

# theJournal

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*~ABM ISSUE~*

Break Down to Break Through

# Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.
3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.
4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
6. We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support.
7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.
8. We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.
9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.
10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.
11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

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## Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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,

The stories in this issue are all well-written and I loved reading them. But I would like to use this opportunity to say a few words about our new *Journal* resource, “Sober Dating Questions for Discussion.” This e-book has been a long journey of service work for the *Journal* team. I started a reading meeting a few years ago to get feedback on the project and it resulted in a regular S.L.A.A. online video meeting with loyal attendees. Recently my sponsee, who I have been with for 20 years, started attending. She lost her partner of 13 years in a tragic hand-gliding accident.

At one meeting an attendee said with dismay, “We don’t get to answer all the questions in the e-book.”

“There are too many questions to get to in an hour so it’s something that can be done with your sponsor or recovery partner,” I responded. My sponsee said with a grin, “Maybe we should go through it together.”

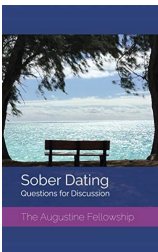
We have been meeting each week and I think it’s helping me more than it helps her.

Just this morning, we were crying, talking about how sex and love addiction demolished our lives, made us suicidal and homicidal. We said, “Who would have thought that S.L.A.A. and Higher Power would restore our lives to what they are today?” The strength she has shown me since the passing of her partner and throughout our journey together is a precious gift to me. The “Sober Dating Questions for Discussion” e-book work is giving her hope and as she said, teaching her to date herself and know herself better. I encourage you all to check it out on Kindle.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

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## Available now in ebook on Amazon Kindle!



### Sober Dating: Questions For Discussion Kindle Edition

EBOOK CONTAINS THE DIGITAL EDITION OF THE JOURNAL SOBER DATING FOCUS BOOKLET, THE ROMANTIC OBSESSION PAMPHLET, SHARES FROM S.L.A.A. MEMBERS, QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, AND A MEETING FORMAT.

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is, “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.” 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: #192 — Sept./Oct. — People as Drugs — “Through sex, charm, emotional appeal, or persuasive intellect, we had used other people as ‘drugs,’ to avoid our own personal inadequacy.” S.L.A.A. Basic Text page 74. Please share your story of using people as drugs and your experience, strength, and hope in overcoming the desire to use people as drugs. Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2021. And #193 — Nov./Dec. — Pink Cloud - According to Dictionary.com, Pink clouding, or Pink Cloud Syndrome, is a phenomenon many recovering addicts experience when they first go into recovery. When pink clouding, they feel a sense of euphoria that’s then followed by a crash once reality sets in. Have you experienced a “pink cloud” in recovery? If so, please describe your experience and how it impacted your recovery. How did you maintain your connection to Program/spirituality?

Deadline for submissions is Sept. 15, 2021.

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

Do you feel Higher Power demolished your life to build it back up with a stronger foundation?

All of the answers to the question of the day were article-length. They are included on the following pages.



# Rebuilding With Hope



I was in another Twelve-Step program (NA) for 10 years when I finally entered S.L.A.A. I knew about S.L.A.A. for more than four years, but after my first meeting I thought I could manage my life. Honestly, I felt too much shame and fear to be able to stay. But my life

changed in December 2020. I had a relationship with an S.L.A.A. member. I thought it was okay because I didn't have any problem with that. I lied to myself, to him, and to everyone. I left everything behind me. I quit my job. I moved hours away from my friends, other recovering

addicts, and all of my safe points so that I could live next to him. One week later, he broke up with me. I felt that my Higher Power took everything from me. I had nothing. I was in a new city in a foreign country all alone. I didn't have any job, friends, or anybody there. That was a real shock! I started to go to S.L.A.A. meetings because every minute I had suicidal thoughts. I didn't think about drugs. I wanted to die because the pain was unbearable. It was easier to stop using drugs, than

to be alone. But my sponsor told me to just keep going to the program and the meetings. I made it, not because I wanted to change, because I didn't want to die. I know, it is only four months, but for me it's a real miracle. My Higher Power demolished everything in my life, to rebuild with hope. My life was full of fear, suffering and active sex and love addiction that destroyed everything around me. Now I still have many fears, but I had something new: faith.

— ANONYMOUS



The Journal is now  
available in  
audiobook (mp3)  
format.

