

A full moon is visible in the upper left quadrant of the cover, set against a clear blue sky. Below the moon, a large, billowing cloud formation is illuminated from below, giving it a vibrant pink and orange hue. The overall scene suggests a sunset or sunrise.

# theJournal

Issue # 193

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# Pink Cloud

# 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,

What I realized after reading the articles in this issue of *the Journal* is that pink clouds might be a good thing sometimes to keep members in the program. It's just the pink clouds born from and relying on fantasy that get us in trouble. In this issue, S.L.A.A. members share their experience in dealing with the crash that come from fantasy-based pink clouds. I'm grateful for their service in sharing their stories.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is on the theme “Pink Cloud.” 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: #194 — Jan./Feb — Truth Being Revealed in Higher Power’s Time — “Have you found that Higher Power has shown you the truth about something important gradually rather than immediately upon your demands?” Please share your experience, strength, and hope with truth being revealed in Higher Power’s time. Deadline for submissions is Nov. 15, 2021. And #195 — March/April — Long-term Recovery — How do you keep your program fresh and growing? Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2022. Please send answers to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

According to Dictionary.com, Pink clouding, or Pink Cloud Syndrome, is a phenomenon many recovering addicts experience when they first enter 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?

After about two months of staying away from bottom-line behaviors and participating in meetings, listening to YouTube shares, reading literature, browsing through the S.L.A.A. and S.L.A.A. virtual intergroup website, I felt alone. There was so much hope in the realization that I could live free from my extreme dependency on sex and love. I now realize reaching out to a real person in the fellowship is important. I try to call another member to maintain the human connection to the program. I might even hear a message from my Higher Power during the outreach conversation. Taking action on some suggestions that the sober member gives can help me to stay connected to the program.

— ANONYMOUS

## Question of the day

When I first got sober, I was in a boatload of trouble. I was facing company lawyers, possibly losing my job and I was being blackmailed to stay in a relationship with a married man. I completely surrendered and let go of that slender rope I was hanging on. I decided either 'God is everything' or 'He is nothing', and that day I decided 'God is everything' and can do all things. He is good. I have seen the miracles in this program of lives being transformed. As it turns out, I wasn't fired, I wasn't exposed, I was able to retire early in good standing, and go on to do volunteer work which I love (it's my way of making living amends). When I was acting out, my days were black-cloud days. It's as if a switch was flipped. I was free of the addiction that had me by the throat. Now, every day is a pink-cloud day. I've never had it so good!

— SUSAN G., HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

Gosh, my pink cloud began when I started in the program, but I have to admit, it hasn't diminished, it continues to expand. I feel drenched at times because that pink cloud swells with my continued recovery and, as I expand, grow, and evolve in my growth, that cloud gets heavier until it finally bursts a gentle pink rain down through my service in this program. I've been involved in S.L.A.A. H&I since the beginning of my recovery and being of service to the suffering addict who has never heard of this fellowship allows me to continue to grow in my recovery. That is how this pink cloud of mine continues to expand. I love sharing my love and gratitude for this fellowship with the still suffering addict who has never heard about S.L.A.A. It's the service that makes me smile. I find myself...singing and dancing in that pink rain!

— GLENN S., HOLLYWOOD, CA

## Question of the day

I had more of a ‘pink fog’ — a disorienting sense of relief after withdrawal, but not really the manic/euphoric version of the pink cloud experience. My pink fog dissipated rather gently. I was so busy working the Steps and getting to meetings (and dealing with the wreckage of my present) that I didn’t experience a crash, rather, I just found myself working on the long game of being sober in S.L.A.A. I had to fake it until I made it, spiritually. My sponsor helped this process along by constantly sharing his interactions with his Higher Power. I think that was the key to my feeling ‘taken care of’ by my HP.

— DAN, HOUSTON

I was scared into the rooms. Getting to know the Steps and feeling a sense of fellowship gave me a big pink sigh of relief, but it did not get me sober. My acting out got further apart in terms of time, but it progressed in seriousness and riskiness. For 2 years as I plodded on, I justified myself by telling myself that I was in recovery, therefore I was trying my best. Finally, I got caught properly, thank God. Sobriety this time was different and lasting. There was of course, a new kind of pink cloud. This time I was eager to tell my friends that I’d truly and finally surrendered and changed. I was ready to sign a book deal and tell the world of my great recovery. Now years later I am less worried about getting the word out. I am happy to quietly do service and be helpful wherever I can.

