



# the Journal

Issue # 182

Single Issue \$4

Thank You A.A.

# 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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Stories, interviews, personal testimony, and other content contained herein are authored by members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. The opinions expressed in *the Journal* are not necessarily the opinions of The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., F.W.S. office, Annual Business Conference or any other Conference committee including the Conference Journal Committee or *the Journal* production staff. Motions adopted at the 1989, 1990, and 1991 Conferences chartered *the Journal*, but it is impractical for all of the content of a periodical such as the Journal to be Conference-approved. Each recovery group can determine its own position on the use of content from *the Journal* 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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## Letter From the Editor

In place of the letter from the editor I thought it appropriate to publish the entry that a S.L.A.A. member submitted to *the Journal* meditation book project:

### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

*Since the beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, the Twelve Steps of that fellowship's program of recovery have been adapted to a wide variety of human problems. Among these are gambling, overeating, smoking, narcotics abuse and child abuse. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page vii*

Our program is based on the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of A.A. Our founder, Rich, was a sober member of A.A. That's where he found many prospects to grow this Fellowship. Whenever we have a problem in S.L.A.A. conference committees, it's not uncommon that someone will ask, "How does A.A. do it?" The introduction of Chapter 4 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text explains the adaptation of the Program of A.A. to sex and love addiction. A.A. literature is recommended with the suggestion that we "substitute the words 'our addiction' or 'sex and love addiction' for the direct references to alcoholism in those books." I struggled for four years to get sober in S.L.A.A. I was also sober in A.A. My sponsor told me I should let my sponsee go because I was acting out in S.L.A.A. She refused. So, we met each week and read the Big Book of A.A. One alcoholic's story about burning down a barn revealed to me in stark reality the seriousness of my own sex and love addiction. I burned down the barn of my life over and over again because of this disease. I was able to get and stay sober immediately after that.

I WILL LOOK TO THE PROGRAM OF A.A. FOR GUIDANCE IN S.L.A.A. MATTERS, KNOWING THE PROGRAM HAS A LOT OF EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH, AND HOPE TO SHARE.

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Announcing S.L.A.A.'s new Conference-approved meditation book:

## A State of Grace

## Daily Meditations

365 Days of S.L.A.A. Recovery Inspiration

Hard cover limited edition preorders now. Soft cover edition to be released mid-2020 at \$12.95 each

[www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “Thank You A.A. Please take this opportunity to express gratitude for what the founders and foundresses of A.A./Al-Anon have gifted to the

planet, as adapted by S.L.A.A.” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #183 — March/April — Extreme Self-Care: “Has the Program helped you learn to love and take care of yourself? Please share stories of how you learned to and /or how you engage in self-care for your recovery.” — Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2020. And #184 — May/June — “Have you gone from living alone to moving in with a partner? Please share about the challenges you faced and how you dealt with them and/or any special stories about moving in.”— Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2020. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

“Thank You A.A. Please take this opportunity to express gratitude for what the founders and foundresses of A.A./Al-Anon have gifted to the planet, as adapted by S.L.A.A.”

Thank you, A.A. and Al-Anon, for your double winners’ meetings. In multiple other meetings, I have had to deal with both aspects of my addictions: compulsive as well as anorexic tendencies, not only in S.L.A.A., but also in BDA, etc. Until I found double winner meetings in our beverage program, I was having a hard time embracing both sides of these apparently paradoxical behaviors simultaneously. More will be revealed but I am grateful today for the acceptance to be able to attend meetings on both ends of the extreme nature of my addictions without having to choose a side.

— ANONYMOUS

They have given me a life, planted in generations to come

— ANONYMOUS



## Question of the day

Thank you, Bill W. and Dr. Bob for founding A.A. It's a miracle! It's a God thing! And I'm so grateful for the life I have today due to A.A.

— JACK H. KATY, TX

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In my opinion, A.A. is the greatest spiritual movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

— NED J., FL

It is completely beyond comprehension how much the A.A. model was so forward thinking and how much the 12 Steps and basic principles of A.A. have real relevance in our current world.

— SETH S., BOSTON

I see A.A. as the backbone of my S.L.A.A. recovery. I still remember reading from the Big Book. That still supports my recovery today after 5 years. The Steps have been a gift from God for me.

— FIONA M., LONDON

Thank God for the divine inspiration that is the 12 Steps of A.A. Alcoholics Anonymous is the "Mothership" as many of us have come to think of it.

Again, and again I return to the Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve for good direction. I use this literature to help guide my sponsees thru the 12-Step process. There are so many pearls of wisdom in these pages. A.A. saved my life, and helped peel the onion of my addictive self, to discover at my core, sex and love addiction and anorexia. I feel like I am on the path to a life worth living. Thank you A.A.! Thank you, God.

— SUSAN G.,  
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

A.A. saved my life. S.L.A.A. saved my soul. I am deeply grateful for not only my own recovery journey, but for all the 12-Step programs born from its humble beginnings.

— MARC S., TORONTO

Thank You A.A.

S.L.A.A. saved my life and allowed me to grow through a personal spiritual transformation by a simple yet powerful set of 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. The miracle of the 12-Step process was the greatest discovery of the Twentieth Century.

— RICHARD R., OMAHA, NE

I came into recovery thru the doors of A.A. After finding that my core addiction was sex and love addiction. It was like coming home to a familiar 12-Step program.

