

theJournal

Issue # 220
Single Issue \$4

RETREATS



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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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Motions adopted at the 1989, 1990, and 1991 Conferences chartered *theJournal*, but it is impractical for all of the content of a periodical, such as *theJournal*, to be Conference-approved. Each recovery group can determine its own position on the use of content from *theJournal* at its meetings.

The Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

(Recently Conference-approved, awaiting Board of Trustees approval due to not reaching 2/3 vote with Proposed Underlined Changes)

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 the 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 and 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 or 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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(Recently Conference-approved, awaiting Board of Trustees approval due to not reaching 2/3 vote with Proposed Underlined Changes)

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.**

The above version of the Twelve Steps was adapted from the Twelve Steps first published by Works Publishing Company in 1939. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, New York, granted permission to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous to reprint the above version in 1986. The forward of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., New York, 1952) states, "... the Twelve Steps can mean more than sobriety for problem drinkers." The fellowship of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is grateful for the early contributions to recovery made by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous through the gift of these twelve principles to the public in 1938.

The Twelve Traditions of S.L.A.A.

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity.**
- 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God as this Power may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.**
- 3. The only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. Any two or more persons gathered together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction may call themselves an S.L.A.A. group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.**
- 4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole.**
- 5. Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers.**
- 6. An S.L.A.A. group or S.L.A.A. as a whole ought never endorse, finance, or lend the S.L.A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- 7. Every S.L.A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**
- 8. S.L.A.A. should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.**
- 9. S.L.A.A. as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.**
- 10. S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the S.L.A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.**
- 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow S.L.A.A. members.**
- 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

The Twelve Concepts for World Service of S.L.A.A.

1. Ultimate responsibility and authority for S.L.A.A. world services always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The Annual Business Conference, by delegation, is the voice and conscience for our world services and of S.L.A.A. as a whole.
3. To insure effective leadership, each element of S.L.A.A. - the Conference, the Board of Trustees, staff, and committees - all possess the "Right of Decision."
4. The "Right of Participation" is maintained by allowing members the opportunity to cast one vote up to the level at which they are trusted servants.
5. The "Right of Appeal" prevails so that minority opinion is heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the Board of Trustees.
7. The Articles of Incorporation and the By-Laws of the Fellowship are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. Although the Conference Charter is a legal document; it also relies on tradition and the power of the S.L.A.A. purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, including their ability to hire staff.
9. Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership must be assumed by the Board of Trustees.
10. Every service responsibility is matched by equal service authority – the scope of this authority is always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and by-laws.
11. The trustees need the best possible committees, staff, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, systems of rotation, and rights and duties are always matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference observes the spirit of S.L.A.A. Tradition,
 - a. taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power;
 - b. that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle;
 - c. that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others;
 - d. that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity;
 - e. that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy;
 - f. that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Fellowship it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

The Conference Journal Committee, a service body within Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, publishes *theJournal* 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 *theJournal*.

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Note of Recognition:

To the newly appointed Board Member, **James B**, who served as the recordkeeper for the 2025 Annual Business Conference/Meeting (ABC/M) for his diligent work and the vital role he played in documenting the proceedings of the Conference in service to the Fellowship

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

In our efforts to continue the work for the fellowship and on behalf of our growing production staff, I wish to thank you for being a supporter of our one-of-a-kind publication. It is for you that we work tirelessly on a two-month cycle to produce *theJournal*. Again, we wish to acknowledge and thank the prior production staff for their efforts and for paving the way to a smooth transition and being available to us in our “changing of the guard.” Rotation of service means that today you are a reader & tomorrow you are a writer or perhaps even one of those on the production staff.

We have yet to grasp everything, but we are very proud to report that while our subscriptions dipped in December, they have nearly doubled since that time. Share *theJournal* with your fellows, encourage more to join us for the print version, and feel free to read the slightly delayed web version online. Over the coming months, we will need to make some decisions about not only next year’s topics (we do that every June), but we also have to solve a web traffic issue that may mean a repackaging of *theJournal* to keep our website prepared for the growth of the S.L.A.A. fellowship, as a whole.

