



the Journal

Issue # 149

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DIVERSITY

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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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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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:

I live in Los Angeles, a city where it's expected that diversity should be celebrated. My mentor from college (where I was the chair of the multi-cultural club) asked me if Los Angeles is a close community. She seemed to expect all cultures to be holding hands in unity. But I didn't see that. I saw a lot of people keeping to themselves and their community before I walked into the rooms of S.L.A.A. I felt very alone in this city. But, in S.L.A.A., I truly felt the unity, no matter what background each of us came from.

Tradition 1 states "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity." So even though my background may be completely different from other members, I try to make sure I'm looking out for the welfare of S.L.A.A. When I first started going to meetings, members told me to look for the similarities and not the differences. I feel unity when I relate to another's story. I relate to the feelings being shared, not the specific details sometimes.

Step 12 in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve states "The knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God's sight all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God's scheme of things — these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living [being sober, following the 12 Steps and Traditions and being of service]."

The *Journal* worked with the Conference Diversity Committee (the Committee made a really great flyer for this issue) to get the word out about this theme and we received some really great responses. I hope this issue celebrates our unity and the community that can be found in S.L.A.A.

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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Question of the Day

& Answers from Yesterday

“Have you ever felt that personal differences (such as sexuality, gender, age, race, or disability) made you an outsider in society but felt safe in the rooms of S.L.A.A.? Can you share your experience, strength and hope?”

Yes. It was in S.L.A.A. that I addressed my bi-sexuality and came to acceptance. That acceptance led to sobriety, after relapsing my first three years. Religious indoctrination took time to overcome. With the help of S.L.A.A., a therapist, and the patience of my sponsor, I was able to grow to accept myself and have a long-term relationship.

— MONIQUE S., LOS ANGELES

I have always felt like an outsider, but not on that basis. I felt “different” because I felt “less than,” which is the reason for my sex and love addiction. That is the feeling of being different that I believe makes all members able to relate regardless of all other differences.

— STEVE B., SUNRISE, FL

Very interesting and challenging question. My experience is that most 12-Step fellowships in North America are white and male. I believe this is one reason for special meetings but not the only one. Personally, I have felt safer in S.L.A.A. rooms than other fellowships and in Montreal, S.L.A.A. has members from around the world.

— RITA H., MONTREAL

— **Single** and 56, lots of company in S.L.A.A.!

— MARK H., VAN NUYS, CA

I feel safe and connected within our fellowship. As a result of recovery, I feel more “at home” in other settings.

— NANCY G., SAN DIEGO

Yes. I used to be in the sex industry. In S.L.A.A., people seem to understand that. People in the outside world don’t understand and judge me as though I am a leper and would never accept me into their circles. My sister tries to get me to “spin” my history. But I believe in the promises — that my experience in my disease can really help people.

— A.D., LOS ANGELES

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “Diversity, “Have you ever felt that personal differences (such as sexuality, gender, age, race, or disability) made you an outsider in society but felt safe in the rooms of S.L.A.A.? Can you share your experience, strength and hope?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two questions are: Issue #150 – Program Crush: Sexual and Emotional Intrigue at 12-Step Meetings – “Have you ever had a crush on someone in a meeting? What did you do about it?” The deadline for submissions is 7/15/14 and: Issue #151 – Sober at the Holidays – “Is it more difficult to stay sober around the holidays? What special problems have you encountered and what tools of the program did you use to stay sober?” The deadline for submissions is 9/15/14 Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

The first time I brought my wheelchair to a meeting, the world did not stop. There was no explosion, no S.L.A.A. police storming the barriers to insist that I leave immediately because disabled women can't be sex addicts.

Who would want to act out with a “crip?”

I never, ever felt I fit in

anywhere. And why on earth would I want to fit in with such a strange group?

This is my perpetual paradox:

I want to fit in desperately.

Yet, I don't.

That way I can continue to isolate far, far away from anyone, so the shame of my various acting out patterns will remain secrets, known only by me and my ever

patient, ever accepting sponsor.

— MARSHA

I've never felt like an outsider in society. But I do feel a bit lonely in the rooms. I feel very safe, although I'd like to see more people who look like me.

— JUANITA, HYATTSVILLE, MD

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Between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Tuesday through Friday

Orders may also be emailed at any time to officeassistant@slaafws.org



Escape from Shame

A colleague in the A.A. program dropped hints to me for a year or so that he was a member of S.L.A.A.

After three breakfast dates with someone (and I didn't even know his last name), I was driving home and planning what his mother would wear to our wedding.

At the time, I was 66 years old, had benefited from 17 years of committed recovery in A.A., and, fortunately, suddenly knew I was in trouble with something about love, romance and marrying someone without a last name.

I found two groups and began to attend regularly. I didn't like them. I didn't like the people. I did not feel welcome. But at some level I knew that something important was happening.

I am now 71 and gay. Like several million other men in my age group, I grew up at a time when it was pure torture to have gay feelings.

Hell, the concept of homosexual orientation had not been discovered. Religions and our culture (and our well-intentioned family members) believed and instructed that gay feelings were a matter of choice, a "preference."

They taught us that anybody with gay feelings was intrinsically disordered, sick, unworthy of full participation in family and society, perhaps incurable.

They were excluded from the military, excluded from family and government service, denied anything resembling a normal maturation process as an adolescent – the list can go on and on. Gay men know the struggle.

But it's not just gay men who know. I have two home groups: One is a closed men's meeting, and one is a closed meeting with open discussion and lots of straight men.