— PHILLIP W.,  
LITTLE ROCK

The 12 Steps offer a simple solution to those who have none and can be adapted to almost any problem/issue/struggle that people come across. The fellowship model provides a place where those who feel alone and different can connect with people they can relate with.

— ANONYMOUS

Grateful for the founders of A.A. Truly spiritually enlightened. I use the Big Book and Twelve and Twelve with O.A., S.L.A.A. and O.A./S.L.A.A. sponsees. I read the Big Book every day.

— RICK S., COATESVILLE, PA

Thank you for paving the way!

— ARI F., NJ

Thank you A.A. for showing that any 2 people can have the opportunity to change lives for the better. Anyone can make a difference.

— RICH, WORCESTER, MA

They gave us the 12 Traditions, which help me feel so safe. The long-term sobriety in A.A. inspires me. I get hope and strength from their customs, rituals and history!

— KARA B., BROOKLYN/  
MANHATTAN, NY

## Question of the day

I'm so grateful for the guidance of A.A. to provide a path to sobriety to apply to sex addiction. This saved my life.

— JOE C., SHERWOOD, AR

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I am ever impressed with the model and path to recovery that A.A. has laid for us. As a sex and love addict in recovery in S.L.A.A., I am so very grateful for all those who have gone before me.

— NORA B., ORANGE COUNTY, CA

Gift of choice to not have to act out sexually for more than 22 months. Return of dignity. End of loneliness due to relationship with Higher Power. A great sponsor!

— REBECCA W.,  
CANOGA PARK, CA

I have an immense amount of gratitude for A.A./Al-Anon and how it all got started. A.A. first saved my life and S.L.A.A. saved it again. It's a strong example of how God's grace has shown and continues to show up.

— LINDSEY H.,  
WEST PALM BEACH, FL

The gift of a second chance. The gift to truly discover what are the patterns that govern my life.

Return to finding my real self.

— JOEL

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The S.L.A.A. Basic Text eBook  
**IS HERE!**



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# Door to a Different Life



I got sober in A.A. in 1985 as a young person. Years later in my recovery, I decided it was time to quit smoking. Thanks to A.A., I knew where to go: I joined Nicotine Anonymous, wrote a goodbye letter to Marlboro man, and by the Grace of God have been smoke free ever since (28 years). Then I joined CODA to address my

codependency issues, Al-anon too. I need to start minding my own business. I knew if I didn't join those programs I wouldn't be able to work in my chosen career field for sure and it would be difficult to keep my side of the street clean instead of insisting yours wasn't :) All the while, as I was working on many issues in multiple programs,

I was ignoring my sex and love addiction and its devastating effects on my life; this addiction wasn't even really on my mental radar. But after yet another marriage ended, I finally hit a bottom with this addiction and admitted I need help with it (though it was not my final bottom). At that time, I realized sex and love addiction was my primary addiction.

I am extremely thankful for A.A. which was the door into a different life today. I would never have gotten around to recognizing this addiction if I hadn't started in A.A. first. That's just my path, or my journey. For me, the slogan: "You can't see until you can see," was true. I wasn't ready yet. But I'm so grateful for the wisdom of the old timers in A.A., I just kept coming back and "more will be revealed" was certainly true in my life. I use many A.A. slogans to this day; slogans like: "One day at a time" ...and "Just for today... This too shall pass ... first things first ... principles before personalities ..." Keep it simple... keep coming back ...it works, if you work it" ...and "cultivate an attitude of gratitude." These simple slogans have worked in my life.

My sex and love addiction nearly killed me (and someone else). I almost didn't survive my final bottom (and God willing there won't be another). Though I am in many programs, today I only

actively work a couple of them. I have an addictive personality and think I will always need the program to live "happy, joyous and free." I'm so grateful I came into recovery via the mothership program of A.A. I'm super glad I got that solid foundation under my feet. I'm a hard core low bottom sex and love addict, and I needed more structure than most, and boy did I kick against the tides; however, I sat in A.A. meetings and as person after person shared their success in staying sober thru the Steps (which are all about stripping away everything that stands between us and God) I realized I had found much more than recovery, I had found a way of life.

Early on, I thought I could find an "easier and softer way" to do the A.A. program, but I got drunk again after nearly nine years sober from alcohol. I drank over yet another failed relationship. By the grace of God, I went back to meetings, and I heard: if it's broke, don't fix it, just do it! And my personal favorite: "this is a follow-the-leader" program. I follow my sponsor and she follows hers and so on. Today I know I must follow Dr. Bob and Bill W.'s example by working with others and carrying the message. That's what works! I learned in A.A., that nothing will ensure my sobriety as much as working with another sufferer of our dis-ease.

So today, the way forward is “trust God, clean house, and carry the message” - it’s just that simple.

I am so grateful to A.A., who helped me “sober up and grow up,”

and so glad to have realized my sex and love addict issues and to have found my way to S.L.A.A. Thank-you A.A.!

— ANONYMOUS

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# Thank You, A.A.!

I, like many others, would not be here if not for you. I would’ve been dead by my own hand, or likely by self-abuse (or well on my way) through food, fantasy or work addiction. I am not there today and have a rich fulfilling life because of you...I am restored to sanity and usefulness!