In preparing you to read this issue on retreats, we reached back to 2008 to grab an excerpt that illuminates how important retreats can be to our recovery:

“Through a mysterious sequence of events, sobriety from drugs and alcohol was thrust upon me in my mid-twenties. I was repeatedly encouraged to attend men's intensive twelve-step retreats held in Vermont twice a year, so I did. That was when the recovery process was cemented into my brain. The true nature of powerlessness and the need for a real spiritual awakening was spoon fed to me over the next few years. The awakening came, and so did an authentic relationship with God and some degree of mental health.”

—from Fantasy confessions by Kaleb C (November 2008), in “Themes,” *theJournal: Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous*, Issue 115, Honesty.

We hope you get at least as much as we did out of this issue and are inspired to participate in retreats along your journey.

All the best,

Joel S, Acting Editor at *theJournal*

QUESTION OF THE DAY

Q1. Which retreats did you find worthwhile for your recovery? What made them meaningful?

The last S.L.A.A retreat I attended in Montreal took place in 2002 with long time members. A local religious community lent space for a one-day event where participants shared struggles and wins in recovery. Being together outside the usual meeting format helped members get to know one another better, form friendships, and deepen trust, serenity, and strength in their Higher Powers. That, in turn, supported their ability to carry the message of the 12th Step back into regular meetings. —Daniel G, Sex & Love Addict (Montreal, Quebec, Canada)

Retreats often focus on Steps or include workshops, with strong member participation through writing and sharing. Beginning in the summer of 2014, retreats became an opportunity to spend a few days focused strictly on recovery. That experience was especially meaningful because it offered an intensive recovery setting that was more accessible than a treatment center. —Ari F (NJ/CA)



Years ago, service on a retreat organizing committee led to the creation of a spiritually connective backup workshop. As part of contingency planning in case a retreat leader became sick, one committee member prepared a pouch containing about 75 questions on slips of paper. Each attendee would have drawn a question and shared on it, making participation itself the theme of the workshop. Although the workshop was never needed, the planning process became a spiritual tool in its own right, and the pouch still remains as a meaningful reminder of that retreat. —Anonymous

The GDVI retreats, the NEI retreat, and a Malibu retreat from the LA Intergroup were all especially helpful and worthwhile. —Melissa K (South Jersey)

A number of retreats organized by SLAA UK proved deeply beneficial to recovery. While regular attendance at SLAA meetings offered support, retreats created a different experience: more time to share, repeated contact with the same people, and less room to hide behind old patterns. Sharing multiple times over a weekend peeled away layers and exposed deeply rooted issues. Fellowship on retreat felt healing and esteem-building, while the retreat setting helped uncover unresolved needs for approval, persistent fear, and a lack of self-forgiveness despite years of recovery work and amends. With that awareness came the ability to use more appropriate recovery tools. —Gary H, Sex & Love Addict and anorexic (London, UK)

Q2. Have you attended a retreat? What was helpful and would you recommend retreats? Was there a snapshot moment that changed your perspective?

Since 2014, I have attended at least two retreats every year. Spending several days with other members deepened my connection in ways that a single hour-long weekly meeting could not. Retreats have helped me build healthy friendships, practice boundaries, and strengthen communication and vulnerability with others.

On the seven-hour drive from New Jersey to my first retreat, I went with the intention of deepening my relationship with my Higher Power. Before departing for the trip, I had created a concept of my Higher Power as the number 37.

In New Jersey, gas pump attendants fill your tank (and it is forbidden for a passenger or driver to do so). I asked the attendant to fill up my tank. When the tank was full, the total value was revealed as exactly \$37.37, which felt like a powerful affirmation. That moment opened my heart to whatever the retreat would bring that weekend.

—Ari F (NJ/CA)

I have attended many retreats, and the best ones each taught me something different about recovery. For that reason, retreats are strongly recommended.

—Melissa K (South Jersey)

Q3. How did being with others away from daily distractions affect your understanding of isolation?

