

the **Journal**

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**Life Stressors and Grief**

# *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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## Question of the Day

### & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, Life Stressors and Grief: “How do you cope with grief and other large life stressors while living

sober?” 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: #215 — July/Aug — \*ABM Issue\* — Sponsorship — “What makes it work? What challenges have you faced?” Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2025. And #216 — Sept/Oct — Codependency — “Please describe how codependency has been an ingredient in sex and love addiction for you.” Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2025. Please go to <https://slaafws.org/thejournal/> and click on “Answer Question of the Day.”

### How do you cope with grief and other large life stressors while living sober?

First, I remind myself about the 5 stages of grief: denial/shock, bargaining/negotiating, anger, sadness/depression, and, eventually, acceptance. Second, I lower my expectations of myself by understanding that some days might be harder than others, and adjusting my schedule where I can in order to lower my personal, internal stress. Third, I talk about the loved one that I lost and/or my feelings to people who will listen and love me until I have reached acceptance. Fourth, I give myself permission to remember that grief is resolved in God's time, not mine, and I do not try to speed up the process. Trying to speed up the process is always counter-productive. And, finally, I do everything to take better care of myself knowing that I am hurting deeply, so maybe more meetings, more readings, more outreach calls, more sleep or better meals -whatever feels best to me, emotionally, accepting that it will not last forever if I allow my grief to resolve itself, naturally, in due time.

— KATHLEEN A., SACRAMENTO, CA

## Question of the day

I speak regularly to fellows, trusted friends, and mentors to ensure I am not isolated. I stay connected to my meeting space, church groups and other activities that give me joy such as singing, writing and creativity. I allow myself to feel my feelings and not suppress, numb or ignore them. I also allow myself to feel a range of other emotions between the spells of grief, not feeling that I have to dwell on it unnecessarily. I lean into God, prayer and other spiritual practices.

— LAUREN, CAPE TOWN

One second at a time. I notice that all emotions, thoughts, and stressors show up somewhere in my body. Now that I'm sober, they are apparent and hard to ignore. I have nothing covering them up - no acting out - so I listen and give them space to tell me what I need. Then I do my best to follow through, take the next right action. When I listen, I know what to do. When I don't know, I ask God. The action is usually simple - take a run, lie down, drink water, call a fellow, shake, write, cry, etc.

— SOPHIA, PORTLAND, OR

How? On the chin. Heartache and emptiness are reminders that I am alive. And the pangs that come with going without get so much easier if I can move through this moment with dignity. Heal and set the wound while I am open and aligned. Also, if your process in shares and fellowship is routinely to grieve, and it has become a pattern, it's worth considering whether it's become despair. It's important to introduce other lessons in life. There's only so far that suffering can take a person until it's time to dip into joy and enlightenment.

— ANONYMOUS



## Question of the day

I've come to expect grief and loss as part of having a big, rich life which the S.L.A.A. program has provided me. When I've experienced grief and loss, I take it to the meetings and share on it as often as is needed. The fellowship has always held me until I had the strength to stand on my own. I also use A.A.'s Acceptance Prayer which reminds me that I don't have to like everything happening in my life, but accepting it helps the grieving process pass through me more quickly. I accept my grief and feel it and let it wash over me - I try not to resist or deny the pain of grief and loss. Journaling, sharing with other fellows, outside help if needed and, most importantly, prayer are all tools that help me turn whatever is hurting in my life over to my HP and fellows.

— MANUEL M.

This goes back to the first Step. Life is unmanageable.

So, when grief or life events threaten my peace of mind, I take a moment to say to myself, *yes - this situation sucks, but I can work through it.*

Then I see if there are other past traumas in my life that the current one is triggering, and remind myself of what I did right or mistakes I made in dealing with the ones in the past.

I tell myself I can react better this time and then try to move on. If I'm still stuck, I talk to my sponsor, therapist or other members of the fellowship about my situation; they might have suggestions for dealing with the problem or by sharing it I find that problem seems smaller.

I remind myself that acting out would not make the situation better.

— DAVE G., PASADENA, CA

## Question of the day

While living sober, I cope with stressors in life by attending meetings. I have come to find that when I show up and I am willing to listen to those around me, I learn different skills. Before, I would suppress my feelings, but going to meetings has allowed me to openly share the difficulties I am facing. Recently, my cousin passed away and I found it comforting to speak openly at different meetings. Sharing is a coping skill I have learned to utilize while living sober.