My S.L.A.A. journey to health has taken eight years (and of course is continuing on). It has taken that long to beat a frightful addiction to romantic fantasy that had me chattering to myself. I continue to be stunned, awestruck by the simple power of this addiction. Eight years—that’s a long time and a lot of work; but today I am free of what brought me in and brought me to my knees.

I could not have done it without A.A. and its principles. Where—oh, where—would I be today without

it?!

I did my first 4th Step in ’77-’78, when I was in college. I remember my mother was on the list (of course) and I did it by myself (a familiar story when you first come in). I have tried to live this way for all of my adult life—what an accomplishment! It is something I can be rightfully, joyously proud of!

Am I any closer to the spiritual touchstones we talk about—tolerance, patience, love, mercy, etc.? It doesn’t seem so to me (but then, am I a good judge?) I struggle every day with my defects and can lose heart (which Bill would say indicates a lack of humility, I think) because of it. However, I am I hope substantively different than I would have been if I hadn’t been exposed to our wonderful

principles.

I would likely have just gone on my way—changing jobs as the panacea to all my problems, stuck on one guy or another (at least in my head) and ping-ponging endlessly between starving and bingeing. Not a happy sight, not a happy life.

Because our founders—Bill, Bob, Lois, Rich—stuck to a deeply spiritual way of life through many dark days when *nobody* seemed to be listening—I am whole today. Not perfect...whole. I would have

been fragmented, torn down the middle by my relentless, powerful addictions. They always win...until our wonderful founders came along and finally, finally after so many centuries tore a large hole in the fearsome, terrifying curtain of addiction.

I am whole today because of the hole they shot through addiction. And I am profoundly, inestimably grateful.

Thank you for your service!!

— A FRIEND OF BILL W.



# Coming Home

Walking into my first meeting of A.A., I was struck by a feeling of coming home. It was a feeling I had longed for at every family reunion, but never experienced. It was a feeling that I had chased with every episode of acting out or acting in.

It was a feeling of admiration for the older gentleman playing with his grandson before the meeting started and disbelief that a real, living, bona-fide adult could have so much lightness of heart when we were all stuck in a grungy church basement on a cold night in Chicago.

Many days, I still feel like I can't connect to the Higher Power I need, a trust-worthy and encouraging power that doesn't expect anything but for me to keep

going. But I can pick up literature from A.A., talk to other members of 12-Step groups that came out of A.A. or reflect on the power of the program and its various sister programs working in the lives of those around me.

And, then I feel connected to that power that I need to spend one more day "acting as if" I am capable of doing the "next right thing."

I work in a health-care setting, and it is clear to me that A.A. and the programs that grew out of A.A. are saving more lives in a time where more people have problems that traditional medicine can't help. I am so grateful to this program for being a daily source of peace and hope.

— ANONYMOUS





# My Thank You to A.A. and Al-Anon

I came into recovery through my church in 2001 after years of active addiction. While I soon after came to S.L.A.A., I didn't get it at first, floundered, and eventually took a recovery holiday.

That did not go well. With the desperation of the drowning, I came back to a recovery mindset. I felt at the time that I wanted a sponsor who shared my faith; the only one who really knew the Steps, had some experience with sexual improprieties, and shared my faith was a recovering alcoholic. We'll call him Tim.

Tim was a black and white Steps guy. He was methodical in how he had people do Step 4. In a nutshell: Don't write a book. Don't get hung up on one person, event, or thing. Deal with that in Step 5 when you're going to talk about it at more length with your sponsor. His Step 4/Step 5 template was the grid from A.A.: the "Who" column, the "What" column, the checkboxes of "what part of me did it affect" column.

He was again methodical in Step 6 and 7. He said I should write down the seven deadly sins—pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony,

anger, sloth— and add to it "lack of self-discipline" and "self-centered fear." This became the template. He had me write down synonyms and antonyms and pray about it every day, so I got it in mind what I didn't want in my life and what I wanted to bring into my life. As a side note: Lust has a negative religious connotation; when you look up the actual definition, it is more like "unprincipled sexuality." Hope that helps someone.

We get methodical again for Steps 8 and 9. Step 8 is the preparation— what did I do to so-and-so; why; what harm did I cause; what shall I do to make it right. Step 9 is the doing. Step 9 was a whole lot easier with doing a good Step 8.

Tim's history is this— at the end, he was a bottomed-out alcoholic. He had his three matching Hefty bags of luggage. He got into a recovery center and picked a hard-nosed ex-navy seal to sponsor him. "Work the Steps or die M- F-er" is still a phrase that Tim recalls hearing. Tim worked a program; he still does and has over 20 years sober. He now passes the blueprint along to his sponsees in A.A., plus me, his S.A. sponsee. Not nearly as

hard-nosed, but offered as a serious solution to a deadly problem.

I'll change focus to Al-Anon. I joined some years ago because a housemates' drinking spun out of control. I finally got rid of him through an eviction, however at first Al-Anon taught me stay calm when chaos was happening around me. I then realized that there are always things around me that are not to my liking- people, behaviors, institutions, you name it. The real secret is that we learn acceptance of troubling people and situations. We learn to detach from troubling people and situations. And we steadily get better at joyfully living our lives and avoiding, where we can, troubling

people and situations.

