

theJournal

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Breaking Up...
With a Sponsor

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:

In all relationships (not just sponsor/sponsee) I've always believed in the idea that people are together for a season, a reason or a lifetime. If it's for a season, it's usually because people's lives go in different directions and need to part ways. If it's for a reason both people have lessons they need to learn and then they move on. If it's for a lifetime, then it's usually a good fit and continues to help both people throughout the relationship. I've had all of those kinds of relationships with sponsors and sponsees and have had my share of breakups. I learned a lot every time and was always grateful for the experience with each person, even if it was painful at times.

And with this issue of *the Journal* I enjoyed hearing other S.L.A.A. members' experience with this topic. Hopefully, if anyone is struggling in a sponsor/sponsee relationship and wondering whether to stay or to go, this issue will help you with your decision.

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 found it necessary to break up with a sponsor? How did you come to this decision and what happened?”

After I woke up and realized the codependent relationship that had soaked up ten years of our time, with him talking about his family problems, and I saw my role in playing shrink instead of working the Steps, I broke off the sponsee/sponsor relationship. I got another sponsor and began seriously working the Steps. The first sponsor was very upset. And still today when we talk, it is always about his children and their problems. I learned a lot about my codependency and how I would give my power away. Not anymore!

— JIM, SAN FRANCISCO

I broke up with a sponsor because I had a resentment towards him and he refused to allow me to discuss it with him. Now, years later, I realize that when I allowed him to abuse me, I had re-created the abusive relationship with him that I had with my elder brothers. It was just a lesson I had to learn and we're OK with each other now. I have to admit that I'm still angry. But that's that part of me that thinks some healing will occur with a proper amends.

Anyway, I choose to move on as best I can.

— ANONYMOUS

My sponsor didn't have enough time for me. I'd talk to him and he'd be doing other things while on the phone with me. It was not easy to get together face to face. I told him I needed more time and I needed more. We parted in a friendly way.

— STEVE B., CHICAGO

Fortunately not — I have worked with my A.A. sponsor for 20 years and my S.L.A.A. sponsor for 11 and 1/2 years. These are some of my longest, stable, healthy relationships. They are not perfect. But, I have learned to stay and not run if I have a negative feeling; and to talk about it once I have settled down. It's about good boundaries, mutual respect and trust plus commitment.

— RITA H., MONTREAL

Yes. He was “cured.” H.P.'s will — I have a better sponsor now.

— TOM F., PINELLAS PARK, FL

I have been fortunate to have the same sponsor for my time of close to 7 years in S.L.A.A. It has greatly contributed to my recovery.

— ANONYMOUS

Yes. My sponsor had stopped working the Steps at Step 4. I eventually surpassed him and needed a sponsor with the experience of further Steps.

— ROB S., JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY

No. But we fell away from each other due to change in schedules.

— MARK W., SF/EB — BRENTWOOD, CA

My sponsor was temporarily unavailable. During my process of trying to find one, she was available again. I have had to step down as a sponsor sometimes due to being unavailable, once because of boundary issues. After much consultation with my own sponsor, and prayer, I chose to step down.

— MONIQUE S., LOS ANGELES, CA

Yes. My first sponsor in A.A. told me to go through the first 164

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “Have you ever found it necessary to break up with a sponsor? How did you come to this decision and what happened?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two questions are: Issue #149 — **ABM issue — 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?” — The deadline for submissions is 5/15/14; and 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. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

pages of the Big Book and take each sentence and make it a question. The work was prior to a first Step and felt daunting. I spoke with another member and called the sponsor. I told her I was going to find another sponsor. She got mad and told me I needed to make amends to her. Another time my S.L.A.A. sponsor shamed me about wanting to date. So I told her the relationship was not working for me. She also got mad and told me I would have to start over. I found a much better sponsor both times.

— ELIZABETH P., HOUSTON

Yes, and of course it brings up so much discomfort and stress — like breaking up with a romantic partner. I’ve had 5 sponsors in S.L.A.A. The first lived far away, plus as we reached my Fourth Step, I had concerns my story might trigger him (knowing his story) and I needed to focus on me at the time. Another sponsor broke my anonymity. And another requested I take down my art collection of lowbrow art — I was unwilling to do that. My 4th sponsor had a slip and left the program. And my fifth and final sponsor has helped me for 3 years now. Breaking up and setting boundaries has taught me a lot about myself and it does get easier. The skills and the healthy vulnerability that I learned has really catapulted my recovery

and my ability for healthy relating.

— TOM, LOS ANGELES

My sponsor had issues with his daughter who became ill. This caused him to be unavailable at crucial times.

CAREY, LITTLE ROCK

I had a sponsor in another fellowship who “broke up with me” because they said they were moving out of the country. A few months later, I saw the individual in an S.L.A.A. meeting (regularly for 6 months — clearly they did not move out of the country). It triggered my rejection and abandonment issues. For my wellness and for top-line and self-care behavior, I found a new sponsor in S.L.A.A. who I spent more time “interviewing” to make sure that they were more capable of practicing rigorous honesty.

— ANONYMOUS, CA

Yes. I still haven’t made amends to my main first sponsor in S.L.A.A. She often tsked at me. So, I held a resentment.

