

theJournal

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The Smartphone in
Addiction and Sobriety

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 re-

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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.

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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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Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader,

After reading the articles and answers to the question of the day on the theme of “Smartphones in addiction and recovery,” I am comparing smartphones to motorcycles. For some addicts, smartphones can be dangerous and can give them an adrenaline rush. For others, the phone can help their recovery. My 80 year-old grandmother used to go into the California hills and deserts for rides with my father on his motorcycle. She said it made her happy and was so peaceful and pretty. I never thought of motorcycles that way.

I felt the same way about this theme of *the Journal*. I thought I would get a lot of responses about smartphones as destructive to addicts. I didn’t realize what a tool for recovery they can be. I’m grateful for the positive perspective in many of the articles. I’m reminded of how often I use my smartphone for recovery (especially at Intergroup to look at the FWS website and our local intergroup website). I enjoyed reading all of the articles in this issue. I hope you do, too!

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

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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at its meetings.

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

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Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

The Smartphone in Addiction and Sobriety. Please share how smartphones affect your recovery.

Smartphones were once a major part of my addiction. Now, my smartphone is easily part of my recovery. It helps to set healthy top-line behaviors and boundaries. My top-line behaviors are eliminating apps and websites; and I set boundaries for using and responding to text messages. As a person who was “addicted to the ping” of technology, I’m very clear that I’m not big on texting because eventually it would take me down the rabbit hole. And because I love living a different life, free of that side of my addiction, I choose to adhere to parameters I set in place for myself.

— **Tia R., Los Angeles**

Alas, I am one of the few people I know who never had or wanted a smartphone! I specifically requested a ‘dumb-phone’ years ago when I bought my handy-dandy fliptop. It works just fine, thank you, God. When I am at meetings, I pay attention to the message of recovery, not the men or women who may trigger me just by being my type — that means anyone with nice eyes, etc. I have enough trouble remaining present. No need for any more distractions.

— **Marsha Z., Jamaica Plain, MA**

I joined our wonderful program before there were smartphones, so I have not (yet) acted out on one. On the other hand, prior to recovery, I spent many hours waiting by the phone for various Mr. Rights to call and change my life. My thoughts about smartphones are twofold. First, I’ve often thought that if I act out it would be on a smartphone because it would be so easy. So, I very much appreciate their power. Second, it has been an incredibly wonderful recovery tool for me. Just hours ago, I used it to listen to a recovery speaker while I was out for a walk. I will use it tonight to read our Basic Text at my meeting and to look up information on an Intergroup’s workshop this weekend, so I can make an announcement. I used it yesterday to look up the phone and login numbers for an S.L.A.A. conference call I wanted to join. I also used it to find a meeting at a vacation destination and to schedule a rideshare service. My smartphone also has a meditation timer. Finally, although not necessarily a feature reserved to smartphones, I am able to use mine to chat and text with my S.L.A.A. family.

— **Anonymous**

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “The Smartphone in Addiction and Sobriety. Please share how smartphones affect your recovery.” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #175 — November/December — Acting out with someone in the program — How do you recover from acting out with someone in Program? How do you act around them, around your group? The deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2018. And #176 — January/February — Dating Apps: Have you met your partner with the help of a dating app (or online dating) and/or have you learned to deal with dating apps soberly? Please share your experience, strength and hope. The deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2018. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

As I date, I’ve had to add smartphones to my dating plan. Some guys, depending on their age, will avoid texting – some do it every few hours. I’ve had to draw my own boundaries by telling people how often I like to text. The CoDA side of me doesn’t want to say, “No” to texting but I’m so triggered by texting.

— **Aless, Los Angeles**

I just recently got a cellphone and learned how to text. I find it very impersonal but it does help to support each other.

— **Diane S., Pittsfield, MA**

I am dating and using the dating apps. I can stay up late at night swiping. I go “off plan.” I also use the phone to text when in willfulness or despair. But, I can get info on a meeting when traveling.

— **Kara B., New York City**

I have had some difficulties with coming upon triggering images on my smartphone. I currently have an internet filter on my smartphone.

— **Steve L., Cincinnati, OH**

I use the text feature to stay in touch with recovery partners and friends as well as the phone itself. My phone also has books (like our basic text) on it that I use in meetings.

— **Matt F., Austin, Texas**

The phone is a source of addictive as well as sober potential for me. I use the text feature to maintain contact with sponsees. The voice portion may have limitations (driving, work, non-sober space). I have held the passwords for phones, passwords for restrictive programs and networks. The unrestricted use of internet capable phones requires a period of sobriety and dialog with sponsees. Some cannot ever use unrestricted devices. Progress not perfection.

— **Irv B., Willimantic, CT**

My smartphone was a huge source of my acting out. Now, my phone serves to keep me in contact with my sobriety resources and sponsor.

— **Joe C., Little Rock**

I have 2 apps on my smartphone that bring me into connection with myself – a mindfulness app and an emotions app. They assist me in remembering that I exist, I have feelings, and I have needs. Also, I have easy access to fellows.

— **Nancy G., San Diego**

For me, it’s only recovery. I am not acting out. It’s a way of communicating with my sponsor and fellows in the program. I use my smartphone to share 10th and 5th Steps. I can use the smartphone to find information about changes in meetings or activities within the Fellowship.

— **Susanna, Stockholm**

Question of the Day

I do not have a smartphone. This is a deliberate decision that helps my recovery.

— Roberto, Frankfurt, Germany

I have a smartphone, but it is not activated for search or any internet use. I only use it for phone calls and texts. I am connected to my sponsor and sponsees with it but not inappropriate behavior.

— Rick S, Westchester, PA

It's a two-edged sword - compulsive checking of emails on one hand and recovery by phone and "WhatsApp" on the other.

— Alex, London

My smartphone is a temptation but also a boost to my recovery. I am now just a few buttons away from recovery support.

— Christopher G., Largo, FL

Through my smartphone, I can access my triggers as well as recovery. Although it brings slippery material at the tip of my fingers, it also offers me the opportunity to join a meeting wherever I am, access shares or read recovery literature. The choice is mine. It offers a daily opportunity to commit to my recovery.

— Mathilde, London

Smartphones are an invaluable tool in my recovery. They allow me to have access to the Basic Text and other Conference literature and help me participate in running the business of the Fellowship. And those are some of the tools that help my Higher Power keep me sober.

