



# theJournal

Issue # 185  
Single Issue \$4

*ABM ISSUE~*

Dealing With Fear

# 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.

## Table of Contents

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble	2
The Twelve Steps 3 Letter From the Editor	5
Question of the Day 6	

## Theme: Dealing with Fear

Anorexia and Fear	14
Fear of Losing Myself Took Me Off the Dance Floor	15
Fear Came as a Big Surprise	16
Fear Is a Scarlet Thread Weaving Through the History of My Life	17
Fears Jam	18
Connecting with the Feeling of Fear	18
Asking God to Take My Hand	19
Together We Can	21
Fear: An Interview	22
Answering the Question of the Day	32
Spiritual Reminder Unique to S.L.A.A.	34
Coronavirus and Addiction	36
Given Tools to Combat Fear and Anxiety	37



## 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.

©1985, 2003, 2012 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

# 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.

\*©1985 The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities, which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise. **THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — 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 Him. 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 Him 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 God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His 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 alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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.

© July/Aug., 2020. The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

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*.

The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. 1550 NE Loop 410, Suite 118 San Antonio, TX 78209, 1-210-828-7900 Monday-Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT except for holidays (fax) 1-210-828-7922. [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)

For subscription concerns, please visit: <http://www.slaafws.org/subscriptionhelp>

Managing Editor	Lisa C.
Art Director	Fiona
Outreach Director	Becca
Proofreaders for this issue	Chris D. Beth L.

## Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

In this issue's Letter from the Editor, I would like to pay tribute to Roger R. from San Diego. As I was finishing up this issue of *the Journal*, I received the email that he had lost his battle with cancer and had passed away. The email mentioned his very dedicated life in service to the program of S.L.A.A., and that Roger was active in the program until the very end. He also attended a very large number of consecutive ABMs as both a Delegate and a BOT member. He will certainly be remembered for supporting/attending many of the North County San Diego meetings and he helped many of our members. The email also mentioned that his wife asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in honor of Roger to S.L.A.A. (<https://slaafws.org/lifesaver>).

As the editor of *the Journal*, I have the honor of going to the ABM every year since I volunteered for the job. I met Roger at one of my very first ABMs. He always had a smile on his face. He was in charge of the hospitality suite and sat and talked to me when I was stressed about whatever I needed to do for the ABM. I looked forward to seeing him every year and whenever I saw him I couldn't help but smile. I was always reminded of how service is sobering by the calm joy that he showed to everyone around him. I know those words don't usually go together (calm joy) but that's what serenity is to me. And he personified it. He came to many spiritual retreats in Malibu (every year at Thanksgiving, Los Angeles Intergroup hosts the spiritual retreats). I, as well as many fellows, will miss him. No one knows how many lives he helped save, but it was more than can be counted, I am sure.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “How do you deal with fear in recovery? Have you had a particularly fearful situation that Program

tools helped you overcome? Please share your experience, strength, and hope and any coping skills.” Here are some insights that were submitted in service from fellow S.L.A.A. members. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two themes are: #186 — Sept./Oct.— Tools for No Contact — “Have you ever gotten through the pain of a no contact rule to come to some new revelation about yourself, clarity, peace, or mindfulness? Please share any tools that make no contact easier.” — Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2020, and #187 — Nov./Dec. — Reconciliation — Please share your experience, strength, and hope around reconciliation. How do you deal with expectations and “lay an entirely new foundation for cooperation, trust and intimacy?” — Deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2020. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

### How do you deal with fear in recovery?

When I was starting my first Fourth Step in another program, I still remember reading this sentence about fear: “It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it.” Until I read that sentence, I didn’t know fear ran my life, but it was 100% true. After a long time in recovery, I’ve learned to treat fear, along with other characteristics that separate me from my H.P. and other people, through Steps 6 and 7. I don’t know if fear is really a “defect,” but Steps 6 and 7 are helping with it.

— CHRIS, SAN DIEGO



## Question of the day

This pandemic has caused intense fear amongst many of us. We already have the tools to deal with it.

— MICHAEL S

How do I deal with fear? The 1st thing I do is to notice it when it comes up. I try not to react from that place. Only bad things happen when I do! I learned this as a middle school teacher: Whenever I'm in fight or flight, my only job is to get out of fight or flight. So how do I do that? By talking to fellows, journaling, praying, taking a pause, going to a meeting, doing yoga, or going to the gym. And when I'm in a better space, then and only then, can I appropriately take action.

— DAVE R.

Outreach, meetings, writing, reading literature, meditation and prayer can help when feeling fearful. I personally like using the set aside or Serenity Prayer and also find tapping meditation a helpful tool to help calm me. Going out in nature if possible is also a tool I use.

— ANN R.

What could be scarier than this nightmarish COVID-19?

When faced with fear, I grab a good book, hide away from reality and isolate, which comes way too easy to me, an emotional anorexic.

Before recovery, I would naturally act out: call women on my bottom line, look at porn and just plain ruin my now cherished bottom line...

God is taking care of me every day, in every way. I am so grateful to S.L.A.A.

— MARSHA Z., JAMAICA PLAIN, MA

## How do you deal with fear in recovery?

When dealing with fear, I share about my fear(s) in meetings, with recovery partners and with my sponsor. I also try to remember to pray. Finally, I endeavor to take action toward facing the fear in sane and serene ways.

— CATE B., WASHINGTON, DC

Fear is a powerful deterrent in my recovery. Some of the fears that I need to work through with the help of my programs included spending time in jail, getting divorced, potentially losing my job, and starting my own business. Acting out was not going to help any of those things.

— RICH K., WORCESTER, MA

---

Unquestionably the greatest driver of all my acting out has been fear. My Step work and time in the Program has shown a great number of these fears to be irrational. I now pause and breathe. I remember that I have a 100% survival rate of my worst and most fearful of days. I now have a new spiritual coping mechanism that I learned from my fellowship.

— DAVID M., AUSTIN, TX

Fear is any time I am not present. False evidence appearing real. I mostly am afraid and worry when I am not close to God. With that, I do my best to pray when I'm struggling with fear.

— ARI F., NJ

## Question of the day

Fear is an alert that I am taking over from my Higher Power. I think of, 1. I can't, 2. Higher Power can, 3. I turn it over and breathe. I have used 1-2-3 as a mantra when having difficulty letting go.

— ANNE K., TAMPA

When I'm in fear, I try to think it through – think what will likely happen. Generally, what will likely happen is far less dire than what I fear will happen. Deep breathing helps.