— ELIZABETH, RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA

As an addict, I believed my experience with grief was unique - that I was uniquely miserable, that I was uniquely alone, impossible to understand, impossibly broken. I believed sadness was solitary, and that I would always be alone because how could anyone understand what I was going through? And even if they could, they'd never love me for it. Boy was I wrong. Grief and the struggles of life are as universal an experience as any. Step Twelve emphasizes that the key to working through our own problems is by helping others work through theirs. We are not alone. I am not alone. My experience with sadness, with hardship, is everyone's experience. I can pick up a phone and call someone from this program and they will know my pain as their own. By being of service as a sponsor, I can put the rumination on my issues aside for a moment and help someone else work through whatever they are going through. I can sit with discomfort and recognize that it is simply a feeling, and it will pass. Finally, this program has taught me that sometimes the best thing to do, is to simply do nothing at all. The act of nothing is sometimes the bravest act of all.

— TW, LOS ANGELES

## Question of the day

Life can be full of stressors; the blessing is that stressors are just triggers that I have allowed to become internalized. Sitting with a trigger will become toxic if I do not use the tools of the program. The majority of stressors are related to my expectations in all areas of my life not being met. Life is not always going to go my way. Surrendering the reality that this is how it is will hopefully prevent the grief of an expectation not being met. I use the tools of the program, meetings, outreach, service, and meditation. I do my best to practice self-care. I am honest with myself; I know my character defects will be released if I recognize the harm I am doing not only to myself but to others. I strive to understand that I must live life on life's terms.

— MAX B., LOS ANGELES

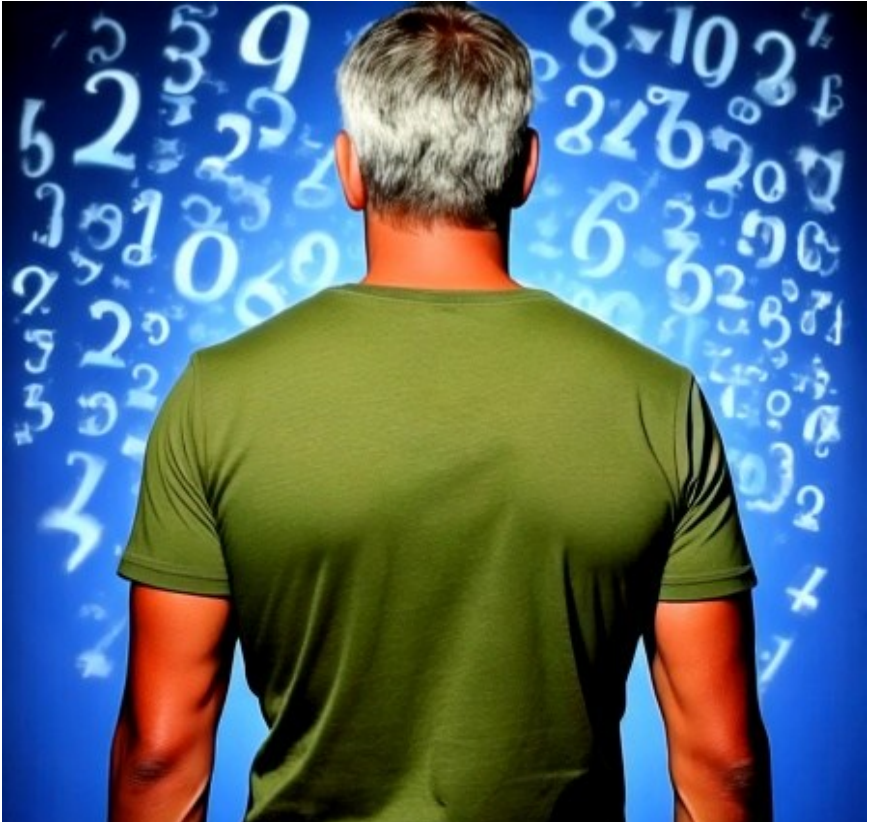
For big life challenges I need greater reliance upon my program. I need to get and stay current in meetings. I need more prayer and meditation. I sometimes need to pare down on some impromptu service while fulfilling service commitments as best I can. I need to remember I'm not alone and help is available when I'm humble enough to ask for it.

— CLAY, ARLINGTON, VA

I was in S.L.A.A. for three years when my mother died. Armed with the spiritual toolkit of recovery (the Twelve Steps), a growing self-esteem, a compassionate fellowship (unity), the ability to get out of my head (often being of service), I was able to feel my feelings/name and process my emotions without having to numb them. I was able to navigate it sober. This is what my Higher Power wants for me, and what I'm sure my mother would want for me as well.

