

the Journal

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Sponsorship

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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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

I've been working with a sponsee for 27 years in S.L.A.A. This has been the longest relationship in my life (besides my family). We got through many life events together, getting sober, surgeries, marriages, moving, death, and the Pandemic. Through it all talking with her every week has given me so much insight into my life, her life and the world in general. We have laughed and cried hysterically at times together. Every time we read together from S.L.A.A. or A.A. literature and discuss it, I find tools to use in dealing with real life problems.

I'm so grateful for my sponsee, my fellows in S.L.A.A. and *the Journal*.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, Sponsorship — “What makes it work? What challenges have you faced?” 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: #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. And #217 — Nov/Dec — Stalking: “Have you experienced and or been a stalker? How has S.L.A.A. helped you recover?” Deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2025. Please go to <https://slaafws.org/thejournal/> and click on “Answer Question of the Day.”

Sponsorship — “What makes it work? What challenges have you faced?”

I am currently being sponsored, working the second step. I am in the program for almost three years. When I finally admitted my powerlessness two years in the program, I started looking for a sponsor. I had someone specific in mind, I asked her a few times but she had no space to sponsor me. Then I realised this fella represented how I wish my mother would have been: strict, loving, strong and warm. The sponsor I eventually found is a bubbly, much younger version of myself; my ego initially felt resistance working with her, but my HP knew what was best and now I am so grateful!

— ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

What makes it work is staying sponsored. Trying to work this program without the guidance of a sponsor leads towards relapse often. I have found it a challenge to find women in this program who have the recovery I want to ask to sponsor me.

— ANONYMOUS

Early in my recovery, a fellow member suggested I "find someone to be honest with, because as an addict, I'm going to do what I'm going to do." For me, that person is my sponsor. I continue to practice honesty with her, even when it's difficult, instead of trying to make things look "good." I see now that this is what eventually freed me from the double life I had created in sex and love addiction.

MELISSA, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Sponsoring other recovering members helps keep my house in order. It keeps me spiritually centered and open enough to channel what our Higher Power has to say to us as we work the Steps together. It provides a way for me to give back to the community in the way of service.

Two people with the same problem, sharing experience, strength and hope with a commitment to not break bottom lines and to allow feelings to surface, is what makes it work. Praying before a sponsee shows up to do work helps to alleviate challenges with egos, sets the stage for love to be channeled through both people, and allows the session (Twelve-Step work) to begin.

— ROB, NEWPORT BEACH

My Job Is to Get Out of Higher Power's Way



There are a few things that have made sponsoring work for me. Firstly, my job is to get out of Higher Power's way to keep emphasising ours is a spiritual programme. That applies to me too as a sponsor so regular prayer and meditation around sponsoring is required

together with outreach. If I get really stuck then I can always find the answer in the A.A. Big Book chapter on "Working With Others."

Setting healthy boundaries for myself, such as how long calls are and how long I'll wait if they are late is critical for my

well-being. Being receptive to the lessons I can learn from my sponsees has also made sponsorship work for me. I've learned so much about relationships, honesty, meditation and inner child work from my sponsees.

Passing on only what I have been given through the readings, outreach and of course my sponsors is important in my experience.

It never works out well if I pretend to know all the answers. It's a real strength to encourage my sponsees to talk to others and to God.

The main challenge I faced at the beginning was a belief that I didn't know enough to be able to pass on to another.

Underneath that were some core feelings of not being enough, perfectionism and grandiosity that I was somehow responsible for another's sobriety.

I'm grateful to my sponsor for encouraging me to just be available to sponsor who ever wants what I have and then let Higher Power do the rest.

There have been plenty of other challenges since then which I can now see as learning opportunities for acting as if my defects have been removed and for practicing healthy relationships.

I've sometimes had to work hard to maintain my boundaries about how long I wait if a call is missed.

I've had to deal with envy about sponsees sex lives and their excitement about dating. There has also been loss when a relationship with a sponsee ends and I've learned to accept and sit with that.

Dealing with sponsees and dating has been consistently challenging and I have needed to remind myself that it is their dating plan, that I'm not in a relationship with their partners so my reactions aren't relevant and are probably my projections.

Most importantly I've learned that my sponsees have their own higher power and it's not me.

— GARY H., LONDON

Learning About Myself Through Sponsoring

I'm 4 years into my work in S.L.A.A. I've always been hesitant to sponsor people because of my self-worth issues. I realize it's part of service work. I already serve as a secretary chair and volunteer for readings and for timing shares. I realized that the next natural step for me was service work as a sponsor.

I prayed about it. Within a week, a woman asked me to sponsor her. I learned powerful lessons in my own recovery from the experience.