It was extremely helpful to be free from household responsibilities and other daily distractions, making it possible to focus more fully on personal recovery.

—Ari F (NJ/CA)

Retreats also created opportunities to talk with people in recovery who I did not see at the meetings I normally attend. —Melissa K (South Jersey)

Q4. How did Step work at a retreat affect your view of character defects? What top-line tools did you bring home?

Learning that addicts often share the same character defects was almost comical. I also love adding discussion on character assets to swing things positively. Top lines during a retreat are really about me, often assessing boundaries and healthy communication.

—Ari F (NJ/CA)

One of the most valuable workshops was on the three Circles (Inner Circle or Bottom Line, Middle Circle, and Outer Circle behavior). The insights gained from that workshop remained useful long after the retreat ended. —Melissa K (South Jersey)

Q5. What was the biggest difference between a regular meeting and the more intense retreat experience? How did the experience of “getting current” in a dedicated, supportive environment help you release guilt or shame?

A weekend retreat made it possible to get to know others on a much deeper level. Real transformations became visible, including people moving from prideful to humble or from closed-off to open. Supportive, focused settings make it easier to

get current and let go of guilt and shame. I witnessed quiet and unsure retreat participants gradually open, release emotions, and embrace vulnerability. —Ari F (NJ/CA)

The biggest differences were the presence of new people, new ideas, new input, new connections, and my experiences at retreats allowed me new sober friends for life. —Melissa K (South Jersey)

*Editorial note

The retreats questionnaire was described as the longest and most involved *theJournal* submission the contributor had ever answered. It may be useful to note that the Question of the Day (QOD) may include more than one question, which differs from the approach which was used in the past. We welcome participation and contributions from everyone in the fellowship to keep *theJournal* as fresh as possible.

We are also including an answer that didn't make it into last month's publication:

Issue #219 Fantasy QOD – In what ways has letting go of fantasy helped you grow in recovery? How do you stay present and build real intimacy instead of escaping into fantasy?

It is most important for me to stay in the present. If I am dating someone and find myself daydreaming about the future, or some other aspect of my new date's life, I call a program buddy to help me stay focused on the "here and now." Otherwise, I can get carried away with fantasies about the future. Fantasizing usually trips up my present, causing the relationship to crash.

Through SLAA, I uncovered my childhood Disney/Jane Austen fantasy that Prince Charming would come along, sweep me off my feet, and we would live happily ever after. Such expectations are

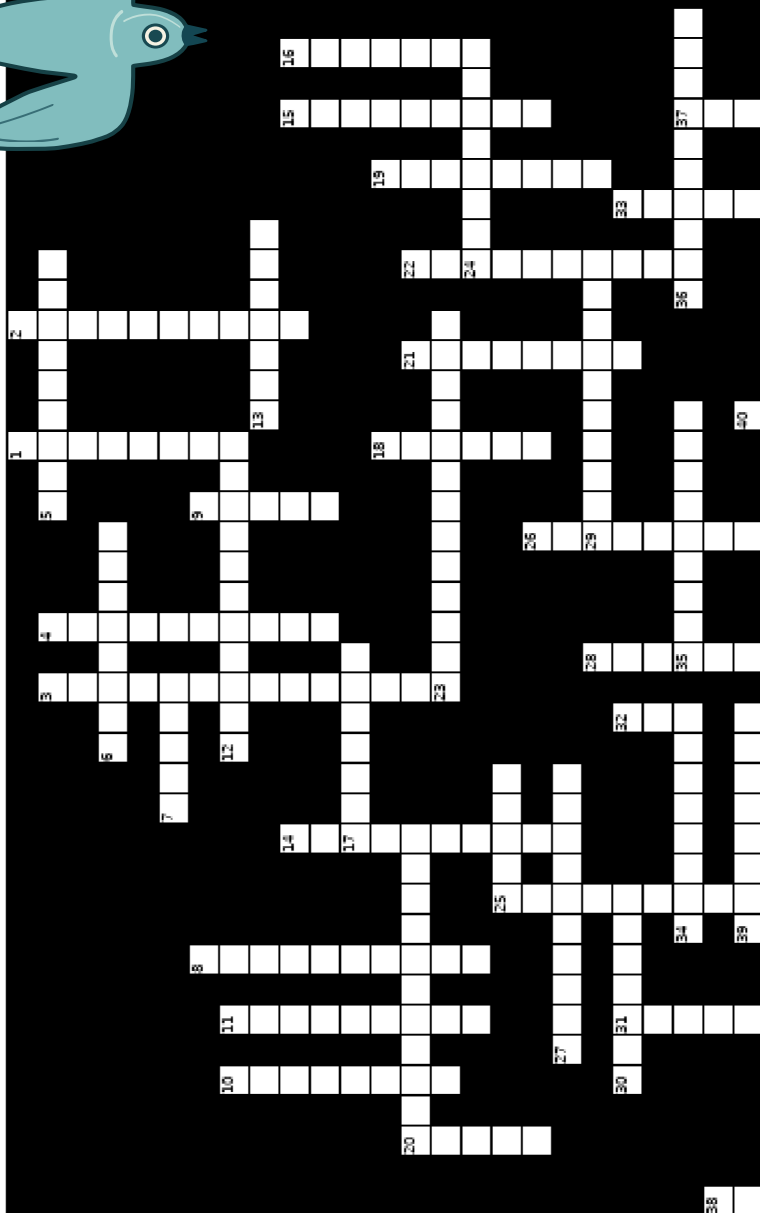
unrealistic and unattainable.

