

# theJournal

Issue # 189

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*God Shot*

# 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: God Shot

Part of Something Wonderful	16
How FAITH and Trusting a Higher Power Worked for Me; Thanks to S.L.A.A.	17
Experiences That Prove There Is a Higher Power Outside of Me	20
The Light That Breaks Through the Darkness	22
An Epiphany	23
God Shot: An Interview	25
Higher Power/Light/Universal Love	27
Because I Have to	28
God Uses Everything to my Benefit, Including Kittens	31
Not a Single Doubt	33
I Saw Recovery	34
I Lost My First Love	35
Accepting I Am an Addict	36

## Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition oriented fellowship based on the model pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous.

The only qualification for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. S.L.A.A. is supported entirely through contributions of its membership, and is free to all who need it.

To counter the destructive consequences of sex and love addiction, we draw on five major resources:

1. **Sobriety.** Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom-line addictive behavior on a daily basis.
2. **Sponsorship/Meetings.** Our capacity to reach out for the supportive fellowship within S.L.A.A.
3. **Steps.** Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sexual and emotional sobriety.
4. **Service.** Our giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely receive.
5. **Spirituality.** Our developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves which can guide and sustain us in recovery.

As a fellowship S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues and seeks no controversy. S.L.A.A. is not affiliated with any other organizations, movements or causes, either religious or secular.

We are, however, united in a common focus: dealing with our addictive sexual and emotional behavior. We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We need protect with special care the anonymity of every S.L.A.A. member. Additionally we try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media.

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## The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.\*

1. We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sex and love addicts, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

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The Conference Journal Committee, a service body within Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, publishes the Journal for the good of the international S.L.A.A. membership. Oversight and policy is provided in accordance with the Ninth Tradition.

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

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

It was really great to see so many submissions for this theme. I think it's a topic that is essential to my sobriety in all of the craziness of life right now. For me, a Higher Power's presence and support is really needed. I need clear signs that God exists. Hearing everyone's experience reminded me that God exists and will give me signs if I ask and look for them.

Step 2 says we "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." Hopefully, some of the stories in this issue of *the Journal* will help you along that path as they did for me.

Most of the experiences in this issue are positive God shots.

I've had many positive God shots in my time in 12-Step programs, but I also had a few God shots that were like taps on my shoulder, pulling me out of delusion and telling me I might not want to stay in an addictive situation. One example was when I was driving to my brother's house in the desert with my married qualifier. We saw a rainbow. I thought it was a sign from God that my qualifier was leaving his wife and that our relationship was meant to be. I later told a fellow S.L.A.A. member about the sign from God and he replied, "Rainbows are refracted light. How can God be in something so broken?"

I looked it up in the dictionary: "The root of *refraction* is seen in the notion that the path of a ray of light or wave of energy is "broken" when it is deflected or turned. The effects of refraction can be seen in a rainbow, which is formed when light rays passing into (and reflecting out of) water droplets are bent at different angles depending on their color, so that the light separates into bands of color."

This opened my eyes and started the clearing away of my delusion and I started being honest with my fellows and my sponsor. I was better prepared when the relationship crashed and burned. I finally had a spiritual experience that has kept me sober for 19 years in S.L.A.A.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “God Shot— Describe any experiences that have proven to/reminded you that a Higher Power

exists. How has this helped your recovery?” 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: #190 — May/June — Returning to Romantic Relations — Have you ever returned to romantic relations after a period of abstinence in the S.L.A.A. program? Please share any issues and concerns and how you dealt with them. Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2021 — and #191 — July/Aug \*ABM Issue\* — “Breakdown to Break Through — Do you feel Higher Power demolished your life to build it back up with a stronger foundation? Please share your experience strength, and hope.” Deadline for submissions is May 15, 2021.

Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

“Describe any experiences that have proven to/reminded you that a Higher Power exists. How has this helped your recovery?”

It was Christmas day, 1991. I was six months sober and each of those withdrawal days had been anywhere from horrible to just painful. At the end of that day, I remember thinking to myself, “Hey, I didn’t feel bad today. This couldn’t be the end of my withdrawal, could it?” It seemed too good to be true, but it was the end. That, perhaps more than anything, cemented my membership in this program because it was proof positive that not only could the writers of the Basic Text specifically describe my addiction, but they were also probably being honest about what I hoped was my recovery. That had to be the work of a Higher Power.

— CHRIS D.



## Question of the day

Last week, I was feeling a bit imbalanced. I hadn't given myself enough time with my Higher Power and had spent too much time hanging out with my partner. As I was driving yesterday, I noticed I was behind a car with a license plate that said "TOPLINE." Truly, Higher Power is everywhere — in the mountains, in the meetings, in the literature...it's there — keeping me humble, keeping me from manufacturing my own misery. It's protecting me. It's reminding me.

— RIV, LOS ANGELES

11/07/20 - I woke up angry after a date night with my wife went south the night before. I really didn't want to go into a meeting, but I forced myself. I tried well over a dozen times to get into the 8:30 a.m. PST stag meeting but couldn't. I even emailed the host and he responded with the same link and password that I had been using. I tried a few more times to no avail. I was going to give up but decided to go into the 9 a.m. PST Big Book meeting. And it completely changed my attitude for the day and my life. My journey into spirituality, having denied it my entire life, began that day. How can you explain how I couldn't get into the stag meeting and how I was 'guided' to the meeting that changed my life?

— DAVID K, LA

God shot reminds me that when we want to reach for the stars, we need to aim for the heart. I believe that embodying, rather than disassociating, is a means of keeping the portal open to the divine. In other words, we can access the universal through the self, as long as we are willing to go through all-the-things-that-we-are-not and to leave it all behind.

— LOUIS, BROOKLYN

## Question of the day

Part of moving from Step 1 to Step 2 was jumping in the ocean. I went to the coast, dove into the waves 3 times, and then heard a voice in my head say, "Welcome to your new life." I knew it was the voice of my God. This one simple moment has helped me stay on my recovery path ever since.

— JUSTINE C

When I surrendered my will, things got better in terms of recovery.

— EUN

I woke up in the emergency room in September wondering how I was still alive. My addiction progressed so much that the only way I could see out was suicide. I was severely depressed for weeks in the hospital. As I lay there looking out the window with the sun shining down, the next thought that came to me was the only thing left to do was to pick up the broken pieces of me and move forward. With the help of therapy, I went to my very first ever S.L.A.A. meeting. I immediately related to the feelings everyone was sharing surrounding their addiction. Today, I have three months in the program and am currently working the steps with the guidance of a sponsor. Every day, with the help of the program, sponsorship, meetings, and fellowship I get better. How dark it is before the dawn! And but for the grace of God there go I!

