly as much of one before meeting/falling for her.

And to be honest, my heart still works like that. Even though I was absolutely left holding the pieces of this relationship that was meant to be for a lifetime, I still can't see myself doing anything other than finding one relationship and committing to it forever...or spending the rest of my life on the lookout for it. I have no interest at all in dating, especially multiple people at a time. It just feels outside the scope of my heart's function. Maybe that's not a very sober thing to say, but it's hard for me to find what would make it so.

— BEN, MEMPHIS

Share space

Letter from the 50th-Anniversary Story Committee

New Personal Stories Available to Read

Nineteen new stories of recovery from sex and love addiction are included in the draft second edition of S.L.A.A.'s Basic Text. You can read them at: <https://tinyurl.com/5OBTStories> or request by email: tmwg5obts@gmail.com

Each story is preceded by a brief introduction and, when appropriate, content warning.

In October, the 50th-Anniversary Story Committee, a subcommittee of the CLC, will launch a weekly meeting focused on the new stories. One story will be read and discussed each week. Look for a

flier with details soon at: <https://www.slaafws.org/5obt1/>

Here are titles and descriptions of each new story:

My Knight in Shining Armor

A man in excruciating withdrawal from his latest addictive relationship finds a Higher Power, sobriety, and stability in S.L.A.A.

Surfing Sobriety

Content includes mention of suicidal and homicidal ideation.

In recovery, a woman discovers that anorexia is at the heart of her sex and love addiction.

Changing the Scenario

Content includes suicidal ideation and mentions childhood sexual abuse.

Locked in a hopeless cycle of obsession, stalking, and emotional instability, a woman finds the way out through S.L.A.A.

Sober Dating

A man with a history of destructive relationships embraces healthy dating with a detailed plan.

Twelve Steps Toward a Sober, Happy Life

Desperation leads a woman to S.L.A.A., where she finds that the more she depends on a Higher Power, the more independent she actually becomes.

Getting Sober and Clean Was Just the Beginning of My Journey

Content includes incest, child sexual abuse, self-harm, and rape.

A sex, love, and fantasy addict learns that the opposite of addiction is connection. In recovery he heals his traumatic past and sets a new course for his life.

Filling the Void Inside Me

Of the many gifts a woman

receives in recovery, the most important to her is learning how to love herself.

Slipping Into Recovery

Content includes suicidal ideation.

Digital communication platforms prove to be fertile ground for a woman's sex and love addiction to take root. In her Higher Power, she finds the love and validation she sought through her phone.

Fear of Male Sexuality

Recovery helps a woman see that her sexual anorexia is a way of coping with her fear of sex and helps her heal the shame of being attracted to men of a different race.

I Thank God That I Have S.L.A.A.

Content includes suicidal ideation.

A military man struggling with PTSD and sex addiction finds connection and peace in S.L.A.A.

Spreading the Crazy

Recovery in S.L.A.A. helps a woman change her pattern of dating unavailable men and find a healthy relationship.

Stay

Terrified of being alone,

and running from one addictive affair to the next, a woman decides to stay in the rooms of S.L.A.A. and rebuild her life.

A Queer Anorexic

After a long struggle with queer identity, an over-attached mother, sexual addiction, and emotional anorexia, the author finds connection in S.L.A.A., along with a new vocabulary for understanding himself. The author, who was assigned female gender at birth and transitioned at age 18, identifies as a bisexual, trans male.

I Have a Sickness

A 68-year-old academic in South Africa is caught cheating on his wife, finds AA, relapses to rock bottom, and enters rehab. There he finds S.L.A.A., where he learns to integrate his actions with his true values.

An Opportunity for Healing

Content includes mention of murder.

S.L.A.A. helps a woman break the cycle of rescuing and needing to be rescued, and her family's legacy of living a life in fantasy.

Fantasy Is My Drug

After experiencing rock bot-

tom in a jail cell, a man dependent on fantasy discovers faith and finds S.L.A.A.

Progress Not Perfection

Content mentions childhood sexual abuse.

In S.L.A.A., a young woman heals from an abusive childhood and breaks free from her pattern of sexual and emotional infidelity, fantasy and obsession, and compulsive masturbation with pornography. Despite occasional slips, she has learned to be rigorously honest.