After nearly 4 years of attendance, I am now absolutely convinced that my straight colleagues, men and women, know my struggle, and respect me, and support me in every step of my efforts to be a whole person.

When I first came to our program I wasn't quite



Photo by Lisa C.

aware that I lived in a cesspool of shame that I had carried with me for 65 years.

In my Polish/Irish Catholic family (no criticism of those good people. They did what they were

taught. They did the best they could. They followed the “party line.”), there was no discussion of sexuality, let alone “gay” feelings or “sexual orientation” – which, as I say, hadn’t even been discovered as a concept. I went through Catholic high school, and seven years of Catholic University, undergraduate and graduate school.

At the end of graduate school, I matriculated to a mental hospital to begin “treatment” to “cure” my gay feelings and, hopefully, to be relieved of the shame of being a gay leper in my church, family, and society.

The “treatment” didn’t work. After 23 horrendously painful years of “treatment,” I began to accept, with great horror, that “I am what I am.” That didn’t make the shame go away.

Actually, the shame was exacerbated. I compared myself to every straight man, to every person who had a heterosexual spouse and children.

I felt defective and less than, and incurable, different, invalid, and incapable of achieving any wholeness.

My A.A. program helped a lot, and I was and remain very committed to meetings. But I found some people who were joking (not malicious) in A.A. about being gay. Among my gay A.A. colleagues, I witnessed a startlingly cavalier attitude about sex, multiple sex partners, and constant chatter about body parts.

In S.L.A.A., I became visible to dozens of straight men (some married, some not, some previously married, some with children, some not,

etc), who respected me, accepted me, and – get this one – they identified with me totally, regardless of the fact that our “orientations” were different.

We connected at the level of struggling addicts. I began to talk about things with other human beings that I had never discussed.

Little by little, relentlessly, something was lifted from my heart and my mind – the shame started to dissipate. And with the dissipation of that shame, my head came up from the cesspool. Little by little, I was lifted out of a cesspool of shame that I had lived in for all of my pre-adult and adult life.

The miracle of that was that once I was freed from some of the shame, I was able to look at my sexual behavior (which had become catastrophic obsession, romance and fantasy) and could discuss it in a small community of trust and respect.

And that’s when the healing really began. And it continues. I go to meetings, and I trust, and I respect. And I feel included, and I feel part of. And I look forward every week to my meetings.

It has been said over and over that shame is toxic. It is a killer, and it destroys the human spirit.

It was not until my recovery began in S.L.A.A. that there was a practical and effective way to relieve, and astonishingly, eliminate the shame that had kept me from being honest and looking at myself, not as a sexual pervert, but as a human being with a few issues that I could bring to the table and work out in a community of connection that I had always longed for.

—DAVID

An Invitation For You

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

It is a great way to carry S.L.A.A.’s message of hope and practice the Twelfth Step.

The fellowship needs volunteers of all skills and levels of availability.

Become a *Journal* Representative for your intergroup or home group, encouraging the use of *the Journal* as a source of topics, letting people know that there are *Journals* for sale, and ensuring that plenty of *Journal* subscription cards are always on the literature table.

Contact info: <http://www.slaafws.org/thejournal>

Finding in



Photo by Lisa C.

WHEN I STOP PERCEIVING
OTHERS NEGATIVELY, MY
PERCEPTION OF HOW THEY SEE
ME IMPROVES.

As an African American it is common to be stereotyped, labeled, feared, and hated. Some of the negative profiling and depiction on television is substantiated, and some of it is not.

Other than by African Americans, I have only been called the “N” word twice in my life; once by an 8-year-old boy who I was counseling in an inpatient facility — and, another time when my car broke down on a street while en route to work in the then racially notorious Pasadena, Texas in 1986.

I was reared in a family of high standards in which my contrived life mission was to dispel myths about people of color; to show the world that “we” are not all the same.

I was taught to represent that not all of us split verbs, have gangs of children by different women, arrive late and want to

Acceptance

S.L.A.A.

take things that belong to others. I was taught to show anyone who I encounter that the depiction of people of color on television, in song lyrics and in movies is not a representative sample of everyone who is Black or African American.

I remember the hurt that I saw on my then girlfriend's face when she came home from her college course, in which she was the only person of color.

She told me that all the white students in her class wanted her to give them a dance demonstration.

I also recall numerous situations where people of other races expected me to know the stats of every player in the NBA or NFL. Further, I recall people of other races, at the sight of me, locking their car doors or clutching purses.

Even in S.L.A.A., I have at

times been the recipient of long stares and extensive questioning — as if the thought process is, “What is he doing here? Isn't it normal for black men to be abusive sexual heathens?”

But for the grace of God, the stares and questioning have been the exception. I have been invited to homes of many S.L.A.A. family members, where in nearly all cases an invitation to such interaction would have had no common basis.

I have invited S.L.A.A. members to attend meditation groups with me and they have invited me to their activities. I was invited to a co-ed S.L.A.A. Christmas party. I was the only person of color and felt more than accepted. While at a conference in the conservative and mainly republican city of Dallas, Texas, I went to the

S.L.A.A. website to search for a S.L.A.A. men's meeting. When I arrived, it actually turned out to be a co-ed meeting.

I was the only person of color there and I felt more welcomed than I had ever been at co-ed meetings in the liberal and mainly democratic city of Houston, Texas. In fact, a young woman there was impressed with my desire to write articles for the *S.L.A.A. Journal*; she also submitted articles. She invited me to participate in a weekly gratitude list with her and other recovery partners.