— ANONYMOUS

## Question of the day

I'd had several slips right around three months into sobriety. I'd broken bottom lines twice right around that measure of time.

Then, I passed the three-month, then four, five, and approached the six-month mark, and was getting ready to embark on the Fourth Step with my sponsor, when my pink cloud came to a crashing halt.

This time came on what would have been a 30-year wedding anniversary if my ex-wife and I hadn't divorced at the seven-year mark. I acted out for two days straight and was feeling humiliated by how easily I lost that confidence, particularly since my sponsor and I were about to start the Fourth Step.

He suggested we put the brakes on the Fourth Step until I again reached a three-month period of sobriety. After humbly sharing about that experience and where I was struggling in program with my sponsor and other fellows, I became more aware about my character defects.

I needed someone else to direct my attention back to when I was veering off-course. I'm now coming up on 18 months of sobriety on my bottom lines, but I'm not focusing as much on the days... Just the day. One day at a time.

— ANONYMOUS

## Question of the day

As my withdrawal eased up, I transitioned from that raw, vulnerable place to the euphoria of the pink cloud.

It felt like an exciting new sense of freedom. I was starting to trust myself not to self-sabotage as I had so many times before.

Still newly sober, I was learning the boundaries of my recovery. There were times when I was over-confident and drifted into middle-line behaviors, like flirting and fantasy.

My intuition told me I was on a slippery slope. Keeping in close contact with my sponsor and sharing these behaviors honestly helped me protect the recovery I had worked so hard for.

My sponsor created a safe space free from judgment. She offered suggestions to help me maintain my recovery through Step work, service work and self-care.

These suggestions kept me in contact with my Higher Power.

After surviving withdrawal, I never wanted to end up back at the beginning and was willing to go to any lengths not to take my recovery for granted.

—DOROTHY H-J, HOUSTON, TX

## Question of the day

Recovery is a process of awareness, acceptance, action, in that order. Not all the awareness comes at once, in fact, self-awareness usually comes in waves. Each wave of awareness is overwhelming when it first appears. The pink cloud began because I saw the surface of my flaws and problems and thought, “What I see now is all there is, and I can overcome these easily.” I saw a future in 6 months where everything was breezy and began living in that fantasy. Then I started to see deeper levels of my flaws, which caught me off guard and brought me back to today. I was in fear and hopelessness. I talked with my sponsor, fellows, and recommitted myself to working the program one day at a time and not looking ahead. I began praying, reading daily readers, and created a daily routine.

— ANONYMOUS

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So, my pink cloud was interesting. I made a commitment to myself to go to a 12-Step meeting every day for one year. I was also trying to recover from a drug addiction. I then realized I couldn't go to the same program every day — are you kidding me? So, I shopped around and found S.L.A.A. That was it. I knew that this was my deeper issue. And I got involved. Right away! I tried to get involved in H&I (Hospitals and Institutions) in my other program, but they wanted 5 years off of drugs. So, I got involved in S.L.A.A. I have been connected to H&I ever since. Being of service in H&I has allowed me to maintain my recovery. And, while it was very challenging at times dealing with different personalities, it was the principles and the Traditions that kept me connected after the pink ‘fog’ lifted.

— ANONYMOUS

# Every Experience Is a Chance to Grow



I experienced a pink cloud when I first entered the S.L.A.A. program. I was devouring all the literature I

could find, attending a meeting a day, sometimes two or three and immediately set myself up with a sponsor. I was so

immersed that I was riding high and on a trajectory that I felt I was almost invincible. I began no contact with my significant other and he broke that no contact after two weeks by showing up at my doorstep on Mother's Day evening. I answered the door, surprised, shocked, and confused, and allowed him in.

What followed was a wide range of emotions from anger, blame, feeling defeated, and my ego was bursting at the seams to want to stay in my anger. I was doing SO well prior to him showing up. I was doing everything I was supposed to do. I was learning so much, enjoying my solitude and fellowship with other women and I even started to share in the meetings.