— RYAN, ANNAPOLIS, MD

I woke up today.

— JOSH W.

## Question of the day

I no longer try to control outcomes.

— KRISHA

Getting a gig during the pandemic (very flexible and well paid) last year that allowed me to work on my spiritual program and go thru withdrawal...

— XIMENA, MIAMI

I remember in the first year of my recovery, my life was a mess— the perfect example of unmanageability. I was just discovering the tenets of S.L.A.A. and trying very hard to place my faith in the existence of a “Higher Power.” I was also in the financial pits. Newly divorced, single mom, under employed, with a way too high mortgage and unable to make ends meet. I attempted a “fox-hole” prayer. You know the type - “God please help me! I will do anything to get sober.” The unsaid was, “I’ll do anything if you get me out of this mess.” But low and behold that afternoon I received a check, a substantial check, for payment for an insurance policy that I had dropped because I was no longer married. It was a refund of a full year’s worth of insurance payments, enough for two months of bills to be paid. It was at this point my belief in a Higher Power began. Now don’t get me wrong- this was not an overnight conversion to totally belief in HP. I experienced two more ‘checks in the mail’ that saved my bank account from bouncing before I became a complete believer. But on this day, the door opened for me –both in my belief in a Higher Power, and in my ability to turn my will over to the care of HP. I have been living that way ever since.

— MELISSA K., CHERRY HILL, NJ

## Question of the day

Laughter connects people and can provide a sense that everything will be ok.

— STEPHANIE, SACRAMENTO, CA

Looking back, all outcomes in the circumstances of my life have proven to be the best for my evolvment, even though at the time I was in sadness and resentment. God has been always by my side guiding me to the most beneficial direction every time.

— FOTINI

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When I was taking steps toward change, I didn't know what I was doing. I just went with my newly found intuition and support from my recovery network. It's unbelievable to see that some of these steps served me years later or were catalyst for more change in the long run. It reminds me that there is always a project in the making for me, as long as I'm willing to be brave, keep at it (without forcing things) and let time do the rest.

— KJ, MONTREAL

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I'd heard that coincidence was God's way of remaining completely anonymous. The most significant of these "coincidences" happened when choosing my first sponsor. I prayed for my Higher Power to show me if David, a man I'd recently met at a meeting, was the right person. A few hours later, I ran into David outside the elevator in my office building. He had only been there a few seconds and was about to leave after realizing he had come to the wrong building in the complex. However, I knew he was in the right place at the right time. David went on to be just the person I needed as I began my recovery journey.

— SCOTT W., ST. PETERSBURG, FL

## Question of the day

In the midst of a big life change, a fellow showed me a new method of daily 10th Steps. These 10th Steps have allowed me to manage the big life change smoothly and to turn the change into an opportunity for growth.

— ANONYMOUS

I had no idea how I was going to survive this pandemic, and then I found Zoom. Soon after lockdown had been declared, I realized I had been given the gift of organization, planning, and leadership. I had practiced those skills and gifts for a long time, and I was especially good at crisis managing for exactly times like these. Not only was I able to feel more connected to my S.L.A.A. community, but this tragedy gave me the opportunity to connect with people all over the world and feel a little less alone in my grief, and simultaneously, in my joy, one day at a time, and at just about any time of the day.

— VANESSA V.

When my Higher Power decided I was ready to face my truth, I was in a meeting about being as sick as your secrets. Everyone was challenged to share a secret about themselves that the group did not know. We went around the room in order and I was the very last person to go. The only secret I could think of was that I might be gay. When it was my turn, that's what I said; "I might be gay, but you will never hear me say that again!" As soon as I said it, I knew it was true! But then, my mind flooded with secrets that I could have shared. That's when you know that your Higher Power is in control.

— JOE, AR

## Question of the day

When I first entered recovery, some 7 years ago, I took a long while to find a sponsor. I was looking for someone like me, they needed to be my age etc., etc., etc. I can see now that I was looking for someone who I thought would “get me” who I’d feel safe with. So, my perfectionism meant I didn’t find a sponsor and I tried to do it alone. Which of course didn’t work out. A fellow who I outreached with asked if I was looking for a sponsor and said he was available. I said I needed to think about it and just hoped the situation would just go away so that I could avoid it. Some weeks later I slipped against my self-appointed bottom lines. I came to realise that I needed a sponsor and I needed to work the 12 Steps. The first call I received after my “slip” was from that very fellow who had offered to sponsor me. That was my Higher Power getting involved. I did my bit, and I took up the chance straight away asking if he was still available and we agreed to start work the very next day. It was my first step along the path of recovery.

— ANONYMOUS

A huge God-shot for me was that at my first ABM I met my sponsor. Prior to this I was beginning to fear that I would not find one. I knew the moment I met her that she was the right one for me! It was a miracle she was available and said yes! We’ve been together nine years now and I thank God every day for her. She has helped me to grow in so many ways! I’ve never had it so good!

— SUSAN G., HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

## Question of the day

When I was in my first month of recovery, my Higher Power did for me what I could not do for myself the first time I saw one of my qualifiers. Fortunately, I was walking out of an S.L.A.A. meeting when I saw him in the building lobby. As my heart pounded and my stomach dropped, my mind raced. Would I linger in his eye line to make sure he saw me, flirting with a guy I knew? No. I grabbed the arm of a fellow S.L.A.A. member and whispered to her what was going on. She calmly walked me out of the room and listened to me as I cried. I called my sponsor, who offered the guidance not to break my no contact. This experience shook me but showed me that with the aid of my Higher Power and women in recovery, I could choose recovery instead of my addiction. I had never successfully done that before. I knew this moment was my Higher Power in action because left to my own devices, I would have succumbed to my powerlessness and started the vicious cycle all over again. Experiencing my Higher Power's loving protection early on was an experience I could draw from in future challenges in my recovery. If I were taken care of then, I would be taken care of again.

— DOROTHY H-J, HOUSTON, TX

When I came to the program, I believed God was angry with me for being unfaithful in most of my longer relationships. Through working the Steps, getting reflexions from my sponsors and working on finding the love for myself that my Higher Power has always held for me, I have strengthened my recovery and successively removed the need for seeking alleviation of my suffering outside of myself.