This is key for me because I used to get stressed, irritated, and angry at all the irritations of life. I would either behave in destructive, self-sabotaging ways in front of coworkers, or stuff it and act out sexually where I felt I had control over my circumstances. My acting out was because I did not get my way in the working world or with housemates, so I turned to clandestine sexual activities as an outlet.

Al-Anon has taught me how to have healthy, effective relationships with people which I think dovetails beautifully with the program of S.L.A.A.. A.A. brought me a sponsor that worked for me.

— DALE B.

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## Service opportunities for *the Journal*

*The Journal* is a basic recovery tool for S.L.A.A. groups and individual members, and it is a key outreach tool into areas that do not yet have an S.L.A.A. presence.

We're looking for people with writing, drawing, outreach, web design, production, and printing skills to assist in the creation of the new, deeper, more refreshing publication.

Please assist us in creatively carrying the message of recovery.

Please go to <http://www.slaa.fws.org/contact/jeditor> to submit your writing.

UNITY IN SERVICE



# Thank You, A.A.: An Interview



Lisa: Thank you for doing this!

Chris: Very welcome

Lisa: I know you're sober a long time in A.A. and S.L.A.A., can you tell us a little bit about your story-how you found and got sober in both programs.

Chris: Sure. I'm Chris, a recovering sex and relationship addict as well as an alcoholic. And my sobriety began in A.A. in January 1978 when I was 21 and in S.L.A.A. in June 1991 when I was 35. When I entered A.A., I was completely lost as far as life goes. At least alcohol, drugs, sex, sugar and everything else that I could get my hands on covered up the fear, shame and lack of happiness that I

had in my life to some extent. But I didn't really know joy at all until I got sober. I didn't mind the blackouts or consequences of drinking. But what finally got to me was the physical pain of hangovers.

Because I had to try to stop drinking many times, I didn't think A.A. was going to work but I had no choice. I went into an Air Force treatment center on the base where I was stationed. And fortunately, it just took. I was told several times, "Just don't pick up the first drink because that's what will get you drunk." In A.A., I found joy. I found fellowship, friendship, Higher Power, peace of

mind and really a life worth living.

I haven't had a drink or drugged since then, but my sex and relationship addiction continued on through my first 13 years of sobriety in A.A. I knew about S.L.A.A. and I just don't think I thought about it or was that concerned about it. I figured that because I was sober in A.A., and had just come out as gay, I deserved to have an active sex life. So, I tried to take advantage of that to the fullest extent. I just acted out. However, what I was always looking for was a relationship. I knew deep down that's what I wanted. I wasn't looking for anonymous sex. I know now that because I didn't have a relationship with myself it was impossible to have a successful relationship with anyone else. In May of 1991, I had been in a relationship for a year and a half with someone who probably was a great guy, but I was a disaster. He was the substance that I hope is the last substance to get me into my last 12-Step program. I was so addicted to my qualifier. Even now, thinking back on it, it's scary. It's a lot different than alcohol and drugs. I had no awareness when I was using drugs or drinking of life. However, when I met my qualifier, I knew of the 12 steps. I was very active in A.A. But as much as I knew about addiction, I didn't recognize that relationship for

what it was. In May 1991, he dumped me, and that conversation was over the phone and that was my bottom. It came out of nowhere because I lived a fantasy life. And when he was gone I felt all at once all of the rejections of my entire life. I was a complete disaster and not functioning. I couldn't sleep. If I slept, I dreamt about him. I had trouble eating. I ended up not being able to work for several months.

I then got 12-stepped by somebody who was in S.L.A.A. in Northampton, Massachusetts. I went to my first meeting but I certainly didn't want to be there. I did not want to be a newcomer after being an oldtimer in A.A. The people in the meeting were talking about sexual things, they were talking about masturbation. Oh, it was horribly uncomfortable. Fortunately, God had given me the gift of desperation. So, I had no choice but to continue to come back and find somebody to help me work the Steps. And even though I had worked the Steps in A.A., I didn't recognize that I hadn't turned my sex or relationship life over to my Higher Power. I heard a man share in a meeting that he hadn't masturbated for two years. When I heard that, I thought I felt the floor open up and it was as if I was falling down to the center of the earth because I knew when I heard

that man share that it was God talking to me saying, "Chris, you're going to have to stop masturbating." And that was horrifying for me. I knew that I wouldn't make it, that even the attempt would be horrible for me. But I met with that guy and he said I should stop masturbating, no sex with others, no fantasy to the best of my ability and no porn. And then he said something very painful -he said, "Chris, you're so obsessed, you should stop drinking coffee." Oh my God, it couldn't get any worse!

June 23 of 1991 is when I masturbated for the last time and the rest of those things, except no coffee, became my bottom lines (I did stop caffeine in 1993). I have changed my bottom lines over time because I eventually met Gordon after eight years of complete celibacy. We ended up becoming intimate. And in February, if we make it, we will be together 20 years and married 15 years.

One of the tools that has kept me in both programs is service. Service work has been a real Godsend because it kept me involved and kept me accountable.

Lisa: I know you've been at really high levels of service in S.L.A.A., could you tell us about your commitments in both Programs?

Chris: My first role in A.A. was GSR (group service

representative). We had just started a brand-new meeting in the treatment center that I went to. I don't remember how I ended up being the GSR, but it's been a gift from God that I'm so co-dependent that I couldn't let the group down, so I showed up for my commitment. I've been a coffee maker. I have been and am now a sponsor.