Get them at:

<http://store.slaafws.org/ctgy/CAUDC.html>

# Building an Indestructibly Solid and Healthy Foundation

**M**y answer to whether my Higher Power ever “demolished my life” is a resounding “NO!” No matter what the motives of a Higher Power might be who would do that, however much I needed a stronger foundation for recovery, I needed no help at all to make a wreckage of my life before recovery.

That was all me. All by my own panic and greed-driven motives I had ruined one might-have-been-good marriage, then got into an awful one and stayed until my children and I had been abused and traumatized.

I had used other relationships in ways that had shriveled my soul with shame, left with a conscience that insisted others were always to blame for my mistakes in the workplace, mis-spent money, the child I gave up at adoption, the arrest for DUI, the pain my parents felt, and the friends I betrayed and abandoned. I was so enraged at God, I fired Her/Him/It as my Higher Power because my pleas for relief

from the consequences I so clearly deserved had been ignored — I thought — and I had declared myself totally in charge. As I tried to rush through the 12 Steps, I added Antabuse and a mental breakdown that lost me my job, my house, my driver’s and pilot’s licenses, and the last shreds of my dignity and strength.

The problem was that it was not just alcohol and compulsive eating that I was powerless over. I decided I had given up enough and continued my sex and love addiction through five years of daily 12-Step Meetings, two more failed — and abusive — marriages, other failed jobs, six 4th and 5th Step rituals, and more half-bad decisions. But God (Her/Him/It) continued to help me, just as H/H/I had been during the 15 years of an unhappy, troubled, and sexualized childhood, and 21 years of adulthood to match. That Love was unconditional, always available, as rich, and generous and as much as my

shriveled soul and rebellious, disillusioned mind were willing to accept. I had demolished my own life, and there were still “bills to be paid” for me and my children for the decisions I had made and the actions I took in every area of my life.

There were lots of consequences, and my children were innocent. Watching their continued suffering as I attended daily A.A. meetings rather than helping with their homework, cleaning the house, and protecting them from the abusive men I was always involved with, carried new consequences as I slowly learned to be rigorously honest with myself and others. As I no longer used alcohol and compulsive eating to avoid reality, hope sunk deep roots into me. Then that tricky, scheming, but always loving H/H/I arranged for me to get 12 Stepped into S.L.A.A., and I began to build a stronger foundation for my life faster and with much more bearable consequences when I did make mistakes.

I wish I could tell you that I listened to H/H/I and turned my will and life over completely at that time. But

demons and unmet needs from my childhood were still to be uncovered, and too much faith in my own intellect and fear of accepting intimacy and genuine Love were the source of brand-new ideas.

Still, the mistakes got smaller, my strength grew as I learned to face consequences with humility and courage, and S.L.A.A. sobriety brought a lot of joy and happiness into my life. I even learned mindfulness so I could be grateful for both good and bad times, even as I kept learning the hard way a bit too often. Hey!! Imperfect sobriety is still a whole world better than what my addictions had brought me!

After 3 decades of recovery, I still benefitted greatly from a new round of Twelve Steps on co-dependency and emotional anorexia with a tough HOW sponsor. And I truly believe that I now let God’s unlimited Love flow through me to others — almost all the time! I have learned how to play and been in a committed partnership with the best playmate and adult partner I have ever met for nearly 25 sober years. I still go to meetings. There are challenges still, but the time of

painful learning is now hours instead of months and years, and things are still getting better. I did not need God's help to demolish my life. But I have needed a huge amount of help to build what seems to be a solid, indestructibly solid, and healthy foundation. Not so strange, after all. My life in my

addictions was hell and left no room for real love. My Higher Power gave me free Will to learn from my own mistakes, but also gave me infinite Love and renewable Hope. Thank God!

— BEEZ,  
TARPON SPRINGS, FL, USA

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## Building a Strong Foundation Where the Wreckage of My Dis-ease Once Stood

**H**igher Power did not demolish my life. Addiction and self-will demolished my life, time and time again. Higher Power put a Twelve-Step veteran into my path, and I followed the implicit suggestion that the Twelve Steps — of any program related to my dis-ease — might benefit me. Through the Program of S.L.A.A. and its Twelve Steps, I have come to embrace a concept of Higher Power that works for me. This Higher Power is building a strong

foundation where the wreckage of my dis-ease once stood. From this foundation, I'm learning to build healthy relationships with program friends, fellow trusted servants, sponsors and sponsees. My hope is that all of this practice in building healthy relationships helps me to be well-positioned for healthily building relationships and partnerships of compassionate, romantic, sexual, and domestic natures as well. More will be revealed.