— AVA H., NYC

---

I accept my fear and dialogue with my inner child with love and acceptance. I do NOT put my fear in charge of decisions.

— NANCY G., SAN DIEGO

I try to think of my Higher Power and bring it to the situation. I also take a fear inventory as a part of my 4th Step. I recently had a fear of going outside due to thoughts I made up. I did a fear inventory and called in my Higher Power.

— ANONYMOUS, MN

Biggest step for me was going to an ABM and asking someone to be my sponsor who lived 1,500 miles away from me! Also, going to meetings, sharing my fears with others, and listening to others tell my story!

— KELLY R., SEATTLE, WA

## How do you deal with fear in recovery?

I have always struggled with fear. S.L.A.A. has helped me learn to face my self and my feelings so I can walk through fear with the spiritual and fellowship support I need.

— KIRSTEN C., REDLANDS, CA

When I feel afraid, I have fellows I can call to help me keep things in perspective. I have learned to identify that I am scared. So, I am able to soothe myself and face the challenges I need to face.

— FIONA, LONDON

---

Through work with a sponsor and participation in meetings, I've learned that the best way to deal with fear is to walk through it. This means to face the thing I fear and take an action to deal with it. Prior to this action must come prayer and consultation with my sponsor so that I'm of clear mind and heart and acting, not reacting.

— ANONYMOUS

My fears are normally fear of appearing inadequate and/or stupid. Normally it is because a task I am doing is not done to the level of perfectionism I'm demanding of myself. When I start to feel this, I remind myself that I did the best I could with the knowledge I had and the time I had available. Prior to coming to Program, I had severe fear of public speaking – probably due to a stutter I had while growing up. By sharing at meetings, doing lead shares, and not dying, I've gotten more comfortable with public speaking. My boss has noticed and asked if I did toastmasters or other speaking training.

— DAVE G., LOS ANGELES

## Question of the day

When I realize that I am being fearful, I try to walk toward my fear. Often the closer I get to my fear – the less power it has over me.

— SETH S., BOSTON

In the last several months, I've been working with my therapist to better understand my identity, relative to gender and sexuality. It's a scary space. And reaching out for help and guidance from others is essential to me.

— SCOTT F., CHICAGO

---

Faith as expressed via prayer, not in word, but in feeling, combined with somatic therapeutic tools, are what I use constantly and continuously to maintain emotional sobriety.

— JENNY K., SAN FRANCISCO, CA

I came to S.L.A.A. when my husband left me. But I stayed when I was diagnosed with breast cancer 3 months later. The tools enabled me to stay connected to my emotional sobriety, the Fellowship and God. I believe S.L.A.A. saved me for the benefit of not just me but also my 8 year old daughter, as she and I went through the worst year of our lives.

— CELIA E., MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

## How do you deal with fear in recovery?

To deal with fear, I remember the acronym, false expectations appearing real. I remember that fear is trying to tell me some sort of bad story so I decide to pray instead of listening to the fear.

— LINDSEY H., WEST PALM BEACH

I was driving to a job interview, when fear and anxiety about the process and outcome gripped me. I parked the car and connected to my Higher Power through meditating and breath work. I called a Program friend. I prayed, “God, please guide me as to what you would have me be.” I entered the interview calmly and confidently, did my best, and let go. The next day, I got the job!

— ANONYMOUS

---

As an anorexic, one of my guiding principles of life is that people are not to be trusted with any of my deepest thoughts. In working the Program, I have learned that my fear of others is irrational and is preventing me from experiencing love and having any really joyful relationships.

— HAROLD K., DALLAS, TX

Often when I’m afraid, I try to say the Serenity Prayer, sometimes over and over, almost like a chant, until my fear subsides. Fear is a thread that is woven thru the fabric of my life. I never knew until recovery how true this is. I would previously have said I was fearless! But now that I’ve had this awareness, I watch for it. I’m so happy I have Program tools for living today. Thank you S.L.A.A.!

— SUSAN G., HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA



## Question of the day

I know that I do have deep-seated fear. But I am not in touch with it. Actually, I don't even really know when it is affecting me. I am working hard with my therapist to address this important matter.

— SAM E., NYC

French:

la seul chose que je ne veux pas etre, c'est d'etre eu presence de femmes d'eu un endroit dangereux, merci mon dieu de m'aider a oublie ce cote voir

English:

I don't want to be in danger of acting out when I'm around women. Thank you, God for helping me be aware and change.

— MARC L., MONTREAL (QUEBEC)

---

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



amazonkindle

🍏 iBooks

# Anorexia and Fear



While resentment is known as the “number one offender” in 12-Step literature, fear is a close second for me. The S.L.A.A. program helps me to deal with fears I have about never being good enough, a message I somehow learned from an early age. It also helps me deal with the fear of being damaged emotionally, physically,

or spiritually beyond what God or anyone else would want, because of past situations that have occurred regarding my sexuality. Through talking with my sponsor about the *40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis* pamphlet and answering the 50 questions in the *Anorexia (Sexual, Social, Emotional)* pamphlet, a lot of these shameful experiences came to

light, some of which I had covered up for years with binge eating and working obsessively. By talking through these experiences with my sponsor, I came to see my fears as natural responses to some of the traumas that had occurred before I came into S.L.A.A. Before talking with her, I was angry that I feared emotional and physical intimacy so much, and even resented my reactions of panic (fast heart rate, palpitations, quick breathing) that would occur whenever I would even think about dating in a “sober” way. But through cooperating

with my sponsor, I learned that our feelings keep us safe. Many times, I had repeated destructive relationship patterns with abusive people because I was not listening to my fear or I was listening to the fear of abandonment to the exclusion of all other fears. S.L.A.A.’s meetings and pamphlets are tools that I have used to try to tame these fears so that they can begin to work for me, as I work toward healthy relationships with my HP, myself, and potential romantic partners.

— ANONYMOUS, PENNSYLVANIA

## Fear of Losing Myself Took Me Off the Dance Floor

I was terrified to go back to the dance floor (my biggest passion is dancing) because I feared that I would bump into my ex.

I got into S.L.A.A. after we broke up because I am a love addict.

I prayed for years to my HP for enough recovery to be able to stay connected to myself in his presence and not lose

myself to him. After years of pushing through my fears, working the Program on a daily basis, keeping up outreach calls, working the Steps thoroughly, listening to other’s shares, and doing my Step 11, the day came when I was able to stick around on my beloved dance floor and not melt into a heap when he appeared.