— S. IN SAN FRANCISCO

# The Steps Change Me



The main way I deal with grief or stress is by working the Steps.

But, I've done all Twelve Steps, so what does “working them” look like for me these days?

Basically, my recovery program consists of me doing my Step Ten, Eleven, and Twelve actions forever on an on-going basis. With some Step Six and Seven in there as well.

My experience is that the

Steps change me.

They are like a preemptive prescription for treating my disease of sex and love addiction. It's maybe more important what I do BEFORE the stress/grief hits, than what I do in response to it.

An example? One stressor that comes to mind is I've been on a few Zoom meetings since 2020 that have been Zoom-bombed. It's not a pleasant experience to be on the receiving end of something like this. It makes me feel violated and stressed. And maybe I feel grief, too, for the loss of a safe space.

My action here has been to write a prayer for the bombers. Here it is:

"God, the people that did this must have a lot going wrong in their lives to feel pleasure and satisfaction by causing other people pain.

I hope their lives improve, that they find peace, that they are surrounded by loving family and friends.

I hope that they don't need to do stuff like this anymore to fill the hole that, I believe, is the absence of you. I think, maybe, that they are lonely for you.

Please help me perceive these bombers as I believe you

would want me to, with love and compassion. Please help me to see them as if I'm perceiving them through your eyes and heart. Maybe they qualify for a Twelve-Step program, but they are afraid and lashing out in counterfeit courage and false joy. If they come to any of my meetings to legitimately be a part of them, please let me welcome them with open heart and arms.

Please help me overcome the anger, resentment, and violence in my own heart directed at them. Please help me internalize the fact that, but for your grace, it could be me doing such actions.

I hope the other people on the call aren't wounded or damaged too deeply by the actions of the bombers.

Amen."

Step Eleven asks us to improve our conscious contact with God, not just maintain it. One of the ways I try to improve my contact is to write my own prayers that personally resonate with me. The above prayer is an example of that, and one way I dealt with a stressor in my life. But, it is also a preemptive strike against future anger and spiritual disconnection.

— STEVE, ONTARIO

# Grief Can Be a Mysterious Process

I've been sober in S.L.A.A. for 11 years. At this point in my recovery, my sex and love addiction no longer creates drama in my life. But that doesn't mean that there isn't still sometimes drama. That's just life. And over the past 11 years, life has kept right on "life-ing" (as the kids say). In that time, I've experienced a lot, including many moments of joy and happiness that I never could have imagined back in the days of my addiction, but also some devastating moments of tragedy and heartbreak.

In recovery, however, I've learned to live life on life's terms. I've stopped (mostly) trying to force my will onto everyone and everything in my life. I'm not perfect at it, but I try to practice acceptance in all areas of my life. In talking about acceptance, the *A.A. Big Book* says that "nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake." That can be a hard pill to swallow sometimes, but it really is the

key to my serenity. For me, acceptance and grief often go hand in hand. I can't really ever get to acceptance without first passing through grief. I usually have to grieve for what was, or what wasn't, or what might have been, before I can accept what actually is.

But grief can be a mysterious process. Even though many people believe that it comes in five stages, I've found that it's rarely linear or predictable. Sometimes, my grief has felt like it would never end. Other times, it has threatened to overwhelm me completely. More than once, I've thought to myself that **THIS** grief, this time, is just too big, that this will be the one that finally finishes me off.

But my grief always passes. Even the worst of the worst - the biggest betrayals, the most tragic losses - those hurts have all eventually lessened. With time, I always come around to some level of acceptance.

That's not to say it's been easy. It's not. Grief sucks. It

hurts like hell. It's confusing and exhausting. And sometimes, just when I think I'm finally past it, I discover a whole new layer of it. But I now know that I can handle it. It won't kill me. And it WILL pass. I've learned that if I just lean on my program, my sponsor, my fellows, and my Higher Power, I can come out the other end with acceptance. And acceptance is the answer.

Remaining sober while experiencing grief has been a challenge for me. I'm currently grieving a friend's loss of mental health. Although I may be sober, I don't think I process grief in a healthy manner. I try to do my best with waking up, practicing my daily gratitude and doing some mirror exercises for self love, reminding myself I am worthy, enough, and loved. I focus on spending time with friends or colleagues, attending meetings, and doing activities that bring me joy. Sometimes I'll watch a particularly sad movie or listen to music that evokes emotion in me

to help grieve a bit and let the tears roll. My big issue at the moment is avoiding allowing myself to free fall into the grief and instead process and heal from it, so I can move forward in a healthier manner. Whenever possible, I surrender the heaviness of grief to my HP. Sometimes my head and heart can't - so giving it to my HP helps me get through the day more joyfully and to be kind and loving to myself and others I cross paths with. Slowly, slowly, I am trying to walk through the grief and not around it, taking my HPs guidance as we move forward. I'm thankful for the Steps, sober communities, my HP, and having all that I do have, thanks to recovery and my HP.