And when I was through the Steps, I broke up with her. I’d like to find her again and apologize.

— ALICE D., LOS ANGELES

Yes, early in my recovery, I needed a tough structured program. I was in enough pain to be willing to do 150 percent of the

work for my recovery. Through working all the Steps a few times, I softened and so did my recovery structure. I had no need to work a Step or die. With a new way of looking at myself, I no longer needed a rigid sponsor. I was able to receive and give love, and it was time to search for a loving, gentle sponsor. I simply said to my sponsor at that time, “I think I am ready to move on.” Without judging each other we both moved on. I am friends now with this woman and I call her. But, I gave myself a huge gift when I listened to my intuition by asking my Higher Power to bring along a loving sponsor.

— K., LOS ANGELES

I had a great sponsor and got to the 2nd Step with him. However, my therapist suggested switching to a guy in my tribe that struggled with what I am going through. So, after praying about that, I broke up with my sponsor and asked the other guy.

I’m glad I did, because I am learning so much.

— DOUG W.

My sponsor walked away after I relapsed— also was hardly available — which was frustrating.

— BARBARA, CA

Unavailable Sponsors



3 years ago, I walked into my first 12-Step program (Al-Anon). I didn't quite feel at home there. But I struggled with my active alcoholic husband, so I stayed. First, I only attended meetings and therapy. I felt more comfortable to pay somebody for their service than to ask somebody to be my sponsor. After almost a year, I gathered all my courage and asked somebody who seemed to me to "have it together."

She said, "Yes." She told me to call her for the next 30 Mondays at 8:15 to show her how committed I was to the program. And as co-dependent as I was, I did. Even though, at the time, she didn't pick up or return my calls.

After my divorce was finalized, I felt that I was ready to do the steps. But at this point, she went through her own divorce. I joined a step

study group, and through the work, I got recovery.

I dated one unavailable person after the next one. I asked my sponsor, "Why do I keep attracting unavailable people?" Her answer was, "You always will. You need to learn to date them anyway."

I did not like that answer and started to search for the solution. I was not willing to put up with an unavailable person for the rest of my life. That's when I realized that I have S.L.A.A.

I sat in meetings and was like a sponge. I heard every share, and heard the tools, and started to see my relationship from a different perspective.

Almost every person I chose was unavailable (sponsor, partners, friends, mentors). That's when I decided to stop it. I went to my sponsor telling her, "I need

someone who is available and reliable."

She told me to call her again, and promised she would answer, but I never called. And soon after, I found a wonderful sponsor who guided me through the Steps and tools.

At our first meeting, we both discussed what we expected from each other — our wants and needs. I told her I need an answer in a timely manner (24 hours). And so far, that works very well. I stopped a lot of my friendships whenever I found that person was unavailable, and that has been such a big blessing to me.

It allows me to have time and space for available people in my life, who are a big part of my recovery and growth.

— CARMEN, MARINA DEL REY, CA

I now have a long-distance sponsor who is kind, respectful, considerate and stays emotionally detached from my relationships and affairs.



Sponsorship: Attraction Rather Than Promotion

I have broken up or fired two previous S.L.A.A. sponsors. The first was a female, who had promoted/solicited herself to become my sponsor, only to be an abusive, berating leader — when that was the thing I had emphasized I did NOT want in a woman sponsor. Since then, I have learned I must be very selective in the people I choose to sponsor me — and I have to be careful and not select anyone who outwardly promotes themselves to me. I cannot personally emphasize enough how important it is in getting to know fellows in the rooms over time and consistency, rather than hooking onto the first sponsor we see just because they fill some fantasy role or inspiration we hope to achieve.

This is exactly what the Traditions/principles of the 12-

Steps is about. We work on attraction rather than promotion. And since I have started sponsoring others, I do not approach newcomers for sponsorship unless they inquire for it themselves.

The second sponsor that I had to let go was a gay man (or at least he claimed to be gay). He asked me not just once, but twice, to go over to his private home to do my Step 4 inventory work.

I have a strict policy of not going to any male S.L.A.A. member's home. I would have been able to let it go the first time he asked me and I rejected him. But when he persisted a second time, I couldn't believe it and fired him right after that.

That was so inappropriate. And given the nature of why we addicts are IN a 12-Step program (to find

recovery), his actions really left a sour taste in my mouth about our fellowship.

However, I now have a long-distance sponsor who is kind, respectful, considerate and stays emotionally detached from my relationships and affairs.

She handles our sponsorship relationship with a more “backseat driver” approach and lets me figure out my strengths and follies, and gives feedback or experience/hope when I ask for it.

If only she lived closer! There are a lot of things I do not like or agree with about S.L.A.A. or many of its members. However, it is because of those who continuously seek recovery and to better themselves spiritually that I am willing to keep working on this program (along with S.A.A.).

— S

When I Dismissed a Sponsor



Photo by Anonymous

I met my sponsor when I was in detox for alcoholism. He was conducting the A.A. meeting at the facility where I was being treated. He seemed knowledgeable as he chaired the meeting.