— Jason S., Sacramento

Luckily, I haven't developed an addiction (yet) to my smartphone and hope I do not. It is certainly useful for communication with S.L.A.A. members and traveling/road trips to recovery events in Vermont, Massachusetts, Florida and Texas over the last 10 years.

— Rita H., Montreal

The smartphone is an acting out machine! It is a challenge to my sobriety. It is good because I can text or call Program friends to try to stay sober.

— Mark M., Sacramento

I can easily switch my addiction to my phone – playing games. Zoning out on YouTube and other apps can easily fill the void left by not acting out. On the other hand, I also use my smartphone for daily readers and meditation.

— Sarah C., San Antonio

Since I have been able to have access, I have put apps on my smartphone that enhance my recovery, serenity, and sobriety.

— Rich K., Worcester, MA

Smartphones are a double-edged sword. I use my phone to receive emails and send out business meeting agendas. At the same time, it is a great distraction to numb me from daily struggle. As an aware individual, I allow myself a limited amount of time per day on my phone.

— Carole, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

In active addiction, my smartphone would serve as a gateway to obsession, compulsion, and acting out. Through websites, apps, and texts, the device aided in my enslavement. Today, in recovery, my smartphone serves as a tool for greater connection through phone calls, texts, recovery apps, literature and meeting searches.

— **Marc S., Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

Smartphones facilitate my connection with my Higher Power through downloading and reading recovery literature or making outreach calls. When smartphones isolate me from God, it hurts my recovery.

— **Jean, Seattle**

Smartphones are a curse and a blessing. I find that I am a mere nanosecond from acting out and yet the information available in just a click is powerful and intoxicating. Recovery gives me the ability to pause and think before slipping down the slippery slope.

— **Seth, Newton**

Distraction, distraction, distraction ... infinite apps ... missing on the phone: the broom app to sweep your floor. 😊

— **Jean P., NM**

Wow — when I first came into program, my phone was the root of my addiction until I started collecting numbers and entered fellows into my contacts as 12NAME... then I found that the first people appearing in my view were 12-Step people.

— **Glenn S., Los Angeles**

When I'm dating, the response time to my text tends to affect my sense of well-being — too long a wait and I'm anxious. An immediate response brings relief. I've learned to take up to one day to respond to texts and have set a boundary of no emotional texting!

— **Diane, Oakland**

My smartphone affects my recovery by causing me to get distracted and I am not present to what is happening in my life.

— **Lindsey H., West Palm Beach, FL**

The effects are mixed. I can use it for distraction easily. It is mostly an asset that I can use to focus on literature and the F.W.S. website at any time. It makes it possible to keep in close contact with my sponsor, sponsees and fellows, even those in other countries.

— **Anne K., Tampa, FL**

My cellphone can be a useful tool for recovery or a temptation to addiction depending on how I use it. If used with wrong motives, it can be a compulsive agent of texting, intriguing, or misappropriated emotions. However, with healthy motives, I can call my sponsor, listen to meetings, access S.L.A.A. literature, text a newcomer to be of service, and I can set it aside for my quiet time. Like so many things in life, it's not the object itself that is good or bad, it's how it's used for healthy or unhealthy purposes. Thank God for the gift of modern technology that can knit us in a tight community of support and fellowship. God help us steward this resource well!

— **Anonymous**

Smartphone addiction in the age of the 24-hour news cycle



Hi everyone. I'm Tony E. from S.L.A.A. of Greater New York, grateful to have this opportunity to talk about my own addiction to the smartphone. And, also, how the smartphone has given me new tools to achieve sobriety and a certain level of peace.

Being in recovery from sex and love addiction means one of my bottoms lines is avoiding pornography and intriguing through social media. I'm sober for over 3 years in these areas, thanks to my Fellowship. But more recently I've had to face my addiction to anything my smartphone brings in that involves people in politics. Sex addiction has morphed into an obsession with current politics. The smartphone makes this very easy. The first thing I want to do when my eyes open is check Twitter and read the news. At work I have spent hours politics-surfing instead of working.

I'm back to the First Step — “admitted we were powerless, that our lives had become unmanageable.” I feel powerless to change the political situation I'm obsessed with, and powerless in my compulsion to keep from checking the news. I have 12 online newspaper subscriptions.

My fantasy is that if I don't keep checking on my smartphone the country will fall apart, and that my act of checking actually makes a positive difference. I tell myself that obsessive-compulsive news checking is better than obsessive-compulsive sexual acting out. But it feels the same to me, leaving me drained, frustrated, worried and awake at night.

I refer to this as “delusional agency,” i.e. the irrational belief that one's ineffective actions exert an influence on events. It's another way of thinking we can control the things we can't. But I get a shot of that addiction-reinforcing adrenalin by trying. This is what I have experienced in the throes of love addiction, i.e. being in a destructive relationship and trying futilely to change it. This is old family stuff getting replayed in new ways.

I've taken the following steps toward smartphone sobriety. One, to limit the amount of time I

spend on news apps to non-work time. I still need to know what's going on, but I gave up the fantasy that checking 100 times a day will save the world. And I avoid internet trolls whose intention are to deliberately offend, provoke and hook me into their negativity. A troll is a qualifier for me.

The other thing that has helped my consciousness enormously is meditation apps. Until I discovered these, I was never able to meditate, being hyperactive by nature. Now I do on a regular basis. Going inward, focusing on my breathing and the acceptance of my thoughts, has given me a sense of peace and calm. I can't control what's out there by getting caught up in addictive smartphone apps, but meditation has given me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and the courage to change the things I can. I can't change the world, but I can change myself.

— Tony E

Caution — text to speech was used — expect terrors

The smartphone has been a blessing and a curse. Technology is often neutral, it's just how we apply it in our daily lives. When I started doing committee work, we emailed constantly to address those questions that came up between meetings and to prepare for upcoming meetings. Working with six other people developed a community of servants aiming for a common purpose greater than ourselves. This was very gratifying as our meetings were monthly or every other month, plus I was an out of town member, so I did not have casual face-to-face contact with other committee members in between meetings. We did a lot of good, thoughtful work and the

outcome for the retreat that we helped organize was a beautiful thing.

I also keep meditations in my Kindle. Truthfully, my go to is one from another program that also deals with changed attitudes towards relationships, but it is a fantastic reader that dovetails well with our fellowship's mission. This is something that I read during the morning, and catch during intermittent moments at work when I have some private time. It has been a welcome change of thinking to the barrage of dealing with life.