In my past, I had an issue with setting boundaries. Initially, my sponsee would want to call and talk for over an hour about all the ways people in her life were making her suffer. After three of these phone calls, I had to set boundaries. It was affecting my own serenity.

In my past, I wanted to people please. I would do whatever a man wanted to do. I wanted to be liked at all costs. I would silence myself and my needs. I couldn't get a word in with my sponsee. More and more, it

was feeling abusive. What she was doing and taking away my serenity.

In my past, I'd only voice concerns over text with a partner. This created tension in my relationships because texting is not the venue for serious topics. I still have a lot of work to do in this area.

I shifted my communication with my sponsee to only text messaging. This way I could get a word in.

My work with my sponsee helped me realize that in-person discussions and phone calls about serious topics are very hard for me. I am conflict-avoidant. I fear rejection. I'm not confident. My worst fear is someone telling me I'm wrong or disagreeing.

My work with my sponsee helped me realize I have more work to do on the character defects of fear, pride, and also poor self-esteem. Pride and poor self-esteem are opposites, but addicts like me are often studies in contrast. I want to be the best and feel I'm the

worst at the same time.

In my past, when I would notice discrepancies in a partner's words and actions, I would be silent. I would never speak to mistruths they seemed to share with me.

My sponsee said she had done work in other fellowships for over a decade, but her shares were focused on other people and their program. It didn't seem like she had done much work in any program.

I had no idea what sex and love addict obsessive compulsive behaviors she wanted to be sober from. She was on vacation and said she'd just pick up the step-work when she got back. There didn't seem to be a real commitment to inner-work or desire to work and understand the program.

My sponsee told stories that conflicted with each other. She said she'd been working the Steps for ten years, but she didn't want to talk about program literature, Step-work, or be of service to meetings in any way. She wouldn't set bottom lines.

My sponsee would only minimally attempt any prompts focused on the First Step. In speaking with her, it seemed she thought her life was manageable, she knew

everything about the program, and it was just other people in her family causing her to suffer.

It seemed my sponsee's actions and words did not align. She said she wanted a sponsor, but didn't want to do much of the things sponsors focus on: program literature, Step prompts, ways to be of service, bottom lines, and top lines.

In my past, men would say they wanted a committed relationship, but their actions all pointed to them wanting a sexual relationship with not many strings attached. They would say they had feelings for me, but their actions would show they only had sexual feelings for me.

In my past, I would allow partners to be ambiguous with me about what our relationship was. This caused me so much suffering.

I'd be with someone a year or more and the relationship would be undefined. It led to so much heartbreak.

I'd realize a year or more into dating that my partner was emotionally unavailable. He saw our relationship for over a year as casual when I saw it as a full-blown committed relationship. This was a pattern with me. I found my-

self allowing myself to be manipulated through a man's purposeful ambiguity.

I felt it was a character defect to not be easy breezy about things, so I allowed the ambiguity at the cost of my serenity.

I white knuckled for a year or more hoping one day the partner would define what our relationship was about. I gave away my power and my voice in an attempt to earn approval and an official relationship.

I was confused why my sponsee sought me as a sponsor or what she wanted our relationship to be.

I had to have a talk defining what the purpose of this sponsee/sponsor relationship was.

In my past, defining the relationship was always so hard to do with a person I had been dating. I was afraid of: not being nice; being seen as too rigid and focused; not having the same values; risking my connection to them; being abandoned and rejected if they disagreed with the definition of our relationship.

I prayed about things. I focused on what I could change and what I couldn't.

Finally, I bravely said to my sponsee, "I'm about program literature, service work, self-focused character defects work,

and solutions within one's control. I'm not providing helpful Twelve-Step service for you when I listen to you vent about what you're unhappy with about others in your life. It's a self-improvement program for defects of one's own character, not character defects in the other people in our lives."

In my past, I let men come and go. Pick me up and put me down. Disappear for days and weeks, then pick things up with me again seamlessly. She wanted a casual temporary sponsor much like the men in my life wanted a casual temporary partner. My sponsee was non-committal about the program much like my previous partners were non-committal about relationships. I couldn't let my sponsee come in and out of my life whenever it suited her at the expense of my serenity.

As with the seventh tradition, each of us needs to be self-sustaining. Like my previous partners, I felt she wasn't contributing much to the sponsee sponsor relationship because she didn't want to really talk much about Steps, program literature, or service work.

I told my sponsee that program literature, service work, meetings, prayer, meditation is an every day thing. I can't hop

on and off from the program or my quality of life suffers.

I can only point to program literature; ways to be of service within the program; what I've done with working each Step.