I talked with him afterwards and he agreed to sponsor me. He was very conscientious at first; not realizing that I had my own car, he even came by my house to drive me to my first outside A.A. meeting. I was so impressed to see that he was 31. Age did not matter — I was 51 and he was so popular in that particular A.A. meeting, and how poised he appeared leading the meeting of such a large group. I was 51 and he was 31. Age did not matter — I wanted to save my life, not my pride. He had a wife and a very young baby. We would meet at

Denny's every Saturday morning. But it was always a rush — rush. He always said that he didn't have much time because he had to get back to his wife and baby. The majority of our meetings at Denny's involved him hurriedly telling me what to underline in the Big Book. He would always tell me that I will learn that my recovery is to help someone else, that was why I was underlining those passages in the A.A. book.

However, he never had time to explain anything that I was underlining. It was always rush, rush, rush. Even though he was married, he spent a significant amount of time flirting with a particular waitress, as well as texting on his cell phone.

I was shocked when he shared with me his concept that we are the cause of the things that happen to us in our lives; that if a stranger

were to slap us, perhaps it's because our facial expression prompted it. He further went on to assert that when women or children are sexually assaulted it's because something in their behavior encouraged it.

I truly became disgusted after hearing these statements. But because I was new in recovery, I dismissed my feelings in the name of powerlessness and acceptance.

After meeting on another hurried Saturday morning, in which he brought his beautiful but very active baby with him, he made the suggestion that (due to the distraction of the baby) we meet the next day, Sunday. Again, his attention was totally taken up with the waitress who served us. I arrived at the agreed time on Sunday and waited, waited, and waited. I called and texted him, but there was no answer.

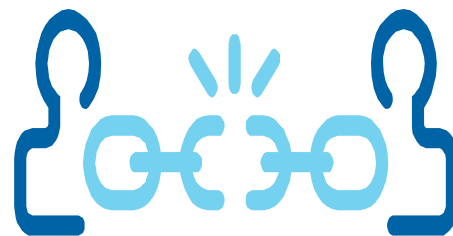
I waited for quite a while and finally went home. He called me a few days later and explained that he was busy with his family and wasn't able to return the call. I called a childhood friend in Chicago who had clean time and asked if he would be my temporary sponsor. He agreed.

I never told my sponsor that he was officially fired, and I heard through the grapevine that he was perplexed as to why he wasn't hearing from me anymore. I soon came in to the S.L.A.A. fellowship. I saw him at an A.A. meeting and noticed on the sign in sheet that his clean date had changed. He relapsed.

I felt total compassion for him. I told him about S.L.A.A. and he said that he would be interested in coming to one of our meetings.

— RALPH D

She Fired Herself



I've been in S.L.A.A. for over six months. It took over a month to find a sponsor in my local group. Finally, a woman with four years sobriety said she was available to sponsor. I asked immediately. She told me in our first conversation, "I don't know what I do wrong, but I don't manage to keep most sponsees." As with romantic partners, we tell others about ourselves in the first few conversations. I learned (again) how important it is to listen to what people say about themselves.

From the beginning, I struggled

with a feeling of shame whenever I failed to follow her instructions.

Sometimes the consequences of my actions taught me that she was right. She helped me maintain abstinence from my bottom-line behavior for six days, then seven, then thirty, then fifty days (after exactly six months in program). That very day, my sponsor called to tell me she was firing herself because it was not working for her. It was about her, she said, not about me. I blamed myself. I called recovery partners. They told me to stay in my own head.

Still I imagined she "broke up with me" for my resistance to her instructions. I was not being given the freedom to fail or to choose, that's what sparked my opposition and shame.

I would have cooperated more with her suggestion of using the Fourth Step method presented in a popular book (rather than the Alcoholics Anonymous way that I had started and did not want to scrap) if it had been based on her sharing her experience, strength and hope. As my new sponsor says, there is something about the A.A.

way that helps reveal MY part in situations.

I realized my opposition stemmed back to the relationship that I had with my mother, of course. I saw my mother as a powerless non-person in relation to my father. I'm nearly fifty, so I grew up in a feminist era (Bee Gees' "Staying Alive," Higher Power have mercy). I wanted more from life, despite being female. I wanted my father's role — breadwinner, ultimate authority in the house,

and disciplinarian when my mother's tactics failed. I opposed my mother's attempts to teach me to do womanly things: putting on make-up, sewing and cooking. I now know that my mother was sexually anorexic and possibly incestuous. And my father was a sex addict with behaviors involving incest, pornography and affairs. No wonder I saw my mother as an object. I spent 30 years active in my sex and love addiction.

I hurt a good many people along

the way and lost jobs and partners due to my behavior. I couldn't figure out why. I had entered A.A. 26 years prior to entering S.L.A.A.

I knew the value of the program but I drifted away after about 15 years, and was spiritually bankrupt by the time I was launched into S.L.A.A. Higher Power has never taken anything from me without giving me something good (or often better) in its place. I have a new sponsor and new growth.

— ANONYMOUS

Practicing Intimacy and Boundaries

When I was new in S.L.A.A., I broke up with a sponsor in another program. It helped me practice intimacy with myself and with someone else when I admitted that the sponsorship wasn't meeting my needs anymore.