I have, of course, been affected by the negative side of smartphone technology. Some in my Fellowship recommend

downgrading to a flip phone to get away from visual temptation. While I have chosen not to do this, and have struggled in this area, I don't envision myself getting a dumb phone as some have suggested. As my friend says, strong program is the best defense against problems in this area.

Finally, I struggle with smartphone worship. I check email, then check it again, Facebook before bed, etc. I need to place limits on myself. Being hyper connected is a temptation and a downfall to be mindful of. So here's to connectivity for the right reasons.

Written from my smart phone, on the Central Coast of California.

— Anonymous

Applications for Recovery



Notes

This is a lyric essay, written three days after my wife discovered I'd been acting out. The feelings are still raw, and we're only just beginning to figure out how to move forward. I've added new bottom lines for the first time in nine years.

More will surely be revealed.

Compass

"You might need this," read the note that came with the heavy, gold compass. It looked like it had been unbolted from some larger device. The needle wobbled under the glass. My former boss hemmed and hawed about how it was a half-assed gift, thought of at the last moment, but I thanked him for it. It was my going away party at work, and at least 10 of my former co-workers had come

back to see me off. I was moving from Dallas, Texas to Santa Fe, New Mexico, from an intergroup with six independent meetings to one co-ed meeting a week, from a full-time job at a drug and alcohol rehab to a full-time undergraduate program, from a newcomer with no prospects to a five-year sober member whose recovery gave him a life again. I had experience and a solid foundation, but I'd need some guidance as I took on this new venture.

I've still got that compass. Must be around here somewhere.

Contacts

Nearly every time I've acted out since I joined S.L.A.A., there's been a list of anonymous partners to delete from my phone, or messenger or email. Usually faceless, and rarely satisfying, no contact with these people ever

truly exists. I create a façade to present to them, trading my insecurity for the fantasy version of me. I swap genders to attract more attention, despite my lesser attraction, more concerned that I just get some action. It's enough to flood my head with dopamine and create the illusion that I am obtaining what I seek. But we never truly meet in spirit. We are using each other to meet an end and will throw each other away as soon as we get what we want. But I never really get what I want, and no one ever touches. We just desperately grasp for substance.

Unlock

I set the passcode on my phone last year when I got it in Santa Fe. My wife, still my fiancée at the time, bought the phone for me as a birthday gift, as mine was so old it couldn't even be updated

anymore. For my passcode, I used the date of our forthcoming wedding, then changed it a week later when we had to adjust the date. We've always shared our passcodes with one another and I've never hesitated to let my wife use it for any reason at any time. I never even ask her why. Why should I, if I know I haven't been getting into any trouble? I'm sober.

Calculator

That's me, figuring how many more items I can steal before my boss catches on. That's me, marking the places on the path where I'll leave Tarot cards to frighten our former friend. That's me, figuring how many ways I can act out without breaking my bottom line.

That's me, running a negative balance.

Settings

Sometimes I can express my feelings so easily. Other times I don't know what I'm feeling. When I am confused, I say so, and do my best to explain. And then there are times when I hold it all inside, and forget my tools, but somehow, somehow, they're bound to get out.

Games

In my mind, I shifted my stories and character traits to best fit the shape of the situation. At work, I hid my lies behind carefully crafted blocks of trust. I made myself indispensable and free of suspicion, hiding my theft in plain sight. When the numbers didn't add up, I blamed it on someone else. At home, I built walls of consistency and reliability, making it home at a reasonable time, never giving away my occasional detours after work. When everything fit just

right, I cleared solid levels of lies and they disappeared from sight. In between, I saved the crooked blocks for only me to see, shadowing the subject of my resentment (a kinder way of saying "stalking"), plotting my revenge, losing track of all of this deceit and resentment as it piled up faster and faster, nearing the point when I would inevitably lose.

Finances

I punch numbers into a spreadsheet on my laptop, trying to make the figure in the bottom cell go from negative to positive. My wife is sure this isn't going to help.

"Why aren't you willing to give anything up?" she asks.

"I didn't say that, I just want to know where we stand before we make any decisions."

We moved to the Cleveland area from Santa Fe two weeks ago, and we're barely making ends meet. We couldn't have even made it this far without financial help from a friend who made the trip with us and an old recovery buddy of mine back in Dallas. Still, I won't be drawing a paycheck until the end of the month, and my wife has to carry us solely on her income until then. I knew it was going to be tough, but every time we turn around there's another bill we forgot, another loose end back in New Mexico that we have to tie up. And I thought I'd be getting paid sooner.

Last month, we didn't even know where we were going to live. No realtors would take us seriously all the way in Santa Fe, so we drove up to Ohio in a whirlwind four-day trip. We met with sketchy men in questionable premises who refused to show us credentials. We spoke with an older lady who was upfront about the problems she'd had living in her rental house. And then we finally found our home, the one

with the purple walls, a basement and even (we thought) air conditioning.

On the drive back home, the realtor called us to tell us we'd been approved. My wife was ecstatic, but I still pulled out my phone to Google the woman's name and the company she worked for, sure she was another scam artist who was going to pull the rug out from under our feet.

And the sounds I heard uttered in a truck stop bathroom still rang in my ears, pulling me down to a place in my mind where I hadn't been in years.

Flashlight

A white light, at maximum brightness, shining in our dark bedroom, all the tools of acting out at my fingertips.

She is asleep. The television is on. Occasionally she shifts, and I try to see if her eyes are open or shut.

I am beside her, but somewhere so far away, forcing myself to trudge on, an iPhone zombie after his ever-elusive high.

News

There has been a recent development. Updated July 11, 2018. When I hand my phone over to my wife, my limbs tense up, knowing what that device holds and how poorly I've hidden my tracks. I don't know why she wants it, but I never ask her why. Why should I, if I'm sober? But I'm not. And she's installing a new app, to keep in closer touch, so we can send each other video messages throughout the day. It only needs my profile picture now, and access to my photos.

"These are some cute selfies, babe," she says, and that's the moment I know it's about to hit, that everything I've been hiding is about to be found, and my wall of lies will come crashing down. I brace myself for impact.

She looks up.
“What is on your phone?”