I loved this topic! Thanks for the question of the day. Wishing everyone who reads this safety, health, sobriety, joyfulness, and to be surrounded by a loving community. Keep going, one day at a time.

— ANONYMOUS

# My Amends to My Dad



I was in the middle of my Step Nine the last time I visited my Dad.

I told my sponsor that he might die very soon but her reply was that I wasn't ready to make my amends yet. So I accepted it while applying concrete changes to my behavior as they became clear to me

through working Steps Four, Five, Six and Seven. For the first (and last) time of my life, I was gifted to experience intimacy with my dad. He passed two weeks after that day. Many family members told me how he was so moved by our last encounter, he even told my niece that I was so beautiful,



which he never told me before. While I was at the airport, waiting for my flight to the funeral, I ran into my qualifier, who I hadn't seen in 22 months!

I was destroyed, but I managed to keep no contact. I immediately called someone from the program and texted my sponsor; I was so triggered. I had no idea what I was doing. All I wanted to do was burst into tears but I kept going until I finally could crash in my hotel room. Once there, I called my sponsor and sober fellows until I could calm down and sleep. I set an alarm to wake up early so I could do my prayer, meditation and journaling before my morning meeting, then I went to see my mom. I thought that I wouldn't be able to stand her as I was such a mess. But I managed to make myself vulnerable and told her what happened.

She didn't even know about the relationship with my qualifier but she understood and showed compassion. It brought us closer. After that I went into town and after a few errands, I realized I wasn't triggered anymore, my nervous system had found some peace again. The day after was the funeral and my text wasn't ready yet. I thought I'll do it in the even-

ing, but I went to a meeting and felt tired afterwards. Instead of letting the fear of not being enough and thoughts of doing it all wrong creeping in, I did let it go, thinking I can't force this.

The next morning, I woke up early again, prayed, meditated and journaled. I felt my Higher Power guiding my hand and writing for me, I followed what came up, word after word, and my text was written. There were probably 80 people at the funeral, some of them I didn't know, some of them I had not seen in 25 to 30 years. But I wasn't afraid. I felt so strongly held by HP that I knew it could not go wrong. And as humbly as I could, I read the text in front of everyone.

It was extremely powerful. After the ceremony I couldn't count how many people told me how moved they were by the words my HP had written. Later I realized I had made my amends to my dad.

When I navigate grief and loss, I stick even stronger to my program and trust the guidance of a Power greater than myself; it allows me to feel my feelings, to stay sober and to heal. I am grateful for what's been taken away.

— ANONYMOUS

# When Deep Grief Comes Knocking



Recently, a beloved family member was hospitalized after stopping their medication. Before they left for the psychiatric

institution, I saw a photo of them. They looked beautiful, but also tired and confused. It made me deeply sad. I am

grieving the fact that there is nothing I can do to change this—except pray and be there for them in whatever ways I can. This kind of deep grief threatens my sobriety. When I meditate, I feel restless. When I share in meetings, I feel shaky, afraid of being judged. So, I turn to my sponsor and follow the direction of the program. I journal. I do a fear inventory. And now, I share it with you, trusting that God has my back.

Here are my fears:

I fear that my beloved family member will die young, like my mother, because of the disease of sex and love addiction.

I fear that this sacred bottom they have touched will be ignored again.

I fear the powerlessness of not being able to tell them what to do.

I fear the heartbreak and sadness that may come.

I fear the agonizing pain of watching them get sicker.

I fear losing a loved one.

I fear losing my serenity.

I fear losing my sobriety.

The list goes on—my sponsor is used to my long lists of fears. But as I reflect and share with fellows, the feedback I

receive is simple yet profound: “Of course you feel this way. Who wouldn’t?”

My sponsor also reminds me of something else—that my desire to control is creeping in, that my will wants to take over and dictate the course of events. She tells me this is an opportunity to let go—to trust that God is bringing my beloved family member exactly what they need.

As for me, it’s crucial to stick to my top lines: going to meetings, praying, meditating, journaling, sleeping well, talking to fellows, helping a newcomer—all the things that protect my well-being.