It was painful. It did not mean that the person hadn't helped me. We remained on good terms. My sponsor in S.L.A.A. was a much needed support.

My sponsor set very clear boundaries and expectations early on. I think I kept up with my end of the bargain, but noticed my sponsor's availability becoming less reliable. Maybe I was not insistent enough in asking for what I needed — I learned what I needed by going through the breakup.

I was struggling with old behavior popping up. I was desperate for support, but I wasn't the type to pester, so I would reach out and give up when I wasn't getting a response.



Photo by Lisa C.

When I perceived a mutual friend was receiving immediate responses from my sponsor, I realized I had to stop relying on this person. I told my sponsor this and that I needed a time out.

My sponsor pressed for a clearer decision from me, and I exploded in complaints. Basically, I needed more time, more attention, more privacy during our meetings, and I was ready to proceed in Step work.

I was not ready to decide to end our sponsor relationship. But, my sponsor made that decision for me and decided to end our sponsorship right then, but said I could continue to make outreach calls.

This whole interaction took place by text message, which I don't suggest! It took me a long time to

make an outreach call and I was never called back, but my follow-up text was replied to, and that felt like I was heard. I wanted to thank my former sponsor genuinely for how I was helped.

I always felt badly for my complaining episode and not giving myself time to cool down before I expressed myself. It was a very difficult experience to go through.

The medium of texting was part of the culprit — not a good medium for that type of communication, but I wasn't sure how else to feel heard.

We all have our own perceptions of experiences, and I find it takes time and energy to build intimacy with someone in a sponsorship relationship, and both people don't always have the time or energy.

I believe this sponsor had held on to our sponsorship despite probably needing the time and energy for other things.

I felt neglected, and that stirred up neediness in me and some really uncomfortable feelings.

As a side note, the former sponsor of my other program passed away last week, and I was one of the last people to see my former sponsor in hospice.

I am very grateful for my former sponsor's example of unconditional love, availability and service to me.

As an addict it can be hard to see the positive side in things, and sometimes really losing a person is what it takes to appreciate them.

— ANONYMOUS

S.L.A.A. Event

Augustine Alchemy

A Recovery Conference for SLAA and COSLAA

Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM. August 9, 2014

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

Donation at the door \$18.

No one turned away Brown bag or on the town

Sample Program: • 8 AM Hospitality • 9 AM First Open presentation. (One S.L.A.A. /one COSLAA speaker) • 10 AM First breakout • 11:15AM Second breakout • 12:30 PM LUNCH • 2 PM Third Breakout • 3 PM Fourth Breakout • 4:15 PM Second Open Presentation (One COSLAA / one S.L.A.A. speaker) • 4:50 PM Closing circle and gratitude • 5 PM 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.

I had to fire a sponsor in my fourth year of S.L.A.A. He was a really great sponsor.

“I NEVER
WOULD HAVE
MADE IT HERE
WITHOUT
YOU.”

It was a male-female sponsorship relationship. I worried about the fact that some S.L.A.A. members were opposed to the idea and that I was attracted to him even though he was gay, but I went ahead with working the Steps with him anyway.

When I got to Step 5, I would go to his house every week and he would listen to my inventory. It would sometimes take 8 hours to read through only a few pages of my lengthy inventory.

He listened to my resentment list and fears and we would talk about my character defects. I really respected his sobriety and we became closer over the year we worked together as my attraction towards him faded into friendship. (You can't tell someone all of your deepest darkest secrets and not create some intimacy!)

And then I met my last qualifier. I had been doing well in my sobriety, going to 3 meetings a day in 3 fellowships,

meeting with my sponsor and doing all of my Step work. The qualifier was married and a newcomer in S.L.A.A., struggling to get sober. After 6 months of tiptoeing around love addiction, we started the insanity of acting out in sex addiction. I lost my mind.

My sponsor became completely codependent trying to force me back into sober behavior. I went to an A.A. meeting every morning at 7:30 a.m. My sponsor made a strict rule that I call him before that meeting and report on my behavior the day before. It was always bad acting-out news. After months of calling every day, I could tell my sponsor's patience was wearing thin. I could hear it in his voice and in the lectures he gave me.

Finally one day after I swore to him that my qualifier truly loved me and not his wife, my sponsor blew up.

“You're his trick,” he said. “He's addicted to prostitutes and you're just another trick.”

I Needed to Fire a

I started sobbing and shaking and hung up the phone. I stood in front of the A.A. meeting, unable to walk through the doors. I looked left and right up the street wondering where the nearest open liquor store was. I was going to get drunk. I was in a very dangerous state of mind. A close friend (sober member of A.A.) saw the state I was in and read my mind. He said “Don't do anything stupid. Sit down right now and talk to me.” I looked around wondering if I should start running down the street.

“Sit down now!” he yelled. That got my attention. I immediately sat down, bowing my head like a

prisoner about to be sentenced in court.

I told him the whole shady story about my affair, and about my participation in S.L.A.A., and about the phone conversations with my sponsor and wanting to drink and destroy myself, even after 4 years of sobriety in A.A.