Reminders

A blank stare on her face, turned toward a powered-off television. Your best friend saying, “I don’t think we can be friends anymore.” A few years later, his gleeful expression as he smashes your windshield in with a crowbar. Your co-worker, the next day, texting you back: “It’s okay. You were drunk. It’s not the first time a guy has done this to me.” Who that girl in the chatroom may have really been, how old she was, and what you encouraged her to do. Everything you had to list off when you went three weeks without telling your sponsor anything. What your friend doesn’t know you stole from his wife’s dresser drawer. Your wife’s hand smacking your head while you weep in the passenger seat as she drives to work.

Photos

They were poorly hidden, behind a stream of random photos taken of the wall. I thought it was all I needed to keep it a secret, to keep the cycle going, to ensure the release on my pressure cooker. But just like when I was 18 years old, and my girlfriend stumbled across child pornography on my computer, it only took one innocent perusal of an electronic device to damage my relationship forever.

The difference between now and 17 years ago is that then I was kicking myself for not hiding the photos more effectively. This time I’m kicking myself for becoming complacent in my Program, for no longer sharing my feelings with my partner, and for thinking she couldn’t forgive me.

Videos

The app my wife put on my

phone allows you to record a video message and send it to a friend. Then they can record a video response and send it back to you. It’s kind of like text messaging and FaceTime rolled into one, only it’s not in real time so it feels kind of slow. Waiting for a video response seems to be more nerve racking than waiting for a simple text, which we all know can make one anxious enough, watching those three dots.

After leaving my wife that morning, I head downtown to catch a noon “getting current” meeting. I get to the church, but the door is still locked five minutes before the meeting is supposed to begin. I sit down at a picnic table and pull out my phone to check the meeting list again. The time and location are right. Surely I got the right day, right?

I check the calendar. It’s Wednesday, not Tuesday. There’s no meeting here today.

Just then, I get a message from my friend, Britni, back in Dallas. It’s on the app my wife set up for me. I haven’t even figured out what it does yet. I send Britni a text in response:

Me: I’m kind of in a shitty place right now and not up to talking. Maybe later?

Her: Aw! What’s wrong?? Ya, talk later. No rush or pressure. Sorry you’re in a yucky place. Love you, friend!

Me: Been acting out and got caught. I’m pretty f***ing stupid. Not staying honest with my sponsor. I guess I’m a little in shock at the moment. Was gonna go to a meeting but looks like I got the day wrong. But I can still go to one tonight. Love you too, friend.

Her: I’m sorry. I know exactly where you are in all that.

Me: I’m not sure why, but it feels good to hear that. Maybe because it reminds me that others struggle too.

Reference

“If you always tell the truth,

you never have to remember what you said.” – Sam Rayburn

Messages

Her: How could you do it while I was F***ING SLEEPING NEXT TO YOU

Jesus Christ.

Me: I was out of control.

Her: I left my dream job and my friends and I bust my ass so you could have a chance to succeed and follow your dream.

Me: I know.

Her: I’m going with you tonight, not to sit in the meeting or anything. But to hang out in the car. I’m gonna need some alone time.

Find iPhone

For the next two months, my wife and I have agreed that she can ask to look at my phone at any moment, and I have to hand it over. I know that I have no intention of acting out, and I don’t want to, but I also know that as an addict I am never guaranteed another day of sobriety. So, while everything is riding on my recommitment to the program, I must remain vigilant and surrender to my Higher Power every single day.

When I’m alone in our bedroom, door open or not, and my wife is at home, sometimes she rushes in to see what I’m up to. Anxiety compels her to seek me out when I can’t be found. I must admit, I’ve barely picked up my phone when she’s around during the last few days. Even when she’s not around, I barely want to touch it. I use it for directions and finding places in a city still unknown to me. I check email and send her text updates of what I’m doing during the day. She asks me to send her these messages, but I want her to know as well. I want my wife to know who I am and what I’m doing and what I’m feeling. It’s the first time I’ve done that in a while, and it feels good.

App Store

I had a sponsee in 2012 who was a real technological wizard. He designed all the fliers for our recovery workshops. He set up the Dallas intergroup on the Slack application, so they could easily stay in touch. And one year, at a workshop, he gave a talk on how we can use the same technology that we acted out with to strengthen our recovery. It may have been my job to help him work the Steps and to share my experience, strength and hope, but I learned plenty from him as well.

So now, every day, I'm opening up the Hazelden app, and my Kindle app with a book of meditations, and the draft copy of S.L.A.A.'s meditation book (soon to be voted on for conference approval). I pulled out my phone and took a photo of the Third Step prayer at a meeting on Thursday, so I can read that prayer every day. I'm combing through the Basic Text and pulling out sentences to make into reminders on my phone. I use the Calm app every day to practice meditation.

Not only that, but I can also use my iPhone as an actual phone to call my sponsor.

Maps

I'm still 15 minutes early when I spot the church one block over, but Google doesn't tell you when you're in a "right turn only" lane. So, I turn onto the bridge, driving over the Cuyahoga River, where my phone tells me multiple times

to make a U-turn in the middle of it all, but I wait until I've reached the other side to turn around. When I finally make it back, the phone, over my car speakers, informs me, "Your destination is on the left."

A man with a tent sits behind the church and another man sleeps a few feet away. I'm not sure about parking my wife's car back here. There are no other cars in the lot. I park instead a few blocks down and pull up the meeting list on my phone. "St. Malachi Center," it reads, not "St. Malachi Church." There must be another building.

I start walking and when the center comes into view, I realize there's parking in front of it, so I go back and get the car and park just in time to walk in before the meeting starts. There are twenty men seated at the tables around me.

My fear of other males sets in. But then the other members start talking, and I hear more harrowing stories of withdrawal than I've ever heard in nine years of being in the program. They quote the Basic Text like alcoholics quoting the Big Book. I stop comparing and start identifying. This is a safe place to speak.

When I finish my share, everyone claps, but I try not to let it go to my head. I'm sure they do it for anyone who speaks at the meeting for the first time. Afterward, four of them pull me aside and share their phone numbers. One invites me to a

party at his house in a few weeks. Two of them mention their past trips to Santa Fe. I've never felt so welcome at a meeting in my life.