If you are in the midst of grief, I feel for you. I want to offer this prayer:

Dear God,

Please help those of us who are grieving deeply.

Help us feel our feelings and trust that Your will is the only outcome.

Guide us toward the next right step and give us the courage to take it.

Help us stay sober and take things one moment at a time with serenity.

Amen.

— M.A. NYC

## **When I Focus On Helping Others, My Problems Die of Neglect**



Grief and other large life stressors' are simply going to be a part of anyone's life. They could happen to us when we're deep in our addictive behaviours, or when we're just getting sober; and they can happen if we are long into our sobriety.

As implied in the Question

of the Day, it's not a matter of whether they will come, but rather how we might cope when they do come.

Before we look at how to cope with such pain, it's useful to briefly reflect on the relationship between pain and addiction.

Some of us have experience,

before or during recovery, of medicating or insulating ourselves from a grief or stressor by numbing out in addictive behaviour.

This link between pain and addiction seems logical enough.

However, we would do well to avoid confusing correlation (or justification!) with causation. Many people who are not addicts respond in non-addictive ways to grief or stressors. We may act out 'over' such painful moments in life, but that is not the same thing as our addiction being 'caused by' them.

As the famous story of Fred from the *A.A. Big Book* (p. 39-43) reminds us, we don't need great pain to act out – we can do it at “the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon.” Just as pain's presence is not simplistically the 'cause' of addiction, so too pain's absence is not a foundation for sobriety.

Indeed, many of us know that mere abstinence can leave us so brittle and easily triggered that our sobriety is threatened by the least of life's many problems. We need more than abstinence – we need sobriety and the maintenance of our spiritual condition.

In this vein, the best recovery advice I've found on dealing with grief or stress is given on page 15 of the *A.A. Big Book*. I must “perfect and enlarge [my] spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice with others” if I am to “survive the certain trials and low spots ahead.” Pain + self = self-pity; and when I'm pitying myself my world shrinks, my problems grow, and my service to others disappears. Step Twelve says the same thing with different language: to maintain my spiritual awakening, I must try to “carry this message to other sex and love addicts and practice these principles in all areas” of my life.

Whether I'm negotiating the highest mountaintops of success or the deepest valleys of pain, I'm spiritually in trouble if I let my ego make 'self' the vortex of my life.

Some of us might understandably be concerned that such advice equates to ignoring or suppressing pain.

To be clear, the advice referred to above is not about 'keeping calm and carrying on'. It's healthy and sober to cry, celebrate, vent, dance or otherwise respond authentically to life as it happens.

What is not sober is to let

self-pity pull us away from our primary purpose of helping other addicts. We do not need to be living pain-free or perfect lives to be useful to others. Indeed, if we refrain from being of service until such a fantasy life is realised, we will forever be working on self rather than working with others. We also will deny them the benefit of seeing someone navigate real life in recovery.

In the A.A. *Big Book*, which our *Basic Text* urges us to read alongside our lovely literature (see the first paragraphs of Chapter 4), there is an entire chapter ("Working with Others") devoted to the Twelfth Step. It famously opens with this profound challenge:

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking [or relapse / acting out] as intensive work with other alcoholics [sex & love addicts]."

Such wisdom is echoed in the Third Step Prayer, where we offer ourselves to our Higher Power to be used for purposes other than our own, and (crucially) to be relieved "of the bondage of self." Only by forgetting myself and helping oth-

er addicts am I truly relieved of the bondage of self. As I heard one speaker put it, "When I focus on helping others, my problems die of neglect."

I'll end with a personal anecdote from my recent past. After eight years of sobriety from my major bottom line, to my deep horror I was informed that someone in my spiritual community had been informing others about what they thought I'd been up to! Resentment (the greatest stressor of all!) roared for weeks as I burned with thoughts about what I would say to them if I had the chance. It was only through my continued work with sponsees and newcomers that I was able to re-teach and re-learn the lessons from Steps Four and Eleven where I see those I resent as just as 'sick' as myself and learn to pray for them free of self-pity.

In sum, I have to keep going in recovery: rain, hail or shine. As the cherished prayer of St Francis of Assisi puts it, I need to pray not so much "to be consoled as to console."

— ANONYMOUS, AUCKLAND,  
NEW ZEALAND

# Complicated Grief

My dad died in January. He was 92 years old. At the end of his life, I found out more and more about his long-term affairs.

As a little kid, I never knew what it was. I was the third daughter and by the time I came around, mom really was not interested in being there for me.

Dad was much more there, but there was emotional incest. He was definitely getting his validation from me and my sisters.