One day I was even able to have a dance with him and stay present to myself with discipline. I was able to hold myself, not abandon myself, and remember God. So, dear fellow addicts in S.L.A.A. recovery, there is hope.

I must add, each and every time I prayed heartfully before I entered the building where I danced asking for safety, protection, and courage.

Today I rarely think of him and if I do so, I pray for him: “God bless him and change me.”

I am forever grateful for all of you who made it possible to get to know myself and love and care about myself enough to stay connected.

God bless you all with courage on your journey. Keep coming back.

— MARIA

---

## Fear Came as a Big Surprise

**I**t feels to me that since recovery, I have so much more fear. I am sitting in fear a lot, afraid of the phone ringing, of letters arriving in the post, of other people, of taking the train. Fear came as a big surprise. Yet, I understand that first I had to become sober and free from addictive highs, such as love hormones, drink, adrenalin, and drama, so my life could be more still and I could get in touch with these fears.

I was a very fearful child. Finally, I am able to look at this fear and get professional help instead of suppressing it with old coping mechanisms. How do I deal with fear in recovery now? I accept the feeling, knowing it won't kill me, knowing it will pass. I am

talking to my inner child, reassuring that I will keep her safe. I am kinder and slower with myself, no longer doing wild daring things to try to impress others.

I am seeking outside help and therapy. I talk about my fear with other fellows, realising others have these feelings too, and my shame goes away. And I am connecting with my Higher Power. When I connect with HP, seeing myself as one creature on this earth that is connected to all other creatures and all life and held by a wise healing magical nature that is my Higher Power, I feel safe and trusting. I know I belong and will be taken care of.

— ANONYMOUS

## Fear Is a Scarlet Thread Weaving Through the History of My Life

**I**t's been a journey of discovery since coming to S.L.A.A.. Currently, I'm on Step Six; one of the questions I wrote on this morning during my quiet time was: "What are you fearful of?" I would never have considered myself fearful when I first came into this Program. I was "fearless" not "fearful." I hitchhiked all over the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. I hiked down steep trails (called the Goat's trail because you had to be a goat to get up and down it). I camped out alone in the desert for weeks, and I did many other dangerous things that take "guts" to do. It wasn't until after years in the Program, and many inventories, that I came to see that I am indeed fearful.

Fear is a scarlet thread weaved all through the history of my life. Many of the things I just described were actually me running away from physical and emotional abuse, from true love, from myself (perhaps a death wish), from possible disapproval of others, and more. It's been a very slow

process of recovery. I'm a little slower than others perhaps, but I'm well on my way today. No amount of therapy can touch this. No amount of exercise, no amount of substance, or anything else can touch my dysfunction; the only thing that can is the Grace of God. Only God, or my Higher Power, can lift my compulsion. The addictions that had me by the throat are no more.

I'm amazed to think that at the end of every day, I have to go to sleep. It's like a hard reset, everything shuts down, and when I rise I get these 24 hours only. My Higher Power gives me daily doses of Grace, serenity and freedom, but for today only. It must be renewed each day which reminds me that I am completely dependent on Him. And each day, He restores me, renews His grace, mercy, peace, beauty and love...for today. I'm so glad I found S.L.A.A. and this path to peace, and all of you.

— ANONYMOUS

# Fears Jam



## Connecting with the Feeling of Fear

**I**n addition to taking a Tenth-Step inventory of it, I try and connect with the actual feeling of fear as I experience it in my body, knowing that once a feeling is felt fully it dissipates. To do this I stop, find a quiet place to sit, and take a few moments to breathe into my centre, noticing any sensations in my chest and abdomen. I might place a hand on my heart, in a gesture of acknowledgement of the feelings and as a way of

connecting with them, reminding myself that feelings won't kill me, and that "this too shall pass." I might also acknowledge the fear in my inner child, saying silently to him, "I know that you are afraid, but I'm here for you and you are safe and loved." Usually after sitting with it for a couple of minutes, the fear dissolves and I come to experience feelings of peace, safety, and wholeness.

— BEN, LONDON



# Asking God to Take My Hand

APRIL 11, 2020

I know it is a miracle that I live in recovery in S.L.A.A. and other 12-Step programs, decades free of my original bottom lines: no real or fantasy pornography, no self-sexing, no sex with anyone unless I know their first and last names.

I have had to add to those bottom lines for clarity, but I have lived my commitment to all bottom lines for a long time.

That made possible a 19 year, sometimes roller coaster partnership grow to 4 legal years, after 7 failed marriage and marriage-like relationships, some after I was sober in S.L.A.A.

Along with the usual fears even “normal” folks have (obvious, when considering 2 of my 3 original bottom lines), I carry a real fear of my own imagination!

When the spiral of fear and anger surges in me with emotional and even normal threats, it can bring temptation to retreat into distracting fantasies and old, addictive behaviors.

Those are not “long-ago” issues for me, although many days are free of them. So, keeping current is one of my most precious recovery tools. Staying current with my wife has not really worked well.

She is too easily made afraid because she really can’t appreciate how “here and now” addiction and temptation always is, even while it co-exists with profound gratitude for, and daily practice of, recovery.

Today she will ask, “Don’t you need a meeting?” and, “Are you keeping current?” and I always answer truthfully, and take the needed action.

Mindfulness, living in the moment, is another important tool. It is a natural gift of years of practice living in today.

But mindfulness weakens unless I keep my commitment to active participation in the Fellowship of S.L.A.A.; attending meetings, using the slogans, conscious contact with a spiritual Power greater than myself, sponsoring and being sponsored, and doing my limping and sometimes just barely willing best at the

moment to live out the principles of the Twelve Steps in every area of my life.

Right now, my fear of losing my wife and others I love to the current pandemic is a huge, looming darkness for me. Working at home, isolated from the support of valued co-workers and the routines of a much loved job, I live with the very real likelihood that the 4 months of symptoms my wife has (only 2 months for me), IS that life-threatening COVID-19 infection.

Only minutes ago, she said if her chest tightness did not ease up soon, she needed to go to the VA Hospital ER.

The triage nurse who phone-screened her two days ago said it would be good if she did that, because her symptoms, while not acute, have lasted so long.

Thank God my e-mail just intervened with this invitation to be current with people who understand I could be only minutes, hours, or a day away from relapse.