That experience led me to question what I was really doing in the program. Was I supposed to be here? Was this program worth it? Were my efforts in vain? I experienced suicidal thoughts, questioning if I was really in S.L.A.A. for the right reasons and I blamed everyone but myself for the actions that led to me breaking the no contact.

When my sponsor mentioned pink cloud a few days later, it made sense. I was able to take stock of the situation through all of my emotions and do my best, in my limited understanding being so new to sobriety, to take the situation as a learning experience and keep moving forward.

I am grateful for the experience.

I am understanding that I must be more balanced in my recovery and life in general. I needed to be taken down from that pink cloud to get where I am today — working the Steps, slowly, with intention, purpose, and truth — not my truth but based in material reality.

I am grateful for every experience. It brings me closer to the amazing woman I was built to be.

My message to all who are still reading this far: Keep moving forward, every experience, slip or step up is a chance to grow and learn. I believe in you!

— STEPHANIE, FAYETTEVILLE AR

# Emerging From the Grip of Darkness

When I first entered the programme, I was in severe withdrawal. I could not eat; I was shaky and would have to slip off to the bathroom at work to cry.

I found myself in a very dark place mentally. I could not think of reasons to continue. Fortunately, I went to my first S.L.A.A. meeting, which was a women's group and was encouraged to return.

I began the work with a sponsor and started to slowly emerge from the grip of darkness. This gloomy feeling lasted for what seemed like months. After many meetings and outreach and top lines, I finally found a moment of joy. I'd gone to an Americana exhibition and noticed some cheerleaders.

They were inviting people to come and experience being at the top of the pyramid. I was able to build up the courage to go ahead and volunteer. As I was hoisted to the top, I let out a whoop of joy and my face felt as if it was cracking as I was

smiling for the first time in what felt like forever. I realised that I'd broken through the gloom, that I could feel happiness, and it was as though a dam had broken, I started to notice small joyful things from day to day in my new sobriety. Here was the light at the end of the tunnel! Around this time, I felt on top of the world.

Free from reaching out to qualifiers and supported by fellows, life seemed to be getting easier and more manageable. I could see a sunny future and became hopeful. I think the rose-coloured glasses started to slip from my face, and the pink cloud dissipated as I travelled further into my Step 4.

As I went through the columns, I had to face things that I had kept deeply submerged and unconscious for many years and face up to the emerging patterns.

This didn't completely deter me, but I remember feeling overwhelmed and struggling again. I'd lost the bounciness

of that first wave of euphoria and hope and realised that there was a bumpy road of hard work and dealing with some deep-down issues ahead. I am grateful however for the

pink cloud, even though it departed swiftly. It helped remind me that I could smile and feel happy and laugh again.

— MIRA, UK

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## Crashing Down From the Pink Cloud

**I**ronically, I vividly remember sending a message to my qualifier who is in another program about this.

I was so happy at one point in early recovery, I couldn't wait to tell him (who aside from being my qualifier had, up to that point, been one of my best friends for almost 6 years) that he didn't have to worry about me! I was totally fine!

He actually had the insight to say, "Hmn...careful, it sounds like you're on a pink cloud. It's normal, but just be careful."

I distinctly remember scoffing at it, and subsequently, and quite arrogantly claiming that I was going to be just fine! There I

was on Lexington and 30-something street in New York City, just having left a meeting, maybe a month and a half, two tops, in program, feeling as high and pink as the sunset sky on a warm, August day.

A month later I wanted to die. Truly, I thought of ways to end it, how to go quietly without making too much of a fuss, but just enough to show it hurt.

I was in complete agony. For every level of the pink cloud video game that I had advanced to during that brief interlude of euphoria, relief, and joy, the naive optimism about my newfound tools of sobriety, I dropped double the levels into my own hell of withdrawal. And I dropped fast. It was sort of like being

suspended in the air, in a calm, ethereal plane and suddenly waking up in a fog, in a dark room, with the shades drawn, noticing I hadn't taken care of my hygiene for about a month, and I had gained a few pounds out of nowhere it seemed, and there was all this stuff around my apartment, clutter everywhere, and I had all these missed calls, "What day is it? What month is it?" I wondered. "Who cares," I would quickly reply. I ignored every phone call unless it was from work. And even that sometimes.

I couldn't care less about my email. My friends. My family. The only thing I cared about was whether my qualifier had tried to reach out, or if he added a new song to our playlist.