— FREDRIK L, SWEDEN

## Question of the day

My first Sponsor helped me to find a connection with my Higher Power by giving me a slogan... “Coincidence is Higher Power’s way of remaining anonymous.” This allowed me to see coincidence, serendipity, and luck as a love note from my Higher Power. This helped me to see my Higher Power as loving and helped me learn to believe that I am lovable.

— CHRISTOPHER G., TAMPA BAY INTERGROUP

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When I had been struggling with the Third Step and turning my will and my life over to a Higher Power shortly before starting my Fourth Step, my sponsor asked me to look for moments when I saw examples around me that indicated the existence of a Higher Power. In our fifth or sixth conversation about the topic, as I was very challenged with letting my will go, my sponsor suggested that perhaps I needed to look in nature. The following morning, as I began my 45-mile commute to work, I was greeted by the incredibly vibrant, painted skies behind the hills I was approaching, just before the bend in the highway. I sat in awe as I watched the trees on the top of the hill begin to frame the sky. When I got to work, I relayed the experience to my sponsor, having humbly experienced something only a Higher Power could put before me... And finally turning my will and my life over to that Power did not seem so much of an issue.

— ANONYMOUS

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Coincidences.

— JENNY, RED BANK, NJ



## Question of the day

I moved into my flat in December 2013. I hit my rock bottom on March first, 2014. I wanted to die. I was on my knees. I was taken to my home group meeting 50 feet away from my flat. I just crossed the street and there was the basement of the Saint Paul Anglican church in Athens where the 12-Step meetings of N.A. were happening 3 times a week. When N.A. got bigger, the meeting moved into a bigger room. A year later, I happen to hit another rock bottom because I got involved in a romantic relationship that took me back to my knees. I was in a compulsive romantic relationship. I could not at all find God. I was lost. He became my Higher Power. I felt like I was using drugs and alcohol, but I was not. I had heard from a friend who was a long timer in S.L.A.A. that I might be a sex and love addict. I told myself I needed help. The same church that I went to and got clean at in 2014, was holding S.L.A.A. meetings. I went. I sat. I listened. The same room saved my life again in my next 12-Step program — S.L.A.A. I think God had a plan in giving me this flat. I trust His will for me, and I have gotten the Power to carry that out. Every time I happen to start losing faith in the struggles of life and I get afflicted by my addiction I come back to this experience, the room across the road.

— DOROTEA M.

I was about to act out. I woke up from a weird dream and I wanted to comfort myself and I got up and the phone rang. It was 10 p.m. and I had gone to bed early. It was someone from fellowship that heard me speak at a meeting the week before and I was honest about struggling during COVID-19. I don't usually speak to this person, but I saw the call and answered. He thought I was asleep, but I had already woken up. I was grateful for that call in a time of need.

— ANONYMOUS

# Part of Something Wonderful

**W**hen I first came into S.L.A.A., I struggled with the concept of a Higher Power, but I was open to the idea and was ready to surrender to the programme. One day, I had gone for a long forest walk by myself and was feeling very low. As I walked through the trees, I felt something stroke me very gently across the crown of my head and I stopped dead, thinking “What was that?!” As I looked up, I realised that I’d walked under a large beech tree and a gracefully dipping, leafy branch was what had softly stroked my hair.

In this moment, being alone in quiet woodland, I realised I was part of something huge and wonderful. The touch of nature reminded me that I am a tiny part of a universe full of diverse beings, ecosystems, hopes, dreams, and stardust. It reminded me of when I was a little girl and being stroked on the head would soothe me to sleep and make me feel safe and comforted. I decided at

that moment that this was proof that I had a Higher Power out there looking after me and patting me on the head. I just surrendered to this charming and beguiling idea that there is something or someone out there that is all encompassing and omnipresent and that it is there to help me.

Once I had embraced my Higher Power, difficult situations became much more bearable. If I knew I had to tell someone something that they didn’t like and I was scared of an angry reaction, I’d think to myself, “It’ll be OK, I can pass on any scared or upset feelings to my Higher Power, and that will allow me to try and stay calm and breathe and carry on.”

Having a Higher Power makes me feel less alone, and the more I believe in my Higher Power, the more I believe in myself. It’s a lovely feeling.

— MIRA, UK

## How FAITH and Trusting a Higher Power Worked for Me; Thanks to S.L.A.A.



**A**riving in the rooms of S.L.A.A. can be overwhelming with new language, people sharing their stories and adjusting to feeling safe with strangers. For me, one of the scariest was hearing references of God, Higher Power, turning it over, God's will, not mine. These ideas all seemed foreign. I did not "get

it!" How was the program going to work if I didn't have a Higher Power (HP)? What does it mean, God's will?

I think what did help was that I was able to recognize that everything I had done before finding S.L.A.A. simply did not work. Some of those changes I "tried" that did not work included moving, getting

married, changing jobs, opening a business with my spouse (hoping to avoid acting out because we would always be together), changing my phone number and getting a therapist. All of these changes did not change my behavior and often made it worse. If I changed jobs, it was just new places, new opportunities, new conveniences to find acting out partners.

It was meeting new people to continue to live a secret/second life with.

Getting married only kept me monogamous for 3 weeks until I re-involved myself with a married man that I had a relationship with while engaged. It was constant chaos! I was bringing me wherever I went.

I started trying to create an HP by using a number that was symbolic to me. As a visual and creative person, I thought if this works, maybe then I can start to trust. It was about 8 months in the program; I was attending a retreat. I knew that a takeaway goal was to leave the retreat weekend with a better understanding or start to find a relationship with an HP. Well, God (my HP) recognized I was ready, and I filled up my gas tank to take the 6.5-hour drive to the retreat and it stopped and

filled my gas tank at \$37.37 (37 was the number I was using to start letting go). After that experience, I have had many God moments where I trust, accept, and let go. In 2016 when I finally set the date and time to meet with my ex-husband (after much discussion with sober members in the rooms, my sponsor and working the prior 8 steps), I was leaving the driveway to go meet him.