I can't speak too much about their story, only about me and there were some poor physical boundaries, as that's what I'm calling it and nothing dramatic.

My parents split up when I was around ten years old. So, when my dad was around, I was younger than ten. Even as a little girl, I thought, What is this? Shouldn't he be doing this with mom or something? It wasn't anything that he could not have done in public (nothing too dramatic). I just turned 60, so I've had these

memories for over 50 years now. I never confronted him about it when he was alive. I'm not sure, perhaps I should have. Perhaps the grief would be less complicated.

I was in another program before I joined S.L.A.A. I thought for a second that maybe I should bring up this topic with him and clear the slate. I don't think I ever spoke about confronting him with a sponsor or a fellow because I thought I was too scared to do that.

I don't know how he would react. I thought I couldn't do it but I'm sure I could have. Would he have fallen through the floor? Probably not.

I don't know how he would have reacted, but I did push him away for all my adulthood a little bit because of that. And he probably would have appreciated knowing why, because he did want a close relationship. As an adult, the grief is a little bit complicated.

— EVA

# Higher Power is Like the Aircraft Marshaller



I'm grateful to be recovering in this program. In the last 18 months, I have grieved a very stashed job. I have grieved the loss of accumulated recovery in S.L.A.A. to a relapse in this program. Through real estate transactions, I have had to change homes and lost two homes. I have a father

that's 90 years old and refusing care, a mother who is 85 with dementia. And all of those stressors in my life.

And with my new more profound version 2.0 of recovering in this program, I have thrown myself into service. And I felt like Higher Power said to me, start a 7:00 a.m. women's



meeting and that's outside of East Coast business hours. And I've done that and that has been a tremendous enhancement to my life and recovery. I feel like it's really opened up a better, stronger channel with my Higher Power. I am not weighed down in angst and grief from my losses. I'm not worried about the way that my brain thinks life should look like. It's been wonderful to create relationships with women in this fellowship that are doing the really difficult work of being present and available to other women.

They are doing the really hard, deep emotional work of self-love, self-acceptance, and validation.

And I am becoming less focused on those other external things that I felt weighed down and pulled down by.

So, there are stressors in life. And even now, having lost nine years of sobriety in this program, I am so grateful to be where I am right now. Today, I have surrendered my whole life strategy of and obsession with the pursuit of external validation. Right now, I'm at a point of acceptance and of not caring if I'm ever in a relationship again, and that's a gift from doing service work in this program. I have an enhanced relationship with this program and I'm more comfortable with me. So, the stressors, although heavy and hard, have been a tremendous way for Higher Power to be like the guy at the airport with the glowing marshalling batons who directs the planes on the runway. Anyway, that's where I am. Thank you for listening.

— MICHELLE

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## Trigger Processing

Hi, my name is Robin. I'm a sex, love, fantasy addict, and anorexic recovering in this program. The topic of soberly dealing with life stressors real-

ly changed over the years for me. It depends on a lot of self-care - basic needs such as rest, proper eating that really agrees with my body, and what's hap-

pening in my life. The outside world used to always have an effect on me. And I couldn't decipher what was childhood trauma, PTSD, or just life happening on life's terms. My internal landscape really has an effect on my perception and how I view the world.

Recovery in this program (and I qualify for many different programs) has helped with that. It is helping me grow into more of an adult. I wasn't given skills to navigate through life. One of the ways that I was abused was through neglect. And it wasn't intentional. My parents did the best they could. But they should not have had children. They were not set up with the skills to bring a child into this world.

And so, I've had to learn how to grow up. And I am 53 years old. And it feels like I'm just now doing it. I have 27 years in A.A. I'm currently qualified to be in at least (I'm just going to guess right now) six programs: Al-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, Nicotine Anonymous, Violence Anonymous, Debtor's Anonymous, and Underearners Anonymous. The Steps are amazing. They are life-changing. And when I work the Steps on a specific addiction in a specific area, I have a psychic change.

Working the Steps with an individual who has recovered in these specific areas has been important to me.

I am currently working the Steps around drama so I can stop living life on the drama triangle. And I am not finished. I'm 3/4 of the way through and I have been working on it for 48 hours. The disease, for me, lies in my mind. And, as long as I don't pick up the drug of choice or the behavior, it doesn't activate the phenomenon of craving.

And, if I attend to the causes and conditions and my perception of a situation, I'm able to regulate my system, enough to not have to "go over the falls" (which would be a craving or an acting out behavior. I'm not able to have a choice in the matter.