Sure, I had stopped seeing him. We limited our conversations to emails strictly about our professional projects, and there always needed to be a third party on the email, per the direction of my sponsor, but that wasn't enough anymore. I wanted my old drug again. Oh, how the mighty had fallen from her precious pink cloud! It was a scary, scary place, what I like to call the Stygian Pool of

Withdrawal (cue Milton fans). While on the fluffy contours of the pink cloud, I attended in-person meetings, I called in to meetings, I did top lines, I called my sponsor regularly, I raised my hand in meetings to share, to read.

I was an honor student! In the murky waters of the Stygian Withdrawal Pool, I could not for the life of me get up to brush my teeth, much less pick up my phone to tell a fellow that I wanted to die. But that was the reality.

One day, a fellow said to me something along the lines of: "It's okay if all you did today was wake up and tell someone that you feel awful, and it's okay not to know what to do about it."

That was the best thing I could have ever heard because I didn't realize I had all this shame about not knowing how to get back to my Pink Cloud throne. "How had I fallen, so far, so fast? I thought I was doing so great, wasn't I, God? Is there a God? Why are you putting me through this, you bastard?"

So, I tried, one day at a time to text or call (on the slightly less horrible days), just one person, **JUST ONE**, and be honest about my feelings, and

be open to the wisdom and experience, strength, and hope from those who had any to offer.

I was lucky enough to be in contact with women in this program who had solid recovery, and I was willing to believe that this stagnant abyss was not the be all, end all of my life. Despite not knowing how, or if, I would ever get back to a place of pink-cloud-style relief and euphoria (basically another high, which is why it's dangerous!), I was promised serenity and peace by my fellows, and that sounded like a pretty good compromise to me.

I kept checking in, one day, one call or text at a time, and slowly but surely, I began praying once a day: "God, please help me." I said it over and over again, until I finally began to have the willingness to help myself.

Instead of staying home and only doing phone meetings, I slowly went back to in-person meetings. I didn't always want to share, but I tried. I gave

myself a pat on the back for showing up to a meeting, and listening, and being present. I started having conversations with God, real question-and-answer kind of conversations. I didn't always get an answer, but I got the sense I was being heard. Sometimes the answer came through a fellow on the phone, or someone's share at a meeting.

Most importantly, I realized that the cloud was not the ideal. The ideal was peace, long-lasting, Higher Power kind of peace, and that would only come with time and working the Steps.

So, Patience and I became good friends, and now whenever I hear a newcomer on the phone and they sound like they're on that cloud, I say nothing. I share in their possibly temporary joy and elation and remain present and like a loyal servant to a loving God, available for the day they wake up in their own abyss of cruel reality, so they, like me, don't have to climb out of that dark, hellish pool alone.

— VANESSA V.

# Share space

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## My Focus Is on the Steps



When it was recently suggested in a S.L.A.A. ABC Committee Meeting that literature on a “dating plan” for

fellows who may have anorexic tendencies was being considered, I felt my heart rate increase in a split-second. I don’t have a lot of actual

romantic relationships, but when I have, just like binging on food for someone who compulsively eats, I've always moved to sex with that partner too quickly, and too often, and with great remorse when I became ashamed about my actions.

Twenty years after my divorce, I'd had my first romantic relations since my ex-wife.

Not from lack of trying, but out of fear of rejection, and the amount of acting out I did in solitude with pornography or fantasies and euphoric recall of past sexual partners.

Three or four years ago, without program, I got into a purely sexual relationship too quickly, and being extremely codependent, I wasn't able to break that relationship off for three months after it was clear that it wasn't working, and she had no desire to let me go. A little over a year and a half ago,

I took a weekend to visit an online friend who I thought I'd built a stronger relationship with, but I realize now, I was trying to fill the hole in my soul by attempting to "rescue" her from a series of bad relationships. Being intimate on that weekend made it clear that I had no business trying to become romantically involved.

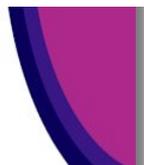
Right now, I don't pursue or attempt to intrigue with anyone for any kind of romantic relationship. It doesn't seem like the healthiest thing as a permanent solution for someone who has anorexic tendencies, but first things first.