A New Foundation

When a man new to recovery has an affair with a coworker, he discovers a strong love addiction hiding beneath his sexual acting out. With the help of his sponsor, he makes amends to his partner and rebuilds his relationship.

Free From Bondage

A neurodiverse, religious woman with chronic illness, reliant on fantasy to escape her childhood burdens, finds connection in an alternative-sexuality community but loses herself. In S.L.A.A., she learns to develop true self-care and reliance on God.

My S.L.A.A. Story



This story contains descriptions that may be triggering to some.

If you would have told me 30 years ago that I would be sitting here in this meeting, relating this story, I would have replied: "You're crazy!" But here I am and if anyone

was crazy – it was I before getting help and attending Twelve-Step programs.

I was born and raised in the mid-west to a strict Christian family. I was the youngest of five with two brothers and two sisters. There is a difference of six years between my next oldest sibling and me. Both parents worked to put food on the table and a roof over our heads. I remember being told several times that my birth was an “accident”, and this made me feel like I wasn’t supposed to be. I tried very hard to please my parents and tow the line.

My Father was a Credit Manager for a farm equipment company and was moved around the mid-west often. I lived in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois, all before turning 16 years old. I never developed any close or lasting friendships and after my next oldest sibling moved away, I was an only child at home for six years.

My parents loved one another and all their children; however, I never witnessed any public displays of affection between them. I believe my dad was faithful to my mother, but I never received the “birds and bees” conversation or any guidance regarding a loving

intimate relationship between adults. My idea of a successful marriage was from my parents and television. I believed a successful relationship was like the Cleaver family on the sitcom “Leave it to Beaver.” The man worked, the woman stayed at home and took care of the family, and there were never any arguments or conflict within the family.

I learned about sex from my friends and at 12 years old, began masturbating to women in the lingerie section of Montgomery Wards and Sears catalogs. If I came across a pornographic magazine, such as Playboy, it was a treasure trove. I would masturbate nearly every day, sometimes more than once a day.

I was shy and deathly afraid of girls. I never knew how to talk with them or how to interact with them. I played sports in high school. I was asked by several girls to date. I was even asked to attend the High School Prom but could never muster the courage to accept the offer. Instead, I would fantasize about the girls and masturbate to that fantasy.

I joined the Navy after High School. I remained a virgin to the age of 21 and had my first sexual encounter with a prostitute in Spain. I remember I

wasn't too impressed with the actual act of sex wondering what all the "hoop-la" was about. I gave her my virginity and she gave me the "clap." That shut the door on any immediate desire to have sex with another woman. I continued to masturbate now with pornography since I was old enough to purchase it myself.

After the Navy, I returned home to my parents who now lived here in California. I attended Junior College and took a part-time job at an auto parts store.

My next sexual encounter was with a female co-worker. She was divorced with one child. She was also unhappily engaged to another man. I believe she was looking for a way out of the engagement. I was unable to relate to her other than physically.

I transferred to a State University. There I had my first serious relationship. She lived in the same apartment complex as I did. She was a High School dropout and was molested by her father. She lived with me for about six months, and I considered marrying her. After six months, she told me she no longer cared for me and asked me to move out. I later learned she had been seeing another man. I believed she used me for financial support

until she found someone better. I was devastated.

After this break-up, I had difficulty keeping my emotional composure sometimes breaking down and crying uncontrollably. My parents, sensing something was wrong, came down to visit me. We went out for dinner, and I explained what I was going through. A crying episode was coming on. Both my parents pointed their fingers at me and said: "Don't cry! Be a man! Men don't cry!" I fought back the tears and took their advice to heart. I haven't been able to cry since that day.

My friends told me the best medicine was to get back on the horse. I began seeing several women. I was always attracted to women who weren't available or were emotionally damaged.

They were either already with someone, had children or some other baggage. I believe this was intentional on my part as a way of avoiding intimacy.

I met my future wife, Leslie, the last semester at college. We attended a night class together. She was the first woman I dated who was educated and without any baggage. Our relationship was progressing fine for the first six months when tragedy struck; my brother, who was a Police Sergeant, was shot

and killed in the line of duty.