The gratitude list has catapulted my recovery forward; I have never again felt that S.L.A.A. is a program exclusive to any particular race. When I stop perceiving others negatively, my perception of how they see me improves.

— RALPH D.

My Insides, Your Outsides

I have been advised by my wise sponsor not to indulge in self-bashing. But to set this story in context, I need to let you see me through my internal eyes.

I will be brief. I am short, obese, graying, and have double knee replacements, so I don't walk easily. I went to California recently for a conference, my first in S.L.A.A. Normally, the S.L.A.A. meetings I attend have less than 10 people in them, or are on the phone line and have about 40 women, invisible to me. At this conference, I was to meet a few people who I had spoken to over the women's S.L.A.A. phone meetings. I was having body image problems, yet pushed myself to go anyway.

My weight, my hair length and my stunted sense of fashion bothered me. As I sat in the group of 40 - 50 women face to face, seeing they were tall, thin, had beautiful hair, and wore these unique beautiful clothes, I felt dismayed at where I thought I was in comparison to them on a physical plane. I heard the S.L.A.A. Preamble being read from across the circle, and suddenly it was like I had climbed into a familiar car, ready to fasten my seatbelt, to position my hands and feet and to shift into drive. I took a deep breath and let myself melt into the group and became a part of, instead of apart from.

As the weekend progressed, I was healed as I heard others share their insecurities and realized



Photo by Anonymous

we all compare our inside selves (whose imperfections we know too well) to other people's outside selves (where they project the best of themselves, usually). How can we ever hope to survive such a comparison?

More shocking to me, was when I was given compliments on aspects of myself which I had not been paying attention to. I realized again, there is great power in the "We" of the program and in being brave enough to just show up.

—LINDA, DALLAS, TEXAS

Acceptance and Identification

I am a recovering sex and love addict and a pedophile. “Pedophile” is a hard word for many people to hear. It’s an even harder word to use to describe oneself. I don’t identify myself as a pedophile very often, but sometimes I think it’s necessary in order to reach the addict who still suffers. I spent a great deal of my adolescence and early adulthood hating myself for my attraction to young girls. I just wanted to be like everyone else. That should sound very familiar to any addict. Who doesn’t want to feel normal?

I lost my relationship with my girlfriend after senior year of high school when she stumbled across some images on my computer. She told me that she couldn’t see me the same way anymore. I was devastated. For several years I proceeded with the idea in my head that I was incapable of being loved by anyone because of the experience I had with that one person. If a thought existed in my head, I considered it to be a fact. My inability to be loved was a fact in my head.

When I finally made my way into S.L.A.A., I attended a small meeting on a Friday night. There were two other men and one woman. I had never been to any other type of twelve-step meeting before. I didn’t have any frame of reference of what to expect. One of the men was straight and the other was gay. The woman leading the

meeting was straight. I wondered about the possible conflicts of having both men and women in a meeting of sex addicts. I wondered about the conflicts of having gay men in a meeting with other gay men. But none of that was important enough to keep me from being open to what those people had to say. I was amazed when one of the people at that meeting shared that they were also a pedophile. I didn’t expect to find someone at my first meeting who struggled with the exact same demons I did; someone who had dealt with the same kind of self-loathing.

That self-loathing is not exclusive to being a pedophile. Almost everyone I have ever met in S.L.A.A. has dealt with self-hatred and low self-esteem. But it was a relief to walk into a room that first night and immediately identify so strongly with someone else. I no longer felt alone in my pain. Over my years in the program, I have heard some discussion about whether or not it is a good idea to discuss the details of past illegal activity in a meeting. There is no legal protection in that setting.

We want our meetings to be a safe place where people can share openly about their struggle with this addiction. I have trouble with this because it was so important for me to hear what I heard from that other member the first time I

attended a meeting.

Most of the people I know, from my meetings over the years, are aware that my bottom line relates to accessing illegal forms of pornography and acting out in chat rooms with under-aged girls (or people that I at least thought were under-aged girls). Again, that might be hard for some to hear, but it is the reality of my situation. I am happy to say that I have five years of continuous sobriety from my bottom line, stretching back to my entrance into the program.

When a newcomer walks into a meeting, they could be suffering from any number of issues that fall under the umbrella of sex and love addiction. There are as many different bottom lines as there are members. It’s a hard thing for a person to walk into a meeting and admit their behavior. If someone else shares a similar experience, it can become easier for the newcomer to open up. Tradition Five states that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the sex and love addict who still suffers. This puts me in a quandary over how much I should share about my story when a newcomer is present. I have no way of knowing if that person is really an addict seeking help or if they are an undercover police officer.

I have come to strike a balance between sharing just enough to give an idea of what my bottom

line is without explicitly stating it. I share that my acting out behavior involved acting out illegally online. If the newcomer returns, I am more willing to open up about the specifics of my behavior. Recently there was a story featured on NPR's "This American Life" about a teenager who was acting out in the same way that I used to. He was disgusted with himself.

He didn't know what to do about it. He tried going to a therapist for help and was met with a great deal of ignorance and judgment. It was a very hard story for me to listen to, but I was so grateful that the reporter chose to discuss this controversial topic.

The teenager who was featured in the story eventually started his own support group online. I couldn't agree with all of his conclusions, but I applaud his resourcefulness in getting himself some help. When I was a teenager, I felt like I was all alone in this terrible situation of being a pedophile. I thought I was doomed.