As I pulled out of the driveway, I looked at my dashboard where the odometer was, it also told me the range and how many miles were on my car. Each one ended with 37. All three lined up in a row. On July 30, 2020, I said goodbye to my first dog, Jake. This was one moment I had often thought or feared would cause me to lose my sobriety. This experience ended up being peaceful due to knowing God was with me and with Jake during our goodbye. The date was 07-30 (equaling 37) when we said goodbye. In addition, that morning when I went to my bedroom to get dressed for the ride to the vet, I glanced at a shelf in my bedroom and caught a glimpse of a medallion I had picked up at a S.L.A.A. recovery day I had attended a few years before. I

did not remember that I had placed the medallion there, and when I picked it up, it read “If God brings you to it, God will get you through it!” That one moment got me through the loss of my first dog. In early September 2020, I chose to get a tattoo to honor how Faith has saved my life and the unexpected blessings I have experienced due to this life-saving program. Pictured is the life preserver, the symbol/logo of S.L.A.A. and the word faith. Over the years, I have heard

people find faith or an HP in the rooms, with the earth, with flowers, with their shoes (the person who shared that said they can’t walk out the door without them). We never know what it is that will connect us to God or Higher Power...or when. If you’re struggling, for today, I invite you to borrow mine. May you find peace and the ability to trust and have faith a little more than yesterday.

— ARI F



## Experiences That Prove There Is a Higher Power Outside of Me

The following experiences have shown me that I have a loving, giving and understanding Higher Power that is saving and preserving me for a reason. That reason is to help other people and to show them that there is a way out of abusive, sexually destructive behaviors. I used to think my life was worthless and meaningless and I had no purpose.

But S.L.A.A. has taught me that I have a purpose and it isn't just for me to waste away. It is to live and thrive and to overcome and live in recovery and sobriety forever. I am grateful for the purpose that my life has now, and I couldn't have discovered that my life has meaning without this program. I know that a Higher Power exists because it's brought me through so many awful painful situations where there is no reasonable explanation of how I survived. Here are just a few of the experiences that prove there is

a Higher Power outside of me:

- When I was choked nearly to death by a partner I met during my days of doing adult chat videos, but I survived. I moved in with him after meeting him in the chat and he was an unemployed alcoholic and drug addict who also was married and living at his parents place, but I survived.

- When I found out that my bisexual fiancé had HIV but somehow I didn't, even though I had gotten pregnant by him and was still having sex with him.

- When I was abused my entire childhood and had suicidal thoughts but never went through with it and wasn't successful in killing myself.

- When I was approved for an apartment without even having a job after stretches of homelessness.

- When I survived a car accident that totaled my car but somehow left me intact.

- When I made it back home in one piece every time after I had anonymous sex with someone from craigslist.

- When I acted out sexually with someone with herpes but didn't contract it myself.

- When the doctor told me that I had contracted HPV but when I went for the cervical biopsy it came back totally clean.

- When I went to my first S.L.A.A. meeting and they didn't say I was weird.

- When the pornographic images and chats I was engaging in didn't lead me to prison.

- When I found myself in abusive relationships but I wasn't led to commit physical abuse or worse.

- When I found out that a person I met on craigslist and was hoping to sleep with had just gotten out of prison for killing someone by setting their girlfriend's apartment on fire but yet I made it home unharmed.

- When I met my sponsor at one of the S.L.A.A. meetings and his story was so much of my story.

- When I made it through withdrawal after a toxic

abusive relationship. While going through this, I moved to and lived in three different states.

- When I was accepted into law school without even having the right test scores or the family support or the family financial paperwork and financial aid allowed my therapist's letters to substitute.

- When I sat around with my first boyfriend as he bought and did drugs at his drug dealer's house, but we never got raided, arrested or stopped by the police.

- When I sat around with another boyfriend/qualifier and he was growing marijuana in his house, but I didn't get caught up in that and I wasn't kicked out of school.

- When the police caught me in a car having sex but didn't take me in or give me a citation or anything.

- All the times I was having sex in cars and motels and I didn't get arrested or cited for any kind of solicitation/prostitution charges.

- All the hours, minutes, days, weeks and months of sobriety to get to 18 months of sobriety today!

— NITA

# The Light That Breaks Through the Darkness

**T**he most powerful reminder that a Higher Power exists for me is fellowship and sponsorship. After two years of getting sober, I am starting to date in a sober manner.

It is bringing up a lot of feelings, particularly pain behind the traumas that caused me to be sexually anorexic and love addicted in the first place. In the middle of this work, all I can feel is how angry, disappointed, hopeless, and exhausted I am. I often feel very far apart from anything like a Higher Power. And when I do make conscious contact, it is often to rage against God.

I often ask how a loving, all powerful HP could allow some of the things to happen that happened to me and how so many dysfunctional patterns resulted, even when I was praying for healing. A lot of times, it does not feel like I can trust God or have hope that I

will find any healing through this disease. The light that breaks through this darkness is when I show up to meetings or talk with my sponsor, I realize I'm not alone in these feelings. I am told I have a Higher Power who can handle my anger. I see examples of people who have been where I have been and now have healing that I want.

I see people that have worked the Steps and now have a sane and satisfying romantic long-term partnership or marriage. I find people that can handle my "baggage" and my "crazy" (things I'm often aware of that I can't yet comfortably share with the people I date). I am so grateful for the fellowship, all who read this, because you are helping me survive this disease with hope even though I am in the middle of the painful healing process.

— ANONYMOUS, PENNSYLVANIA





## An Epiphany

**A**n excerpt from a Harvard Health article on “How addiction hijacks the brain” reminds me of, and seems to support, an epiphany I recently had about

what I’d like to find when I’m ready to make myself available for sober dating.

That epiphany, or what some might call a “god shot,” was the awareness that what I

want to find is a dating partner that has the potential to grow on me, someone that I could just as easily ‘take’ as ‘leave’ while I explore what commitments, if any, I’d like to enter into with them. My addiction would love for me to believe that this new perspective is tantamount to cold indifference — about as far away from ‘true love’ as I could possibly be — and that I should want ‘the one’ who evokes ‘love at first sight,’ seems ‘perfect for me,’ and that they should be someone I ‘can’t live without.’

So, when I read this excerpt, my recent epiphany really started to look more like a sign of recovery than the avoidance of ‘love’ that my addiction would like me to believe it is.

So, this excerpt really resonated with me. Without further ado, here is the excerpt I’ve been referring to: “In nature, rewards usually come only with time and effort. Addictive drugs and behaviors provide a shortcut, flooding the brain with dopamine and other neurotransmitters.

Our brains do not have an easy way to withstand the onslaught.” This shone even more clear light on how those ‘perfect for me,’ ‘the ones’ that I just ‘can’t live without,’ are the objects of my addiction. It also illuminates why it makes good sense for me, in recovery, to now want the relationship rewards that “come only with time and effort” and resolve to take a pass on the “shortcut” matches.