I'm not sure what help she needed. I had to accept that my sponsee did not seem to want or need the kind of help I'm able to give.

I'm not providing helpful Twelve-Step service for my sponsee to listen to her vent about what she's unhappy with about others in her life.

My understanding is that the Twelve Steps are a self-improvement program for defects of one's own character, not defects of character in the other people in our lives.

I can't hop on and off from the program or my quality of life suffers.

I can only point to program literature; ways to be of service within the program; and what I've done with working each

Step. All I can do is offer my Experience, Strength, and Hope.

In my past, I wanted a relationship just to have a relationship - even if it wasn't healthy. I could have kept this sponsee/sponsor relationship if I abandoned my principles - just like I could have kept relationships with partners by abandoning myself at the expense of my serenity.

Endings have always been hard for me with previous partners. It brings up all my family of origin issues with feeling rejected, abandoned, not good enough.

My experience with this sponsee was another opportunity to work on areas with which I struggle. In that way it was a success. She may not have been ready or maybe I wasn't the sponsor she needed. And that's okay.

— ANONYMOUS

ABM Shares on Sponsorship



Editor's note: the following shares were recorded at the 2024 virtual S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting during the Conference Journal Committee break out sessions. These are the edited transcripts.

Hi everybody. It's really

lovely to be here. I love this. I love the Journal. I'm a fan girl. I just transferred my sex and love addiction over to the Journal. That's OK, right?

One of the greatest gifts of sponsorship came when I first entered the program in 2017. I was completely broken, shak-

ing, and at an all-time low. My therapist, who had been working with me for over a decade at that point, suggested that S.L.A.A. might be something worth exploring.

So when I joined S.L.A.A., I took a step forward with an amazing sponsor. Then, I kind of fell out of the program—I met someone, and I thought, "I'm cured. Me and this guy are great." But we weren't. The guy didn't really love me or even like me. And yeah, I was just obsessed. Who knew?

So, I reached out to my sponsor, and she was really cold. She said, "Oh, I can't believe I'm hearing from you." She was sharp and distant and told me, "I've moved to Germany now. I don't live in London anymore."

I looked back through my messages and realized I had just completely dropped off—from speaking to her super regularly to absolute silence. I went back to the meetings, and luckily it was during lockdown, so I did 30 meetings in 30 days. I was fully immersed. I think I finally broke—it was like, "This is it. Now I have to do it for real."

I had an amazing sponsor named Anna—yeah, let's say

her name was Anna. But I kept missing our scheduled calls. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I forgot," I'd say. And she would remind me, "Mira, I said 10:00 because I had a meeting." I'd apologize again—"I'm so, so sorry"—but eventually, she had enough. She told me, "Mira, my time is really precious. I'm busy." And I was like, "Yeah, yeah, OK, I'm so sorry."

Then, I started going to lots of women's meetings and was lucky enough to get a sponsor I had seen the first time around in S.L.A.A. I had always thought she was incredible—revelatory and kind. So, when I got her as my sponsor, I was truly committed.

I remember walking down the street, calling her late. "Hey, I'm so sorry. I called you late. I was at this party, and I couldn't leave..." She cut in and said, "You know what, Mira, I really love you, and I'm so happy to be on this journey with you. But I don't think I can be your sponsor anymore. You've broken my boundaries three times, and I'm not taking care of myself if I'm taking care of you like this. Let's be fellow travelers instead—I'm happy to outreach, we're still friends, and we can still hang

out. I just don't want to be your sponsor."

I was stunned. "What? What's happening?" And then, it was like the scales fell from my eyes. I saw it—I felt it—from her side. Because she was kind. And the irony hit me: in my obsessive relationships, I had always needed to be the center, to be on the pedestal, to have constant attention. But when someone was offering me unconditional guidance, support, and love, I couldn't see the value.

From that day on, I have never taken sponsorship lightly. I treasure my sponsor—I would probably take a bullet for her. Not that we'd ever find ourselves in that kind of situation, but you know. I appreciate her.

This might sound crazy, but my sponsor messaged me on a Tuesday afternoon. We normally speak at 8:30 AM on Wednesdays. She wrote, "Hey, Mira, I'm in the hospital with a heart attack. I just wanted to let you know—I might not be able to make our call tomorrow."

She had a heart attack. She was stabilized. And yet, she thought, "I better let my little sponsee know." And that, to me, was love. Unconditional

love.

So, I asked myself, "Why am I dating these men?" Instead, I held on to the beautiful gratitude I had for my sponsors. Now, if I ever meet a special human, I will show up for them. I will be attentive. And if they can't show up for me, I'll gently say, "Hey, I really love you. It's been great knowing you, but I need to step back."