So, if I'm able to have a handle (which is a statement that can sum up a particular situation) it could be a limiting belief or childhood experience. My PTSD lies in my body and my body keeps the score of the situation. And so, when I get activated, my perception, my mind doesn't know the difference between what is currently happening and what is the same thing that happened in my childhood. My response to that is fight, flight, freeze, or

fawn in order to get my needs met.

This approach to a situation no longer is benefiting or working for me, but I haven't learned a new behavior. In the S.L.A.A. program there is a pamphlet called "Triggers as a Resource" which has been helpful for me because what is hysterical is historical. If there's a situation where I am anxious and just losing my mind over something, it means that my body and mind are responding to it as if it was a childhood trauma.

So, there have been modalities for me that have worked. By me doing the Steps on, for instance, my mom or a current friendship, I'm able to write down what the belief is, what the underlying unmet need is. I write down what my part is, and I can do a trigger process on this and it helps neutralize it (I will explain some aspects of trigger processing later).

If I am saying to myself, I am so upset about this, I will rate it on a scale from one to ten. And if after I do a trigger process, if it even moves a little bit (if it started at a ten and went down to a seven) that is huge progress. I have multiple addictions. One of the many addictions that kept happening for me, and sometimes still

creeps up, is soothing with other addictions. Once I put the alcohol down, I'm soothing with my addictions to men, food, watching TV, or isolation (anorexia to keep myself safe). In relationships, I couldn't deal with the person in front of me.

And sometimes I need to change friendships because I'm not getting my needs met (such as connection, belonging, or significance). One of the ways that I would get my needs met was contributing more to the relationship than the other person did.

I am recovering now from living my life on the drama triangle. I always perceived myself as a victim. Whether I'm persecuting someone, rescuing them, or playing the victim, it all means the same thing for me. It means that I feel victim to a situation or person.

When I am on the drama triangle, I cannot see clearly, think clearly or respond to life in an adult way. I'm able to clear these inner landscapes through neutralizing triggers with trigger processing methods such as tapping EFT. With tapping, I tap my arms or forehead for example, and say affirmative statements. There's also a tapping app that I use. It's scientifically proven that this helps lower the cortisone

levels in my body and bring it to a regulated state. Other methods include EMDR, and TAT (an acupressure technique).

There's the graduation process where I graduate parts of me that are no longer serving me. These parts of me were installed in childhood and have been with me for most of my life and may have helped protect me as a child but no longer serve me as an adult.

I am tremendously grateful that in the past three and a half years I have learned these techniques. There are nine of them that I use. In another program I'm in, I found a trigger processing pamphlet. In that program, we do trigger processing at 6:30 a.m. every morning.

And there's also one at night, but I mostly do it on my own as soon as I open my eyes because there's usually something that surfaces in the middle of the night that I need to look at and release. I do about three trigger processes a day. One of them is holding pressure points on my head with

both hands. I do this a certain amount of time to give my system the time to process. Just talking through situations hasn't really worked for me in the past. Trigger processing has been a game changer to release this energy and trauma from my body. There's a lot that I don't respond to in the same way that I used to.

Hopefully this can help someone because I know it has helped me tremendously with my approach to life. It's still a work in progress and I am still learning to turn to these things rather than old behaviors.

I no longer go to someone with my resentments and try to force them to change. I've learned in recovery that nobody else has to change in order for me to get my needs met.

There's 9,999 different ways for me to get my needs met and it doesn't have to be given to me by some person that I'm obsessing about. Thank you so much for my recovery, S.L.A.A. I appreciate it so much.

— ROBIN, LOS ANGELES

# Processing Grief in S.L.A.A. Meetings



Hi, I'm Tony, sex and love addict. I wanted to speak on this subject of grief. Grief is a very familiar topic for me. I processed a lot of grief in

S.L.A.A. meetings. When I was a newcomer, about eight and a half, almost nine years ago, I had to deal with the passing of my father. It was a prolonged

illness. And so he latched on to me and wanted me to be his protector as he went through first, his resistance of the medical system and then his acceptance that all he could do now was whatever the doctors said.

But he'd drag me into emergency rooms and then check himself out. He would say, "Just give me a transfusion. Let me get out of here."

He's an alcoholic. I thought, how am I supposed to do this? I had to walk my father through the last 40 days of his life. And I processed this at my S.L.A.A. groups because there were so many meetings back then. This is pre-pandemic and there were four meetings per week and I could process this. It gave me the strength to really step up because my father's passing was complicated.

He was a sex and love addict. He had basically two wives (not legally). He was a bigamist by choice.