As you grew in your readiness to soberly date new people or reconcile and soberly relate with an existing partner, what were surprising developments you found springing forth from your recovery? What kinds of sanity about dating and relating has your recovery brought you?

If you are inclined to share your written answers to these questions, please submit them at <https://slaafws.org/journalsubmit> for potential inclusion in a future issue or special Focus Booklet of the Journal on the topic of Healthy Relationships.

— A GRATEFUL RECOVERING LOVE  
ADDICT AND FRIEND OF THE JOURNAL

# God Shot: An Interview

**Lisa:** time in program and/or sobriety date.

**Crystal:** 4 years and 4 months.

**Lisa:** I have heard the term “God shot” in 12-Step rooms when the speaker tells of an experience that was an unexpected blessing or a sign that God exists and has a plan for their life. Can you describe any similar experiences that you have had in your time in S.L.A.A.?

**Crystal:** I do not use the term “God.” I use HP for general purpose and my personal, intimate relationship with HP is called Mother Goddess Life. I have had experiences that were so very easy to see and many subtle ones. My hope is that with recovery I will be more sensitive to seeing the more subtle Higher Power experiences.

When I am forced to surrender my will over to HP and the solution is unclear to me, HP’s solution has always been stable and much healthier than I could have imagined. A few examples, when I started S.L.A.A. I was suffering anorexia severely and

praying a lot about it. I knew I needed people in my life, some kind of support but, all the ways I was looking for help were just not fitting my needs. I’ve known about 12-Step programs since I was 12 and have been in and out of Alateen, Al-anon, ACA, and CODA and for some reason they were not coming to mind.

An ex-boyfriend of mine was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He was dying and I, as a friend, took it upon myself to gather some of his friends who were reluctant to visit him and we all went together to his home that he was currently sharing with his new girlfriend. His was a sad and painful death.

And I was impressed how his girlfriend managed to support him through it. She had a mini gathering after his memorial service of all his old girlfriends; there were many at their shared home. I lingered after the get-together and for some reason opened up to this woman about my pain, struggles, and confusion. She 12-stepped me on the spot. There have been other

moments, like financial struggles that I just couldn't see my path clearly. With patience, a lot of focused questioning with HP, solutions started to appear and opened up easily for me. I know trusting my intimate relationship with HP, patience and remaining focused on my needs I can with confidence expect the help I need from "God shot" experiences.

**Lisa:** Some say you have to be open to the idea that God has a plan for your life to believe and see God shots instead of writing them off as coincidences. Do you believe that things are exactly as they should be or happen for a reason and there are no coincidences? If so, can you describe your experience with this? If not, what is your idea of God shot?

**Crystal:** Yes, I firmly feel I can trust my HP (Mother Goddess Life). She is with me and listening when I let go my will completely, trust, and quietly listen for solutions. The challenge is full surrender, I see myself over and over again try to take it back, participate in the outcome, or negotiate and it never works.

**Lisa:** Can you describe your path to spirituality and

how it plays a part in your life today?

**Crystal:** For many years, I tried modern spiritual practices. I also tried traditional church. It felt like it took me the experience of hitting bottom that I finally had no choice but to let it all go. SURRENDER.

**Lisa:** Do you feel differently about God shots than you did before program? If so, please explain.

**Crystal:** No, I have always known that there was a power greater than myself that could help and have had people describe the feeling of surrender but just couldn't comprehend it.

**Lisa:** Anything else to add to the discussion?

**Crystal:** Yes. I really do not like the literature using the term "God." I think Higher Power brings strength and intimacy to recovery and the word God is a big obstacle and turn off to many who need to find their own way to recovery. Spirituality is a very intimate relationship where trust and open communication takes place. It is vital that everyone, regardless of who they identify with, find their Higher Power.

In Recovery.

— CRYSTAL

# Higher Power/Light/ Universal Love

I don't usually experience a "shot" from my Higher Power... it usually comes gradually, admittedly sometimes with resistance! I do make an effort to practice daily prayer and meditation, where I sit quietly with my "Insight Timer" app, shut out the world, and focus on the inner space that I didn't even realize was there before. That's what I recognize as Higher Power/Light/Universal Love.

I feel it then, and over time I have experienced it staying with me throughout the day, and my days are SO much better than before, when I didn't have this program and especially this specific ritual!

But even the most enlightened person can be affected by life, and this year - 2020 - has been tough. If I didn't have a program that I could still participate in, albeit virtually, that has taught me to accept life on life's terms, trust in a Higher Power, and continually look for things to be grateful for, it would have been much more difficult. There was one day, however,

where all the bad news was getting to me, and I honestly felt like I was having a meltdown!

Then I went out to walk my dog, and something amazing happened: I looked down and spotted a tiny dandelion flower in the grass. In that moment, when I saw that little piece of yellow life popping out of the green, I immediately felt it was a Direct Message to me from a Higher Power.

In all that darkness, this small, beautiful thing seemed to be saying to me, "There's more to life than suffering. There's still beauty, life and light in the world." THAT felt like a God Shot, for sure!! It reminded me to have faith, even in the darkest times; to believe in the abundance of Love and Light because it's here, when I look for it.

After that I felt better. I started to see other things that were beautiful and good in my life. It reminded me to be vigilant with my gratitude list, especially when times are tough.

— DIANE H.

## Because I Have to

**B**elief in a Higher Power was not something that came easily to me. When I started working with my sponsor, I informed him - quite boastfully - that I was going to have to act “as if” a Higher Power existed, since I, as a philosophy professor, was well-acquainted with the many arguments both for and against God’s existence, and I was squarely on the side of disbelief.

I considered myself an agnostic when it came to the existence of any divine being, an atheist when it came to most religious conceptions of God, and an anti-theist when it came to the God of the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

While I did subscribe to a personal religious perspective of sorts, it was one in which I ultimately touted the supremacy of my own ego. I worshipped, quite literally, myself.

Nevertheless, despite my reservations, I told my sponsor in my next breath that I was indeed willing to try to believe

in a Higher Power: “But only because I have to.” I knew that I was at the end of my rope, and that if I continued to live in my sex and love addiction, that I was going to end up mired in isolation and despair for the rest of my life. I’d put myself on a pedestal and hailed myself as my own god, embraced a philosophy of intellectually driven self-improvement...but I was unable to change my life in the ways that mattered most.