I immediately returned home to be with the family. However, I found I could not cry from my brother's death or at his funeral. My parent's earlier advice had come back to haunt me. I could not deal with all the emotions I was experiencing. Then I received a call from Leslie. She was checking on me to see how I was doing. She asked me if I needed her to attend the funeral. It was a Godsend, and I replied yes.

At the funeral, my parents and family were very impressed with Leslie.

They told me she was a keeper, and I should not let this one go. With that in the back of my mind, I would later ask Leslie to marry me, and she agreed. We had been dating for about six months.

I graduated from State College with a BS in Criminal Justice and was hired by a large California Police Department. I attended the Department's Police Academy. Leslie remained in college to complete her schooling. It was a long-distance relationship, and I buried myself in the demands of the Police Academy.

On one of Leslie's visits, she told me that she had been drinking at a bar at college and ended up having sex with an-

other man. She was genuinely sorry and feared my reaction. I was in the middle of the Police Academy, and it required all my attention and energy. I chose to forgive Leslie without really addressing the issue of infidelity. As I look back on it now, I recognize it was my choice to avoid the issue and intimacy associated with it. Instead, I doubled my effort in the Academy graduating 2nd in my class.

Leslie and I were married after I graduated. I transferred that determination and motivation I had in the Academy to working the streets.

I chose not to put the same effort into our marriage – it was easy not too. I buried myself in work. We became more roommates than a loving, committed couple. Even the birth of our daughter, three years into our marriage, did nothing to rekindle or ignite our failed intimacy.

The internet porn boom hit me in 2004. It started out with static images on select porn sites; however, I was never satisfied and kept expanding my search criteria. When porn videos became free, my internet porn addiction took off. I estimate I spent two to three hours a day three to four days a week viewing porn. Once I became

bored with one genre, I would expand my search with ever more graphic or bizarre sex videos.

My wife worked days, and I worked nights. This allowed me to pursue my Internet Porn viewing without being disturbed or risk of being caught. I would isolate and lose myself in a fantasy world.

I would clear my viewing history at the end of each episode. I preferred to view porn instead of resting or sleeping before my shift.

This potentially could have been an officer safety issue since I wasn't at my peak during work.

I had three close friends on the police department. I worked in the same squad with them, and I considered them as my brothers. There is a deep bond between us, and I would literally trust them with my life. They too were married with families. I further isolated from Leslie and her friends by only socializing with my law enforcement friends. I developed an "us against them" mentality with a sense of superiority to and entitlement from the public.

My law enforcement friends and I would take trips to Nevada to gamble, play golf and fish. These trips would include visits to the many strip clubs in

Nevada although this activity was kept secret from our wives. My addiction was escalating from internet videos to an actual woman performing "lap dances." During these numerous trips, I would set aside \$300 for gambling and strip clubs but I would easily go over that amount. I would begin thinking about the next trip during the drive back from the current trip. I would set money aside from each paycheck to be available for the next Nevada trip all the time lying to my wife to conceal it.

Just like my internet porn; I became bored and frustrated with the strip clubs. I had to "up" the experience to get the same "high."

My friends suggested we visit a legal brothel in Nevada. At first, I would accompany them but not solicit an escort. I deluded myself believing that I was not being unfaithful to my wife with internet porn and strip clubs; however, it was only a matter of time. If you go to a barber often enough, eventually you will get your haircut.

When it became too much and I did solicit a prostitute, I felt enormous shame and guilt, but it did not stop me from planning the next trip to Nevada on the drive home from my current trip.

It was as if the floodgates

were open. My buddies and I would make Nevada trips every two to three months and a ritual would ensue. We would gamble and drink alcohol, then visit a strip club and finish the trip with a visit to a legal brothel. The cost of these trips was jumping up to \$750 dollars in "entertainment" costs alone. I continued to delude myself that my behavior was not illegal since I was visiting legal brothels all the while conveniently ignoring the infidelity to my wife.

After a while, I became tired of driving to Nevada to visit strip clubs and brothels, so I began to visit strip clubs here in California, and I searched for and found "massage parlors" that doubled as brothels here in California.

Never satisfied with the variety, I also used the Internet to search out escorts and visit them at their apartments or hotels.

I ignored the chances I was taking by visiting these locations and soliciting the escorts. I was taking a great risk with my safety and my job, but I would fool myself by carefully researching the locations and escorts.