— ANONYMOUS

# Still a Work in Progress

**A**s the ambulance doors shut for the third time, 'Goldfrapp's A&E' was playing in the background. [Editor's note: This song uses a hospitalized woman's musings as a metaphor for a broken relationship.] It couldn't have been more of an apt accompaniment to hospital. The need to be rescued repeating itself in the form of yet another obsession.

I had no idea this would turn out to be my qualifier. I'd hit many rock bottoms before but this time there were no substances involved. Two years sober, living on my own in a new area, passing the message on as a recovery worker, and yet my primary addiction still had me at ransom.

I found out I suffered with this disease after surrendering to a stint at rehab, paid for by my deceased father/Higher Power but still my self-will was fully intact. It took a near breakdown after completing my Step Five for the second time in A.A. and my sponsor dropping me due to my

powerlessness in this area to finally succumb to S.L.A.A. I had to leave yet another job due to encounters with male staff members, I couldn't afford to eat, let alone pay my bills and my Mum had to sell some of my dad's photography equipment to get me to face-to-face meetings in London.

As soon as I surrendered to the process, the job centre granted me extra funds. I've used this opportunity to focus solely on my recovery. This complex mental health issue started at the age of eleven when matters at home became abusive. My old man brought me up since a tiny baby and I visited my mum every other weekend. Developing and expressing my own opinions was overwhelming for the sole caretaker whose insecurities played out as controlling behaviour. Dating a string of women as he struggled to commit set the precedent for how I received and perceived love. Enmeshment with this parent and feeling abandoned by the other contributed to a

life full of failed relationships, cheating, and promiscuity. I used men to boost my self-esteem which resulted in suicidal driven thought processes on many occasions.

It was all encompassing. I couldn't concentrate on anything else. Anytime I strived to reach my full potential in any venture, either in career or creative endeavor, I hit the floor running as my cravings dared to cease.

I'm still a work in progress—always will be — but this programme has been the making of me. I survived horrendous withdrawals including eight weeks of panic attacks, flu-type symptoms, months without one-on-one support but continued through Steps Four and Five regardless, processing and integrating one day at a time.

I've sobbed uncontrollably, all whilst taking responsibility for myself for the first time during a pandemic. At last, I am allowing the grieving and healing to take place. I'm no

longer in constant torment with a guy, my passion for music and writing has been re-ignited, I've started cooking care of a meal kit delivery company and baking is quickly becoming my top line go to. I'm pushing through the fear of anorexia and starting to show up for myself and others even reserving a spoken word slot at a local open mic night. I feel my most spiritually connected in nature.

I'm lucky to have the sea on my doorstep and regularly take walks to and from the nearest towns. I never knew what a boundary was a little over a year ago so learning what's healthy and how to state my needs is simply empowering. Outreach and service have been fundamental in practising these newfound skills.

I'm tapping out of people pleasing and into authenticity. This fellowship is giving me a life where I can be free, and I can be me!!!

© Mischa via *the Journal*

— MISCHA,  
WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA, UK

# Couldn't Imagine a Future Without my Qualifier

The first time I found S.L.A.A., I was at a breaking point. A qualifier who I had been back and forth with many times dumped me in a very cruel and final way. I was a nervous wreck. I couldn't eat or sleep, I was crying at work and shaking, I felt like a zombie and couldn't see a way to live without him. I remember telling my therapist that I felt hopeless, and that I just couldn't imagine a future without my qualifier.

I felt as if I was stuck in a pit of despair. My therapist consoled me and gently pointed out that this was a pattern that she had seen me repeat over many years and many relationships and that each time it was getting worse. "How much money have you spent? How much time have you spent? And how happy have you been?" She asked me.

I agreed that I needed to stop the destructive cycle I was in and she recommended I try S.L.A.A. I think if I hadn't felt so broken and hopeless, I would never have seen myself walking into a room full of strangers. At the time it felt

like the last resort. I gratefully fell wholeheartedly into the program, helped by encouraging fellows who inspired me to keep coming back! By working the Steps, attending as many meetings as I could, and doing my outreach, I was able to break my usual habit of turning to exes or new conquests for solace.