I was depressed, cynical, fearful, resentful, and angry, and I could not stop myself from hurting those I claimed to love whenever I acted out. Knowing I had nowhere left to turn, I begrudgingly made the decision to surrender to the possibility that there could be a divine source of power and love able to save my life.

It was then that I began to realize what recovery would demand from me. Not only would I have to give up my bottom-line addictive behaviors – I would also have to give up characteristics that I always felt had defined me as an individual, including my

sense of intellectual superiority and my love of being “right.” I realized that I had a choice to make: I could either maintain my smug air of arrogant confidence (which was getting me nowhere), or I could humbly admit the limits of my knowledge for the sake of sobriety. Thank God I chose the latter!

My spiritual awakening was no “sudden and spectacular upheaval” by any means (A.A. Big Book, “Appendix on Spiritual Experience”). In my case, coming to God-consciousness was a gradual process, until one day it dawned on me that I genuinely believed that prayer and meditation were actually interactive and relational: I wasn’t just going through the motions anymore.

One key factor that supported my spiritual growth was a newfound habit of constructing gratitude lists. Before my time in recovery, I was quite bitter, and I always felt like the world owed me something that I wasn’t getting. I saw the world as a harsh place, unforgiving and indifferent to my needs. But when I began to write down the things I was grateful for, at

my sponsor’s suggestion, my orientation on the world began to change. I started to understand how much good was at work in my life, how many little gifts I had that I could appreciate.

As I got into the habit of making these lists, I decided to tell myself that these things were ultimately given to me from a Higher Power. I gave up believing in the notion of “happy accidents,” and made the choice to recognize blessings for what they were: blessings.

In addition to all of the little, subtle blessings that go into a good life, I was given something overwhelmingly wonderful when my wife and I welcomed our first child earlier this year.

Taking care of my son is a constant reminder that my life is no longer my own to do with as I please -- that just as my time is now often spent in care and service to my son, I must also ever be in service to my Higher Power and His will. Taking on the role of a father has made me increasingly mindful of the way in which The Divine cares for me in a parental way...though I am also aware that I must be

spiritually mature enough to partner with God in executing His will, and to be fully accountable for my actions and attitudes.

Now that I am getting to know a “Presence of Infinite Power and Love,” I am finally feeling secure enough to review and appreciate religious conceptions of God that I once scorned (“We Agnostics,” A.A. Big Book). I’ve been trying my best to “be quick to see where religious people are right,” and to “make use of what they offer” (“Into Action,” A. A. Big Book).

This is a new experience for me, but it has already been a fruitful one, as my encounters with religious minds from diverse traditions are giving me a clearer sense of how I can be a better instrument for carrying out God’s will.

I cannot stress enough how essential humility before God has been in helping me bring down the walls that I’d built to separate me from The Divine.

It wasn’t easy for me to admit that I might have been wrong about God, and it wasn’t easy for me to admit that I didn’t have all of the answers;

but once I confessed my limitations, recovery became easier on me. Reliance upon God is now the cornerstone of my serenity, as I am now able to fully trust the famous claim that “nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God’s world by mistake” (“Acceptance was the Answer,” A.A. Big Book). Knowing that I am in good hands – the very best hands – makes it easier for me to accept and affirm life on life’s terms, and to see all troubles that may come my way as opportunities for spiritual growth.

When I first began to act as if I believed in a Higher Power, I did so because I knew I “had to” if I was going to be sober.

This was not a choice I made happily, but one I made out of desperation. Now that I am growing in conscious contact with God, I understand that I “have to” maintain this connection because there is no life for me outside of it.

Seeking God’s will is now something I gladly choose, because there is nothing that could ever be better for me. This is a better way to live!

— ALYOSHA C., READING, PA





## God Uses Everything to My Benefit, Including Kittens

A few days ago, my wife and I rescued three kittens. Helping them reminds me of the grace I was shown by my Higher Power and how God uses people, places, and things for my benefit.

This isn't the first time my wife talked me into helping her rescue some kitties. First, there was the tiny little girl we found

in our parking garage here in Kuala Lumpur. Just a month old, this cutie became Mirabelle. She was adopted less than a day later by a young couple here in town.

Next came a brother and sister whom we found outside a restaurant. They became Helen and Hermie. Adopting them was an animal lover who has a home full of animals that

includes cats, dogs, and two monkeys.

Now, we're fostering Jillsie, Dickie, and Ralph Mustachio (if you haven't already guessed it, my wife is the one naming these babies).

I mentioned previously that she talked me into this. There was no arm twisting. I love cats. Not as much as she does, but I do consider myself a cat person. Each time we rescue kitties, I know we are doing an act of service, one that I am grateful to be able to do. When we find new homes for these babies, I'm a bit sad. But I'm hopeful because we've done our part in giving them a chance at a better life.

I can't help but wonder if this is what it's like for my Higher Power. When I sought help, I can imagine the satisfaction this must have given God. The fact that I trusted my Higher Power has

to be gratifying, especially since I chose to do this of my own free will. I believe this must have made God hopeful that my reliance on divine power and strength would help me live a better life. The life that God intended for me in the first place.

Rescuing kittens is a minor act compared to the grace God showed me in saving me from my sex and love addiction. Yet, I believe that God uses everything for my benefit. Having the chance to help vulnerable kittens reminds me of what happens when someone requiring help is given what's needed to overcome their circumstances. My Higher Power did that for me. And just like these kitties purr in contentment when we help them, my heart hums with peace and joy at having a second chance in life.

— SCOTT W., KUALA LUMPUR,  
MALAYSIA

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# Not a Single Doubt

*“It’s all going to work out. I have not a single doubt.”*

I’m in a crappy spot right now. I’ve been unemployed due to mental illness for years, but I have a family that thinks it’s my fault. I need an apartment lease, but because of my employment history, I need a guarantor. This week I went to my family, the same family that thinks my bipolar disorder and being in the hospital four times in as many years is no reason to be unemployed. But my family is codependent, and I was raised by my mother, who is now deceased. My family is all I have to rely on.

The thing is, I don’t have my family to rely on. They don’t respect me. They talk about me behind my back, a fact I’m aware of because I’ve heard them all do it to other family members and close friends. I realized that, for my recovery, I needed to detach from my family. They’re not safe or sober, even the ones who’ve been in a 12-Step program for as long as I’ve been alive. So I told them that I didn’t need their help with an apartment after all, and that I’d work on another option.

They’ll probably get upset about that, but I can’t afford to care anymore.