If a program such as S.L.A.A. had been available to me at that age, it might've saved me a lot of heartache. I am so glad that I finally made my way to the program so that I could begin the process of healing. S.L.A.A. is a fellowship where I feel that I belong no matter what embarrassing facts I am sharing with the group. It is so important to me that I feel accepted in these meetings and I want everyone else to experience the same acceptance so that they may find recovery too.

I was picked on a lot in junior high and I retreated into my sex and love addiction as a result. Feeling like an outcast has always made me feel extremely sensitive to whether or not other people are being treated as equals.

Through my work on the Conference Journal Committee for

S.L.A.A., I was exposed to the Conference Diversity Committee (CDC) and to the idea of this issue of *the Journal* on the topic of diversity. The CDC attempts to find more ways to reach out to the addict who still suffers by examining the barriers that may or may not exist to individuals who are in the minority.

While it is most important that I identify with the feelings of others in a meeting, there is a common language between individuals who share the same background. Sex and love addiction is surely not isolated to Caucasians.

It has been suggested by some that there are differences in the outlook on sex and love from one culture to the next. Society as a whole seems to be pushing everyone to buy products in order to obtain more sex and more love.

There are those who scoff at the idea of sex addiction. "It's just the way men are," some might say. Is it just men? Some women struggle with the same issues of sex addiction that men do. This is not an isolated problem. From one culture to the next, the concept of sex and love addiction may not seem real. How do we help these addicts who are still suffering? How do we help the addicts who have yet to submit to the idea that sex and love addiction is real?

Perhaps we cannot, but if there is any way to help the newcomer identify as a sex and love addict, I think it is worth giving a try. I still attend that same S.L.A.A. meeting that I went to for my very first meeting. We have since moved locations and changed the night on which we meet. It's hard to keep a new group going and it's hard to help it grow. Our Higher Power has ultimate control over whether a meeting continues to thrive or dies out.

I believe that if there is a need, the opportunity will present itself.

Due to the fluctuation of our little S.L.A.A. meeting, attendance of women has always been scant. We lost our two regular female members due to one moving away and another who could not attend when we switched nights. Though we are still a co-ed meeting, it is very difficult to retain female members.

Every time a female newcomer arrives at our group, I ask myself, "How I can help this person to feel more comfortable?" And, "How can I help them identify with the addiction?" We always provide our female newcomers with the phone number of a willing female S.L.A.A. member so they have someone they can call. There are larger meetings in our metropolitan area that do include a large female membership, but some people are not able to make the drive to attend them.

I am constantly looking for new ways to help female members get what they need, when they walk in the door for the first time, so that they may find recovery. That is helping the addict who still suffers. By now you may be thinking, "Boy, this guy sure is co-dependent. Sounds like he needs to go to Al-Anon." You might have a point. I cannot do anything to make a person come back to a meeting. But I do believe I have an obligation to fulfill the primary purpose of the program in any way possible. If I want to stay sober, I have to work every one of the Steps.

This includes Step 12, which states that we try to carry the message to sex and love addicts. I try to do this by helping other people to feel welcome the first time they walk into a meeting. I want them to feel the acceptance that I felt the first time I walked in the door. It is that acceptance that has kept me coming back for the last five years.

—ANONYMOUS



Photo by James E.

Learning to Love and Accept Myself

When I came to S.L.A.A. I was what we refer to as a “lesbian in the closet.” I started my program in the online room and I heard many terms there, one of which was the word “qualifier.”

Most described the qualifier as someone who qualified them for the program. I have learned that I didn’t need a qualifier to do that, I was qualified long before that last relationship that I had before entering S.L.A.A. However, I loved the word because it allowed

me to talk about that person and the relationship in a gender neutral way. There was a lot of freedom in being able to talk about the relationship that I was so secretive about. And I was able to clear out years of the poisons that were infecting my head.

I was raised in a home that didn’t practice religion, but we looked up to a matriarch who was very religious. I was taught that to be a “good wife,” a “good mother,” and a “good woman” I would need to grow up to be like

this person. So when I found myself in a same sex relationship, I knew that I was doomed!

As I started working with my sponsor on the Steps, I found that there was a huge concentration on the Higher Power concept. I said to my sponsor pretty early on, “If this is a religious program, then this isn’t going to work for me, because God doesn’t approve of me or my relationship.”

My sponsor didn’t miss a beat

and explained to me that this wasn't a religious program, but rather a spiritual program and that there was a difference. I soon learned that the things that I was afraid God didn't love or accept about me were really the things that I didn't love or accept about me.

As I grew in my program, I started to reveal more about myself — at first, one-on-one with another member and then in a small group at a women's only meeting. It was there that a woman told me that I was courageous. I had to do a double take. Was she talking about me? Really? "Do you know me?" I thought.

I'm the one who was so scared that it took me months to share

with them the gender of my ex-partner. It was there that I learned I had to lean on the understanding of others until I could get my own. I found love, acceptance, and pure kindness in the room that night.

Later, when I was able to start sponsoring, a woman asked me to sponsor her and I felt like I couldn't say "Yes" until I revealed this part of myself to her. So I said, "Yes. But does it bother you that I am gay?" Without missing a beat she said to me, "Well, does it bother you that I am straight?" That night I found humor within my differences and the shame I felt of being different started to melt away.