“Fire that sponsor,” he said. “Find another sponsor before you do. But don't call him again. Go to a meeting tonight and find a female who has what you want and fire that sponsor.”

He could see the fear in my eyes. “I wouldn't even know how to tell him that,” I said.

“Write this down and read it to him over the phone,” he said.

I took out a pen and paper and he said, “I'm really grateful for all your help this past year, but I've found someone else to work with. Thank you, and goodbye.” It seemed a bit harsh, but I did it.

I don't remember what my sponsor said in response because I was too nervous. But it must have been something nice because I would have woken up if it was mean in any way.

I started working with the new sponsor. She was married, sober in A.A. and had 8 years of sobriety from her bottom lines. And she was



Photo by James E.

Really Great Sponsor

working an S.L.A.A. program. She also had an S.L.A.A. sponsor.

She worked all the Steps with me again and gave me a dating plan and forced me to go to a women's A.A. meeting. I say forced because I hated going there every week.

Women and intimacy freaked me out. But those women really cared about me and were a positive influence when I needed it the most.

My sponsor guided me into sobriety and helped me maintain it. She ended up leaving S.L.A.A. for her own reasons, but I often think

fondly of her and hope she is doing well.

I also thought often of the sponsor I fired and hoped he was doing well, too. But I didn't see him around the meeting rooms of S.L.A.A.

Then, I was given the gift of seeing him again a few years ago. I was at a potluck celebrating a fellow's sobriety in my food program.

My former sponsor was there because he was a friend of the host. We sat and talked as if we had never parted.

He told me I seemed a completely changed person. I said, "Thanks to your help and others in S.L.A.A., I made it through the insanity and feel like I have been rocketed into the fourth dimension like it says in the book. I never would have made it here without you."

He simply said, "Thank you for that," and we moved on, with smiles on our faces, to chat with other people. It makes me happy to think about it even today.

—LISA C.

Share space

Stomping My Feet

As a newcomer in S.L.A.A., I still feel resentful (and sometimes depressed, anxious, despondent, or agonized) at the thought of having to live a life without a girlfriend. Even though the recommended no-sex/no-dating period is temporary, my first response to such a thought is one of upheaval.

I hate the idea of having to wait to have sex — to put off finding someone to love me. In fact, the thought of having to live my life doing anything other than abandoning myself to the pursuit of my vices seems purposeless and unbearable.

And of course it does. Everything I've ever done in my life up to this point has been to move towards sex and "love," or to numb out the pain of not having it. After all, who doesn't want to feel pure pleasure all the time? Who doesn't want to have their every need met at a moment's notice?

Luckily, thanks to S.L.A.A., I can at least acknowledge that these thoughts are rather juvenile. They are the flailing arms and stomping feet of my addict, crying out at the "injustice" of not getting what it wants. This isn't to say what I'm feeling isn't very real — just that it is important to keep things in perspective.

This program teaches me to face life as it comes. Life involves hardship. It involves pain, temptation, and unmet desires. However, it also involves joy, freedom, community, and fun. With S.L.A.A. and the help of my Higher Power, I am starting to take life on life's terms, and to have gratitude for all the gifts I have been given today.

—JAMIL

S.L.A.A. Event

First Annual Midwest-Regional S.L.A.A. 12-Step Retreat

When: May 2 - 4, 2014

Where: The Columban Fathers, St. Columban Retreat Center, 1902 Calhoun Street, Bellevue, Nebraska.

Cost: \$150 (includes food and lodging*) received before April 11, 2013; \$175 after April 11, 2013

SLAAOmahaRetreat@gmail.com



Diversity

THE JOURNAL IS LOOKING FOR SHARES FOR A SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE TOPIC OF DIVERSITY

“We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.”

This recent change to the S.L.A.A. preamble reflects the idea that we can all find recovery from sex and love addiction, no matter our differences. Have you ever felt that you didn't fit in? Do you feel that you fit in in S.L.A.A.? Do you feel that the program is reaching as many people as it could be? How can we continue to carry the message to as many people as possible?

Please send your shares on diversity (by the May 15 deadline) to:
www.slaafws.org/contact/Conference+Journal+Committee

Topics may include:

- Gender Relations
- Sexuality
- Cultural Viewpoints
- Unique Bottom Lines
- Acceptance
- Fitting In
- Identifying with Feelings
- Encouraging Diversity
- Unity
- Gender Identity
- Other topics welcome!

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As I introduce myself
as a sex, romance and relationship addict, I want to first touch on how each of these young age with compulsive masturbation, I would sneak around and had a lot of shame mind, whether it be a fix on a movie, a celebrity, or the idea of flowers, candles, and

addictions have manifested in my life. I believe my sex addiction started at a very

changed, the choices I made have I can now choose freedom over sickness, secrecy and shame, a normal, over sexual abuse and

HOW I FOUGHT MY DISEASE AND WON RECOVERY

"Don't give up before the miracle."

It was all just an escape. It also never allowed me to be present and to see the person I was with for who they really are. The fix and fantasy in my head was enough alone to get me high. My relationship addiction, which I believe to be my core spiritual malady, never gave me the opportunity to be alone. I was too busy compulsively pursuing and being a serial dater often with emotionally unavailable men and women, and using sex as a tool to get the relationship I wanted. My disease revolved around my worth of being tied to someone. And when that person left, it would feel as if my oxygen supply had been cut off.