After making the decision to look for other arrangements, I received a set of photocopies in the mail that had been three days late. When I opened the package, the order was wrong. It was a completely different order, a set of posters where my order was a spiral-bound book. But when I moved the posters around, one fell to the ground. It said, “It’s all going to work out. I have not a single doubt.”

I was supposed to get that poster right at the moment I got it. It is all going to work out, because I’m acting soberly and setting my boundaries in a way that I never have. It’s all going to work out because, even though my family isn’t the way I need them to be, I have friends and “framily” that can and will help me in any way they can, without judgement or gossip. It’s all going to work out because God always works it out for me. I’ve always had someplace to live, and a way to afford rent. I’ve always had a desire to get back up again every time I get knocked down. It’s all going to

work out because, with my S.L.A.A. recovery, I've been able to maintain the best mental illness recovery I've seen in years, and I'm in the process of interviewing for my dream job: a position that utilizes all the professional and educational experiences I've

ever had, pays what I'm worth, and will allow me to meet all of my financial obligations while still leaving time and energy for recovery activities. So, it's already working out, because I'm showing up, and asking God for help first, always.

— TRACEY L., NEW YORK, NY

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## I Saw Recovery

I came into S.L.A.A. a little over two years ago and I identified as an atheist, and still do. I knew that working the Steps worked and I wanted to figure out how to do them without involving a god or higher power. It took a while to find a sponsor I felt good with and looked up to.

My sponsor met me where I was spiritually and never asked me to believe in a god or a higher power. She helped me work the Steps by having me rewrite the Steps, secularly, for myself. She encouraged me to study A.A. Agnostic literature, Native American 12 Steps, Buddhist 12 Steps, and share my beliefs at meetings (she also encouraged me to answer

this *Journal* question). I worked the program and dove into doing as much service and going to as many meetings as my disabled body could handle. I didn't stop and it became the most important thing to me. And before I knew it, I saw recovery.

And before I knew it, I saw that my higher power was The Program and my higher purpose was doing service for my program, my fellows and the greater good. My healing is something I cherish and never thought I would have. My higher power exists in the program and without the program I wouldn't have this delightful recovery.

— MICHELLE C.,  
ORANGE COUNTY, CA

# I Lost My First Love

**M**y introduction to 12-Step recovery programs was a result of substance abuse and various childhood traumas. While doing my step work in other programs, I discovered that the abuse of myself was connected to having my heart broken during childhood. I realized that what was now showing up in my life was generational, from being raised helpless and dependent in a home without love. Additionally, my family was religious, so I learned to accept punishment and abuse as normal.

Gratefully, I have learned so much since being involved in S.L.A.A., my newest fellowship, a continuation in my journey to wholeness. When I hear or read our Preamble which states we have: "The desire to stop living out a pattern of love addiction." That is my primary reason for being here: I want to learn what real love is.

Also, I couldn't help but notice that one of the five major resources identified for us to draw on to counter the destructive consequences of our addiction is spirituality which is defined as developing a relationship with a Power Greater than ourselves, that I

choose to call God, which guides and sustains all of us in recovery.

The 40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis were developed as a tool to help us identify our acting out behaviors. In the last sentence before the questions, the writer states, "We hope that these questions will prove helpful." Helpful? No, these questions are a life-giving gift from God. The only reason that most of my answers were *no* is that I broke up with my qualifier 15 years ago after he killed me spiritually, emotionally, and almost physically. After I ended the relationship, he stalked me until he moved in with another woman. Since I have avoided relationships since that living nightmare ended, the two questions that I mostly identify with from the pamphlet are:

- "Question #16: Do you find that you have a pattern of repeating bad relationships? For me, love addiction was a survival tool I used to repress my feelings of not believing that I was valuable enough to receive love. I disassociated when I knew that most of the men I was with were dangerous. Instead, I would

rationalize my choices by stating “everybody needs love” or “nobody’s perfect.” In my desperate efforts to connect, belong, and be loved, my love addiction progressed.

• “Question #36: Are you afraid that deep down you are unacceptable?” YES!

Concerning the 12 Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction, I identify most strongly with number 11: “To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.” Before S.L.A.A., I thought anorexia was about food and eating. Today, I tell myself the truth about my condition, not “I’m set apart” or “walking in celibacy.”

It is comforting to me that we have signs of recovery that I can refer to during my healing journey. I am personally looking forward to continuing in developing a daily relationship with God. I now know that I am not alone, he will help me in my efforts to heal from love addiction. He will guide me so that I can stop looking for love in the wrong people, places, and things. I am now willing to be vulnerable because my capacity to trust is being restored by having faith in God. I can now love myself because you all first loved me. I now have a program that if I am honest, open-minded, and willing can fill my broken heart with my first love, God.

— WANDA, PHILADELPHIA

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## Accepting I Am an Addict

**A**s part of my Step three, my sponsor instructed me to keep a written log of all the God shots I encountered on a daily basis. I had come to S.L.A.A. as an atheist, but I followed my sponsor’s and the Basic Text’s instructions to step in, blind and fumbling. I was an addict at rock bottom, my infidelity

having put my marriage and motherhood at the brink of dissolution. So, what choice did I have?

Miraculously, as I began to open my eyes and act as if I trusted the world to be friendly rather than hostile, the synchronicity began to appear. One day, when I was feeling triggered and isolated, I

reached out courageously from my anorexia for an outreach call with a woman in the fellowship, and she shared with me that she was feeling anorexic too, as it was the anniversary of her dad's suicide. We connected deeply, and anorexia was lifted for both of us.

Another day, desperate technical difficulties prevented me from logging onto an S.L.A.A. Zoom meeting where I was to be the lead speaker. I was asked to speak three weeks later, on my birthday.

Last spring, for a string of weeks, I had been deeply reflecting on external vs. internal power (external power being what I sought through my sex and love addiction, and internal power being that of God). While wood-burning the Third Step Prayer by memory into my newly crafted God Box (making a God Box was another assignment from my sponsor), I forgot to include the words "thy Power." Upon realizing this, my perfectionism and shame kicked in and I thought I'd ruined the whole thing. Finally, I decided to burn Thy Power into the box anyway, adding the words awkwardly off to the side with a caret. Then, I burned a little cloud

around them. Then, I highlighted them with yellow paint. They became the most prominent words of the prayer.