It has definitely been a process for me as I have come out about

my sexuality. Interestingly, I have found that each time I have revealed that part of myself to another person in our program, it was my fears that kept me locked up in a false belief system (which is much like the rest of my addictive patterns).

I am grateful for the diversity we have in S.L.A.A. I find that sharing my similarities with others has allowed me to celebrate our differences and appreciate my own.

What an amazing feeling to know that I am part of a program that accepts me for who I am and loves me anyway. It's the family that I always wanted growing up and my Higher Power has blessed me with it today!

— LISA, TX

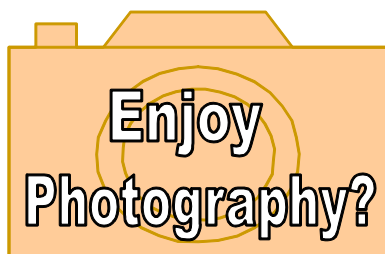
The Rich Tapestry of S.L.A.A.

This is a piece of gratitude for every member of S.L.A.A., man or woman, white, black, any other minority, gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered. I have learned so much from your experience as it contributes to the rich tapestry of S.L.A.A. as a whole.

It reveals to me that while we have unique experiences due to our various backgrounds, we share a profound common experience — our seeking to gain freedom from the destructive consequences of Sex and Love addiction. The more diverse the faces at meetings I attend, the

more I am reminded that engaging in recovery and walking this road of healing is bigger than myself. Our slogan, "You Are Not Alone" comes to life. For this I am grateful.

— DALE B., SANTA CRUZ,
CALIFORNIA.



Send us your original photographs for inclusion in *the Journal*

(nature scenes only, no people please) .

Unity Comes First

are willing to seek recovery and better themselves and their lives. I get a chance to learn from what others share. Even when people don't suffer from my particular pattern of the disease, I learn a lot.

I love the diversity in S.L.A.A. I attend a co-ed meeting which has both women and men attending.

Members may be gay, straight, bisexual, asexual or unsure of their sexual orientation. Some people suffer from sex addiction, some from love addiction, codependency, both sex and love addiction and/or sexual, emotional and/or social anorexia.

A few people are sexually attracted to children and young people. I am proud of everyone there who is working on recovery in our program. No matter what people may have done in the past, they (like myself)

I see that even though we may differ in gender, race, religious beliefs (or lack of them), sexual preference, lifestyle, etc. we have more in common than we differ. We all have the same human emotions which may be difficult to cope with on our own.

I have come to understand and respect people who may be very different from me, but we all share the powerlessness over the disease in our unaided will. We all share the same program of recovery and that is a beautiful thing.

— CLAIRE, AMSTERDAM



Augustine Alchemy

A Recovery Conference for SLAA and COSLAA

Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. August 9, 2014

First United Methodist Church, 941 Old Rock Hill Rd, Wallingford, CT 06492

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Sample Program: • 8 a.m. Hospitality • 9 a.m. First Open presentation. (One S.L.A.A. /one COSLAA speaker) • 10 a.m. First breakout • 11:15 a.m. Second breakout • 12:30 p.m. LUNCH • 2 p.m. Third Breakout • 3 p.m. Fourth Breakout • 4:15 p.m. Second Open Presentation (One COSLAA / one S.L.A.A. speaker) • 4:50 p.m. Closing circle and gratitude • 5 p.m. Close. This conference, now in its 14th year, is one of few with equal participation of S.L.A.A. and COSLAA. It is an opportunity for addicts and those affected by addict behavior to hear each other in a sober, serene environment. We have been blessed that the Methodist Church in Wallingford Connecticut has invited us back for yet another year. It is a serene safe and sober environment. There are separate breakout rooms but many sessions are held together. Getting current rooms are separate. Please respect boundaries.

the Journal themes and deadlines for 2014-2015

Issue #	Theme	Question Of The Day (QOD)	Submission deadline (articles and QOD)
#151	Sober at the Holidays	“Is it more difficult to stay sober around the holidays? What special problems have you encountered and what tools of the program did you use to stay sober?”	Sept. 15, 2014
#152	Strengthening Healthy Boundaries	How has the S.L.A.A. program of recovery helped you to strengthen your boundaries?	Nov. 14, 2014

Submit your answers and longer articles at www.slaafws.org/thejournal

Share space



Sexy Rex aka the Dancing Hamster® 2001 and the F.W.S. aka S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meetings

I met the Dancing Hamster as a Montreal delegate at my first 2003 Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in Boston during the live auction. The auction is an annual fundraising and fun activity during the 2nd or 3rd night of the four days of the annual business meeting. This toy was a big hit with the members present and produced a lot of laughs.

The next time I saw the cuddly critter, that sings and dances to the song, "I'm too sexy for my shirt," was at the 2005 ABM in San Francisco, California. A local delegate won the bid and took him home for 3 years.

However, that delegate returned to the 2008 ABM in Clearwater, Florida, dragging this toy to the auction.

After seeing Sexy Rex at 3 ABMs, I was determined to take him back to Montreal to round out his travels between the East and West Coasts of the U.S.A. I successfully bid for him for the 2008 and 2009 ABMs in Clearwater, Florida. In San Antonio, Texas at the 2010 ABM, he went to Tampa Bay, Florida. At the ABM 2011 in San Diego, California, Rex went abroad by crossing the pond and landing in Germany.

In Heidelberg, his story was finally written down and his adventures photographed. When he returned to San Diego, California, at the ABM 2012, Rex's storybook became part of the live auction. There was a buzz and big stir with the successful bidder flying Sexy Rex and his storybook to Boston. Once again his stay in historic Boston was documented in photos.