Thank God I keep the tools I have had since the early days free of rust: the Serenity Prayer in Gothic letters I mentally read as if out loud, to block out the dangerous mental images; slogans, especially, “Keep It Simple, Live and Let Live, One Day at a Time.”

I make outreach calls. Last week I talked with the person who sponsored me into S.L.A.A. and exchanged IMs with the tough sponsor who guided me through an astonishingly helpful S.L.A.A.-HOW program a few years ago. I thank God for all the people who created, maintain, and support on-line ZOOM, In the rooms and SKYPE meetings.

I practice the 5 tools of Self-Care, and I refuse to be afraid of joy in this moment. When the inevitable stresses and sorrows of life happen, I get current fully, and I ask God to take my hand, so I don't get afraid and let go.

— WITH IMMENSE GRATITUDE,  
BARBARA L., FL

# Together We Can

I got a job writing press releases for my sister's medical group. I was terrified: I had worked in newspapers most of my career (different field); had never worked for/with family; and the job was remote (I had almost always worked on site.)

"Restless, irritable and discontent" were not the words for the fear I felt!

I reached out to fellows. At one point, I was so fearful that I talked to two successively. I had never been so open about my "insides." Worn out with the effort, I actually fell asleep. When I woke the fear was gone! (I've always believed in the healing powers of sleep!)

I visited a church and asked God to help me. Said it with my heart. I read and practiced from an inspirational spiritual book. I walked. I shared.

Perseverance is a strength and I just held on.

My sponsor put me in touch with a marketing person for tips. I utilized my sponsor's professional expertise and accomplishment.

Probably the best thing I did was reach out in desperation to another fellowship (WA). I'm still there.

I'm multiply addicted and the disease has affected all parts of my life.

It's six years later. I'm still there.

It has been simultaneously the best job I've ever had and the worst, especially at the beginning.

I still get fearful about my bosses' approval, but I'm working on it!

Thanks for this opportunity, B&L!

Together we can.

— CHRISTINA/NJ

# Fear: An Interview



**Lisa:** Thank you for doing this. It's a great service.

Can you tell us a little about your recovery path, sobriety time and your discovery of the illness — the background of your S.L.A.A. story?

**Michael:** Yeah. I came in to S.L.A.A. in November, 2013 after probably about 15 years of acting out. I used sexual acting out as a means to not feel all the fear and anxiety that I'd been carrying around

since I was a teenager. Acting out in these specific ways worked to numb my fear and pain.

It was very similar to how alcoholics or drug addicts describe the chemical response to alcohol or drugs making them feel invincible or alive. In my case, it was about being someone who could actually show up on a day to day basis for the job and seemed to have their stuff together.

It worked until it didn't work anymore. And when it stopped working, I tried to do it more and more. I couldn't stop on my own and I needed help. I got to a place where I literally wanted to die. It took me getting to that place of seemingly like this is the end, I can't live life on life's terms. I got to that ultimate place of thinking *I'm just going to take my own life*. And then I realized I couldn't do it and that I had a reason to live. That's when I called the guy who actually became my sponsor. And it's funny because, you know, you think coming into Program like, "Oh this guy is going to help me - specifically me and my problems- to help me figure out a solution so that I don't have to do these things that I don't want to do anymore." That's the exact opposite of what he did. I like the analogy of my house was on fire, my life was on fire and I was standing there you know on the front lawn trying to contain this inferno with a garden hose. And it's doing nothing. And my sponsor walks up and says "Put the hose down. Walk with me." And we walk down the road to a bench, and he hands me a phone, a pad of paper, and a pen. He says, "Meetings are right down the

road here, the opposite way of where your house was. I want you to read every day. I want you to write every day. And I want you to make phone calls to people in program and learn to be of service. And when you're not doing that, I want you to be in meetings. I want you to take service commitments at meetings. I want you to learn to communicate with people in meetings, ask for the phone numbers of the guys that you relate to, and call them. See how they're doing. Don't necessarily talk about all your problems but ask them how they're doing."

I remember thinking when he explained all of this, *what the hell. My house is on fire. I've got real problems. What the hell does all this have to do with my problems, my house, my life?*

And he said, "Well, I guarantee you, if you do this work and you stop trying to manage the unmanageable in your life and you learn to be of service, that the house that's on fire will stop being on fire and it will start to rebuild itself all on its own. And sure as s\*\*t after doing all that for six months -I'm going back to the analogy - my sponsor and I then walked back up to my house and it wasn't on fire

anymore and it was starting to be rebuilt. And my sponsor explained to me, remember when you were standing there with a garden hose? Well, guess what? There was kerosene in that garden hose. And you were the one that started the fire. You were the one that was fueling it. The minute that you stopped trying to manage all of your problems, fears and anxieties and had faith in something greater than yourself, did all this work to clear out the wreckage of the past, learned to be of service, and help other guys which is an extremely noble action, things got better.

That's been the recipe for my recovery. It absolutely worked. Don't get me wrong, I have to do a lot of inventory. When my sponsor had me do my Fourth Step, we did the 4 columns out of the A.A. Big Book which are: 1. Who I am resentful at, 2. the cause of the resentment, 3. how it made me feel and then, 4. what my part was in the resentment. But we also tacked on to that a fear column. So, for every resentment he had me ask myself, "What's the top-level fear that got triggered from this resentment?" The two most important columns on my Fourth Step were the fourth and fifth column (my part and fears). There's

nothing in S.L.A.A. literature that says when we get resentful, we should call the person that we're resentful at and get them to agree with our resentment and get them to apologize. I've got to turn all this over and look inward. I need to take responsibility for what I did and surrender whatever fears are coming up because nine times out of 10 it's completely false and untrue.

Anyway, I'm going off the deep end here, but did that answer the question?

**Lisa:** It's funny because just now you answered all of my questions.

**Michael:** Oh sorry.

**Lisa:** (laughter) I'll just tell you a question first and then maybe we can work out something that will go into more detail. So, one of my questions: Fear can be painful and take up much of your time and energy and maybe even show up in physical symptoms. What part did fear play in your life before recovery? You sort of answered that.

**Michael:** I've actually got a lot more to say on that. Well I'm glad you brought that up because fear has always manifested in my body physically since I was 10 years old. I used to get really crippling migraine headaches. Literally, right when I turned



10, I started getting these migraines and that's when the chaos in my household got worse and worse. The abuse of my childhood got sort of ramped up. My body responds to the unmanageable by creating physical pain to try and distract me from all of the fear, anxiety, and the trauma. It's like my brain believes that if whatever is stored in my body comes out, it's going to be so bad that my life's going to be in danger.