Last fall, I went outside for a walk under the huge New Mexico sky. I was listening with my headphones to an audiobook called "Radical Compassion," by Tara Brach, wherein she describes a beautiful awakening meditation called RAIN (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture). Listening to her voice, I dropped into a serene meditative state of witnessing myself and caring for what was. Suddenly, I felt pin pricks on the backs of my hands, like gentle jabs with a needle. I looked down at my hands, and I saw that there were tiny spherical raindrops there. I looked up at the sunlit sky, which was brilliantly blue and bright, save for a few soft, wispy ribbons of cloud floating here and there. I continued my walk, and my RAIN meditation, under God's sunny and rainy sky.

And, of course, there have been countless S.L.A.A. meetings where the literature topic was exactly what I needed to hear.

These God shots (and many more) have given me the sense that there is a holy presence

guiding me, a divine spirit leaving me signposts toward courage, surrender and serenity. God shows me through worldly hints what I need to learn, reflect on, and be reminded of. My Higher Power proves to me that it embodies all of the anthropomorphic qualities I assigned to it in my Step Two: this non-physical, other-worldly spiritual force is intelligent, kind, non-judgmental, mystical, caretaking, steady, trustworthy, abundant, protective, unassuming, and strong and loving.

One God shot I experienced over the course of 18 months was more like a God seven-course meal. I'm grateful to have the space and time in recovery to reflect on this living recovery jigsaw puzzle, and I'd like to share it with you.

In 2018, I wrote a novel. I had never written a novel before, but I was curious about the process, I wanted to see if I could do it, and a part of me (my grandiose, validation-seeking addict) thought I might finally become wholly myself if I wrote a famed best-seller and everyone envied me.

I brainstormed and researched and planned and wrote. I wrote 400 pages. My story, unbeknownst to me until I was halfway through, turned

out to be about addiction and grief. At the time, I didn't know I was an addict, nor did I have any concrete evidence that I'd ever experienced grief. But, somehow, I knew the life of an addict, and I knew the pain of grief. I put the novel away and did not edit it.

In 2019, I became a mortician. I had never seen a dead body before, but I was curious about this industry, I wanted to see if I could do it, and a part of me (my morose, attention-seeking addict) thought I might finally become wholly myself if I took on a strange profession and everyone thought I was fascinating.

I sought out and got an administration job at a funeral home whose receptionist had quit the week before (God shot). In addition to learning the office business, I apprenticed as a mortician. I went out on death calls and brought deceased people into our funeral home from hospitals, homes, and accident scenes. I washed hair, cosmetized, assisted in embalmings, dressed, bathed, funneled ashes into urns, set up funerals, and attended funerals. Pretty soon, I was a licensed funeral director.

I was also becoming a workaholic. And I was losing rapid, dangerous weight in my



eating disorder. And, I was having an emotional affair with another mortician in my office.

Of course, my affair partner was merely the latest incarnation of qualifiers I had secretly obsessed over, fantasized about, and engaged in intense intrigue with since I was seven years old. But I didn't realize that at the time. At the time, I was exhilarated, infatuated, terrified. The only difference between this and the addictive behavior that came before it, was that this wasn't some single person's irresponsible and uncontrollable sexual acting out, nor was it some married woman's secret romantic adoration or sexual titillation at a "safe" distance. This was in my face, in my life, at work with me for eight hours a day. And the qualifier, being a probable sex and love addict too, felt the same emotional dependency on me. My unconscious well of pain, filled with unworthiness, loneliness, and fear, was magnetically attracted to a similar well of pain in him. I preyed on him, and he preyed on me.

By the grace of a God I didn't know I had, I told my husband of my betrayal.

I promised my husband I would stop my inappropriate behavior and that I would stop feeling so drunk on this man at

work. I swore to him that I would start to care about our kids again, care about our marriage again, care about my life again.

I tried for months. I tried everything I could think of. I spent money on online affair-recovery programs and did the exercises. I went to a therapist and then to another therapist. I screamed at myself in my head to stop acting out with this man, all the while watching myself, bewildered, continuing to act out with him day after day. I lied to my husband constantly. I was in unrelenting agony, and my family suffered greatly.

My husband packed his suitcase and told me to find a Sex Addicts Anonymous meeting. I had never even heard of such a thing. But I found S.L.A.A.

Today, after 15 months of working this program, my marriage is intact, my kids have exhaled, and I have let go of my career as a mortician. I am thinking about editing my novel. I am writing my Step Four now with the guidance of my sponsor. And I am grateful to my Higher Power for a daily chance at serenity, courage, and wisdom.

When I joined S.L.A.A., I had already white-knuckled my way through four agonizing months of failure and pain as I

tried to stop my affair with no spiritual footing beneath me. At the start of my S.L.A.A. recovery, I endured six more months of withdrawal. I had panic attacks so violent that my feet, fingers, and lips went numb. I cried every day. I turned to alcohol, sugar, and work for relief. I had suicidal ideation. But looking back, this time of withdrawal was indeed precious, as described in the S.L.A.A. literature. I was withdrawing my energy back into myself. I was finding my own internal power, fueled by my Higher Power. I was learning radical compassion for myself.

My recovery has been, in a way, a grieving process, and this is what brings me back to my God shot. Release and surrender of my acting out, and the emotional upheaval that follows, has been like a death. I have grieved the loss of my drug of choice: people. I have grieved the slow death of my addict self. I wove in and out of the stages of grief. I experienced denial, not even knowing I was lying to myself and others. I minimized and rationalized and continuously forgot or refused to believe I was an addict. I felt anger, fury even, at my affair partner, my colleagues, my parents, my spouse, people I didn't know, and of course, myself. I

bargained with myself, telling myself I would stop if I just got one more hit. I fell into pits of depression, paralysis and numbness.

And I have experienced moments of acceptance. I accept that that I'm an addict and that I have given the first 39 years of my life away to other people. I accept that I am powerless over sex and love addiction, and that my life is unmanageable, whether I try to manage it or not (but when I try to manage it - i.e., control everyone and everything around me in the pursuit of safety - my life is actually much harder and more frustrating). I am slowly releasing my shame around my addiction because I am surrounded by S.L.A.A. fellows who do not judge me and because I am held by a loving Higher Power who infuses me with presence and belonging.

Funeral directing trained me to midwife myself through my own loss of active addiction to sex and love. My short career as a mortician brought me into the illusory arms of the man who would qualify me for S.L.A.A., and S.L.A.A. brought me into the liberating arms of a Higher Power. Through my Twelve Step recovery program, I am learning how to come alive, one day at a time.

— ANONYMOUS

# *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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