Music

On the way to the meeting this morning, the windows are down and I'm driving 10 miles more than the posted speed limit, because I'm expected to drive much too slow on these Ohio roads. A song by Jamiroquai blasts from the car speakers, filling the streets with funk as I make it to the church just in time. Three days sober from my new bottom lines, and my wife and I just had sex. The color of my cloud is pink.

Safari

It's muggy in Ohio, and I've just begun to recognize the paths to get around. Seagulls soar overhead and firecrackers growl in the night. Each day, I blaze the trail to a new meeting, with new companions and a new guide (my sponsor) leading the way. I've been lost for a while, took a walk along too many well-worn passages where I long ago beat down the easier, softer foliage until it withered to pieces beneath my feet. The landscape has changed. I pull out a map made of circles and lines, and I scratch a few new items down so I know where not to cross.

— Andrew K., Cleveland, OH

The S.L.A.A. Basic Text eBook
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Smartphones and meetings



I will never use my smartphone during a meeting again!

The meeting was about to start. There was a low hum of conversation in the room as fellows greeted each other. I was in my usual seat in the second row with a good view of the speaker. I was watching all of the animated conversations going on around me. Some people were crying, some were laughing. I was so happy to see my community in action, helping each other.

A fellow sat next to me and asked me how to figure out a sober dating plan. I knew of an Intergroup that had posted questions about how to establish a sober dating plan on their website. I felt an urgency to get him the website information immediately. Usually, when there are loud voices in my head telling me I must do something right away, it's my addiction talking to me, trying to get me into trouble!

The hum of conversations stopped. The meeting was about to start. I marveled at the reverence of the group of 100 people around me. Here was a bunch of addicts willing to stop focusing on themselves and go silent at the indication that the meeting format

was about to be read!

The speaker picked up the binder that the secretary had placed on his chair. I reached for my purse and searched for my smartphone. I have a judgement about anyone who uses a smartphone during a meeting and reprimand myself harshly if I ever reach for my phone in a meeting. But in this case, I was willing to take the punishment.

I opened the internet browser and typed in the search words for the city where the Intergroup was located + dating plan.

A porn website popped up on the screen of my smartphone! I couldn't believe that happened in the middle of an S.L.A.A. meeting! The horror! As the speaker began speaking, I fumbled to close my phone and dropped it on the floor! Thank God for the cover and durability of the phone.

When I finally had the phone securely tucked away in my purse again, I noticed the redness in my face and the racing of my heart from embarrassment. I guess it was lucky and unlucky that it happened in a meeting.

It was lucky, because I was triggered to look into the website but had more incentive to turn it

off quicker because I was surrounded by S.L.A.A. fellows. It wasn't even a split second of indecision. I knew the answer was to get rid of it.

It was unlucky, not only because it triggered me but it made me feel guilty. I felt I had done something wrong and was immediately punished. This feeling distracted me to the point that it was difficult to focus on the speaker.

It took a while to convince myself that I was trying to help someone so it was essentially a good act. But I was also trying to impress them with my knowledge of S.L.A.A. and sober dating. It's always best to check my motives and wait until after a meeting if I decide to help someone.

The moral of the story is that I might need to put some internet filters on my phone so I'm not surprised by triggers and allowing my smartphone to become an accessory behavior. And I need to stick to my rule of no smartphones in a meeting. Smartphones can be lifesaving or life-defeating depending on how this addict uses them!

—Anonymous

Share space

Lotus Anniversary Online Share 30Jan17

My name is Lotus, I'm a sex and love addict\ my sobriety date is 4/18/06, \
I have a sponsor in this program,\ and I'm actively working the Steps\
I say all this so as to claim my seat in this Program.\

*\
Looking back, I can see that I became an SLA\ as early as nine years old when I fell in love\
with a boy at school. \ I didn't even know what sex was then,\
but I was crazy about this boy and told him\ I wanted to have his baby \
(I didn't even know how to go about this!) \
*\
My first kiss was when I was 11,\/with a 16-year-old boy in the haystacks\
of an Austrian Inn. My grandfather\ had to lock me in my room so I wouldn't\
say goodbye to this boy when he left\ to go back home far away.\

Again, I was crazy about the boy.\ My mom and dad called me boy-crazy\
by the time I turned 16, and I had\ my next big crush. To a senior\
in high school, I gave him my maidenhood.\

He treated me very badly, but\ I didn't care; I was so infatuated with him.\

I ran away from home when I was 16,\ and left home permanently when I was 17.\

There were a string of lovers from this point on.\

*\
I got married for the first time when I was 18.\ I got married after only knowing him 10 days.\

This began a pattern of lusting after a man\ not knowing anything about him but getting married\
and then finding out who this person really was.\ When the fighting set in,\

(really a struggle for control), \ I discovered I didn't even like them \
and left the relationship soon thereafter.\ This was a pattern thru 7 marriages.\

*\
It was all so romantic in the beginning\ but it quickly disintegrated, and I was miserable.\

The average length of my marriages was 2 to 4 years\ and as I approached my bottom, I did things I never\
thought I would do, I left one husband for another,\ ran off to the Caribbean so I could get \
a quickie divorce and married again the next day.\ I had affairs with men who I didn't respect, who\
seemed to need a mother rather than a wife, men who \ were not emotionally available. \
But the common theme was me! \ I picked them. I was the one who was really not \
emotionally available (later leading to discover that \ I was anorectic).\

*\
I found my way to this Room when my 7th marriage ended.\

It took me around 3 years for the program to really sink in.\

I wasn't done yet, my worst bottom was yet to come.\ I had an affair with someone I supervised,\

Someone who was actively planning his wedding to \ another woman. Putting my whole career in jeopardy\
and I become the laughing stock of my workplace\ when people realized what I was doing. In the end,\