I learned to find ways to self soothe and look after myself by sticking to bottom lines and bringing lots of top lines into my life. It took me a lot of hard-learned lessons and misery to get to a point where I was able to surrender to my Higher Power and start rebuilding my life so I could feel safe, secure, and happy in my own company.

I understand why I had to go through all the pain — it galvanised me to do the hard work and make sure I'd never go back to that dark pit again. Now I have the foundation. I feel a lot more hopeful and there is so much more joy in my life.

— MIRA, UK



## **Breakdown to Breakthrough: My S.L.A.A. Journey from Hell to Hope**



**M**y first crush was in second grade. I would line up behind her after the recess bell rang. The boys in line would inevitably push kids behind me and I would be pushed right into the

head-swimmingly wonderful smell of her hair. That was the first of countless crushes. My first sexual relationship was at the age of 13. I thought I was madly in love. Yet I was also indecisive, something that

would haunt all of my relationships. My pattern of love addiction and love avoidance would continue for decades. In my mid-twenties I was in love with two women at the same time. I was on my knees with unmanageability and powerlessness. When one of those women took her own life, I experienced a pain I had never known before or since. While I believed I would – and should – stay single for the rest of my life, I managed to find my way to another relationship. An amazing son came from that relationship, but his parents were merely co-parenting roommates. I then began a series of long-distance relationships, allowing the distance to create a built-in addiction-avoidance cycle. What I couldn't see then was that I could only move toward a person who was moving away from me.

I prayed often for God to help me with my dysfunctional relationship history. God answered those prayers in the form of one more addictive-avoidant relationship.

We met via an online dating site and instantly connected – two love addicts swooning over the alignment of stars. In typical love-addict fashion I

created a fantasy of her before I met her in person.

She was a relationship coach, which I thought would be the answer to my prayers. If I couldn't make it work with a relationship coach, there was little hope for me.

As soon as we spent a weekend together I knew I had made another mistake.

My inner child was almost dragging me out the door. Before I left, she suggested I check out a book she had read about love addiction.

Love addiction?? While I had never before heard those two words together, I felt a deep knowing that they applied to me. I spent hours on the internet searching for information.

I found a therapist who specialized in sex and love addiction. She referred me to S.L.A.A. I did the “40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis” on the S.L.A.A. website, answering yes to most of them and identifying with all twelve Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction.

Finding out I was a love addict was devastating – and empowering. I now knew the dragon that must be slayed.

I sat in my first meeting with tears streaming, feeling

claustrophobic with shame. I desperately wanted to flee. It was only my misery that kept me in my seat. Meetings were difficult for me in the beginning, and it took many months before sharing transitioned from impossible to tolerable to enjoyable.

The healing I steadily experienced is why I returned week after week.

I learned that my addict self and avoidant self were two sides of the same coin and began introducing myself in meetings as a love addict/love avoidant.

I suspected the absence of my father was the seed that allowed my addict side to grow, while the enmeshment with my mother nurtured the seed of my avoidant self.

I knew my parents' experiences impacted my life. My mother had a revolving door of men and began having babies at the age of 15. My father has been married four times.

My maternal grandfather was married eight times to seven different women.

I recently learned that even my great-grandmother had an affair while married. I come from a long line of sex and love addicts.

Before program I didn't know what I didn't know. I thought I was just a hopeless romantic with bad luck in relationships and deep wounds from my childhood and from my lover's suicide. S.L.A.A. opened my eyes to my problem, as described in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text (p. 71):

"We began to recognize that we were powerless, not merely to change some specific sex partner, lover, or situation. We were powerless over an addictive pattern, of which any current, specific circumstance was just the most recent example."

I was fortunate to find a sponsor at that first meeting, the same sponsor I have today, years later.

My sponsor has guided me through the Steps, supported me in a necessary 30-day no contact, let me practice being in a healthy relationship, and helped me to create a sober dating plan.

I didn't date for a year and a half after my first S.L.A.A. meeting.