At my home group, I've been a speaker, greeter and secretary. I fell in love with the group after a short period of time. I found out they didn't celebrate anniversaries of the group's founding so 10 years ago, I started to be responsible for the annual anniversary meeting. I also helped start an A.A. meeting 35 years ago.

I go to the international convention that A.A. holds every five years. This year, if I stay sober and alive, I will be in Detroit for A.A.'s 85th anniversary. I'll get to sit with the old-timers because I hope to have over 40 years sober.

With S.L.A.A it's been somewhat similar, I started to go to intergroup fairly early. I needed an evening speaker meeting, so I started one in 1993 and it's still going. It must be over 25 years old.

I'm on various committees. One of the gifts of both programs for me is that I got to attend law school and became a lawyer. In 2004, a local member of the board of trustees asked me if I would be

open to being on the board. I came home and spoke to Gordon about it and I ended up being on the board for six years at that time and then another two years later on. I've attended four ABMs in person and one telephonically. I've been an ABM delegate and chair of various board committees as well as a member of conference committees. I've been attending *the Journal* committee for a couple of years. I've written for *the Journal* and read *the Journal*. I love *the Journal*. I've been a speaker at meetings and workshops. I also proofread a lot.

At the last ABM I was asked to see if there were some former board members who would be available to help the current board with various projects. That has evolved into a project to keep former board members in touch. I recognized that there was no formal means of communication between former board members even though we spent years together on telephone calls and in person at the ABMs. There were some board members who I had served with that I wondered why I hadn't seen or spoken to them in maybe 10 years. But with the help of others, I worked on creating a group of board alumni and we had our first recovery reconnection meeting last Saturday. Seven people showed up. It was a complete delight! It was a video

call. This is a way for people to stay involved.

Lisa: Thank you for your service. That's really great.

So, you had said that in A.A. you heard, "Just don't pick up the first drink," so that goes into the question of: How did A.A. help your sobriety in S.L.A.A. and/or S.L.A.A. help your sobriety in A.A.?

Chris: I love this question. I would not stay sober in either program without the other. What A.A. does for my S.L.A.A. program is that it helps me to focus on not picking up the first drink or drug one day at a time. It feels so much a part of me because I've been in it for 2/3 of my life. What S.L.A.A. does for my A.A. program is that it calms my mind to stop obsessing about relationships and my qualifier. It makes it much easier for me to live in the present and not need either to act out sexually or to take a drink or a drug. It brought me to a new level of peace of mind and a new level of ability to live in the world just the way it is.

I have to mention that part of the reason that I have serenity, for today anyway, is that I probably never meditated prior to coming into S.L.A.A. But because of that gift of desperation, when someone told me, "Chris you're such a mess. You really need to start meditating," I heard her. I thought, *you know I really have nothing to*

*lose because this isn't going to work and I'm going to end my life. I want to at least say that I tried everything that I can.* I started meditating and did it 6 days a week, at least half an hour a day. So, S.L.A.A gave me the gift of meditation that A.A. offered but I refused it. But what A.A. has provided me was a recovery structure. I am very grateful that I started in A.A. because of the two programs, it was far easier for me to put down actual substances than it was for me to put down not only my qualifier but men as an addictive substance. I was able to ask my Higher Power to help me not live in a fantasy every second of my life which is what I had done prior to SLAA recovery. I found structure and a foundation for working the Steps. I knew that the Steps worked at least with alcohol and drugs. I just didn't think that they would necessarily work for my sex addiction and relationship addiction. But because I had success already in A.A., I believe that gave me just an eighth of an ounce worth of willingness to give this a shot.

A.A. is at least nominally about a substance. I think that helps me to treat men, masturbation, and porn as substances and to not pick up the first one, otherwise I'd go down the rabbit hole.

Lisa: A lot of other programs have sprouted from A.A. besides S.L.A.A. Do you use the A.A. principles and traditions in any other area (other addictions, career, etc.)?

Chris: Yes. At least for the last 18 years, I've either been working as an attorney or at a university in human resources. I probably have written fifty 4th Steps dealing with my anger and fear over various issues. If it hadn't been for the ability to apply the Steps to work, I would not have been able to maintain this pretty stressful job. I've used the Traditions as well. The lessons learned by A.A. and S.L.A.A. are practical for business ---unless you want to be in charge of the world or want to be mean to people. But if you want to try to have a peaceful life, the traditions are helpful. They have been helpful lessons for me in my work life.

I certainly apply the Steps to my relationship as well. As far as I know, I'm powerless over my partner and everybody else. I want to be powerful. I want people to do exactly what I want them to do. But I've had zero success in 63 years in getting people to do what I want. That doesn't keep me from trying every single day to do it. But at least the Steps tell me why it doesn't work. That provides a little bit of

comfort.

In 2011, Gordon and I were at an S.L.A.A. event in Pittsburg. We got a call that we needed to come up to Connecticut because mom was dying.

We had to go to the airport, wait several hours, fly through Atlanta to get a flight to Connecticut because there was a huge snowstorm. We were the last plane to land in Hartford. We rented a car and got lost on the way to the hospital. I knew the area but couldn't see where I was going the weather was so bad. We were slipping and sliding all over the place. I almost slipped off the road into a river. There was a tree down and I almost ran into it. But miraculously, we did get to the hospital. The electricity went out in the hospital that night, neither of the two separate generators to provide electricity for the hospital were working. I mean everything was just kind of crazy. Mom died the next morning. But, because I recognized that I had no power over any of it, I was able to stop myself from screaming, acting out, taking a drug or killing myself.