I had to protect him from one of them while assisting the other, there's all kinds of legal stuff involved. He had four lawyers. I mean, I became a man that week.

I had a roommate who passed away two years ago. I went to a speaker meeting during that time to take a chip and

I basically said, "this meeting gives me the strength to process the loss of my best friend, who was living with me, and now he's dying."

And by then, I had a partner and she and I were able to be present at his deathbed, when pretty much no one else in his family could really handle it.

That was really important. A lot of people get overwhelmed by grief and have a very hard time processing a present trauma because they haven't processed their past trauma.

In April my mother had a stroke and she passed away right after Easter. My mom was widowed for eight years before she had a stroke. I took care of her.

I was her caregiver, and it got more and more intense as her age progressed.

And now I'm dealing with the passing of my mother, and there's really good grief resources from this hospital that she died at called Hogue Hospital in Newport Beach, California.

So, I'm doing that, and it's been extremely helpful, but I'm also leaning into my program a lot for support and fellowship. The people in this program have been very helpful during this time.

For instance, everybody chipped in and bought me a beach parking pass so that I could have a place to escape to.

That's about the longest break I could take was maybe going to the beach, which is a couple miles from my house and just sitting in my van and relaxing. People have been extremely supportive and generous.

I was appointed the executor of the trust. There's a considerable amount of wealth to chop up, and now my two sisters have all kinds of opinions.

Before, when I was a caregiver, they could not be found. I didn't have money for the basics of life and would ask for their help and crickets would be chirping.

Now they're all in my face wanting lots of control because it affects their future. They asked me if I was up for the role.

They allowed me to do all the difficult stuff of being an executor and a trustee, all the early stuff that takes so much time. And now they've found the fine print in the contracts where they're going to replace me.

When I get home, I'm probably going to show up to some legal papers.

So that's my grief. I'm going to have to grieve the loss of my current really small family.

It's a tough time in my life and I have a program to lean into. Thank you for letting me share.

— TONY B.

### An Invitation For You

Enlarge your recovery by allowing others to get the same benefit that you get from reading *the Journal*. 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.

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

# Share space

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## The 50BTS Needs Your Help

**Drafts of New Personal Recovery Stories  
Are Ready for Fellowship Review and  
Feedback Now through August 8, 2025**

Personal stories of addiction and recovery can be invaluable to newcomers as they seek to “see themselves” in the rooms of S.L.A.A. Recognizing the importance of including updated stories in the proposed Second Edition of the Basic Text, the 50<sup>th</sup>-Anniversary Basic Text Subcommittee (50BTS) asked members to write new stories for consideration. There are now drafts of **19 new stories**, along with eight retained from the First Edition, ready for Fellowship review and comment.

Many of the new stories cover manifestations of our

disease not included in the First Edition, such as anorexia, addictive fantasy, and recovery in the digital world. Some discuss long-term sobriety and how to work the program successfully. Others convey messages of hope about dating and building healthy relationships in sobriety. The stories represent diversity in terms of nationality, race, gender identity, and sexual expression.

The 50BTS **needs your help to read these stories and give feedback** to ensure the stories convey experience, strength, and hope to today's readers.



**Here's how to help!**

You can request online access to all 27 stories and read them at your own pace by emailing the subcommittee at [tmwg5obts@gmail.com](mailto:tmwg5obts@gmail.com).

You can attend a meeting in which a new story is read aloud.

To join an S.L.A.A. meeting in which a new story is read, here's the information:

**S.L.A.A. NEW  
BEGINNINGS  
MEETING**

(all-gender meeting)

Every Sunday

3pm ET / 2pm CT / Noon PT

Phone meeting

Dial-in: (805) 706-4017 (no password required)

**WESTVIEW PA  
TUESDAY  
NIGHT MEETING**

(all-gender meeting)

Read a new story the second Tuesday of each month

7:30pm ET / 6:30pm CT / 4:30pm PT

Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 272 979 763

Password: 085639

Dial-in: (646) 558-8656

**PERSONAL  
STORIES MEETING**

(all-gender meeting)

Every Tuesday

1:30pm ET / 12:30pm CT / 10:30am PT

Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 874 1967 1188

Password: 311 933

Please be sure to share your feedback on the stories you read:

<https://tinyurl.com/50BTstoryfeedback>

Thanks for sharing your thoughts!



## **THE INSPIRATION LINE**

**Your 24-Hour Sponsor**

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**CELEBRATES**

**500,000 CALLS!**

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

# *S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery*

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

# the Journal