At the ABM 2013, in San Antonio, Texas, the bidding for Sexy Rex was wild and crazy with a side bid to take a photo of this humble hamster reading *the Journal*.

The next morning photos were shown of Sexy Rex not only with the July/August issue #143 but also *the Journal* 2014 Gratitude Calendar. Apparently he had been up all night in an effort to get that last side-bid for the fellowship. In doing so he found one article of particular interest and helped explain "Why I Keep Coming Back."

A number of Intergroups tried to rally sufficient funds to outbid the member from Montreal, but alas, Rex is spending the year there. He attends local English meetings and hopes to get to a French meeting in Montreal soon. He looks forwards to his return to the 2014 ABM in Houston, Texas, with a few photos as proof of his journey and progress in the North.

— RITA H., MONTREAL, QC



Sexy Rex reads the Journal.

S.L.A.A. Inspiration



Photo by Anonymous

Today, I am 1 year sober. For the past 12 months, I've been working the S.L.A.A. programme and it has undoubtedly changed my life. At a practical level I take care of my flat and my car. I pay bills on time.

I eat well and meditate. After 20 years of trying to maximize male attention by bleaching my hair, I am now a self-accepting brunette. At a deeper level I am able to sit with what's at the core of me on a daily basis. Sometimes, it is an excruciating pain. At other times, it is a dull ache.

Sometimes it makes me feel so nauseous that I can't sit still. But

I face it. I don't spend minutes, hours, days, weeks, running from myself like I used to. This feels like real progress.

The S.L.A.A. fellowship in the UK is small. Where I live, there are 3 meetings a week but most cities barely have 1. It seems there is a sense of shame around this fellowship that trumps all the others.

One of my colleagues is a recovering alcoholic. Everyone knows he is an alcoholic. He talks openly about it. I would too, if alcohol was my poison. I'd probably talk about heroin addiction, too. Some of my colleagues might even be impressed by it. But I neglect to

mention that I'm a sex and love addict.

If addiction fell into a caste system, as a sex and love addict, I feel like I would be an 'untouchable'.

I knew, as soon as I read the characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction, that I belonged in S.L.A.A. I look forward to weekly meetings that keep me grounded and well. But there is one thing I've been seeking for a year and haven't yet found – inspiration in the field of relationships. I know very few people in long term recovery who have established and maintained a healthy relationship as a result of working the S.L.A.A. programme.

I went to the annual convention in London hoping to hear some inspiring talks from people who had “cracked it.” I attended a talk entitled “Sex in Recovery.” A woman shared about her deeply fulfilling sex life with her partner. I valued her share and it was refreshing to hear someone talking with such positivity about sex. But she said that drugs and alcohol were a major factor in her sex and love addiction, which left me feeling alienated. Drugs and alcohol have never been an issue for me.

People are my drug of choice. She also talked about the importance of passion in a

relationship. For me, passion IS addiction. Passion is my crack pipe. I get high just thinking about it.

I attended another talk entitled “Relationships in Recovery.”

Two people spoke honestly about their relationships with their partners. Their shares were courageous and candid. But their relationships sounded like relentless hard work and I left feeling deflated. I thought, “If that is what I’ve got to look forward to, why bother?”

S.L.A.A. is still a relatively young fellowship in the UK. Perhaps that is why it is hard to

find addicts with long term sobriety who are engaged in healthy relationships.

As someone who is still fairly new to the recovery path, I need to see that what I’m aiming for is achievable – even if there’s only one person in the world who has achieved it. With this in mind, I would love to hear from sex and love addicts who have attained genuine, lasting intimacy with another human being.

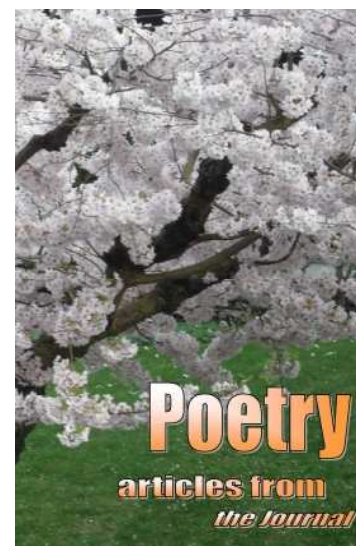
Working the steps keeps me well but I require inspiration if I am to keep moving forward.

— ANONYMOUS, LONDON

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Photo by Lisa C.

I Have Died

IT WAS AS IF A GENTLE HAND WAS CARRYING ME ALONG
THE WIND OF CHANGE TO A FUTURE OF FREEDOM
FROM THE BONDAGE OF MY ADDICTION.

Editor's Note: Step Three states that we "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." This is one S.L.A.A. member's concept of God.

I was ten years sober, and I wanted to pick up a drink so bad I could taste it. But after a trip to the shredder, and dragging a sack of rocks to the foot of a tilted cross, my life has never been the same. God has

carried me, and only in looking back could I see it.

When I sat before the attorney who asked me if I was having a relationship with the man I supervised, I remembered how I had prayed, "Lord, give me the right answer without having to lie. I'm done Father, please help me."

God gave me the words to say that day, as I sidestepped the question — "I have a relationship with all of my employees." If they had asked me if I was sleeping

with him, I would have been dead in the water. You see, I was ten years sober from an alcohol addiction, but I was a sex and love addict whose life was going down in flames before her very eyes.