There's a medical condition that actually describes this where there's a defense mechanism in my head that is trying to protect me from fear and anxiety coming out and manifesting physically. My brain is starving muscles in my body of oxygen. It creates pain and physical symptoms in my body to distract me from this repressed emotion coming out. I've had these weird unsolvable medical issues since I was 10. I've had crippling back pain that seemingly just went away after six months.

Every doctor was like, "I don't know what that was." I've had all kinds of weird aches and pains and I have several friends in Program whose minds work in a very similar pattern. One of my friends had crippling elbow pain and knee pain that just seemingly goes away after three months. So,

for me doing the inventories and doing the Fourth Step style - actually I do this as part of a 10th Step now, is essential for me to look at my resentments and fears and surrender them as part of my spiritual program so that I'm not crippled by pain on a consistent basis.

**Lisa:** What coping skills did you learn as a result of recovery in S.L.A.A. and can you describe your journey with that?

**Michael:** I got the perfect sponsor for someone like me who has all this fear and anxiety and acted out as a result and who ultimately almost destroyed my life in the process. I got a sponsor who had a very similar experience. He was 10 years sober when he started working with me. He actually developed this additional fear inventory process that he does with all his sponsees and that helped him greatly. The inventory process is this: An example would be if I have a work meeting that I'm super nervous about and I've got to present something. And my mind is just believing that I can't do it. I get out a piece of paper and write that. OK. I have fears that if I show up for this meeting tomorrow, I'm going to be crippled by fear and anxiety and I'm not going

to be able to speak. And then I write below that: Well then, if that's true then I have fears that people are going to see me as a fraud, a failure, and a piece of crap. And below that: I have fears that I'm going to get fired. And if that's true, then I have fears that my life has no meaning and I'm going to be forever crippled by my fears, that I can't function as a human being anymore.

So, literally you can see how my brain works. What is seemingly a top level fear the night before a big work meeting- the reason why I'm so crippled by it is because underneath the top level fear is this old belief that if I show up to this meeting tomorrow and I'm not perfect that I'm going to be crushed by this idea that I'm no good, I'm unlovable, I'm not likable, I'm a piece of s\*\*t, I'm a fraud and I should take my own life as a result.

For me, this process is beginning to uncover this core operating system that's rooted in trauma that exists in my head. So, basically, once I've defined what we call the core old belief, then I can begin to look at what is the actual truth. What's the opposite of that negative belief? And so, the truth is, if I show up tomorrow and I'm imperfect and people don't like it, it's none of my

business. What Program has shown me is that all I am responsible for is showing up and trying to do my best. I'm showing up, trying to be of service and doing the best that I can and if anything negative happens as a result of that or if I don't perform to a level that someone has an expectation of then that's really on them. I'm not responsible for that because I did my best. Or if the worst does come true, and I'm somehow fired from my job because I was imperfect -which has never happened -then it's about beginning to have faith and trust that my Higher Power will show me what's in store for the next path in my life- what's the next thing for me to do? What's the next indicated action?

So, sometimes my job ends. I work in a business where I have lots of clients and jobs and for seemingly no reason it ends. I can get into fear and anxiety about that- like, "Oh crap. What do I do now? I'm screwed." But something always presents itself. My Higher Power always takes care of me. I'm given something else - some other way to be of service. Typically, that involves me being able to make money and pay my bills. I haven't run out of money yet and I haven't been completely

screwed where I feel like I have to take my life. My inventory process involves discovering my old beliefs, writing out what's actually true which is the opposite of my old belief and then what action I can take today to find the positive is true and not the old belief. And sometimes that's just as simple as making some Program calls, going to a meeting, being of service, praying, meditating, and trying to get out of that old belief that's buried deep inside. Or it takes some action where I can connect with loving myself and doing something that is good for myself.

**Lisa:** I saw you do that with this pandemic. You're of service - helping with the online meetings.

**Michael.** Yes. I've since had to step back from that because now work has gotten crazy. But yeah, I know. I appreciate you bringing that up. Yeah, when COVID-19 came up my thoughts were, *you should not be in Los Angeles when all of this is happening and if your job is going to end in November you've got to get out of L.A.* So, I did actually take an action. I booked a U-Haul at the end of May just as a precautionary measure in case I do need to leave L.A. That was my back up plan. And that sort of calmed

my old belief. There's a difference between reacting to fear versus contrary action. For me, reactions are usually immediate, excessive, and completely inappropriate. I usually have to do some sort of amends to myself or other people as a result of reaction. And so, I don't want to be reactive. Reactive me is bad. I want to be in contrary action-to do the next right thing. It's funny because one of those contrary actions in the beginning of COVID-19 was to actually book that U-Haul a couple months out because there's no cost to do it and you can always cancel. That reminds me, I need to cancel it because everything worked out fine.

**Lisa:** How do Steps 2, 3 and 11 help you with dealing with fear?

**Michael:** Every day I wake up in some form of fear and I have some level of anxiety especially during the week when I have work. Right now, I have a ton of work so it's even more prominent in my head. The best, shortest descriptions I ever heard of Steps 1, 2 and 3 is "I can't manage this, Step 1. My Higher Power can, Step 2. I need to let my Higher Power manage it, Step 3." So, every morning I wake up, I'm powerless over the negative

thoughts in my head that are telling me to not get out of bed; this isn't going to work out; this isn't going to go well; whatever you have to do today and especially in this crisis it is the thought of like *I'm F\*ed*. There's no point. I shouldn't even get out of bed. The opposite is always true. In fact, there's a really good quote: "I'm not OK. You're not OK. But it's all OK." I love that one. Every day I have to admit that I am powerless over the stuff in my head.