I have my own boundaries with my sponsees, and I hope to teach them—beautifully, with love—that if I need to step away, I will.

But yeah, thanks so much for letting me share.

Thanks.

— Mira

I'm Dean, grateful recovering love addict. I wanted to speak about sponsorship.

I recently became a sponsor after resisting it for a long time. Over the last two to three years, I went from having one sponsee to two, then three, then four. It's like once you become a sponsor, the floodgates open, and suddenly, everyone wants you to be theirs—because sponsors are so hard to find in our fellowship.

I saw the same dynamic when I was in CODA. I guess it's just a fellowship-wide thing—not enough sponsors for the number of people who need them. As someone who has been in this fellowship for a long time, I realized that when I shared in meetings, newcomers or those who hadn't been in the program as long as I had would come up to me afterward and say, "I really liked what you shared."

That's when I realized—I had been in the meetings for a while, and people started seeing me as an "old-timer," a resource, even a role model. I hadn't necessarily signed up for that role, but others placed me in it anyway. So I decided I was going to step up and own it.

I wouldn't always speak in meetings because I wanted to leave space for others to share, but I realized that people genuinely wanted to hear my experience, strength, and hope.

As a sponsor, I've noticed some challenges, especially with new sponsees. One of the most frustrating patterns is

when my sponsee calls me the day after they've acted out. They'll say, "I was thinking about doing this thing. I thought about calling you, but then I did it anyway. And now I regret it."

And I think, "Why didn't you just call me last night when you were still thinking about it? We could have talked through it." Instead, they wait until the next day—after the fact—once shame and guilt have set in. So I tell them, "Next time, call me before." But nope. They never do.

I've had a sponsee for two years, and he still doesn't call me before he acts out. On the other hand, I have another sponsee who does—he's better at it, let's say. And that's just the way it goes.

I guess it's a common challenge. Sometimes, I feel like I'm not accomplishing anything or actually helping because my sponsee keeps acting out, repeating the same patterns over and over. It can be frustrating as a sponsor. But then I surrender. I let it go.

— Dean

Share space

Navigating Change: A Reflection on Editing our Basic Text

Can I live with change? Can we live with change?

As addicts, any change can be a BIG DEAL. We laugh about it in meetings because we know the resistance to change is real.

In my role as chair of the 50th Anniversary Basic Text Subcommittee of the Conference Literature Committee (50BTS) I've been reviewing the Agenda of the Annual Business Meeting and the minutes from past IFDs about the Basic Text project. While many have spoken in support of proposed edits, there are some who seem to be dismayed that anything

would be altered. Given how much we addicts resist change, this is not surprising. And, as I consider what is going on for some delegates, I believe I can see parallels to my personal recovery journey.

Back in 2017, when the Annual Business Meeting and Conference explored creating a 50th-anniversary edition, a key question arose: Should the text itself evolve? The answer seemed to be "yes."

Since that time, ongoing Conference discussions have helped refine the focus of the project. While the book was not to be updated with unrep-

resented manifestations of our disease, the goals of the editing process became clear: honoring the essence and “voice” of the book while correcting grammar and misspelling, simplifying the writing to make it easier to understand and read in meetings, and broadening its language to appeal to a more diverse population.

Personally, I entered recovery eager for transformation. But when I realized that this simple program demanded I apply it across my entire life, I grew uneasy. How deeply did I trust these principles? How many of my ingrained patterns was I willing to release? The process unfolded in fits and starts, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

I turned to my sponsor and my Higher Power for a broader perspective. In some cases, I reached a resolution easily. In others, I had to ground myself in the principles of recovery by taking an inventory, examining my part and my attitudes. Sometimes I had to acknowledge, “I don’t like this,

but I can live with it.” And sometimes, the path forward demanded the courage to make a deeper personal change.

As the editing team shared their work with the Fellowship, some members voiced specific concerns. “That word?” “That phrase?” “That change?” “Unthinkable!” Doubts surfaced — a natural reaction. The team thoughtfully reviewed and considered each comment. Some edits were revised, some weren’t. When we couldn’t reach consensus, we asked ourselves: “Can I live with this edit?” If the answer was no, we continued to talk until group conscience prevailed.

I see the Conference at a similar juncture. As ABM delegates and members consider the proposed edits to the Basic Text, I encourage this inventory:

- Am I willing to trust that it is time for change?
- Am I willing to trust the literature-creation process?
- Do I listen to and hear all

voices – even those that disagree with my opinion?