I had a reputation as an outstanding police officer, motivated, a real "tire biter." I

taught in the Police Academy. I had helped train a lot of our Command Staff.

If I were caught, they would go easy on me. Even though one of my Police Officer friends was terminated for looking at internet porn on duty, I did not acknowledge the risk.

I would wear protection for the intercourse but not for the oral sex. You can still catch an STD with unprotected oral sex. At one point I thought I had come down with an STD and told my wife saying it was just one incident and my motivation was to see if I was attracted to other women since I was not having regular intercourse with her.

I must have been a good liar because she did not question me further.

I felt a tremendous amount of shame and guilt after lying to her. The STD scare turned out to be false and I went right back to my routine. My addiction also affected my relationship with my daughter.

She was an active young girl involved in school, sports and private organizations. My addiction limited the time I spent with her or attended her sporting or club events.

I recall one incident where I left her alone at home while

her mother was visiting family overseas.

I was acting out in my addiction, and she was home alone for a long time at an inappropriate age.

I kept telling myself that I would find one escort to be my mistress and stop the “free-fall” of seeing multiple women; however, I could never find that one escort that would satisfy me.

I conservatively estimate that I spent over \$50,000.00 on escorts, massage parlors, and strip clubs. I expanded my search for that one mistress to women who were not escorts. I frequented “cop” bars and picked up women who were “cop” groupies and I seduced women who I met through my work.

I came to truly loath and hate myself. Try as I might, I could not stop my behavior. I was diagnosed with “Non-Specific Pros Titus” a severe and chronic pain to my groin and lower abdomen.

I went through many procedures to diagnosis the cause and antibiotics to cure it to no avail.

My Urologist would come to believe the pain was self-induced from the stress of living the lie that was my life. I also began taking chances at

work.

I would respond to serious calls alone and would not draw my weapon when necessary. I believe I was hoping to be killed on duty. To me, it was better to die with the illusion of an honorable man than to live with the truth. I was isolated and did not discuss this with anyone including my closest Law Enforcement friends.

I was over eight years into my addiction and having breakfast with my wife and daughter at a local diner. Before the meal arrived, I started to feel nauseous, short of breath and a sharp pain to my chest and left arm.

I knew exactly what it was – a heart attack! I didn’t let on and excused myself from the meal saying I was feeling nauseous and wanted to step outside for fresh air. Here was my chance to end the shame, the guilt and self-hatred associated with my addiction.

I sat in our car with the doors closed and let the heart attack take its course. Again, better to die with the illusion of an honorable man than continue to live with the truth.

About three to five minutes into the heart attack, it was becoming progressively worse. I was at the point of losing consciousness from the pain. Sus-

pecting something more serious than nausea, my wife and daughter came to the car and found me.

Against my protests, they took me to the hospital where I was admitted and underwent emergency surgery the next morning and angioplasty for a stent to my heart.

I thought maybe this would be the push I needed to stop my behavior but after my recovery I went right back to the same addictive sexual behavior.

In addition, due to my injuries and heart attack, I was taken off the street and given a desk job at the Police Department. Later, I was forced to retire from the Police Department due to several injuries and the heart attack.

I remember leaving the Police Station not thinking about what I could do with my retirement, but instead thinking now I wasn't risking my job when I would visit the massage parlors or solicit an escort.

My double life all blew up on me innocently enough, when my wife was looking into changing our cell phone carrier. There she found phone numbers that she did not recognize.

An internet search showed they came back to massage

parlors and escorts. My wife confronted me that evening when she returned home from work. I will never forget the look of hurt, anger and pain on her face. I knew immediately that she was aware of my double life. I did not try to lie my way out of it. I confessed but initially not to every detail. Full disclosure would come later but eventually she learned of it all.

My wife told me that I needed to seek professional help and if I didn't, we were done. I feared losing her and my family, so I agreed.

I saw a psychiatrist through our insurance and after telling him my story he replied, "I believe you are a sex addict."

I remember thinking "sex addict," that's not real. It is just an excuse. Regardless, he provided me with a list of suggested reading material by Patrick Carnes and several Twelve-Step programs in the area and strongly suggested I attend.

I purchased several books on sex addiction and immediately began reading them. I began attending Twelve-Step meetings.