I didn't have to do any of those things because you guys taught me the concept of powerlessness. And powerlessness is one of the most powerful, important lessons that I think I have learned from recovery. I am powerless over so many things and that saves me a whole

lot of work -I can do the Third Step and turn my will and my life over the care of God.

And I use that all the time- right now, I am taking a bit of a risk by retiring from my current position. I don't have enough money to retire fully but I want to get back into the investment business. I'm taking a chance, but I want to do something that I find more fun. I've prayed an awful lot about it. I'm hoping this works out. But one way or the other my goal is to not act out and not drink or drug. If I do any of those things, I could end up homeless or locked up.

I try to use what you guys have taught me in every part of my life.

Lisa: I hope it works out for you.

Chris: Thank you.

Lisa: You do a lot of service work. How do you balance service work in the two programs?

Chris: I have to make a conscious decision as to which addiction is killing me the most at the time or which one is more dangerous for me. And that one is what I do the most service work in. At this point, what has been the most dangerous for me since I got into S.L.A.A. is sex addiction and relationship addiction. Not that I couldn't take a drink or drug. But those substances are easier for me to stay away from for today. I mean, I can act out just sitting here because I can go right into a



fantasy world. Because of that, I do more service work in S.L.A.A. than I do in A.A.

But I want to do service work in both because I need both. I could theoretically just go to S.L.A.A. Perhaps I would never pick up a drink or a drug but it's not worth taking that chance. And I already know that if I just go to A.A. that will not be enough because I was already in A.A. and that was not enough so I needed to come to S.L.A.A.

Lisa: Do you have separate sponsors in each program?

Chris: I co-sponsor a man who is in both programs, so I do not.

Lisa: What would you say to the founders of A.A. if you had the chance?

Chris: I would tell them that prior to joining A.A., I never had a happy moment in my life. I had moments that were anaesthetized or dulled out by alcohol, drugs, sugar, or sex, but I never knew Joy. I only first knew joy in A.A. The program has shown me so much of what I needed to know about how to live life. Because of A.A., S.L.A.A. started. Getting into A.A. and getting sober and then finding S.L.A.A. have been the most significant events of my life. And I am extremely grateful for the

angels who founded the program.

Lisa: Yeah. Me too.

What do you say to newcomers to S.L.A.A. who are coming from A.A.?

Chris: It is absolutely worth the effort to stay in S.L.A.A. Work the program and it will improve your recovery immensely and your peace of mind. I have found it to be a much harder program to work at the beginning. My withdrawal was unlike anything I have ever experienced in my life. Stopping drinking and drugging was one thing, but wow, that was truly a walk in the park compared to withdrawal from this addiction. I share with newcomers that they might experience a difficult withdrawal. But that it is it is absolutely worth staying in this program and getting sober. It will be a true blessing. And I would tell them that you can be very successful working both programs.

Lisa: Thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview.

Chris: It was truly an honor. I feel so lucky to be asked. I owe everything to recovery.

Lisa: I love reading the stories you submit for *the Journal* so I knew this would be a good one!

# Share space

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## Sharing My Story, Part 2

**Continued from the last issue of the Journal:**

I quit my job to work for Habitat for Humanity for a year which is something that I'd really been wanting to do. And then I quit that job to hike the Appalachian trail for six months with my dog. That was in 2009. I'd really gotten to a point where I thought *all right I'm willing to date but I am not willing to do any work today. If something falls in my lap, I'll consider it. But I'm not going to put myself out there yet.*

And when I got back from the Appalachian Trail, I started training for my first marathon. My body started to break down slowly over time. I essentially chronically over trained my body, which is a form of exercise addiction for me on some level. I was running from myself on a very deep level that I wasn't aware of. I worked out so much that I eventually I became anemic. My thyroid quit working. I had a vitamin D deficiency and I was so exhausted all the time that I didn't even want to walk the dog around the block. I would take her

out just long enough to do her business and I was back inside on the couch. A lot of my identity was wrapped up in what I was physically able to do. And when that was taken away from me, it was another bottom for me. I'm so grateful that I had as many years in this program as I did when that happened.

I was forced to sit with myself in a way that I had not ever done in my life. Even with all the work that I've done in this program and all the work that I've done in therapy, I had not really sat with myself in that way. I'll probably never run a marathon again. My body is never going to be what it was before. But it enabled my authentic self to finally surface. And it was in that time when I couldn't do the thing that had given me a lot of my identity that my gender identity surfaced. I realized that I was transgender. That was a gradual process of awareness and acceptance for me.

I had lived as a lesbian previously. I was married to a man right out of college. That relationship ended after about 3

1/2 years when I thought that I was gay, queer, lesbian. Lesbian never really resonated for me. But at the time I thought, *Oh, I must be a lesbian. That explains everything.*

My experience of acknowledging and accepting my gender identity was very different. It was like, *Oh, my goodness this just complicates everything.* I had so many questions and it felt very different for me. But I'm so grateful that I had this program because I had learned how to share difficult things with people, how to talk about myself when there is risk involved. In this whole process of coming out to my parents all over again who are quite conservative and really challenged with my first coming out, I had to go to that conversation with a lot of detachment.