- Am I willing to respect the integrity of the trusted servants who carried out this work, and trust they were guided by recovery principles?
- When I encounter an edit that troubles me, am I willing to consider what might have led our trusted servants to make it?
- When words are different from what I'm used to, am I willing to ask myself if they still convey the core message of S.L.A.A.?
- Even if I don't particularly like some of the new language, am I willing to consider that it may offer a more welcoming path for

someone whose experience and identity differ from my own?

We, the trusted servants who undertook the editing, along with delegates, and members worldwide, will decide if we can embrace this change. I believe we must all remain open to the guidance of our Higher Power heard through our group conscience. This openness is crucial so that S.L.A.A. can continue to be a beacon of hope and transformation for those seeking change in their lives, now and for decades to come.

Stephen S.

Pittsburgh, PA

Chair, 50th Anniversary
Basic Text Subcommittee of
the Conference Literature
Committee

A Relationship With My Higher Power

Developing a relationship with my Higher Power has had so many ups and downs over the past few years for me.

I didn't realize how much I didn't trust God until coming back to S.L.A.A. this last time. Before S.L.A.A., I was involved in the beverage program and had a profound spiritual experience where I felt the presence of God for the first time.

I always believed that there was some kind of Higher Power but I never felt connected to it; it was always more of an intellectual understanding.

After about three years of sobriety in the beverage program, I accepted the fact that the recovery tools and support I had there were not helping me with my sex and love addiction and that it wasn't going to be able to address my issues in depth.

I did not have a God that I trusted with my sex/love life and things unfolded in my life as a result of it. I had been in and out of S.L.A.A. a few times

within those three years and each time I thought that I could "figure out" how to date and not act out or act in on my own. Like many of us, this approach didn't work and I slowly but surely broke each of my bottom lines growing more depressed, suicidal, and feeling more trapped over time.

I finally broke my bottom line of not having sex outside of a committed relationship and within a few weeks God had placed me in situations that nudged me back to S.L.A.A.

Someone in a local A.A. group talked about a S.L.A.A. meeting when the chairperson asked if there were any non-A.A. related announcements. A week later, a friend of mine was severely depressed as he was getting out of a toxic relationship and I immediately thought of S.L.A.A. as he was describing this relationship.

I told him about this program and how it would probably be good for him to attend

and then realized that I should take my own advice. I called a couple of people who regularly attended the only S.L.A.A. group in my area and I kept coming back since then.

Since coming back that summer, I experienced many ups and downs.

My recovery process has not always been smooth, but I kept persisting and wasn't ready to give up. Something about this time felt different from previous times of coming back in.

I wanted it more this time and I was becoming more convinced that I couldn't work on these issues in the other program. I got a sponsor who after a few weeks dropped me because she didn't understand fantasy addiction and felt I needed a sponsor who did.

I felt afraid that I was going to go back out and didn't know when would be the next time I would come back to S.L.A.A. if I ever did wind up coming back.

Within days after this, God led me to a new sponsor who understood fantasy addiction. We developed a no contact plan with qualifiers and I broke that a couple of times when the temptation was presented. God gave me enough strength to

stay committed to the recovery process, learn from these mistakes and thoroughly discuss what I struggle with on a regular basis with my addiction to my sponsor.

God has brought me to a few women who I regularly do outreach with and has helped me to stay persistent and open to outreach long enough to be able feel more connected and in the middle.

God gave me the faith and strength to transition to S.L.A.A. from the beverage program when I originally thought that it would be dangerous to do so.

So many people in A.A. gave me the impression that if I stopped going to A.A., I was going to drink and die. This so far has not been the case and I have found that taking the leap of faith and trusting my Higher Power to guide me to where I need to be has been the best thing I've ever done for myself.

I am developing a relationship with my Higher Power each day and I am growing to love this relationship more and more. I am exploring new ways to connect with God and am not comparing my relationship with MY Higher Power to another person.

I am growing more content and satisfied with the God of my understanding and appreciate the intimate connection we are growing together.

This I believe has been helping me to complete my inventory and to discuss more vulnerable, difficult, and embarrassing aspects of my past with my sponsor. It is helping me to continue practicing vulnerability and sharing where I'm really at each day in my home group rather than pretending I'm okay and have it all figured out.

The safer I feel with my Higher Power, the safer I feel in myself and with others. I enjoy my company more today than in the past and I enjoy the solitude and time I get to spend in prayer and meditation.

I enjoy getting to explore new toplines and seeing how God is leading me to beautiful situations and experiences and is helping me to see more of the beautiful and lovable qualities that I have.

I am getting to truly feel my self-worth improving and feel stronger in my ability to show up and share who I am without shame or feeling less than. I believe in this program more than I did in the past and today I am grateful for what I have experienced in the past that led me to where I am right now.