My focus is currently on working my way through the Steps. So, for now, I'm dealing with those concerns by talking about them in meetings, with my sponsor, or other fellows. "Praying only for God's will for us (me), and the power to carry that out."

— ANONYMOUS

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# Breaking Out of Delusion

*Editor's note: This is a response to a previous issue theme and Question of the Day: Breakdown to Break Through-- Do you feel Higher Power demolished your life to build it back up with a stronger foundation?*

200%. My Higher Power broke down every tower of an idea I had for my life, from my career to my relationship, to my social circle, to my creative network and onward.

When I came into program, I was just getting out of what I now understand was an anorexic relationship (no sex, no intimacy, a safety net after decades of trauma) and became involved in an emotional affair with my best friend with whom I worked side by side on several creative endeavors.

I thought, "This is it. This is my person." The denial I was in was so powerful, it did not allow me to face, much less accept, the reality that "my person" was already in a

committed relationship with a woman he had been with for two years and had just moved across the country with her.

I was living in the delusion, the fantasy, that he was going to make himself available and return any day now. We worked within the same company, had a fairly large network of creatives within our circle, and additionally, an extensive group of friends outside our work, from side gigs, neighborhood friendships, and just living and working in the boroughs of New York City.

I have a vague memory of noticing that our mutual friend count on one of the many social media platforms had literally reached about 300+ people.

I saw myself building a collective, a family, a home, a whole life with this person, if only he could do exactly what I wanted him to (as though I was the authority on his or anyone's life, ha, the addict is a

selfish, control-hungry beast sometimes). One fine day in early recovery, I realized I had a very big choice, and really the most important choice of my life: I could give up my newfound commitment to pursuing sobriety and instead pursue everything I thought I needed and wanted (because as an addict I also thought I was the authority on what I needed and wanted), or I could give up the torch on everything I thought I needed and wanted to have my sobriety.

And by give up the torch I mean, very specifically, give it up and turn it over to my one and only Higher Power, who invariably and without question knows much better than I do the real and true needs and wants of my sober, broken, and healing heart. I could never choose something/ someone else and choose myself at the same time. I was devastated in the face of this choice.

I could have very well given up everything: the anorexic relationship (which I did), my role with the company, all of our friends, my family, my reputation, everything, if it meant I could have him. But

that, of course, meant I couldn't have my relationship with my Higher Power and much less my sobriety. And there was the crux. It wasn't just my sobriety at stake; MY SOBRIETY WAS EVERYTHING. All the other things, even him, meant nothing if it meant I had to continue living in the desperate, tormented, inconsolable pain, the never-ending grief of loving someone who would never, ever be who I wanted him to be.

The disillusioned teenager with lost dreams stared back at me in the mirror. When I stopped to look around, I realized I had been at this exact crossroads one too many times before, and I always, always chose my partner. This time, I chose my Higher Power.

I walked away from the guy, the company, the creative network, my involvement in all the projects, the circle of friends, the extended various social groups, the hangouts, the diners, the neighborhoods, the streets, the park benches, the albums, the songs, all of it.

I haven't heard from any of them since. And it's totally

okay, because what I've been given are new connections, new friends, SANE AND SOBER FRIENDS, new creative networks, better ones perhaps, more will be revealed. I have been given new and exciting work opportunities. I was shown how good I can stand on my own, with my own talent, and my own merit.

My hair has grown back in doubles after having lost a giant patch of it in withdrawal, about the width of a can (it was a huge empty bald patch and a real-life manifestation of the loss I refused to feel).

There's color on my face where once barely living tissue covered my bones. I've reconnected with old friends and formed newer, stronger connections with them. My parents and I are closer.

My estranged brother and I talk fairly regularly now. And most importantly, I have an abundant community of people in recovery that understand me when I speak and show up for themselves and inspire me to show up for MYSELF, and not for an outcome — people who have taught me what it looks like to have a relationship with someone who loves me and supports me, no matter what, and that is my Higher Power.

People who lit the way for me through every dark highway of withdrawal, every time I thought I would die from the pain. I began to work with other creatives again, people I didn't know at all. I began singing again. I began writing again. I am slowly building up the courage to share my own work, rather than constantly putting myself on the bench or cheering on the side.