I didn't lose my job that day. What I lost was my desire to act out. In a humble act of humility and submission, something had changed that day.

It wasn't spectacular. It wasn't sudden. But, it was as if a gentle hand was carrying me along the

wind of change to a future of freedom from the bondage of my addiction.

On the fourth day, after the trip to the shredder and the tilted cross, I picked up the phone and told him goodbye...forever, and I meant it. It's been years since that fateful phone call, and I haven't had to act out in my sex and love addiction since.

Yes, I had surrendered when I went to A.A. And, to a degree, many of my instincts gone awry had been brought into balance. But I had never truly dealt with my core addiction...the hole in my soul that I kept trying to fill with people (the holy place where God wanted to live).

Slowly, but surely, my journey of recovery has been about clearing out the hole in my soul where I had put others and allowing God to live there, in His rightful place.

Today, He continues to carry me day to day, in every way. What about that shredder you say...? I stood in a long line with the people of my church on a Good Friday, and clutched in my hand was my deepest darkest secret written on a 3x5 card. We were instructed to take it to a shredder, a symbolic act of destroying its stronghold over us.

Wouldn't you know...the shredder jammed when I got there! Not for long, just long enough to remind me that my secrets would kill me. The next stop after the shredder was a sack of rocks which I dragged over to the foot of a life-sized cross, that was crazily tilted on sacks of gravel; it appeared as if it were waiting to be taken up and carried at any moment.

It was there that I was crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ

(who) lives in me (Gal 2:20).

Over the years, as I have worked the Steps one day at a time, I have died to self-justification. I have died to defending myself, and to doing things my way. I have died to my resentments.

Today, I try to see my part, and ask for forgiveness. I have died to self-direction, and instead ask God, "What do you want?" I pray for knowledge of His will for me, and the power to carry that out. And I've died to self-indulgence, selfishness and self-centeredness; I try to live my life to please Him instead of what pleases me.

Many times I have to start over, daily in fact, because I am human. But, miracles are happening as I live by faith in Him.

— ANONYMOUS

This Could Be Why I Don't Say, "I Love You"

In the early hours of the day,
Against the backdrop of the tea kettle whistling,
And dishes clanking,
And blow driers blowing,
In the hustle and bustle of it all, as we brush by each other,
Armed in bags and packed lunches, and ambitions for the day,
I think I don't have time.
Or maybe it feels a little too soft for the brashness of morning.
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
It could be because,
When we talk on the phone,
We exchange those day-to-day details —
"Dinner is at 7. Dogs have been fed.
Will you put my clothes in the dryer?"
Love doesn't belong in the cataclysms of errands and information exchange,
Does it?
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
Or perhaps when you're stressed out,
Beaten, broken, fed up with your un-fortuitous relationship with money or men, or whatever,

I think it would be condescending or even trite to comfort you.
After all, you're the parent, right?
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
I remember a time when affection came easily.
I felt at home in your arms,
Knew your scent,
Never had anywhere else to be.
But one day I was too old for that,
At least that's what I thought.
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
Because erroneous characters —
"XOXO"
Cheap platitudes —
"Love ya!"
And social media —
Hashtag-love-my-mom,
Have become easier, simpler expressions of my feelings.
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
It could be because I've overused the word with every man that made me feel something,
That I don't know what it means anymore.
Saying the words don't mean anything anyway, right?
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
Sometimes, I think it's because I felt threatened by the men you brought into our lives.
You said I was Number One,
But I always competed for attention,
And it was never a fair game.
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
I think that even in all my attempts to let bygones be bygones,
I still blame you for not protecting me.
I'm still waiting for you to rescue me-
From what? I'm not sure anymore.
This could be why I don't say "I love you."
And yet, I am an adult,
And the words still carry the weight of the past.
I've made your same mistakes-I didn't protect me either.
Throughout all of the abuse I put myself through,
You were finally the mother I wanted and needed,
But I rejected you. I think you are afraid to say it to me, too.
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."
Most of all, I believe it is because I'm afraid of what love is.
Will it overwhelm me?
Take advantage of me?
Deceive me?
Hurt me?
Will I lose control?
Lose myself?
Because this is what I've learned of love.
This could be why I don't say, "I love you."

— JESSE K., LOS ANGELES

What does “full recovery” look like?

First of all, it seems that full recovery does not look like serenity, acceptance of all those things I cannot change: everything except myself. I want in the worst way to change some things, and it just isn't all that easy to do it!

It was the 15th year of the “best relationship of my life in many ways,” 3 years of it in separate residences. Why couldn't I let go? It had become a painful series of blaming each other, trying to fix each other, trying to find out the minimum I would have to change to make things better. All of this was interspersed with moments of great love and deep intimacy, reminiscing about the many good times we had together, and longing for feeling the playfulness, love, and emotional safety I had once felt in that relationship. As painful as that was, I simply could not seem to let it go, and all the hard-won self knowledge from my recovery journey and honesty about the

present did not add up to the logical answer: It had gone bad. It didn't matter why. Get out. If not, why not?!

Fear of economic insecurity should have left me! But that one still hit me regularly, requiring repeated 3rd and 11th Step exercising. I learned early in recovery that I could be free of the fear while still in the grips of financial insecurity. That was much better than the torture of the fear. The reality of poverty and even homelessness turned out to be something I could handle, with the help of a Higher Power and emotional support from my friends. It did not last forever.