I was on the verge of losing everything, my job, \ my career, my standing in the community, my place to live\

and worst of all my sanity. \

*\
I had no relationship with HP by this time. But I \ cried out to Him just the same. I pleaded with him\
to save me. At that moment, I surrendered. I had to.\
It was either that, or death or insanity. I was suffering so!\
I believe at that moment in time, I was on the verge of \
doing something so awful it would have made the news.\
Instead, I let my HP catch me. I felt this peace come over me\
*\
A few days before my bottom, I had done a spiritual exercise \

at a church which involved lugging a large sack of rocks. \
It was extremely heavy. I realized, this is what it's like\
to carry around my problems all day. It's so hard! An \ old AA slogan is "drop the rock". That's what we \
get reminded of nearly every day here. It works, that's\
why I tried it - others gave me hope that it could work \
for me too. The day I turned it over, worked Step One, \
I felt this peace come over me, which I cannot describe \
other than to say that a surety came over me — a surety that \
if I didn't want to act out again, I didn't ever have to again. \
As long as I kept working the Steps and moving forward\
towards my HP, I believed I could stay sober. I still believe this.\
*\
I've come to learn that the Steps are what strips away everything\
that stands between me and my HP. All of my self-will, self-\
centeredness, my pride, all of the things that put up a barrier\
so that HP won't get past it. He gives me free will, or choice.\
I am always at choice. I can choose to ignore Him, choose to\
eschew Him, choose to keep a wall up and nothing will change.\
Or, I can let down my guard, let Him all the way in where I live. \
I didn't know that I had to cultivate a relationship with my HP.\
You see, I had never had a healthy relationship before in my life,\
and I had no idea how to have one. In order to "come to believe"\
Step Two, for me, I needed to learn more about my HP. \
Who was I trying to become intimate with? Why should I believe?\
I discovered, I had to learn how to become intimate with my HP \
before I could have true intimacy with a man.\
I needed to know what I believed deep down inside. So I started\
doing research, I took classes, I talked to my sponsor,\
I talked to RPs. I watched shows and read books trying to figure out\
how to know my HP better and to let Him be intimate with me.\
I also discovered that intimacy involved \ letting someone know me too (into me see).\
*\
As time went on, I really cemented the belief that my HP\
wasn't just smoke and mirrors, a magic genie to call on in \
times of trouble. In Step Three I came to realize \ what I had with my HP was a real relationship. \
I could talk to Him about everything and anything. I asked Him\
to take care of me, and do whatever He thought was best. \
And instead of feeling like I'd lost control of the car,\
I felt like I had been rescued right before making a fatal turn. \ Now, I can sit back and enjoy the ride :)\
*\
Step four was looking at all the yuck I'd carried around all my life,\
all of my instincts that had gone catawampus in response to a wrong\
someone had done me. I took this step with a sponsor who helped me\
to see my part in the dance, to see the worst of me, and the best of me,\
and how all of the yuck was blocking me from a relationship with HP.\
I was beginning to let go of all the resentment I had built up over my life.\
Beginning to see how *I* had harmed others and myself. \

Steps 6&7 were taking a closer look at my defects of character\
 and Steps Eight and Nine were where I began to look at ways of how \
 I could make things right again — most especially, \
 letting go of my resentments.\

*\
 As the program sank in more and more, and my life began \
 to change for the better, I began to see that if I was going \
 to stay on in recovery, I would have to work the maintenance steps:\

10, 11, 12: mini inventories of my character...\
 prayer and meditation to know my HP better, and working with others - a.k.a.\

“giving it away to keep it” (another AA slogan). \
 As one old-timer in Program once said: “I’ve never had it so good!” \
 I’ve learned that it works if you work it. I’ve learned that if I “do the do”\
 I will stay sober. \
 *\
 The Big Book of AA says, “Rarely have we seen a person fail, \
 who has thoroughly followed our path.”\
 Thoroughness I believe, is the watch word. Since that first time around,\

I’ve worked the Steps many times, and have learned so much each time.\

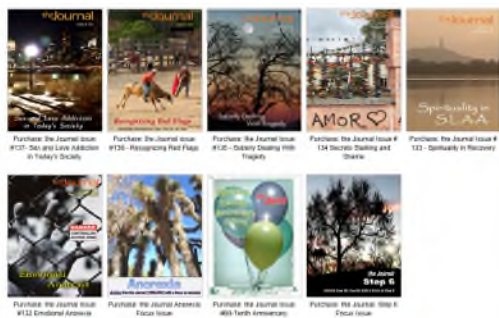
I don’t think I can ever know too much about this Program.\

If you are new, or nearly new, I am glad you’re here with me\
 on this white-water rafting adventure! It’s never dull, and is enough\
 to keep us interested for a lifetime. Please keep coming back here! \
 I need you - together...we can! Thanks for listening.\

\

Done\
 \\}

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My Story



My rock bottom came November 16, 2011. That was the day the FBI served a search warrant at my home and found my external hard drive with over 10,000 pictures and videos containing child pornography. That is the day my life changed forever.

That is the day I realized I had to go to my two sons and tell them their dad was going to prison because he had committed a horrible crime of sexual perversion against children. I would have to tell my mother, my brother and my friends the same ugly truth. That was the day I

feared that my sexual acting out had destroyed my life forever.

Any chance of happiness was out the window. Any chance at normalcy was gone. I was probably going to rot the rest of my life away in a filthy prison cell, and that was all I felt I deserved.

The life history that led me to that dark November day had one or more components shared by many other addicts: a childhood lacking parental nurturing and affection, being sexually abused from the time I was 8 until I was 14, and an introduction to pornography before I was even old enough to read.

And then I was thrown in to the middle of the Vietnam War. I was a very immature 19 year-old who watched my best friend's head blown apart by shrapnel while we were talking.

I, like many other addicts, had gotten a sh*tty start on life and I was making the worst of it. That is, up until the day the FBI showed up. That was as low as I would go. That was my Rock Bottom. Being at the bottom, there was only one way to go. UP. And up I went.

Two days after the FBI raid, I attended an S.A.A. meeting. The relief was immediate. I had found other sex addicts that also had

serious problems with sexuality. They didn't push me away because of my perversions, but instead welcomed me. I recognized there was help for me there. After the meeting, I went home and sought out more meetings.

Within two weeks, between S.L.A.A., S.A.A., and S.A., I had found a meeting for every day of the week. I dove into recovery, attending 6 or 7 meetings a week. I got a sponsor and worked my First Step. I got a different sponsor and worked the rest of my Steps. It took a year and a half to get all the way through the Steps.

Step 4 itself took several months. Much of my recovery came in Step 4. Facing and writing about my fears and resentments was eye opening and powerful. I wrote dozens of pages about it. Acknowledging those I had harmed was humiliating but healing.

Miraculously, while I was in my 4th Step a close friend's daughter asked for help on a college assignment that involved answering questions about my experiences in the Vietnam War. Answering those questions involved bringing to the surface and facing and writing about memories that had been buried for over 40 years, painful, ugly memories that I had kept buried for decades. Those memories had been festering away inside and eating at my soul. The timing was perfect. My 4th Step needed this.