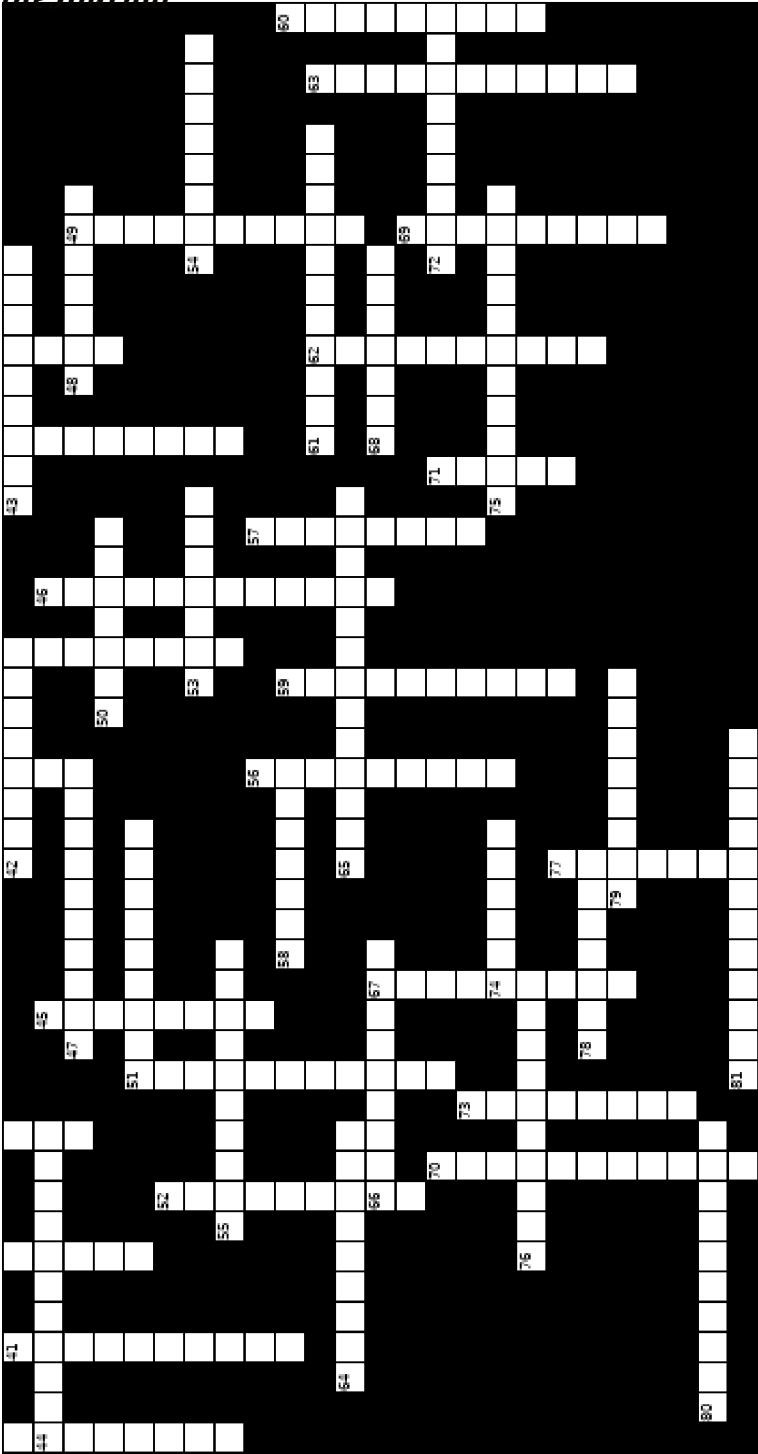
In recovery, I have learned to allow the relationship to build slowly as we spend time together. Also, I have learned that honesty is the best policy, even if it means that we disagree. Sometimes that means enjoying a friendship based on our common interests. Sometimes it leads to a future discussion where one person changes their mind.