I knew my character defects well. Several good, solid passes

through the 12 Steps had given me a darned good picture of my character defects. Some seemed to have been removed through the grace and help of a Higher Power, others, mostly small ones, that niggled at me, were likely to pop up at just the wrong moments.

And there were still others that blessedly had become temptations rather than actions requiring amends. Where was the promise of “perfect peace and ease?” When would the temptations to act out be “simply lifted out of me?” I had stayed above my bottom lines for a long time now. How come it still seemed so hard sometimes?

Why did I sometimes attend a dozen meetings before I heard

How Do I Feel, Now

something that helped me rather than just sharing my own experience in an effort to help others feel not so alone?

Why was it still hard to make myself go to meetings and to keep up with a daily practice of meditation? Why did so many of the people in my life still seem “sick,” a few even toxic for me to be around? With all my willingness and footwork, there were still times I felt distant from God, more than a little on my own, and lonely too much.

Why were days of solid happiness and satisfaction so far

apart sometimes, a lot of “OK” days, mixed with not very many really good ones? Granted, bad days had become a bad few minutes or so every once in a while rather than daily or hourly. Maybe OK days are really OK. I reread what I have written, and I realize I have left out the fact that I never feel as tortured as I once did. I live in a state of hopeful expectation, knowing that things have always gotten better in the long run, even if they were uncomfortable or even painful in the middle.

I must not forget that there

have been many days of much more than just feeling okay — days of incredible joy, incredible tenderness, incredible peacefulness and serenity. There have been some incredibly painful days with the only success that of intact sobriety. And there have been many, many, many days with no real pain at all.

Anger often ebbs as fast as it rises. Fears ebb even faster. I am not afraid to laugh, especially at myself. If I forget to journal for a few weeks, or even years, it still is a wonderful tool of growth when I do use it. I go to meetings and



That I Am a Long-timer?

find friends there. I make phone calls and feel really connected with those I talk to. Surprise! That is the biggest difference! I am often surprised at how nice people are, how friendly and helpful, how responsive to smiles and little comments about a beautiful day, or a good bargain.

I am totally amazed about how my life is today — exactly what I have wanted, but did not know how to describe, much less get. I have had experiences I never would have had without sobriety, pure joy and pure sorrow. I have gone places I never would have

seen, and have lived through tragedy and triumph that would have destroyed me at one time.

Life has become amazingly different from what I ever thought it could be, perfect in its imperfection. Depression lifts quickly. Resentment is brief and weak. Anger is still quick, but no longer disrupts my whole life. Fear starts, but then subsides quickly. Boredom becomes action. Loneliness becomes meetings and phone calls.

Discouragement becomes determination. Mistakes become humility — and humor. Lapses

become a source for laughter. Tears are temporary.

I am long past mere recovery, although I am grateful it maintains itself as long as I give it the fuel and oil it needs — meetings and fellowship.

What an amazing journey long term recovery has become, changing bit by bit to discovery of challenges and rewards I never dreamed of. Guaranteed: Just keep coming back.

In deep gratitude and awe,

— ANONYMOUS,

SOBER DATE: 3/26/1978

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Romanticism

SHARE: For some of us, obsessive romanticism – or “romance addiction” – was a key aspect of our overall sex and love addiction. Beginning at the dawn of adolescence, my interactions with female peers became overwhelmingly focused on winning their approval of me as a sexual being. While other boys naturally developed “the hots,” as we called it, for this girl or that, romantic impulses in me were fanatical and qualitatively much more intense, differing from the norm by many degrees.

And, as is the case with addiction of all types, romance addiction became all-absorbing, profoundly affecting my sense of emotional well-being and capacity to function. To hide the truth from myself, I reasoned that I was only expressing true chivalry in this cynical modern age or was really a tragic Byron, Keats or Shelley-like figure.

All the while, though, romance addiction was preparing the way for full-blown sexual compulsivity as I moved through my teens. Recovery from sex and love addiction in some of us thus must include, by the grace of God, recovery from obsessive romanticism and relationship addiction. Once the compulsion of acting out itself has been lifted and recovery begins to expand in us, we notice that romantic idealization and fixation on imagined relationships begins to fade.

How liberating it is to view others not as goddesses (or gods, as the case may be), but simply as fellow human beings, deserving of respect, honesty and right conduct from us. And thanks be to God, who has acted, by way of the program and fellowship of S.L.A.A., to awaken us from the hypnotic trance of obsessive romanticism.

—TOM

THE INSPIRATION LINE

YOUR 24/7 SPONSOR

215-574-2120

Did you know that you can call the Inspiration Line at any time to help you get through a particularly difficult day?

Did you know that 24 hours a day, every day, there is a message of experience, strength and hope to inspire Sex and Love Addicts?

NEW! Download for FREE a month's worth of Inspiration Line recordings.

Go to <http://www.slaadvi.org/inspiration-line.html>

Did you know you can call the Inspiration Line NOW ?



How we help.....

- 87,741 calls have come into the line since 2006, that translates to 12,534 calls per year, 35 calls per day or 1.65 calls per hour, every hour !
- Calls come from all over the world! 50% from the east coast, 15% from the west coast, 20% from the mid-west, 10% from Florida, 4% from New England and even Hawaii !
- Our busiest day is Thanksgiving and there is never a busy signal, so you will get through to receive inspiring thoughts !
- The Inspiration Line has been in existence for 27 years!

The Inspiration Line is presented to the SLAA Fellowship by the Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup. To find out more or to volunteer, call the Line and leave a message.



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