It was the worst of my fears, the worst of my resentments. And the harms done to others: the young North Vietnamese boy I had killed. His fear-filled brown eyes burned into my memory the instant before my pistol fired. I finally brought out all that stuff – laid it out on the table – faced it – and began to make peace with it.

Working recovery gave me the courage and the strength and the

tools to do that.

The 5th Step. Two long sessions on my sponsor's patio unloading years of bad baggage. Two consecutive days of admitting to wrongs, sharing the secrets and evil that was my history. On day 2 I left her house feeling a lot lighter.

The 9th Step. Among the many amends made was a tear stained letter to the North Vietnamese boy's parents. A Buddhist-style ceremony and amends to the boy on the banks of the American River. And best of all, the amends to my daughter that served to reunite us after way too many years of being alienated from each other. A lot of work. Hours of gut-wrenching soul searching. Not easy stuff, but necessary stuff. Working my Steps allowed me to dig out and examine and then deal with all those characteristics that were feeding my addiction, destroying relationships, and robbing me of any true peace.

Not long after finishing my Steps I was sentenced and went to prison. My recovery suffered during the 30 months I was incarcerated. Prison is a harsh environment that I was ill-suited to deal with. Months of 12-Step work helped me to maintain my integrity and kept the prison system from making me more of a criminal.

But I left prison less of a man than when I went in. My confidence was shattered. My sense of self-worth diminished. But it didn't take away my desire to get better. I left prison craving 12-Step, craving these rooms. I had been promised they would be here waiting for me and they were. Since I've been back from prison each day has been better than the last.

My life today is wonderful and getting better. My recovery is exploding with growth. I've had

multiple recovery break-throughs in the past few months.

It's like the Steps gave me the tools, prison allowed me to pay the price, and now today I get to reap the benefits. 12-Step, the FBI, a college assignment, prison. It has taken all of those components to allow me my recovery. Now, with those challenges behind me and from all I've learned about myself as a result of that work, I'm moving into a new phase of my life.

I'm still a sex addict, so I will continue going to meetings, but 12-Step work is different now. The shame and guilt and pain and tears that were so much a part of early recovery have been replaced with a sense of inner peace. I no longer feel bad about myself. I am happy with who I've become. I don't struggle so much to maintain sobriety. I've got a good set of tools to call on when temptation surfaces. And, more importantly, I have an inner strength because of my recovery that keeps temptation at bay most of the time. I just don't think about acting out as much as I used to.

The world seems to be a better place than it was pre-recovery. People seem nicer. I like the people around me more than I used to. The sky seems bluer, the grass greener, and even the politicians, though they haven't gotten any smarter, don't piss me off like they used to. I guess because of my recovery, I've just become OK with me, so it's easier to be OK with the world around me.

The FBI, 12-Step, going back to Vietnam, and even prison gave me that. What a blessing. I'm a lucky man.

Thank you for letting me share.

My name is Mike and I am a sex addict.

— Mike

Using the Three-Second Rule

It's been a rough week. My "go to" is thoughts of someone at church who triggers me. I constantly have to turn my thoughts away using the three-second rule.

Sometimes however, I have to do it over and over again, like this past week. I turn my mind away from the thoughts as soon as I realize it. The record of my mind has a deep addictive groove and the needle gets stuck there. Then it skips. Again and again. The same refrain. But I've learned in recovery, that at the root of every thought, every addictive pattern, is an instinct gone awry.

These instinctual patterns gone

awry are my character defects. I got a good look at those character defects during my 4th Step. In situations where I had a resentment, I might not have done anything wrong, but my part is that I instinctually reacted in a way which affected my life at that moment, and in the future.

I made decisions that impacted all my future interactions such as: my father wound. My father was unavailable through no fault of his own. But I made a decision based on this father wound that affected the rest of my life. In the area of trust, I believed men were untrustworthy because of this wound, and I carried this

conclusion forward into every relationship in my life. Thank goodness for Step Four. It helped me to see this pattern. In Step 7, I turned it over to a Power greater than myself because I couldn't eradicate this pattern by myself. In Step 10, I try to stay vigilant by examining what instincts are being activated that have me so troubled at the moment. I'm pretty peaceful most of the time today. This program rocks! It works. I have a way to live differently today, and for that I am truly grateful.

— Anonymous

Moving in the Right Direction

Hi, all. I don't know about you, but Valentine's day was a tough day this year, a real roller coaster of emotions. The day before that, my wonderful husband and I celebrated the 11th year of our engagement.

Eleven years ago, I thought for sure he would propose on Valentine's day, but he surprised me instead, by proposing the day before Valentine's day. Now in our almost 10th year of marriage, I find it the hardest of all. The anorexia is a challenge, times of fear, anger, worry. Does my husband still love me? Is he sick of me? Will he be faithful? The thing is, believe it or not, this is progress (not perfection) for me.

In all my previous relationships I was so selfish and self-centered. All I ever cared about was what I thought about him; it was all

about me, what I wanted, and what I felt. Did I still love him?

Would I be faithful? Was I sick of Him? Catch my drift? In recovery, I got a good hard look at myself. In Step 4, I looked at my resentments, and my instincts gone awry. I realized how petty and immature I had been, and then the pendulum swung the other way which is still not what God wants from me, but is better by far than the other way.

I know it's not healthy for me to drift into fear and worry either though. I've really been working, with the help of Higher Power, to release these character defects, to be loving, peaceful, patient, gentle, faithful, kind, and have self-control. On many days the by-product of this has been peace, even joy sometimes. I admit, I still struggle with anorexia. I still have