I remember sitting in my first S.L.A.A. meeting – a mixed group of about eight individuals, the majority of whom were men. Everyone

would introduce himself or herself by saying their name and the phrase “I am a sex addict.” When it came time for me to introduce myself, I said, “I am Don, and my therapist believes I am a sex addict.” This would be my response during introductions for about the first three months of attendance.

However, after reading several books by prominent subject matter experts and listening to the shares of individuals sitting around me in Twelve-Step meetings; I began to accept the premise that sex addiction is a legitimate illness. This did nothing to alleviate my shame and guilt. I was not far enough in recovery for that.

While in recovery, my therapist said, “You are only as sick as the secrets you keep.”

Two secrets I kept for a long time into my recovery are particularly difficult for me. There is much shame and guilt that I still associate with them.

While a police officer, I had an unconscious intoxicated woman in the back of my patrol car. I momentarily fondled her breasts through her clothing. I couldn’t believe what I was doing as it occurred.

I immediately stopped but the event remains with me. What if that was my daughter?

I would want the Officer to take care of her not take advantage of her.

The second secret involved a massage parlor that was also a brothel. The escort I was visiting agreed to heavy petting and oral sex while naked but did not want to engage in vaginal sex.

During our encounter, I became carried away and attempted vaginal intercourse practically forcing myself on her.

She resisted calling out in Chinese to whom I assume was her “Pimp.” Only when I heard a second voice in Chinese asking if she was ok on the other side of the door did I desist. What was I becoming? A rapist?

I am now over 12 years sober. Recovery has not been a cakewalk either though.

My inner circle behavior is sex outside my marriage, internet porn and lying to my wife.

Fantasy masturbation would be in my middle circle at the suggestion of my therapist and then later moved to inner circle with additional recovery time.

I learned the brain’s dopamine receptors – the pleasure/reward system – are activated during drugs, alcohol, gambling and sex. In the case of sex

addicts who quickly slide down into despair after the sex act, their dopamine receptors are left hungry for more sex. A craving is, thus, set up biologically and psychologically.

During recovery, I recall driving to my cardiologist. Normally I would proceed through the toll plaza; however, subconsciously I took a turn towards downtown to an area I would frequently act out. I didn't realize what I was doing until nearly at the location. From then on, I forced myself to text my wife and let her know when I left the cardiologist and again when I would get home.

At one point I was on my computer researching some unrelated topic. On my home page a link popped up for the best fake boob jobs in Hollywood.

It wasn't porn but it was middle circle behavior. I had to ask myself would I be on this web site if my wife was standing directly behind me – the answer was no!

I think the most frequent and annoying issue is vivid dreams of my past behavior. My therapist said these are called "Euphoric Recall" and is normal; my brain is rebooting itself like a computer. He said they would become less frequent with recovery as these

neuron pathways would not be reinforced with acting out. Thankfully they have.

How do I deal with these temptations? By working a program. I have attended a therapy group at the Impulse Treatment Center. Sometimes I elected to see a therapist individually for specific issues that have vexed me. I have a Sponsor from an S.L.A.A./S.A.A. Twelve-Step program, and I have numerous recovery partners from S.L.A.A./S.A.A. Twelve-Step programs. These people act as "accountability partners" and keep me motivated in my recovery.

My therapist and Twelve-Step groups also addressed issues I thought were totally unrelated.

For example, when I retired from law enforcement, I weighed a little over 200 lbs. Now I weigh nearly 300 pounds. It is not unusual, while in recovery, for an addict to substitute one addiction for the other. That is what I have done with food using it as a placebo for my sex addiction. I am considering attending a Twelve-Step program for over eaters.

My therapist has pursued family of origin issues. I was under the illusion my family was perfect and I would not consider any idea otherwise. I

learned later, towards the end of his life, that my oldest brother was a pedophile. He lost his job as a US Treasury Agent because of this issue. I always thought he was fired because he was overly aggressive or possibly lied in an investigation. This discovery also brought up memories of me as an 8–10-year-old child participating in oral sex with an older male. Either I can't or I refuse to remember more other than it occurred in the crawl space of our cabin in the Lake of the Ozarks. Was that my oldest brother? I don't know.