I worked the steps, created top and bottom lines, attended S.L.A.A. retreats and workshops, and created a network of supportive fellows through meetings, program

calls and fellowship. The first healthy relationship I created was with me. I dated myself. I sang to myself. I learned to love myself. The S.L.A.A. promises that came with the Tenth Step were coming true for me (pp. 95-96):

“Now we were truly feeling some sense of deep release from the past! We were free of much guilt for our misdeeds, from the shame of having fallen short of our inner values. In many instances the values we had thought were ours turned out to be someone else’s, and we had shed or changed these to allow the seeds of our own personal wholeness to take root and grow.

We were indeed living new, positive, unfolding lives. Whether in partnership with others or in solitude, we had truly been granted a spiritual release from our sex and love addiction.

While vigilance was still important, the choices we had to make now seemed easier. We felt increasing confidence in our developing partnership with God, and were full participants in the Fellowship of S.L.A.A. We enjoyed solitude and were unafraid of

honesty and openness with others. We could comprehend what it means to have dignity of self.”

When I began dating again, I was grounded in what I wanted from a romantic relationship as well as what I needed in a romantic relationship. I was no longer desperate to find someone who would “complete me” because I was already complete.

I was at peace with the possibility that I may be single for the rest of my life. I began my dating journey with a prayer to my Higher Power: “God, my picker is broken. I need your help. I need you to make it crystal clear if I am with the right person or the wrong person.”

God once again answered my prayers, first with a few dates with the wrong women, then with an opportunity to feel instant connection but not repeat my prior pattern of rushing from zero-to-married. I met a woman who checked all of my new post-S.L.A.A. boxes. She was healthy in body, mind, and spirit and didn’t need me to rescue her.

We had much in common and could communicate well even with challenging subjects.

I let her set the pace and, for the first time, I didn't have a U-Haul ready to move her in. It is the healthiest relationship I ever had. I am still deeply in love with her many years into our relationship, but I am also grounded in the healthy boundaries and growth that I have found in this program.

Because I got healthy enough to attract a healthy partner, I am with someone who can balance my addict self and be patient and give space to my avoidant self.

We slowly created a life together. And my son is doing the same with his partner of many years. My son has broken the cycle of sex and love addiction that has been passed down in our family.

I am not fixed, but I am recovered. I am still a love addict/love avoidant, but I am in recovery in this program. I draw on the five major resources listed in the S.L.A.A. Preamble: sobriety, sponsorship/meetings, steps, service, and spirituality. Every one of the "Twelve Signs of

Recovery" now shine bright in my life, and each of the promises have come to fruition. Instead of answering yes to the "40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis," my partner and I can check every box of the "S.L.A.A. Healthy Relationships" pamphlet. I have a healthy relationship with my Higher Power, with myself, and with my partner.

The pain of my past fuels my ongoing recovery and my commitment to give to others what I have freely received. The S.L.A.A. Basic Text sums up my ongoing journey (p. 103):

"We know, as we continue to live out our recoveries in S.L.A.A., that we are indeed engaged in the great adventure of discovering true freedom of the human spirit. We have received, and continue to receive, many blessings we would not have known how to ask for. Life is open-ended, and wonderful. New chapters in well-being await us."

— C.O.

# We Broke Up, Took Acid and Ended Up in the Hospital on Valentine's Day

“I think you need to call 911,” Sam said, trembling. We had taken LSD a few hours earlier and something was wrong with him. We had also broken up a few hours earlier, although I still thought he would reconsider. For ten weeks, we had been inseparable, and not just because of Covid. I was sure I had found my soulmate, or at least that’s what I’d been telling myself.

And yet there I was, a petite woman, standing in front of a 6 ft. tall, agitated drug addict on an acid trip gone bad. It was clearly a terrible idea to take the acid. Sam is on anxiety meds, we were both emotional from the breakup, it was already pretty late at night (a psychedelic trip can last around 7 hours), and we had no safety plan in case things went wrong. Neither one of us is exactly responsible.

Our whole relationship had moved at lightning speed, even for me, a love addict. I had been out of my previous relationship for one whole day when Sam super swiped me on a dating app. He was very cute and also lived in Queens, which was most of my criteria. I had been with my previous boyfriend, Tim, throughout the pandemic.

I didn’t feel like being alone again and I intended to take it slow. Tim broke up with me right after meeting his family over Thanksgiving. He said the trip had put our relationship into a pressure cooker that it couldn’t survive.

Devastated, I reduced it to a “covid relationship,” where two people pretty much shack up before they’re ready, eat a lot of food and watch movies.