Monitoring my feelings with the help of a trusted program buddy keeps me in touch with how the relationship is progressing for me.

—Kathleen A (Sacramento, CA)

A stylized illustration of a blue bird in flight, facing right. The bird has a simple, rounded body, a small beak, and large, spread-out wings. It is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.





Across

5. Pedestrian path, or a symbol of safe passage in recovery (9)
6. How we approach our Fourth Step moral inventory (8)
7. U.S. State tied to retreat locations and headquarters to F.W.S. (5)
12. Individual one-on-one guidance relationship in the program (11)
13. _____ D, chair of the BPDC in 2026 and from the UK (7)
17. Character shortcomings we identify in Step Six (7)
20. Someone attending an SLAA retreat (11)
23. Evening reflection practice, often linked with Step Ten (13)
24. Retreat time alone for reflection (8)
25. How often I practice my program (5)
27. One of the three things members share with strength and hope (10)
29. Conference-approved books and pamphlets (10)
30. Mental clearness gained through recovery (7)
34. State of being free from addictive patterns (8)
35. Thorough self-examination, as in Step Four (9)
36. SLAA member community (10)
39. Love avoidance pattern discussed in SLAA (8)
42. One of the three things we share: experience, _____, and hope (8)
43. Letting go, accepting powerlessness (9)
44. Positive statement of self-worth (11)
47. Healthy limits we set in relationships (10)
48. Giving back to the program (7)
50. Process of recovery and becoming whole (7)
51. Connection to our own experience (9)
53. Regular gathering of SLAA members (7)
54. Reaching out to other groups or newcomers (8)
55. Dedication to recovery and the program (10)
58. Other members of the program (7)
61. Daily practice of recovery principles (11)
64. Town in Surrey, England, retreat location (9)
65. Personal story shared at a meeting (13)
66. One of Twelve guiding principles for groups (9)
68. Phone number exchanged for program support (7)
72. Aware, as in Step Eleven's _____ contact with Higher Power (9)
74. What we hope to have restored in Step Two (6)
75. God as we understand God, Step Two (11)
76. Twelve principles guiding SLAA groups (10)
78. Experienced member who guides a newcomer (7)
79. Healthy relationship behaviors we embrace (8)
80. Historic retreat setting used by the retreats for SLAA UK (10)
81. How our lives had become, Step One (12)