March 11, 2012 was my first S.L.A.A. meeting. And like a true addict, I arrived late because I was having sex with the man I was cheating on my husband with. Three weeks prior, I had just gotten out of rehab for love addiction. I remember walking into my first meeting, the room was crowded and I took the only seat I could find, near the door on the floor. And as I curled up in the corner and listened to each share, I began to cry. There was a piece of me in each of these women and suddenly my story was being spoken out loud. I knew I was home.

I remember approaching the chairperson after the meeting and saying, "I don't know what to do, but I know I need help." That was my first bottom.

It took a few months to find a sponsor and begin walking the Steps. Finally being able to admit my own powerlessness. During this time, I found myself and my steadfast self-will breaking abstinence and being unable to give up dating, one night stands, obsessing over the collapse of my marriage and obsessing about an affair gone awry.

It took being a victim of Hurricane Sandy and

being displaced from my home, seeing \$50,000 worth of damage, and having a job for me to finally hit the stop button. I decided to set a 90-day bottom-line of no dating. I would focus on finding work, beginning a new career, and rebuilding my life.

On day 45, I met J, the man who helped to rebuild my home. One month later, we had sex. Two weeks after that, we fell in love. Two months after that, he decided to leave the relationship.

I hit my second bottom. It was during this time that I lost my previous sponsor but still showed up to meetings like a dry drunk, listening, barely sharing, and never working the Steps or praying.

Self-will had begun to fail me and my spiritual malady had reached an all time low. It was at this point that a fellow reached out to me. I remembered hearing her qualify many months before in a meeting.

We had exchanged numbers and never got the chance to meet. I heard that this fellow woman had a lot of recovery and I decided to respond to her call. That fellow woman is now my sponsor and through her spiritual strength, love and kindness I have made it to my 9th Step amends and found sobriety.

I would be lying if I said my journey with her was an easy one. In fact, on the contrary I found myself at times simply unwilling to surrender. How can I once and for all get out of the driver's seat and believe in this Higher Power?

Could this beautiful, abundant God actually restore my sanity? The what-ifs kept me stuck in my head, but my faith outweighed it. I knew that surrender was the only road to peace. It was the only solution for how I could win back my life.



that continues to carry me through "Don't give up before the miracle!"

It was a being occurrence of that miracle. During women's recovery in this fellowship, thank you for listening to and loving me as I have. I will find love and joy in my spiritual, loving and joyful recovery.

www.slaafws.org



A Wind of Withdrawal

Outside the wind is roaring, truly roaring
just for a few seconds.

I have heard that winds may roar yet this
is my first experience.

The wind speeds past and bends the red oak tree
outside my window.

This strong old oak leans from the wind which races
past its thick main trunk and whips its branches.

The bright blue sky with little wispy clouds belies
the presence and strength of this wind.

A few smaller branches dangle their broken five
or six feet of dried and leafless wood.

Between gusts, little cotton balls of clouds float
slowly by, belying the wind below.

Such is my recovery, roaring in gusts then
serene a moment before
the insanity of addiction begins again to roar.

ROAR Reach Out And Recover

— LINDA O

Recently,

our group meetings were presented a relatively serious issue.

One of our members had separated from his wife. This was at the wife's request and she had filed for divorce. She moved out and was living on her own.

This member became friends with another female member and started a relationship. This relationship continued for nearly a year, when the estranged wife found out about it. She became jealous and started asking the member questions, trying to find out who the other woman was and how serious this relationship was.

The member, not wanting to involve the other female member, was vague and continuously defended both himself and this other member, saying that the wife had left him and told him it was over.

Still, the wife continued to pursue information.

During this time, the male member would share at meetings

what was transpiring and share information about the other female member. This became more uncomfortable with each meeting.

Then, the wife started to attend both the female only and open/co-ed meetings. She started to intimidate and even eventually threaten this other female member.

Our male S.L.A.A. member continuously requested that the wife not attend these meetings, but she would reply, "The meetings are open to all who need help. You can't stop me from attending."

Finally, we started to lose long-time members, as it was affecting our progress in recovery.

Both the uncomfortable sharing and the wife's attendance chased many members away. Something had to be done.

Two other members contacted me at our Monday meeting. They were concerned and had decided to address the issue.

They had determined that this

was a "group conscience" issue and wanted my help in bringing it up at the Tuesday meeting. I agreed, but asked if they had contacted "the mother ship" or S.L.A.A. home (F.W.S.) office. One of the members said they had done some research and that's where the "group conscience" suggestion came from.

I went home and immediately sent many e-mails to committee members from S.L.A.A. I felt that this couldn't be a unique situation and there may be some suggestions on how other groups handled it. I received many helpful responses and really appreciated the rapid response and concern. The general consensus was that it IS a group conscience issue and should be addressed at the meeting level.

The Tuesday meeting time arrived and I feel God was giving us the answer. One of my colleagues was late and we didn't get to address the issue at the beginning

Thankful to Committees

of the meeting. I spent the whole meeting thinking about it. The thought occurred to me that the fair way to do this was to give the male member a chance to rectify it, without being "called out" in front of the whole meeting.