We also had limited exposure to the outside world. It felt safe.

Tim and I had spoken again after the breakup and I felt ready to move forward with a new person. Sam showed up and seemed eager to get to know me. Within a few days, he was living with me in my Astoria apartment.

I could blame it on the snowstorm that week. I could also say it was because he had been living with his parents since relocating to NY due to covid and he was over it. I didn't care what the reason was. In bed, I'd say things like, "I can't believe I found you. I've waited for you for so long." I was relieved that I'd finally be taken care of and I didn't think he would leave like all the others.

The next few weeks were a blur of him cooking all our meals, watching "The Godfather" and a lot of time in bed. Sam leased a beautiful new Toyota SUV and I told everyone that we got a car. I snagged us a free Hamptons house over Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend, and we spent a romantic few days there. I still felt anxious sometimes, but I kept reminding myself that my life was going great. Sure, I didn't have a job or much going on, but it was a

pandemic, and I was getting lots of unemployment money, so who cared?

I'm 37 and Sam is 35. I figured we would try and have a baby together by the end of 2021. We had talked about it on our first date. Having a baby would give my life the meaning that it lacked. I've always loved babies and have worked as a nanny. Everything would be perfect because Sam showed up in my life right on time and this was my destiny.

I got to know his family, since they lived locally. The day I met Sam's mother I told her I had Borderline Personality Disorder. She told me her daughter had it too, and I thought I could help her understand the disorder and maybe heal their lifelong wounds.

I began to feel so close to Sam's mom that I would text with her during the week. On the eve of Valentine's Day, Sam, his mother and I were talking about future plans and I got worried that my desires weren't being considered. I verbalized my intention to get pregnant in the not-so-distant future by a man who had been in rehab for opiate addiction less than 2 years prior. I

realized I had crossed a line into uncomfortable territory. The car ride back to my (our?) apartment was quiet, and when we got inside, Sam told me he couldn't have children with me. "I'll be unhappy," he said. "I know it." I was shocked. My fairytale ending was crumbling, and I tried to save it. "I'll freeze my eggs," I pleaded.

"Let's work this out. We love each other." Sam was trying to get his life back in order, but an old "friend" of his had been supplying him with coke and more recently, acid. I'd never been that interested in drugs and I didn't know much about drug addiction either. I assumed if you did the drugs you weren't addicted to, it would be OK.

I'd never tripped before and we had discussed doing it together. I thought it might help us save the relationship, or at least be a distraction from the pain of breaking up. It was already getting late on that Saturday evening. We hadn't eaten. We also hadn't made a plan for what to do if things went haywire. I popped the little piece of paper in my mouth. I had no idea how much I'd taken, and I didn't think it mattered.

It would be an experience. The first four hours were spent enjoying the hallucinations in my colorful apartment. The watercolor of my grandparents' beach house on the South Shore of Massachusetts, came alive and the waves bobbed up and down. We talked about God, how nothing really matters, and how we would always be there for each other.

He kept telling me how beautiful I was, and I didn't believe him. I thought I looked like a monster with my red, puffy crying face. We danced to my friend's classical music playlist that he made me when I told him we might take acid. There were life lessons in there too. My ambitions, like starting a fashion blog, had taken a backseat because I was so afraid of failure. Sam encouraged me to pursue my dreams.

But then, it all changed. He started to get upset and then wet himself. I called his identical twin brother for help, but he was on Coney Island and couldn't get to us fast enough. Sam was banging his head against the ground and bleeding. He started to come after me, also, and pulled out a small chunk of my hair. I was terrified it was about to get



worse, so I called 911. I had to spring into action even though I was exhausted and scared. The paramedics came and restrained him. They asked me questions and I tried to stay alert. I walked over the snowy street into the ambulance while Sam was taken on a stretcher to a different ambulance. He was in his underwear and a t-shirt. He didn't even have shoes on, and I had his phone.

I was taken to a hospital that was one of the world epicenters of the Covid outbreak. Everyone was in a mask. The patterns on the curtains were moving back and forth since I was still tripping. I heard the doctor and nurses discussing what to do with me next. "I can HEAR you!" I cried out. I wanted to get out of there. They asked me a few basic questions to check my level of alertness. "What day is it?" the nurse asked. "It's Valentine's Day." It was the worst Valentine's Day yet.