And then I need to come to believe. In order to get out of bed, I have to essentially come to believe that a Power greater than myself will restore me to sanity if I get out of bed. If I take an action, I'll be taken care of. And then once I take one or two actions like I get out of bed, feed my cat, open the blinds to let some light in, eat some food, and drink some water, if I start to take care of myself in a loving way, then I'm always shown that I'm going to be OK no matter what happens. I essentially turn my life and my will over to my Higher Power by doing the thing that I originally thought was going to destroy me that day. And that usually involves a conference call or going to work or doing something that I don't necessarily want to do. When I do it, I'm always shown

that when I walk up to that bogeyman, I'm terrified and feel like I'm going to die and then it's like the Wizard of Oz. Behind the curtain is this tiny little man and he's just projecting himself onto the screen and making himself look bigger. So, if I walk up to it, the screen is paper thin and I can put my hand through it. That old belief that like, *I'm going to die, I'm going to die, I can't handle this*, is paper thin. Once I walk through that fear, my brain finally catches up to the reality of the situation which is, it is all OK. Every day I walk through some version of that and I've been doing that for almost 7 years now. And yet, every morning to some degree that fear still exists. What I've come to realize is that this is just my journey in life — to consistently keep walking through my fears as if I'm going to die. The best way it was ever summed up to me was that I have 35 years of bad programming and I have seven years in recovery. The bad programming still has way more influence than the positives that I've learned in the Program. So, I'm going to have to keep dealing with this for a while and that's OK. It's workable. It's not fun, but it's OK.

**Lisa:** Describe some of the fears that you deal with daily-

are they historical or hysterical and how do you tell the difference?

**Michael:** For me, all of my fears are hysterical/historical.

**Lisa:** You've never had fears that are reasonable-like, yeah that could happen?

**Michael:** Yeah. I guess so. I wouldn't classify them as... I don't know; I haven't thought about that actually. I don't know how to answer that question. That's a tough one because most of my fears are hysterical/historical.

**Lisa:** I think your fears about life being too stressful now are reasonable.

**Michael:** I don't. I've come to realize that they're not reasonable because it really boils down to accepting the fact that my Higher Power has me exactly where I'm supposed to be. If I'm really on the wrong path, Lisa, God will put me on the right path. I just had this conversation with a fellow yesterday. He's moving across the country in 30 days. And he's like, "Oh crap. Did I make the wrong decision?" And I'm like, "Well, you've been thinking about this for the last year and taking all this contrary action around it-really doing your due diligence around all of it. And if you're moving to the East Coast then that's what your Higher Power wants you to do."

**Lisa:** I like that because then none of my fears are really reasonable.

**Michael:** None of mine are.

**Lisa:** Yeah. You made me think about when I was so afraid of losing my job during the recession in 2008. And 150 people in my office got laid off and I watched them go out the door after having 30 years with the company. And so, my fear was huge. But God carried me through every fear and today I've gotten to the point where if I leave the place that I'm at - I've been there 25 years - if I have to leave there- I don't have to deal with the stuff that I have to deal with daily.

**Michael:** Right. Something else will present itself. You have skills. All of those 150 people that got laid off in 2008 or 2009, whatever it was, they all found jobs. That's the thing - I believe and call me crazy - but I have to believe that the universe is perfect and everything in it is where it's supposed to be.

Otherwise, there's no point to my life, I shouldn't get out of bed today and I can't handle it. And then I'm right back to where I started and acting out, trying to manage the unmanageable and ultimately doing what my Higher Power doesn't want me to do (as I've discovered in Program).

My Higher Power doesn't want me using women as sex objects because that's not an esteemable act.

Come to find out, that's not a very healthy way to cope with fear and anxiety. Neither is making a woman my Higher Power and essentially relying on her to be my spiritual barometer. That was a disaster as well. The universe is my Higher Power.

It's my belief that maybe we as a human race, needed to go through this COVID-19 crisis because of the direction we were heading with everybody out for themselves and nothing matters - all the selfish bulls\*<sup>t</sup> - because of how selfish and self-centered everyone is. This is how I grow as a human being - breakdowns lead to breakthroughs for me. I am stubborn. My default is selfishness and stubbornness. I need to have a breakdown; the universe helps me to have these breakdowns so that I can learn to not be selfish and self-centered and act in that old way. And that's a gift. So maybe in a way you could argue that this crisis is a gift. But that's a hard one for people to swallow, especially people who've lost people. I believe that as human beings, we have to really create a mess before we can really surrender

and fix things.

**Lisa:** Yeah. You know it's funny that you say that because after 9/11 - I got sober on December 4, 2001. Right after 9/11, the next day, they were telling everybody to stay home -don't go to public places for fear of another attack. My qualifier and I went to an amusement park and it was totally empty. My qualifier's wife was saying that the attack was going to change the world and make humanity better to each other. And we were just like f\* you. It isn't going to make anything better. We're all screwed. We were in such a horrible place of fear that we acted self-destructively and put ourselves in grave danger. And I see the difference in recovery when COVID-19 hit. I'm still going into my office as it's an essential business and helping co-workers work from home. There hasn't been any of that crazy Los Angeles traffic and people at my work are so grateful for each other and so grateful for me helping them work from home. We've shown so much love for each other and togetherness. And when I drive home- I had to call my husband the other day because I looked up at the skyline in L.A. and it was blue and beautiful with white clouds and so clear and silent. I have



never seen L.A. that way. I mean, it's such a different experience from acting out and having a tragedy with a bunch of fear and being in recovery and having a tragedy with a bunch of fear and giving it to God.

**Michael:** I know. The reports all over the media have been that alcohol consumption has gone way up like 20 to 25%. They're like, "I need something to help me cope." No, you don't. That's the spiritual abnormality. That's what our Program says - this is a spiritual problem of faith and trust. The chemical isn't going to fix the problem. It's a God-sized hole. Fear for me is a God-sized hole. The only solution is surrender. First, I have to surrender the old belief and then get into action- to act as if the old belief isn't true. Everybody- I don't care -you find the most together, richest person on the planet and on some level, they are faking it until they're making it. They literally just have instinctual faith every morning when they get out of bed, they're going to be OK. Some people are blessed with that instinctual level of like, "I am a good person, the universe loves me, and I'm going to be OK. And I don't have that. I have the exact opposite. I wake up and

it's like, *this is f\*d, I shouldn't get out of bed today.* I have to do these inventories in order to get my ass out of bed and get to work. Thank God I hit a bottom in Program because hitting bottom forced me to finally surrender. It's like that guy standing in front of the house - I was fueling the fire with trying to manage the manageable. People who are drinking themselves into oblivion in this crisis are fueling their breakdown. Hopefully, this will lead to surrender.

**Lisa:** I'm in a food program and a fellow tells me, "Thank God I'm not in the food right now because that would just be so much worse." I thank God I'm in this position right now. I go grocery shopping three times a week and I've had to stand in line for an hour just to get into the store. Things have really changed for me. But I get up every morning and I am grateful that I have some heat in my apartment. I have a really nice spacious apartment. I'm just grateful.