Down

1. Educational session at a retreat (8)
2. Greater Delaware Valley Retreat and workshop location _____ Abbey (10)
3. Deep change that occurs through the Steps (14)
4. The community of SLAA members (10)
8. Genuine relationship with others (10)
9. _____ D is the 2025-2026 Chairman of the SLAA Board of Trustees (BOT) (5)
10. Taking care of one's own needs (8)
11. Compulsive behavior pattern we recover from (9)
14. Quiet reflection practice, Step Eleven (10)
15. Focused examination of Twelve Steps (9)
16. Primary _____ of a group (7)
18. Reparations made in Eighth/Ninth Step (6)
19. Modest view of oneself, Step Seven (8)
20. Pennsylvania location for recovery gatherings (5)
21. Inner peace sought in recovery (8)
22. Refraining from addictive behaviors (10)
25. Routine, coffee-fueled start to the day; occurring every 24 hours, early sunup (12)
26. Open to change, essential at Step Six (11)
28. SLAA Los Angeles (Southern California retreat location) which is on the California coast and well known for surfing and hiking with very expensive homes (6)
31. Embracing reality as it is (10)
32. _____ G, one of the authors of the _____ LCEP process for getting literature approved in our fellowship, formerly the treasurer for the SLAA fellowship during the pandemic (3)
33. Emotional openness and honesty (13)
37. Person being sponsored (7)
38. San Francisco East Bay fellowship location where retreats have been held in 2024-2026 near Petaluma, CA (10)
40. Personal qualities and moral fiber (9)
41. Physical and emotional symptoms of early recovery (10)
45. Positive, affirming behaviors that we now choose to include in our lives (8)
46. Connection to something greater than oneself (12)
49. Irresistible urge to act out (10)
51. Renewal of hope and wholeness (11)
52. Privacy protection principle, Tradition Eleven (9)
56. Withdrawal from others, common in addiction (9)
57. Process of healing from addiction (8)
59. Suggested rules for healthy recovery (10)
60. Variety of backgrounds in the fellowship (9)
62. Service body of autonomous groups coordinating service, meetings and resources (10)
63. Behaviors we commit to avoid (11)
67. Compulsive preoccupation (9)
69. Unable to control, as in Step One (9)
70. Are boundary behaviors, thoughts, or triggers that do not constitute active "acting out," but often act as a slippery slope leading to it; yellow-light behaviors requiring caution and awareness (11)
71. Togetherness in the fellowship, Tradition One. Also, the title of a prayer often shared (5)
73. Close and vulnerable, describing healthy connection (8)
77. Hopeful outcome in the literature (7)

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE (Retreats Issue)

For this month's inspirational quote, we begin with our inspiration for this issue of *theJournal*:

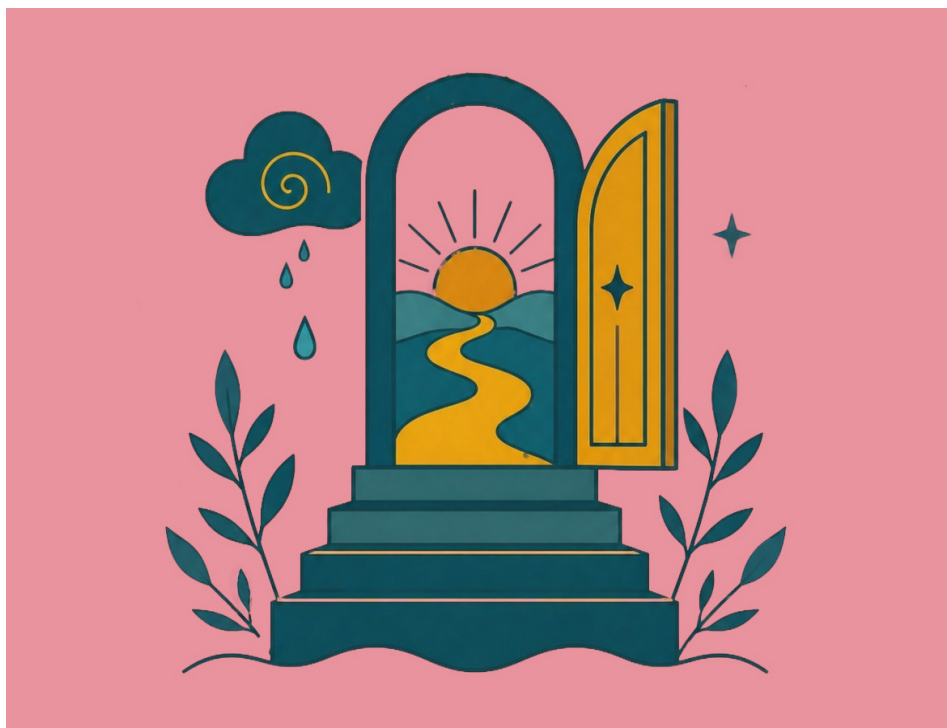
A retreat offers a profound opportunity to clarify your vision and purpose, allowing you to accept your past and embrace your present with renewed focus. It's a dedicated space to plan your journey with intention, empowering you to act with courage and conviction as you celebrate small victories and cultivate a sense of gratitude. By aligning your actions with your values, you build resilience to persist through challenges, knowing when to ask for help and how to connect with others who uplift you. This transformative experience enables you to contribute your unique gifts to the world, ultimately helping you achieve your dreams with unwavering faith and joyfully pursue your passions, leading to a truly improved life.