The meeting ended and with all three of us now there, my colleague

contacted the other male member.

He asked if we could speak with him in private, outside of the meeting. He obliged and we were able to present the issue in a more gentle, private fashion, without making the whole meeting uncomfortable and alienating this other member.

He is a good man and a valued member of our S.L.A.A. community and this tactic turned out to be a positive contact. We were able to present the concerns of the group and maintain respect and dignity with the other member.

It remains to be seen if this meeting was a total success, as it's



Photo by James E.

and the Home Office

only been a short time.

I think our relationship with this other member has become stronger. I can only speak for myself when I say that I gained a new respect for him and appreciate his handling and addressing this issue that affected the entire group.

As of this writing, the wife has not attended any meetings and the members who had left have returned.

I want to thank “the mother ship,” S.L.A.A. home office and committee members for their care, concern and assistance with this

matter.

I hope that this documentation will be of assistance to other S.L.A.A. communities who face similar issues.

— TONY C., CALIFORNIA

Managing My Life on



Photo by Anonymous

I entered S.L.A.A. a little over 2 years ago and thought it was the worst thing to ever happen to me.

In actuality, managing my life on my own before S.L.A.A. was far worse — not just for me, but also for the many others who entered my life — romantic or otherwise.

I thought I could fix this problem through my primary 12-Step program, and boy, did I try.

Two years and reworking the 12 Steps, starting therapy, ruining another relationship, and dumbfounding my friends and myself, finally landed me in S.L.A.A. I entered the program to salvage a hopeless relationship, but stayed for me.

This program has given me a totally new perspective — not just awareness of my patterns or what a healthy relationship looks like, but it has taught me what true intimacy is — with myself!

While my primary program taught me how to get out of self and be of service to others, S.L.A.A. has taught me how to get into self. You see, I never knew what being in self meant; all I knew was escape.

Thanks to this program, I've been able to make myself — my interests, my goals, my likes and dislikes — a priority to me!

All of these years, I was making other people my Higher Power and prioritizing their likes, dislikes, feelings, dreams above my own —

waiting, hoping, wishing, expecting them to put my interests and needs to the top of their lists, too! But I learned here, that that's not how it works.

I had to grow up and realize that Jesse has to take care of Jesse's needs. Otherwise, not only will my needs go unmet, but I will put my unmet dependency needs on everyone else and never experience what it feels like to honestly give and receive love. As a result of putting my own needs first, I've had to experience a lot of discomfort including disappointing people, setting boundaries and cutting off relationships, experiencing boredom as a result of sitting with just plain old me,

My Own Didn't Work

painfully trying new things, and thinking for myself. I had to ask myself, "What the heck does Jesse want out of life?"

And I experienced the life-sucking, but ultimately life-giving gift of withdrawal, with a capital "W." And through doing all of this, I've discovered that I'm a pretty cool person. I'm not the best person in the world and I'm not the worst. But, I genuinely like who I am today. And now I really know that it's not my job — nor in mine or your best interests — to convince you of what a cool person I am.

Even though I'm celebrating this milestone, I think its important to mention that I haven't done this program perfectly. I got involved with an old fling shortly after entering program, set and reset my bottom lines a dozen times, started dating without getting the green

light, and made a mockery of my impromptu dating plan for months before being completely able and willing to put recovery first.

Through all of this, I learned that my addict —my inner 5 year old who is screaming to be noticed — pulls on my heartstrings, triggers my vulnerability, activates my fantasies, and cries out "Damn it, I deserve this!"

I had to make many mistakes and test my willpower time and time again to get to the surrender responsible for this length of sobriety that I have.

But what I always did — despite the acting out and the shame and generally not wanting to be here — was show up for me. You guys taught me that.

And little by little, I got recovery. It's still like that today. I'm also in a committed

relationship, which is not the end-all-be-all of this program, or my life, for that matter.

Despite having acted out together, I chose a partner who has integrity and who shares the same goals as I do. And we've made plans to travel and work abroad together, which is just one serendipitous consequence of applying the tools in this program.

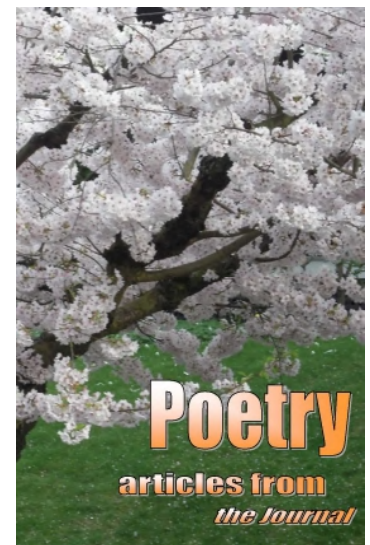
Above all, as a result of getting the hell out of my own way, I've gained the most important relationship — one with a Higher Power whose love knows no limits, whose security can always be relied on, and who continually shows up for me — teaching me, in turn, how to show up for myself, God, and others.

— JESSE, LOS ANGELES

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When Left With Nothing, We Find Our True Selves

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.