Sam's brother picked me up and we drove back to my apartment to wait for news. The next morning, we were told that in his psychotic state, Sam had assaulted an officer and would be arrested after he woke up from sedation. This had become a nightmare I

couldn't wake up from. His mother texted me asking where he was, but I knew I couldn't be the one to tell her. I spoke to my parents and my toddler nephew, who asked where Sam was. "He's sleeping," I said, through faint tears.

After another sleepless night, I heard from him. He had been released late the night before and was at his parents' house. I kept imagining him shoeless. Luckily, his dad had left shoes for him at the precinct. He was coming over with his mother to pick up his stuff. I was relieved but numb. Would we have any privacy? Were we still together? I still couldn't believe that this was my life. I'd never been through something like this. I'm a rabbi's daughter. I'm an adult. I was ashamed and embarrassed. And I didn't know if Sam's family blamed me at all.

He apologized, hugging, and kissing me warmly. There was a sizeable scab on his head from the head banging. His mother came into the apartment for a minute and barely looked at me. I dug deep for compassion towards her. Everyone needed to heal from the experience.

I firmly believe that what happened to me that night was God stepping in. I needed to be harshly shaken out of the fantasy I was trying to live in. I needed him to move out and I needed his parents to get involved. God did for me what I couldn't do for myself. The next day I started going to daily meetings on Zoom. They've helped me to surrender and find some relief from the obsessions. I still have some withdrawal symptoms, like missing the companionship I felt with Sam. I cry a lot. As I write this, I have two weeks of sobriety off my bottom lines and three weeks of no contact. I'm on Step Four with my sponsor and I'm learning all the time. I've used men and relationships to validate me and feel worthy of love. I no longer believe what my addict brain tells me.

When I met Sam, I had convinced myself that I was over Tim. I wasn't, and it was very uncomfortable trying to get over him while already sharing my home with someone new. In a desperate attempt to force myself to be "ready," I set Tim up with a girlfriend of mine. I told her it was OK and that I would be happy if it worked out for

them. I even entertained the idea that we could all be friends. I felt physically sick when she began sharing details of their budding connection, but it was too late to change my actions.

He cut me out of his life and then I cut her out. I'm thankful to not have any information about either of them now and know that it's not my business. It was part of my insanity to try and play God.

If a guy I was dating was especially attractive, I took that to mean that I was good enough to "land him." I don't know how I got this way. I have supportive, loving parents who would do anything for me and have. The co-dependency is strong. Perhaps it's inherited generational trauma from the Holocaust. Or maybe it's the rampant mental illness on my mother's side. It could have to do with growing up in NYC, where everything was at my fingertips and fantasy seemed real at times.

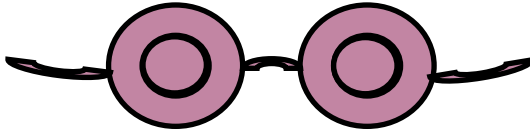
Whatever the reason for the disease, I'm the only one who can change this about myself. It's time for recovery, healing, acceptance, living in the present moment and leaving the rest up to God.

— BRIYAH P., QUEENS, NY

# Share space

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## Gratitude for the Blessings Received Even When the Rose-Colored Glasses Come Off



I have been working the program for approximately two years and have mostly remained sober, abstinent, free from bottom line behaviors, and not acting out since the beginning. I say mostly because my program is not perfect but it's perfectly imperfect, and that's good enough. Those are the affirmations that I jump to often when I am slipping into negativity. Negativity is a large part of our disease. This recently came to light for me.

I have always seen myself as a very positive person, waking up in a good mood, seeing the

brighter side of things, the cup half full, solution oriented, and everyone is good and tries their best. "There are no problems in life, only solutions" was my motto. My positivity was contagious, and some people naturally gravitated towards me while others, in hindsight, were too annoyed with this cheerfulness, and retreated. I was born a people pleaser in every respect, and a typical co-dependent and Sex and Love addict.

I was born in France, the oldest of three children to parents who had come from nothing and made it "middle

class big” at a young age, selling off their small start-up company to a giant U.S. corporation. I grew up in the ritzy suburb of Paris, “Neuilly,” the name of which instantly pegs me as an upper middle-class bourgeois. I was raised by a series of nannies, and a co-dependent workaholic mother who ran the busy household like clockwork, juggling three children and running new companies for my father, an ego-driven, entrepreneurial man in search of his next success.