I know that the road in recovery has many ups and downs, twists and turns, peaks and valley, and ebbs and flows.

But today I can trust that with every up there will soon be a down and that eventually I will come up again.

Whatever transpires in the future, I trust that I will always be given the support as well as the inner and outer resources I need to get through any situation I face like I have in the past.

Whenever I am feeling unsure or doubtful, I can look back at all of the ways God has carried me through everything and trust that I will continue to be taken care of and supported in every step I take.

—ANONYMOUS

Steps Four and Five:

My Share 4/12/25



The following is a transcript of a share from an S.L.A.A. meeting.

My name is Dianne. I'm delighted to be here today to talk about Steps Four and Five. I love a Fourth Step! I know that puts me in the minority. Sure there are painful and cringey moments but I have found ways to lessen the pain.

But the most important thing is the pain is short term but the rewards are enormous, and the benefits last FOREVER. So it's really worth it. And here are some of the ways Steps Four and Five benefited me: I found honesty with myself. I see that as a spiritual awakening because it was life changing.

I discovered that I was not perfect, that perfect didn't serve me well and that perfect was terribly uninteresting. So I could imperfectly let go of perfectionism. I was able to let go of the shame I'd carried my whole life. I saw that it was someone else's shame dumped onto my small child self.

I really was, inherently, a normal human being who had developed unhelpful habits trying to survive. Notice I said unhelpful, not bad. There is grace and love in framing it that way.

I could accept that I was human and therefore a grab bag of positive and negative traits and coping mechanisms. And so was everyone else.

I felt like a weight was lifted from me, from my soul, from my heart. I replaced arrogance with appropriate pride.

I had indeed survived and, ultimately, I got myself to the Steps. I fearlessly looked into every corner and crevice of my inner world.

I can truly be proud of that, and that little Dianne within who allowed me to look, I owe her a great deal. I developed self-compassion and compassion for others.

I could release myself from blaming them. I could see more clearly what I was re-

sponsible for, and what was other peoples' responsibility.

From this I could exercise informed judgment which is not the same as judgmental. They are different words with different meanings. As the big book says: "[The Fourth Step] puts us in touch with deeper levels of our inner nature." I have done the Steps four times in the last 18 years. The first time was in Nar-anon, which is a Twelve-Step program for the family and friends of drug addicts.

I had a sponsor who had no guidance for me on how to do a Fourth Step and that fellowship had no workbook, so I checked all the different programs' Fourth Steps, like S.A. and A.A. I decided to Google character defects, because I had no idea what they were, and I found 288 of them.

They were usually one word like envy, dishonesty, procrastination. I had a five subject, college ruled notebook and I wrote a paragraph on how I saw that defect in myself.

I put three defects on a page. You do not need to do this! This is not how it's done in our workbook. It was a lot, but I was naive and I really thought it was in keeping with a "searching and fearless moral inventory."

I am very grateful I did it that way and to that sponsor for listening to all of that! She wisely urged me to include what I did to myself, as well as what I did to others. For example, I was even more dishonest with myself than I was with the people in my life. Doing that Fourth Step, I had to face the fact that I was not perfect. I had really thought I was, and everybody else was evil, or jealous of my perfection!

I had been taught to blame others for my stuff. What I discovered was that I had all of these 288 defects except for jealousy.

It was truly humbling. As I saw myself as I am, it was like a weight lifted from me and I could relax more. Some days I'd speed down the highway with a smile on my face on my way to share more of my Fourth Step with my sponsor. It energized me.

I was not perfect, nor was anyone else. I was just a member of the human race and that was good enough.

Humility has helped me to stay sober, stay connected to this program, to listen to others and to the Big Book with openness and willingness. The second and third times I did the Steps using ACOA's Yellow Book. ACOA stands for Adult

Children of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Families. We still didn't have a workbook for S.L.A.A. The second time I did it was with my sponsor.

The third time was with a group of S.L.A.A. women who were mostly, but not all, in both programs. It took that group an entire year to do the Fourth Step. It is long, with 17 worksheets. Some are: Shame, Harms, Relationships, Sexual Abuse, Denial, PTSD, Feelings, and Praise. The Sexual Abuse and PTSD worksheets were very important to me.

It's approach is balanced between what was done to me and what I did to others, I found that the group experience was very helpful because everyone interpreted the questions somewhat differently.

Our Basic Text says that "no two people would do it exactly alike: there was no one, single "right way" to go about it." Hearing other's answers often helped me to remember things that I hadn't included or had hidden from myself for years, or to see the question in a different light leading to a more complete answer.