My trauma therapist had taken another job and advised me that he could no longer see me or facilitate our group. It was like a punch to the stomach. He had been with me from the beginning; he was there for me guiding my recovery through the most difficult of times. I was frightened. What would I do without my therapist?

But then, some friends with S.L.A.A. talked with me, one explained that I had five years sobriety and that although my therapist helped me, it was I who did the hard work. It was time to take the training wheels off.

Another friend reminded me that yes, my therapist was leaving and could no longer

counsel me; however, my higher power would always be right there with me as would this Twelve-Step group.

Making amends is important with recovery. I practice a "living amends" with my wife. I try to be the husband she deserves every day. Although I could never find the women I used or took advantage of in my addiction – I can still make amends. It would be inappropriate to volunteer at a women's alcoholism center so instead I donate money to those charities. In retirement, I volunteered both at a local grade school and an animal shelter. I picked up trash in my neighborhood twice a week. Now that I have moved here to Monterey, I have become a Docent at a State Park and participate in philanthropic activities at a local charity association.

I give back by taking officer positions within my Twelve-Step groups. I have been Literature Rep, Treasurer and Secretary. Most importantly, I help people in need. I have been a sponsor, recovery partner and friend to those going through what I have gone through.

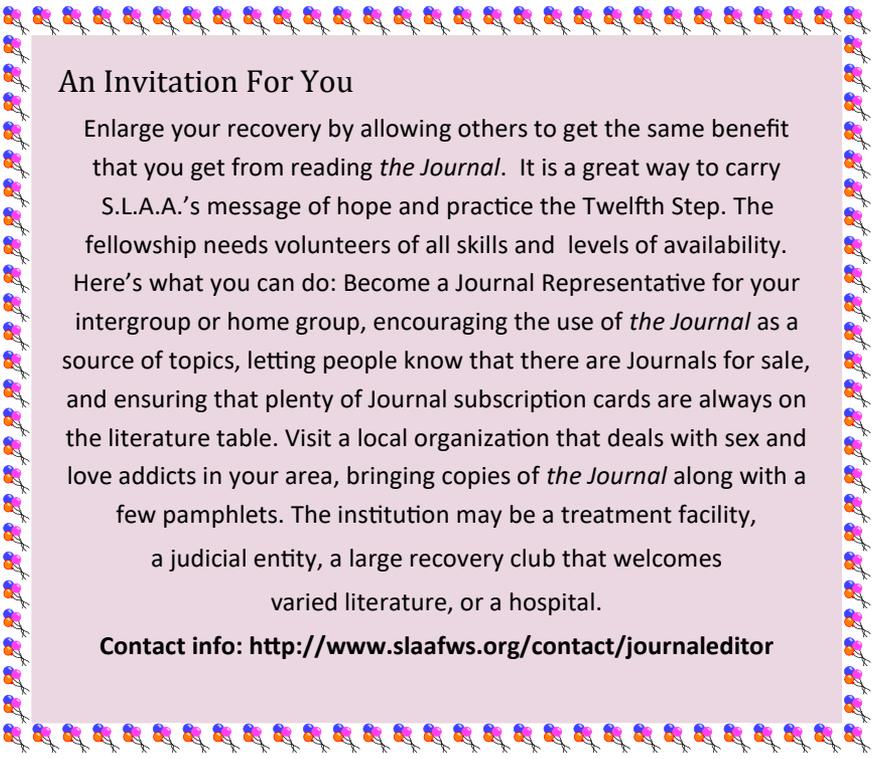
Sex addiction is called an "intimacy disorder" because the addict fears intimacy with a partner. Sometimes addicts

avoid having close relationships altogether. Through recovery, I have started thinking like a “we” instead of a “me.” I am developing a caring intimate bond with my wife that had eluded me before. For this and the friendships I have made through recovery, I will always be forever grateful.

Am I a “recovered” sex addict. I think not. I will always be a “recovering” sex addict. I am grateful for 12 years of recovery from my bottom-line

behaviors. However, I recognize my addict is in the next room lifting weights. My addict is waiting for that moment where he can reassert himself. To prevent this from happening, to not lose this new lease on life, I work the program. I attend meetings. I am more aware of and on guard against my own character defects. I am present for my family, my friends in and out of group, and I guess most importantly for myself.

— ANONYMOUS



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>



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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