It's been a long and painful journey, slow at times, but mostly I have found the peace in my heart that I longed for more than I longed for anyone or anything. I've cried more for myself than ever before, I've mourned my losses, rebelled at the shedding of old ways and skin. I've cried out of relief, gratitude, disbelief.

I've begun to build my life up again after that breakdown, that pivotal crossroad, one day at a time on the road less traveled by me, and in the words of Frost, I really do believe I have "miles to go before I sleep." I know in my heart I will continue to be guided by this unbeatable Higher Power I now have that will steer me in the direction of my dreams, and I have found the greatest solace in that.

— VANESSA V.

To my dear sponsor, I wrote you a poem.  
I was given a writing prompt and first line to compose a poem.  
The prompt was: I begin to heal  
The first line: "I let go"

## Silicea Terra

I let go. I let go to begin.  
    To begin and begin  
        each step  
            on this ground  
Not forcing  
    Not forcing Any-thing, any-one:  
        Any-more.  
Oh cloudy Cloud,  
    Release the rain  
        And Into The Well  
            Then raise the bucket  
    Of that murky water, too  
        wash away  
            this broken glass  
                — downstream  
Into the Ocean deep  
    It returns to sand  
        Grit  
in the furnace of Pain there is fire  
    for change  
        and We forge a vessel anew.

— Thank you for your loving guidance and support to my freedom.

With much gratitude and love, Debra

# A Gamble for Sobriety



**A**cting out always leads to pain. No matter what lies my disease tells me: acting out will always lead to pain.

The best excuse I had for

acting out was the death of my nephew. I received a text one night from my younger sister announcing to our family that her 53-day-old infant son in the NICU would die that night.

I was working at the strip club then. (Staying sober and off your bottom lines as a sex worker is possible from my experience). I panicked. The rest of my family was in the Midwest and here I was, alone in a New York strip club, trying to process what was happening.

I told myself it didn't count as acting out because my baby nephew was dying. In reality, I was using his imminent death as an excuse to hurt myself. Had I followed the spiritual solution, I would have gone to any available meeting nearby and cried. I would have read the literature. I would have made program calls. I would have gotten on my knees and prayed even — despite my atheist beliefs (you do what you gotta do to stay sober). Instead, I crawled into bed with a platonic male friend I was secretly pining for.

He told me all the time that I was beautiful. He also made it very clear he wasn't interested in me romantically. We had a sexual relationship seven years ago before I got sober in A.A. I told myself I was different now. I was sober in A.A. and S.L.A.A. I was so

disgusted by my past. I told myself I was not the same person as I was before. Old gross me was long gone.

Recovery is looking at my past self with compassion. I was just as loveable then as I am now. I learned this valuable lesson when an old qualifier emailed me to make sure I was "ok" being in New York in the height of Covid-19. I was enraged. "How dare he! Our thing was over ten years ago!" I yelled at my sponsor. My sponsor reminded me that something must be "spiritually off" with me if I was in active resentment mode.

This was an opportunity to look closer at myself. I learned I didn't like the past mixing with the present because I hadn't forgiven myself yet. "Also, I have news for you," my sponsor quipped. "If you have a long list or miniature novel of past qualifiers like I did - once in a blue moon you will receive a message from one of them - even if it has been ten or more years." Family deaths, natural disasters, and pandemics excite the disease.

Sometimes it's the shattering of an illusion that triggers withdrawal. I

desperately wanted to believe it was possible for me to be “just friends” with a heterosexual man. And I still don’t know if this is something I am capable of. When the pandemic hit, I had no other friends and neither did he. We texted every day, sometimes at four in the morning, just to gossip or talk about the pasta he cooked for dinner. Gossip is one of my character defects. It creates the illusion of a connection when in reality, we could have been talking about the grass for all that time. Our conversations were superficial and meaningless. But they were there, and I was afraid of being alone. So, I clung to the illusion of intimacy.

I find male attention very titillating. It is something I have to be mindful of when I interact with my current boyfriend’s male friends. Excessive male attention is like a drug to me, and I was getting way too much of this drug from this friend. It fed the fantasy I got from watching too many TV shows where men and women who have been platonic friends for years suddenly realize they were in love. If it sounds like a TV or movie, it’s probably the disease.