My brother, sister and I were collectively “the children,” raised as a unit, attended catholic schools, and had all we ever needed materially. I dug deep into my past, through therapy and various self-awareness workshops, and neither remember ever being hugged by my parents nor being told that they loved me. Acknowledgment and love came in the form of praise for good grades, achievements at school or extra-curricular activities, and being polite and obedient children. I excelled at

all — seeking recognition and love through these officially approved channels.

My father moved the family to the U.S. when I was 12 years old — when it was clear that the Socialist party was rising in France which rendered doing business challenging. We moved to yet another swanky neighborhood of Los Angeles, Pacific Palisades, attended the French School to the great disappointment of my parents who had us apply to all the renowned private schools, but our English was not good enough yet. My father pursued a series of business ventures that finally led to our financial demise, the repossession of our house, and the dissolution of the marriage with a slew of infidelities.

My quest for love started when I was 15 years old and led to a succession of long-term boyfriends until the age of 21 when I met my-to-be-husband for the next 25 years. My rose-colored glasses were firmly planted on my nose as we escalated the financial and social ladder, start-up silicon-valley babies ourselves, had

two kids, living and traveling all over the world.

I became the head of my family of origin and endeavored to keep control and keep our family together, still positive and spiritually bypassing, as my parents were deeply involved in their own lives. My mom remarried an abusive alcoholic who would pass away two years ago from alcoholic dementia. My father remarried a younger woman with whom he raised two children, never contacting us again until recently.

I raised my own children with a combination of what I had experienced: more of everything and the pressure to strive for perfection. I saw myself as the model stay-at-home mom caring for her children, highly educated with a law degree from a reputable university and a rich array of family relationships and friends.

I was also very “spiritual” since an early age from the intellectual discourses of my father that anything was achievable and anything less than a spiritual awakening, quest or being on a journey was not good enough. There

was always a “spiritual” twist to any real-life events that often resolved into blaming outside happenings or the need for self-examination and elevating to a higher road. This spiritual ideal and ego were embedded in my rose-colored glasses in combination with financial, social and emotional successes, and colored my world in a pink hue.

Yet, it was not enough. My insatiable need for love was not quenched and I sought it unfairly in my spouse, in my children, through friends, and intrigues, but I was still the good girl and would not dare cheat.

After a painful divorce from an emotionally unavailable man who left me destitute, I immediately jumped into a four-year roller coaster relationship with a truly unavailable man that continued to take care of me financially. More travel, more houses, sailing around the world, more of everything, but more was never enough because I wasn't enough. My disease was at its peak and it took me two years, close to ten break-ups, to crawl out of the emotionally and at times

physically abusive relationship. I entered therapy and S.L.A.A. on my knees having lost all sense of self, a sickly 41 pounds lighter with an under/overeating problem, penniless, a crippling pathological loneliness, besieged by shame and guilt, estranged from one child, and alienated from most of my family and friends.

Today, I have tools for living, I work my program every day, I have established a relationship with my Higher Power, I have worked through the pain of loneliness, the unfillable void and need for love, of not being enough, and taken responsibility for my parts including the emotional abandonment of my children.

I am self-loving, happy, and embrace reality's ups and downs without the rose-colored glasses or the spiritual bypass. I am still in the process of rebuilding my life and my relationships after some deliberate thoughtful cleaning. My life is very different emotionally, spiritually, physically and financially. I live a very simple and authentic life in Bali, Indonesia. I would not

exchange my best day as an addict for my worst day in recovery, and I will go to any length to keep emotionally sober. I live every day as an opportunity for growth, balance, and service in a non-codependent manner. I was recently called a program ninja and I ninja train every day to keep fit spiritually. I have been gifted more than enough, more than I could ever wish for or imagine, and that's enough.

I recently started sober dating following a two and a half years' purposeful hiatus after more than 38 years of nonstop relationships, and I marvel in a loving way at my changed behaviors. I don't know if my new partnership will sustain but it will most likely teach me something. I remain vigilant as I, most times, do not have the great delusion that I can ever be anything but a sex and love addict in recovery.

Grateful for the all the blessings received even when the rose-colored glasses came off.

— VAL B., PARIS, FRANCE; LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA; BALI, INDONESIA

# *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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