I have learned that detaching with love doesn't mean you're not going to hurt. I really had to go into that conversation with the awareness that I could lose this relationship. This could be too much for them. They might not be able to really accept me for who I am. I feel really fortunate that they have been able to love and accept me. It's still challenging for them. They are very conservative. I am able to accept, most of the time, what they're able to meet me with. I've learned in this program that

when I show up and I'm willing to be vulnerable and share my authentic self with people that more often than not I'm met with that same openness and acceptance. That has been a huge gift of this program for me. My life has opened up in ways that I could not have imagined. I heard in these rooms many years ago don't leave before the miracle happens. And I can sit here today and say that the miracle is happening in my life. I was single for 12 years and I am in a relationship now. It is amazing.

Dating as a transgender person can be very terrifying. And dating as an anorexic can be very terrifying. I was completely celibate for the first several years that I was in this program. I felt like I had so much disconnected sex, I was not interested in anything whatsoever. The idea of being physically intimate with another human being was terrifying to me. I thought, *I don't know if I can really know someone well enough to feel comfortable.*

I'm going to backtrack a little bit here to my recovery journey after the Appalachian Trail. I got more involved in service work. It was suggested that I consider being a delegate. I was a delegate from 2011 to 2014 - really awesome experience. I met some really wonderful people who are in

this room and have known me for most of my journey, which is really awesome. The first three years that I was a delegate, I did not have a sponsor and service was definitely a great way for me to stay connected and current with my program. I asked someone that I met at the ABM to sponsor me and she continues to be my sponsor and friend. I've been pretty active in my local groups.

I've got three sponsees. I'm involved in the Texas round-up advisory council trying to build a good foundation for that event. I am really glad that I got to be here with you all this week to be the recorder. It's been really nice to be back at the ABM.

And as far as dating - that's been quite the adventure for me. It was a several year process for me. I went on a couple of dates and had a couple online conversations with people in 2015. And then like nothing for about a year. But there was a lot of looking at all the dating plans and literature or whatever I could find out there about preparing to date in a sober way. I did a ton of journaling about what I'm looking for and what I bring to the table. I was at least sort of manifesting what it is that I wanted in a relationship.

A couple of years ago, my dog was going through cancer treatment. I was taking her for walks and on these walks pretty

frequently my thoughts would turn to not fantasizing but visualizing what a healthy relationship looked like for me. And miracle of miracles, I am in that relationship now. This is someone that I met online. I went back-and-forth when I first came into the program thinking online dating was not going to work for me because I had some challenges with spending too much time online and reading people's life journals.

One of my fears about transitioning was would anyone ever love me for my authentic self? What I came down to was, I might be narrowing the field a little bit, but I'd rather have somebody love me for exactly who I am than compromise any aspect of myself. And if this means I've narrowed the field that means I have high standards. But I went back-and-forth about whether or not to disclose that I'm trans on my online dating profile. Ultimately, I decided not to, but I put plenty of context clues in there.

I met the woman that I am in partnership with now online. We talked over the phone several times. We were set to have a first date and I got the flu three days ahead of time and had to call her and ask to reschedule. She has since told me that if I had just texted her that I had the flu she probably would not have given me

another minute of her time. And so, by the time that first date actually rolled around, I knew there was something special about this person. We were just really hitting it off.

I remember thinking *I can't avoid telling her who I am on this date. I can't do that.* I didn't feel like I would be in integrity if I left that date without disclosing who I was to her. Fortunately, I'd had a ton of practice by that time - coming out to my therapy group, coming out at meetings and to my family that I was really able to just let her have whatever her experience was about learning who I was. I was OK with that. She asked for a week to think about it. That's a lot to think about. And during that time, I really wanted to ask her, "So, how's it going? Do you have any questions?" I gave her some resources and had some friends that were open to her asking them questions if she wanted to. But really, as much as I wanted to know what her process was like, I had to just let her have her process. On the second date, she said, "I'm willing to see where this goes."

I knew at that point that whatever her answer was, it was going to be OK with me. I knew that this was someone that I wanted in my life. If it was just as a friend, I could totally accept that. If it was something more-awesome! What I had learned is, if

she's not the one then God has something in mind for me that I can't even comprehend.

This program has given me an incredible life. I just quit my corporate job of almost 16 years to start my own handyman business. After hiking the Appalachian Trail, I couldn't imagine sitting in front of a desk for the rest of my life. It's freaking scary to be completely responsible for my livelihood. I do not miss being at the office. I am being of service in a way that sitting in front of a computer did not allow me to do. I've been of service in a way that resonates and is authentic for me.

The other thing that I've learned in this program and over my journey is that it's been an adventure and a journey of authenticity. I came into this world whole, well, and perfectly imperfect. Whatever happened before I came into these rooms, obscured that but it didn't diminish it and it didn't take it away. And it will always be with me. It's always been with me. The same thing with my Higher Power. Whatever disconnection from Higher Power I felt in my life that power has always been there. I can certainly look back to times that I was completely guided and protected from dangerous situations that I was in that I came out of OK.

I am now done. Thanks for letting me share my story.

# A True Miracle



**W**hen I came into the program, I was not even sure if I was a sex and love addict. I wasn't sure if I really needed the program. But I thought it could be good to try it. That was a bit over a year ago and so many things have changed. It has been a true miracle.