The fourth time was using Patrick Carne's The Gentle Path. Its name is sort of a joke because it is very challenging, and like the Yellow Book, it

takes a deep dive into family and childhood issues. It was commonly used in this program before we had our own workbook. For me, sex and love addiction was modeled by my parents and the culture in my childhood, and the abuse in my family set me up for sex and love addiction. I needed to get to those family experiences and issues in order to experience growth and recovery in this program.

Without facing and resolving those issues I would not have found long lasting freedom from my acting out behavior. Right now I'm leading a sponsee through the Twelve Steps with the S.L.A.A. workbook and it has a different approach than the others. It has A.A.-like charts on fears, resentments and a sex inventory. It also looks at the role of denial, guilt, shame, and power in my addiction, and the rewards, whether real or perceived, I got from my addictive behavior. It is long but not as long as the others.

I want to say that I had to do all of this in conjunction with lots of therapy. I had a great deal of trauma from physical, emotional, psychological, and religious abuse and that would have been difficult to face without experi-

enced therapists. I did inpatient trauma work, individual and group therapy, EMDR, DBT, WATSU and I could go on and on but just know that I went to any length to get where I am today. And I still do therapy to keep myself on track. I always did a simultaneous Fourth and Fifth Steps. Otherwise I felt it was too overwhelming for both me and my sponsor, and too much time would pass before it was all completed and I was afraid I'd wander off and forget about it.

So this is how I worked it: I did some Fourth Step work, then read it to my sponsor, then did more of the Fourth Step, and read that to my sponsor, until I had completed the full Fourth and Fifth Steps.

Sometimes there was more Fifth Step afterward. Once my sponsor made me lunch, lit the fireplace and we had a lovely celebration.

I think what made me so open to introspection is my sheer desperation and that allowed me to fully surrender and embrace the work.

Disharmony, which we call reaching a bottom, is necessary to shake us up, and open us to the enormous change needed to recover and live a wholesome, upstanding, transparent, and dignified life. I dropped

resistance and other barriers I had to seeing the truth. I stopped my self-defeating negative self talk that punished me for having defects, and re-framed that criticism as a positive exploration, a treasure hunt, and I congratulated and celebrated what I learned at each Step.

I believe I truly wanted clarity all my life and the Twelve Steps showed me how to find that and see through all the horrible habits of thoughts that were programmed into me by my family and the Catholic school.

The intense focus on childhood you find in the ACOA Yellow Book and Patrick Carnes' *The Gentle Path* was very important for me. In working with sponsees I think the childhood part is a high hurdle for some people, they very understandably resist seeing the truth about their parents.

The Steps before Step Four prepare us for this work. Step One is the motivation for it, my life will be unmanageable if I don't work the Steps.

It takes courage to do this work. Courage is fear that's said its prayers. That's Step Two in action. It's not easy but the faith we put into our Higher Power in Step Three will see

us through it. The Fifth Step takes everything I learned in my Fourth Step and allows me to let go of the shame that kept it all hidden.

I don't know about you but that shame kept me locked into my sex and love addiction behavior. I made this work easier by setting aside a limited amount of time daily to work on the Fourth Step. Maybe an hour, maybe 3, 6 or 9 character defects and then that was it for the day. I built in rewards, like scheduling a movie with a program friend on Friday, or a dinner before a meeting, or coffee afterwards.

I had more free time because I wasn't caught up in my addiction. I made more space by cutting out TV, reading novels and social media.

My sponsor urged me to add an inventory of my assets for balance. I watched my language and used a less critical word for a character defect like dishonest instead of liar.

Lack of honesty is even kinder. I very recently did a Fourth Step on my relationship with my sons.

My oldest son has been angry with me and estranged himself for about 4 years. This also affected my relationship with his brother. Even before

things began to thaw I prepared by reading *Adult Children Of Emotionally Immature Parents* by Lindsay Gibson to understand how my ex and my parenting affected our sons. And I read *US* by Terrance Real. He works with couples on the brink of divorce and teaches them how to communicate in high conflict situations.

It may seem like an odd choice but it was just what I needed. I have a quote from it to share that really resonated with me. "To Unlock a Neural Pathway the Implicit Must Become Explicit."

That's a mouthful so I'll say that in plain English. To unlock a neural pathway means to change my thoughts, beliefs, patterns, behavior, or actions. The implicit means everything I don't know about myself or don't acknowledge.

"Must become explicit" means I need to see it in black and white. I need to write it on paper. So to rephrase his quote: To change my thoughts and behaviors I must pay attention to who I really am. Like if I lie, I know at a deep level that I'm lying but I can hide that truth from myself.