Well, this has been a really great conversation, Michael. I really thank you.

**Michael:** Yeah. Thanks. I have a PhD in fear, so this was a good topic. (laughter)

**Lisa:** I love it. (laughter)

## Answering the Question of the Day



I am reminded of a basic premise that states the opposite of love is not hate, but fear. Love-based emotions include love, joy, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion. Fear-based emotions include anger, grief, shame, judgment, and insecurity. For me, the

addictive process was a way to act out my fears. The function of all my addictions was to negotiate the mental madness in my head — to turn down the volume. I had self-centered fear to the extreme. I acted out with painful relationship patterns, drugs, alcohol,

**Have you had a particularly fearful situation that  
Program tools helped you overcome?**

control, and, at times, isolation. These actions were all due to fear. Now, in S.L.A.A., I am able to take Step One and admit I am powerless over my feelings and behaviors and ask for help. I am able to identify with my fellows and know that I am not alone in my suffering. This diminishes my fear greatly.

My qualifier lives across the street. At some point during our 9-year relationship, he moved there. It was lovely. We weren't ready to live together and that was a wonderful negotiation.

When we separated this last time, I didn't know how I could live my life with him there, especially, knowing he was seeing someone else.

My fear was massive. This Program taught me that taking small bites of time, going one hour at a time, one day at a time, was all I needed. I created a route to the train that was different and effective. I joined another gym.

I stopped going to local meetings and started going to ones away from my neighborhood. I made myself a precious priority and reached out to fellows when I saw him up the block or from a distance.

While I do not recommend this setup, it is now six months later and I have not had contact with him. I wish him well AND I put myself first. I have integrity.

My bottom lines of no abandonment of self and no pursuing unavailable people are honored. My fear has been replaced by faith. My number one tool is telling the truth to my sponsor and fellows. My other tools are putting myself first, surrendering all my feelings to HP, including those of longing and fantasy, keeping a gratitude list, making a meeting a day, and doing my Step work. One day at a time, I engage my top lines and leave the rest to GOD.

— JAYNE N. 4/22/20

## ***Spiritual Reminder Unique to S.L.A.A.***

Stress Reliever and Fear Reduction in Service, Meetings and Beyond

I remember my fear attending my first Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in Boston in 2003 as a first-year Delegate. However, what I learned in the 12-Step programs was that “Fear knocked at the door, faith answered, and nobody was there.” So, I drove down from Montreal despite my fear.

Of course, once I arrived, I was warmly greeted at registration. There were all sorts of activities to reduce my fears. One was my new sponsor was there, another was I had a Delegate Mentor, and finally there was a Delegate Orientation first thing the following morning.

What impressed me most in reducing my fears was how the Conference used a *Spiritual Reminder* before voting and/or during emotional discussions.

The first explanation of the *Spiritual Reminder* that I found was in the Conference Service Manual (CSM) 2001: “*The primary purpose of this role is to allow the group to connect with his or her Higher Power. Although there is a role in which a specific person*

*calls for a moment of silence whenever there is tension, emotions are taking the focus off the task at hand, if it is time for a difficult vote, or whenever it seems appropriate, ANYONE can call for a 30- or 60-second time out whenever s/he wish. The Timekeeper announces when the time is up.”*

Recently, I was asked if I knew the history of the *Spiritual Reminder* used by S.L.A.A. I have saved and accumulated **F.W.S. Newsletters** (1989-present), ABM Minutes (1986-present) and having served on the Board of Trustees (BOT), I also had a copy of the first BOT Manual. I reviewed these documents as well as contacted a few old-timers about how the *Spiritual Reminder* started in S.L.A.A.

The first mention of taking 30 or 60 seconds of silence during business meetings was in the **BOT Manual 1991-94**. An “HP Guardian” would be assigned during business meetings, but anyone could take 30 seconds of time as a “stress-reliever.”

The 1994 and 1995 ABMs were especially difficult according to articles in the newsletter; and, in 1996 the *Spiritual Reminder* was introduced at the ABM, according to one old-timer. The *Spiritual Reminder* was not mentioned in the ABM Minutes until 1999 but has been used ever since.

The current **CSM 2020** (document on the F.W.S. Website) describes and defines the *Spiritual Reminder* in relation to the ABM in three sections. I provide the definition from the *Terms Used in Service* on page 11:

*“Spiritual Reminder: A 30 or 60 second time-out requested by a member or person assigned this role. During this time all discussion and movements are halted to provide the opportunity for all members/participants to connect with their Higher Power. The Time Keeper announces when the time is up and business resumes.”* (See also pages 36 and 48.)

An important point is that the *Spiritual Reminder* is not used to control a discussion or a member but to help facilitate a group conscience as per Tradition 2.\*

Shortly after preparing this article I read the booklet, Triggers as a Resource In

Meetings and Beyond ©2010.

This booklet highlights tools for dealing with triggers of which one is a time out. Triggers is defined on page 3 as “...any event that elicits a strong response in us and/or can stimulate us to act in or act out in our addiction.”

The section on *Solutions/Actions* page 10 offers the following: “*We can call for a moment of serenity or silence during the meeting...In some meetings the group asks for a volunteer whose role is to remind the collective group to connect with the Higher Power, through calling a 30-second time out.*”

There is also a reminder of our collective responsibilities in meetings on page 12: “*It is important to remember that both the speaker and the listener have a responsibility to preserve S.L.A.A. unity\*\*. The speaker is responsible for sharing in a way that is respectful to all the members of the group. The listener is responsible for practicing self-care in a way that does not disrupt the meeting.*”

What is so amazing is that I have not been able to find the practice of a *Spiritual Reminder* anywhere else in 12-Step recovery programs. It appears to be a recovery tool

unique to us and very helpful in taking the time to reconnect with self and Higher Power, especially when feeling fear or anxiety in or out of the rooms.

Recently, I was discussing the 12 Recommended Guidelines for Dealing with the Media, ©1985, with a sponsee and I remembered that in number 12 it says “...any level of group conscience be preceded by one minute of silent mediation.” This is also in the Basic Text, ©1986, page 138 and continues with “derived from S.L.A.A.’s

Eleventh Step and Second Tradition.” This just might be the precursor to the S.L.A.A. *Spiritual Reminder*.