The illusion shattered abruptly one day when I started crying on the phone with him. I couldn’t remember the last time I cried in front of a man. What did this mean? Was I in love with him? Was he in love with me? Could he ever love me? I have been infatuated with this man for a very long time now. How could I have not known?

I formed a plan of action with my sponsor. We decided that I needed to not be in contact with him for a week. I don’t remember what I told him, probably something about how I needed some space to take care of myself. I followed my program aggressively and life resumed. I decorated my apartment. I got a new floral curtain to put in my kitchen. I got a fun gig working for a drive-in movie theater. It was a dream gig for me because I love movies and free candy and driving around in golf carts.

But it hurt. All I could think about was the fact that he recently liked my pic on social media. I wanted so badly just to be present and have fun. I was stuck in the familiar morose, depressed state of pining for someone. I felt like I spent my entire life missing

qualifiers, and I was sick of it! Enough was enough. I couldn't take a week off from seeing him and then resume our friendship. It was too painful. My sponsor and I decided I would take a "gamble for sobriety." I would end contact with him until I finished my Step work in S.L.A.A. My sponsor assured me nothing bad ever happened to her when she put all her chips in for sobriety.

My friend knew I was in S.L.A.A., so it was easy to explain to him that I needed time to focus solely on my program. I explained to him that the excessive attention we were giving each other was confusing for me.

Life resumed again. I focused on my Step work. I got another job testing TV crews for COVID. I felt empowered by my new role as an essential worker. I also started making friends. I was beginning to feel optimistic again.

Suddenly one day it hit me: I did not miss him. I did not miss the old friend I thought I was in love with. I missed the illusion of him. I missed having someone that was always there for me. I missed the role of having a "pseudo

boyfriend" as my sponsor called it. But I did not miss HIM. I was free. It's been over a year, and I am in a new relationship with my current boyfriend. I am grateful I am with him and not my old friend.

For one, I am significantly more attracted to my boyfriend than I ever was to my old friend. (Sometimes I got obsessed with men I was not sexually attracted to.) We are our authentic selves with each other. He is emotionally present. With his love and support, I landed my first full time job in over six years. We are a much better fit. Rejection really is God's protection.

My sponsor and I just finished Step 12 together. We are going to go over the Traditions next. I don't know what the future holds. Whether or not I ever talk to my old friend again is entirely up to God or the universe or good orderly direction or whatever you want to call it. I am at peace with whatever happens. I am grateful, I am serene, and thanks to all of you in my S.L.A.A. community, I am sober.

— CAROLINE, NEW YORK

# Un réseau d'entraide précieux

C'est grâce à la lecture du livre *Ces femmes qui aiment trop* que j'ai découvert les groupes de paroles. J'avais 20 ans, et j'étais déjà désespérée par mes souffrances amoureuses. Je rejouais sans cesse les mêmes scénarios avec des hommes différents. Je vivais pour être amoureuse et c'était peut être ça le problème. Avec DASA, j'ai trouvé des personnes qui rencontraient les mêmes difficultés que moi, des femmes, mais aussi des hommes (bien qu'au début je ne fréquentais que les réunions de femmes). Et cette identification m'a permis de sortir de la honte et de la culpabilité, par là, d'apprendre à me connaître, et de faire des prises de conscience sur ce qui se jouait réellement dans mes relations.

J'ai trouvé un réseau d'entraide précieux, de nouveaux amis, et un accueil

inconditionnel de qui j'étais. Cette bienveillance, cette absence de tout jugement, cette compassion m'ont guéri de la haine de moi et de mes mécanismes d'autodestruction amoureux.

Ce qui m'a permis de poursuivre mon évolution personnelle en DASA c'est qu'il n'y a pas de dogme, chacun est libre de venir aux réunions ou pas, de faire ses propres expériences, et c'est ce qui est merveilleux. J'apprends toujours sur moi après 10 ans de programme en 12 étapes... Aujourd'hui j'ai la chance de vivre une relation saine dans laquelle je me sens épanouie et je remercie infiniment DASA sans qui ce n'aurait pas été possible. Rien n'est figé, l'espoir est partout ! Donnez-vous cette chance ! “

— JULIE

# A Valuable Support Network

*Editor's note: this is the English translation of the article on page 30.*

It was through reading a book about women who love too much that I discovered the program. I was 20 years old, and I was already suffering from my desperate need for love. I kept replaying the same scenarios with different men. I was living to be in love and maybe that was the problem. With S.L.A.A., I found people who faced the same difficulties as me, women, but also men (although at first I only attended women's meetings). And this identification allowed me to get out of shame and guilt, and to get to know myself. I gained awareness about what was really at play in my relationships.