"God made the world out of nothing, and when we make ourselves nothing, God can make something of us." — Martin Luther.

There's more than a play on words here. There is a call for us to let go — let go of all of the old ideas that still shape and drive us, often unconsciously — let go of the hurts and resentments that may have piled up for decades and eaten away at our joy — let go of empty fantasies of a non-existent future — above all, let go of the lies we were told about ourselves (or told our-

selves) from childhood that continue to steal our happiness.

When we finally let go, if only for a time, we are left with nothing. But "nothing" is not an absence, an emptiness. It is the place where our true self, truly present to ourselves and others, comes alive. It is a possibility space; it is "the naked now" (Richard Rohr).

It is the void, the space in which, all expectations gone, something of beauty, truth, and goodness may emerge.

This "nothing" is filled with love.

It is the place where we are "surprised by joy" (C.S. Lewis) — the place where we stand "naked and unashamed" (Genesis) before God, ourselves, and each other — the place in which two persons may spontaneously and unselfconsciously say to one another, "I love you."

In the silence of "nothing," where the voices of our minds have been stilled, we hear the joyful music of the heart.

— BOB S., BOONE, NC

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Issue #146 - After Sober Dating

Issue #145 - Addiction in the Age of Technology

Issue #144 - Sex and Love Addiction: What Is Real?

Issue #142 - Safety in Meetings

Issue #139 - Working With Character Defects



Reflections on Higher Power in the 12 Steps

As someone fairly new to S.L.A.A. and to 12-Step fellowship programs, and a long-time practicing Buddhist, I've struggled with the concept of God and Higher Power.

I sincerely want to overcome my sex and love addiction and emotional and social anorexia. I have already found relief through attending S.L.A.A. meetings, calling recovery partners, and starting to work the Steps with a sponsor. I do not want the spiritual aspects of the 12 Steps to be a barrier to my recovery, so I've made concerted effort to resolve my struggle.

My focus has been to find the parallels in my spiritual practice and the 12 Step program.

Buddhism teaches that everything we need to be happy and whole already exists inside of us.

In other words, the power of the cosmic life force that generates this happiness and wholeness is also an inherent part of all human beings.

In that sense, the "power greater than ourselves" is not external to ourselves.

Yet, to tap into this life force, we cannot do it alone. We connect to it through prayer, reading, and engaging with our spiritual community.

As I reflected on this teaching, I did a lot of research on Bill W. and Dr. Bob and how they formed A.A. and the concept of the 12 Steps.

I read passages from the Big Book as well as Buddhist perspectives on A.A. posted on the Internet.



Photo by James E.

What I came to realize is that the message of "you are not alone" in 12-Step programs means that we cannot win over our addiction by ourselves.

Bill W. and Dr. Bob needed each other in order to recover from their alcoholism.

Their connection with each other was their gateway to their connection with their Higher Power, or God.

Their story made me realize that, when I surrender my addiction, when I admit complete defeat, admit that my addiction is unmanageable and that I am powerless to overcome it, what I'm really doing is acknowledging that I cannot recover just by relying on my ego and my willpower. I need other people (the S.L.A.A. community) to help me.

And this acknowledgement is

the gateway to connecting with my spiritual power, or life force, to heal and recover.

Since I've had this realization, I have felt great inner peace and a sense of joy that I truly am no longer alone.

Each time I reach out to my recovery partners, attend an S.L.A.A. meeting, or use the tools of the program, I am intervening in my addictive behavior and reprogramming myself to connect rather than isolate.

I am engaging with other people in ways that are helping me grow and move away from the addiction and toward leading a healthy, happy life.

As a result, the quality of my daily life is changing for the better every day, and I have such hope about my future.

— ANONYMOUS, ARIZONA

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Monogamy

“The cumulative effect of this continued questioning of our sexual myths and motivations was that a climate of trust and emotional intimacy began to evolve.”

— S.L.A.A. BASIC TEXT, PAGE 158

SHARE: I entered S.L.A.A. because my dishonesty with and unavailability toward women in my life had driven me to conclude that professional sex workers were the only way to go. I knew on a deep level that rationale was twisted thinking. And by the grace of God and by working this program, I have been blessed with a willingness to abstain from commercial sexuality, the courage to live and speak honestly, and have been given a genuine desire to be monogamous. When I reached the Tenth Step, my sponsor directed me to read the section of Alcoholics Anonymous that deals with the morning meditation and nightly inventory, which both serve as methods to engage in open rapport with my Higher Power. The practice of morning meditation (I elected for ten-minute ‘mindfulness’ sessions wherein I recite the Third-Step Prayer and then listen for G.O.D.: good orderly direction) and the nightly tenth step (in which I ask four questions: Was I selfish? Was I dishonest? Was I resentful? Was I afraid?) has led to a continued strengthening and deepening of my relationship with the God of my understanding. I have been imparted greater humility, serenity, and increased awareness, all of which allow me a healthier viewpoint regarding all aspects of life.

I.B. - LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

AFFIRMATION: *I will continue to strengthen my relationship with my Higher Power through morning meditation and nightly inventory, allowing me to grow in humility, serenity and awareness.*

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