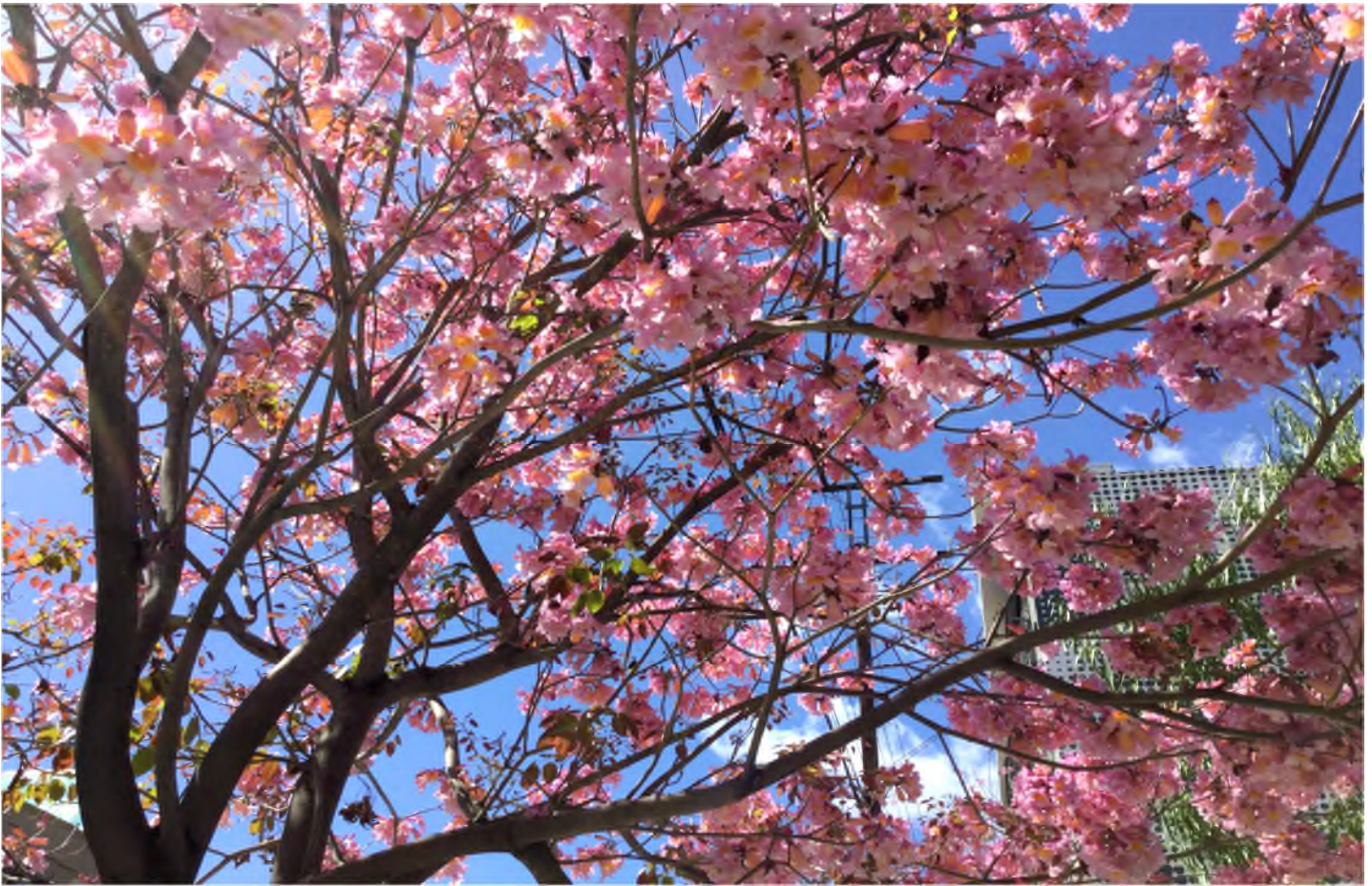
the addict thinking (lust, intrigue), which had always caused me to abandon my relationship early on.

So little by little, I believe I am moving in the right direction, but I have to be careful not to drift into worry, remorse, and self-pity. I have to keep searching, to know my Higher Power better. I have to work with others, be of service, and make amends when I'm wrong. I want to stop thinking about what he thinks of me, what anyone thinks of me; it's none of my business. Instead, I want to think about what does Higher Power think of me? I've discovered: He loves me so!!! I am the apple of His eye. Today, He is my number one Valentine.

May God bless you and keep you.

— Anonymous

Forming a True Partnership



As to forming a true partnership with someone, it's something I've never done before. How can you form a real partnership with somebody you don't even know?

My M.O. was to marry them shortly after knowing them, and it always followed this pattern: Lust, marry, get to know, despise, divorce (In very short order usually no more than 4 years together). And I did it over and over again.

When I did my 4th Step, it was so painful to realize that the central fixed point in this pattern was not them, it was me! It was my choices, my addiction, me, me, me, not "them, them, them" like I thought before.

In recovery, I've at last formed

what I think is a true partnership with someone.

However, that doesn't mean that I don't have trouble still, with ego, control (read manipulation), unreasonable demands and other pitfalls. Then I suffer the consequences of my behavior. Ugh!

It's been a journey and a learning process for sure. But, it's all about progress, not perfection as they say, and I believe I am progressing, some days a little faster than others, a few steps backwards from time to time, but ultimately forward!

Well, I'm also "all in" now. I am willing to keep trying, to keep growing, and to keep struggling. I'm in communion with Higher Power now, most of the time. He

makes it all bearable.

The Steps drew me to Him and have helped me to cement my relationship with my husband, holding my hand as I close off the exits. It's my commitment that keeps me in the relationship today, not how I feel at this particular moment. My Higher Power is my central fixed point of reference today, He is my true north. I keep my eyes on my Higher Power, and on myself, not on what my partner is or isn't doing. As one old timer I knew before he passed away used to say, "I've never had it so good!" I'll keep coming back.

— **Anonymous**



Summer Solstice 2018

this is not the summer of love
this is not the summer of luxurious abundance
this is not the summer of fame and fortune

NO.

this is the summer of tending the flame of my wild heart.
this is the summer of encountering the person I have become,
and burning up the lies I've been living by.

this is the summer of seeing things as they truly are
of letting go of my "whole life strategy," aka ego.

this is the summer of committing to 1. eat 2. sleep
3. drink water 4. write 5. not kill myself 6. not act out.

this is the summer of learning what it means (directly,
from my source) to trust spirit / god / my creator.

this is the summer of deep tending to my sanctuary.

this is the summer of being excruciatingly and
exquisitely present with myself.

so in fact – this IS the summer of love, in that
I am learning to deeply and unshakably love myself.

and this IS the summer of luxurious abundance, of
solitude, of presence, of connection with god in me.

and FAME & FORTUNE? For who? 4 what? How about not
needing a lick of validation from others in order to know

* * * * * I AM EXACTLY ENOUGH * * * * *

— Mary D.

Gainesville, FL



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