I found a valuable support network, new friends, and an unconditional welcome for who I was. This benevolence,

this absence of any judgment, this compassion healed me from the hatred of myself and my mechanisms of self-destruction in love.

What allowed me to continue my personal evolution in S.L.A.A. is that there is no dogma, everyone is free to come to meetings or not, to make their own experiences, and that's what is wonderful. I'm still learning about myself after 10 years of 12-Step program. Today I have the chance to live a healthy relationship in which I feel fulfilled and I thank S.L.A.A. infinitely without whom it would not have been possible. Nothing is fixed. Hope is everywhere! Give yourself this chance!

— JULIE

## Help Others Reach Out to the Still Suffering Addict



### SHARE YOUR INTERGROUP'S OUTREACH MATERIALS

The Conference Public Information Committee (CPIC) supports the fellowship as a whole to carry the message to suffering sex and love addicts.

Instead of every Intergroup “reinventing the wheel” with all-new materials, the CPIC exists to help Intergroups and Groups share materials.

If your Intergroup (or Group without an Intergroup) has used outreach materials successfully - especially using new technology—please consider sharing.

This includes digital:

- print files for letters, flyers, posters
- media items such as online news
- design files for outdoor signage
- audio and video recordings.

Items can be submitted at the CPIC page on the S.L.A.A. website:

<http://www.slaafws.org/committee/cpic>

In order to be shareable, the outreach materials must:

- be approved in Group Conscience for submission to the CPIC for sharing comply with the S.L.A.A. [12 Traditions](#) and [12 Media Guidelines](#)
- comply with the approved S.L.A.A. Suggestions for Public Outreach
- comply with the [CPIC Guidelines for Video](#)
- be only about S.L.A.A. informational topics and/or convey our message by the telling of our stories.

Necessary consents and releases are also required for the CPIC to share the content. The CPIC works with Intergroups and Groups to ensure:

- all shared material complies with S.L.A.A.'s requirements as outreach or public information; and
- your service body is satisfied with the final format and how your material will be shared.



## **THE INSPIRATION LINE**

Your 24-Hour Sponsor

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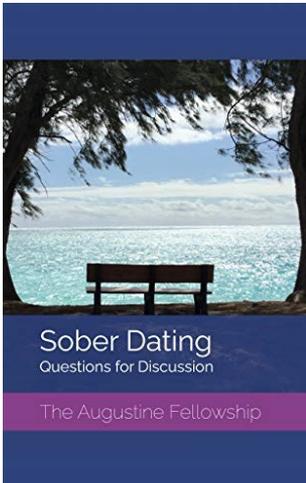
Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup, originators of the Inspiration Line want to thank Fellowship Wide Services and the Journal for supporting the Inspiration Line. GDVI wants to acknowledge the 15 volunteers from all over the US & Canada that leave inspirational messages on the Line and credit them for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



## Sober Dating: Questions For Discussion

by The Augustine Fellowship (Author)

Format: Kindle Edition and paperback



Sober members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (S.L.A.A.) share their experience, strength and hope around dating in recovery. This book contains articles and other resources contributed by S.L.A.A. members, content from the S.L.A.A. pamphlet on Romantic Obsession, and questions for discussion about staying sane and sober while dating. Also included is a sample meeting format to help the reader form an S.L.A.A. meeting with a focus on Sober Dating and this book's Questions for Discussion.

Feedback from regular attendees of a weekly sober dating meeting following the format of "Sober Dating Questions for Discussion" that has been in progress since August 2019:

- "Really good meeting. Love this booklet"
- "Thank you so much. Brilliant meeting - I learned a massive amount of practical info just tonight!"
- "The structure of the meeting and use of the pamphlet creates an elevated level of sharing."

**\*\* If you would like help in starting your own sober dating meeting, contact the CJC at [slaafws.org](http://slaafws.org)**

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

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



theJournal