When I look with clear eyes I can see my lying and when I write it down, tell someone,

and share it at a meeting it's out in the open where I can accept it and do something about it. Those 10 words sum up the Fourth Step. Unsurprisingly the author has a Twelve-Step background. That Fourth Step work helped me form a plan on how to relate to my sons and I will use that tonight, because we are all having dinner together for the first time.

I need to be on my best behavior. We are free to choose our own way through the Steps so you can look at all the many options. Just like our acting out behavior and our bottom lines differ, our approach to the Fourth and Fifth Steps can differ.

Also we can do the Steps multiple times using different methods or in different programs. Sponsors will often have a preferred format so that may affect our choice. Recovery and self awareness is like an onion, over time we uncover many, many layers of awareness and a new Fourth Step will help us process new information. NOW I want to remind you of all the rewards I talked about at the start.

I became honest with myself. I shed perfectionism allowing myself room for grace

and self love. The shame I carried was reduced. Shame became self knowledge and understanding. I found self acceptance for myself just as I was. And I could accept others, as I found them. Granting grace and forgiveness became possible.

A weight was lifted off me and I was lighter in the world. I experienced appropriate pride for the hard work I did.

And I built some self-compassion and compassion for others.

I was freed from blaming others and holding them responsible for my feelings and failings.

That's all I have to say about

my Fourth and Fifth Step experience and now I have a few questions for you to take away to your group discussion.

Are you resisting working a Fourth Step?

Why do you think you resist?

If it scares you, what is scary about it?

Are you embarrassed to share your Fourth Step?

What would make you feel comfortable enough to start your Fourth Step, or share it with another? Or if you're ready to start: List 10 character defects you see in yourself and name 10 character assets.

— DIANNE

An Invitation For You

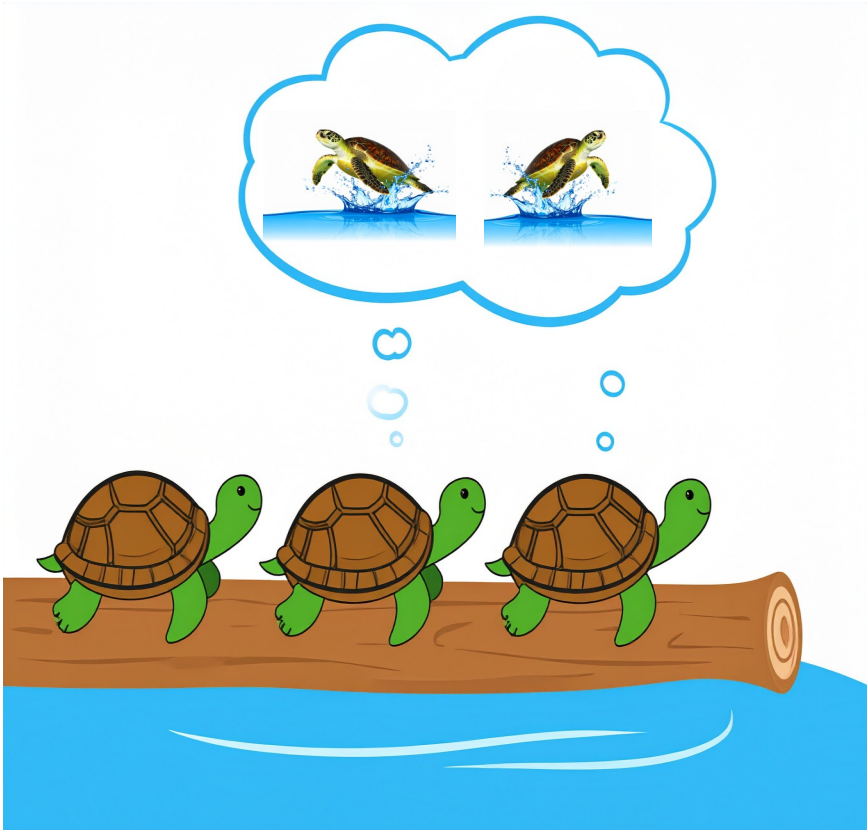
Enlarge your recovery by allowing others to get the same benefit that you get from reading *the Journal*. It is a great way to carry S.L.A.A.'s message of hope and practice the Twelfth Step. The fellowship needs volunteers of all skills and levels of availability. Here's what you can do: • Become a Journal 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. **Contact info:** <http://www.slaafws.org/contact/journaleditor>

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

There were three turtles floating on a log.

Two of the turtles made the decision to jump in the water.

How many turtles were left of the log?



Three! They only made the decision.

— We don't always have to do what our disease tells us to.

— Once we make a sober decision,
it needs to be followed with action.



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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