— RITA H., MONTREAL

(If you have additional information or history about the *Spiritual Reminder* please contact the *Journal* Editor.)

**\*Tradition 2** For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as this power may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

**\*\*Tradition 1** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity.

## Coronavirus and Addiction

We were MADE to survive this!

We are USED to an unseen illness that is trying to kill us.

We live through that every day.

We are USED to taking things as they come, one day at a time.

We are USED to isolation. We have survived loneliness many times.

We are USED to quarantine, jails, institutions, detoxes, treatment centers, and more.

We are USED to turning to a Higher Power for faith, hope, and constancy.

We are USED to letting go of what we can't control, to turning it over.

We are USED to working every day to keep others alive, to keeping hope alive.

We are USED to fighting against the odds to RECOVER from a disease, to help others RECOVER.

We have the best skill set in the world to make it through this. And somehow, someday, at the end of the day, we will be better from this. We know how to allow that improvement to happen. One day at a time...

— ANONYMOUS

# Given Tools to Combat Fear and Anxiety

On week five of being quarantined under New York City's lock down, my sponsor asked me, "What does little Caroline want for herself?"

"She wants to kill God," I replied. Earlier that week, I woke up one morning and discovered three things. One, I had been hired by a company to teach English online (a nice change from working as an exotic dancer) and two, I was going to be an aunt again. My younger sister announced in the mail she was having a rainbow baby. "A rainbow baby is a baby that is born following the loss of a previous child," the card read. There was a photograph of a baby onesie and a sign that said, "hand-picked from my brother in heaven." And three, I still had not received my stimulus check or my unemployment insurance. I was still supposed to stay inside all day, every day, indefinitely. I still only had plain pasta without any sauce, canned beans, and Campbell's soup to eat. I still hung to my Zoom S.L.A.A.

meetings as my life raft to sanity. I was still single and alone with my cats in my studio apartment in COVID-19 hell. I was overwhelmed with fear. How was I supposed to pay my rent? Where would I go if I got evicted? Would I have to move in with my parents back in Kansas?

Was I going to get fat? Would I get Coronavirus? And worse of all, what would happen if my sister lost another baby? After three long days of labor, Henry was born by an emergency C-section July 4th, 2019. It was hard for me to be present in the NICU with my family because I had a qualifier.

I was present enough, however, to notice my sister's lips quivering as she sat in bed on what was supposed to be her last night being pregnant. "I barely slept at all last night," she said. "I was too nervous." I felt pain when she said this. I scanned the room for a distraction and focused on the various tubes attached to her. My family knew that Henry had a 90% chance of living and

it would be weeks, if not months, before he would be able to safely leave the hospital. I also knew it was probably a bad idea for me to be dating anyone, considering I had not reached Step Nine yet and that all of my friends in S.L.A.A. told me it was a bad idea.

But I didn't care. I just wanted to get high and distract myself from feeling the feelings that come with knowing your nephew might die. So I got high. Most dating plans have a two-hour-rule time limit on a first date. Naturally, my date lasted the whole night. We trauma bonded. We talked about our amazing "connection." We made future plans together. We did everything we could to act out except get physical. We did not have sex. And thank God for that. My two bottom lines have always been "no pursuit of unavailable people, and no sex outside a committed relationship."

Somehow, by the grace of God, when I called my sponsor the next day, I was still sober. Over the course of 53 days, Henry had five surgeries. With each surgery, my anxiety grew more intense. "I think he's dying," I told my friends. I am grateful now for a new tool this life experience put in my

toolbox. Rather than trying to fix the situation, or make me feel better, or tell me what to do, I felt the most loved when the person I confided to was just present and listened to me.

I accumulated prayers for Henry like it was insurance. I had a friend put his name on their church's prayer list. There were hundreds of people praying for Henry. Everyone prayed that Henry would live. This was another valuable lesson that I had to learn. I no longer pray for what I want to happen. I pray to fully accept what is happening. And I pray that if there is anything I am supposed to do that I will be brave enough to do it.

On the 53rd day of his life, Henry passed away. He amazed the medical staff one last time, by staying alive long enough for his father to make the hours-long drive from their home in Kansas to the Colorado hospital so they could enjoy a few hours as a family together one last time. My gut reaction to the news of Henry's death was rage.

"I just don't understand why this happened!," I cried to my sponsor. "Why did my sister have to be in labor for three days? Why did Henry have to have five surgeries? Why did he have to live this long and then die?" My



sponsor had lost her father not too long ago so she understood some of what I was feeling. "Maybe it would help," she said. "If you tried to be grateful for the times you did have with Henry." She then told me a story about her own sponsor, how amazed she was that they did Step work together while her sponsor received chemo through an IV in her arm. I decided to stay in New York so I could be close to my medicine instead of visiting my family in Colorado. It was the right decision. I stayed sober.

Flash forward almost a year later: I was once again deep in my disease, yelling at my sponsor my book of woes. We were both familiar with the routine.

I would list my fears and my sponsor would bring up God. Only this time, I decided not to throw at her my favorite, "I hate God! God killed Henry!" weapon.

I had come to realize the reality that this was a trap. Other than the brief high it gave me, choosing to stay angry was not helping me. "I can surrender to God's will," I told her. "But what if God's will for me is something terrible?" My greatest fear has always been of being abused like I did when I was a child all over again. My sponsor understood.

"That has never been my experience," she told me.

I've learned that ultimately what is going to happen will happen. Call it God's will or call it reality. I can throw as big of a temper tantrum as I'd like but what will happen will still always happen. I can worry as much as I want to, but it will not change my circumstances for the better. Worrying does not protect the people I love. My life is easier when I stop throwing tantrums, I quit being paranoid, and instead focus on doing what I feel in my heart I am supposed to do.

I consider myself agnostic, but I believe in the power of prayer. I believe 3 to 15 minutes of morning meditation and a vegan breakfast is the secret to having an excellent day. Meditation keeps me present. When my mind becomes fearful, I bring my attention back to feeling my feet on the ground. I can't feel my feet and my fears at the same time. I meditate and then I pray. I say simple prayers like, "Tell me what to do. I am ready." Other days I just say, "Thank you." Today, I choose to be grateful for Henry. I am grateful for him and his new little sister, a rainbow baby.

— CAROLINE FROM NEW YORK



## **THE INSPIRATION LINE**

Your 24-Hour Sponsor

215-574-2120

**CELEBRATES**

**400,000 CALLS!**

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

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

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





theJournal