I started working the Steps and came out of a big, lifelong denial. I entered really painful withdrawals. With the help of my bottom-lines, my sponsor and the fellowship, I was able to leave a toxic relationship. I went on “no

contact” with all exes. I stopped flirting. I stopped intriguing. I realised that I had been constantly looking for my new perfect Prince Charming. And I had also been constantly trying to be the best, the prettiest and most talented woman in the room.

That didn't mean I was always loud and the centre of attention. I could be standing in the corner, but still trying to outshine everyone.

So, I stopped all that. I stopped making fun of everyone. I stopped giving others my advice. I stopped

telling everyone about my private life. And I stopped running to family and friends to tell them about my relationship drama. It was very hard at times. Without these coping mechanisms it was really hard to be at social events.

Everything felt too much and I felt way too sensitive. Often, I had to leave and go home to feel safe and often I had a big emotional hangover the next day.

I also realised that I wasn't this outgoing person that I thought I was. Now that I didn't look for a man, I didn't really see a point in leaving my home anymore.

I changed a lot. My situation changed a lot. My personality changed a lot. Sometimes I felt like a nun. Sometimes I wondered if my humour had gone forever, and sometimes I doubted my sanity to make healthy decisions. And things changed.

I avoided addicts. I ended friendships that no longer served me. I no longer stayed with friends that I didn't really like or respect. I realised I was hiding behind a bohemian artist persona.

I thought I was a cynic, different and simply "too cool", but the truth was I was too afraid. I was too afraid of not being liked or getting hurt again. I stopped doing a million self-help, yoga and arts courses. I realised I was looking for a purpose there, or the illusion of, "If I finish this course, I will be happy, worthy and liked." I stopped doing geographicals. I

let go of the illusion of, "If I move to this country, I will be happy." I let go of the really strong need to find a man ASAP, because I wanted to be a mother ASAP.

I saw my family dynamics in a completely different light. My dad was not "really cool" anymore. He is a fixer, and he has a tendency to control.

My mother isn't embarrassing, but she is an adult child of alcoholics. I had to stop oversharing with them and stop asking for advice.

And I had to learn boundaries, boundaries, boundaries. Before S.L.A.A., my boundaries were really watery and really flexible. Now, they are very strong.

I'm still learning to set my boundaries, and I often choose running away over staying and claiming my needs. But I know now what I need and want and that is a big change.

I realised how exhausted I was from always trying to be amazing. And I saw that I needed to do way less and rest more.

I started doing affirmations and working with my inner child. No outside person will be able to fix me, or fill me up with love, or will make me feel enough.

Only I can do that with my Higher Power. I have to love myself; I will have to get married to myself. The love of my life, the one I have been waiting for, is ME! I am already a mother, to my inner child. I learned to outreach

and go to meetings and come out of isolation. I learned how to be disciplined and put my own plans first. I had bills to pay and my washing to do. I had to do things that were uncomfortable, and I had no longer the distraction of romance- I could no longer run away on a romantic adventure to get distraction from my fear of everyday life.

I looked at my finances for the first time and realised I had to get my life in order. I needed an income, I needed savings, I needed insurance etc. I was an expert at unhealthy romance, but I was a beginner in everyday things.

I learned to admit that I needed help, and I realised that help was pouring in left, right and centre, when I asked the right people.

I realised that I deserved

recovery. I realised I needed recovery.

I realised how unhappy and depressed I had been for so long. I had not been living. I stopped comparing myself to imaginary desperate cases (THEY are the addicts, not me) and putting myself first.

In the rooms, I found a community that I was so desperately looking for. And I am making some new friends.

I'm in Step 7 now. And I am so grateful for this program, my sponsor, my fellows, the tools and my loving Higher Power. Miracles happened that I could have never believed possible. There has been so much change in just a year. And I'm taking steps to a life totally worth living. Thank you, S.L.A.A.!

— ANONYMOUS

me: Will you  
marry me?



me: yes!



# An S.L.A.A. Poem

Loneliness in the midst of a crowd...  
Weighing over me like a burial shroud...  
The fear coursed through my every cell...  
Convincing me that I could not tell...  
Tell of my abject terror of abandonment...  
Tell of my daily screams for authentic connection...  
Tell of my need to be held and told that I am enough...  
Tell of how all of those fears drove me to a secret life...  
That damaged me and all those around...  
I could not tell...for if I doubted my worth of the life I allowed people to  
see...  
How could I show them the man I was in the shadows...  
Surely no one would ever want me...  
For a husband...  
For a father...  
For a brother...  
For a son...  
For a friend...  
I heard that our secrets keep us sick...  
That in giving voice to all of those things it would bring a healing light  
into my darkness...  
My pain, insanity and self imposed isolation thrust me into the rooms...  
Wherein I borrowed from those who surrounded me...  
Experience  
Strength  
And  
Hope  
Acknowledging that their path was undoubtedly a power greater than  
myself...  
In following their footsteps...on a path they'd all walked themselves...  
I found I was no longer borrowing...but sharing in...  
This new experience of living in honesty and integrity...  
This new strength of surrendering each and every day to my Higher  
Power...  
This new hope of living happy, joyous and free.

— DAVID M., AUSTIN & HOUSTON, TX

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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.
12. We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery.



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