We have (this month) two inspirational quotes for you to consider, and while they are both outside authors with their own perspectives, elevating only one seemed to be publicity compared with quoting two, giving our readers the choice to consider the binary choice and reduce reliance upon a single illumination (or, as some may suggest, a pedestal)

"The purpose of life is to find your gift. The work of life is to develop it. The meaning of life is to give it away." —David Viscott

"Only once you give yourself permission to stop trying to do it all... can you make your highest contribution towards the things that really matter." —Greg McKeown

THEME: RETREATS



How I Overcame My Reluctance

And Thoroughly Enjoyed My Recent S.L.A.A Retreat Experience

When my home group started discussing a men's weekend retreat, I initially barely listened to their announcements.

I was sure this whole "retreat thing" was not for me. I was just not a "retreat" kind of guy. While I had become close to many of the men during my SLAA

meetings, or at the pizza place where we did post meeting fellowship, sleeping under one roof with them for the weekend was entirely something else.

As the date drew closer and the announcements began to focus on the dwindling remaining open spots, I started to shift my

thinking. FOMO kicked in, and I started to think: what if I actually went? What would I gain and what would I have to give up to have this new experience? One of the organizers sensed my growing curiosity and interest, and he offered to explore my ambivalent feelings.

He asked me to write down the pros and cons of going. What did I hope to gain? What was really holding me back?

This process helped me realize that I was primarily afraid of giving up control. I felt vulnerable sleeping under the same roof with some of the attendees (some of whom I was not particularly close to). Would I be able to feel emotionally – and even physically – safe at all times, especially while I was asleep? When I reviewed the attendee list and analyzed the situation, I realized that my fears were probably overblown, and I put down a deposit. Once I decided to go, I was all in.

I volunteered to buy all the food and signed up to be one of the breakfast cooks.

The organizing committee did a fantastic job making the weekend really special. From the selection of the place where we stayed, to the icebreakers, to the various rituals, the formal meetings, the guided meditation, the group hike, the inspired ceremony to let go of generational trauma—everything was so thoughtful and well-conceived. Of course, every activity was optional: take what you like and leave the rest.

In the end, I was so glad that I trusted myself enough to have a new experience. As we were departing, I asked the organizers to consider making our next retreat a bit longer. I won't hesitate to sign up next time.

—RML, Love Addict, San Francisco

SHARE SPACE



How Sex and Love Addiction, Fused with Power Dynamics, Destroyed Me

Several years ago, after a breakup, I turned to dating apps to explore my sexuality. I quickly discovered that sexual dating worked like a drug: Tolerance built up, and ordinary encounters stopped giving me any satisfaction. I needed more— more intensity and more extreme experiences.

Meeting my qualifier tied my sex and love addiction to an emotional intensity that resembled BDSM. To this day, I still don't know whether it was real BDSM or abuse disguised

as BDSM. I never felt that same “kick” with emotionally healthy people.

Eventually, real violence appeared. Practices that are usually framed as safe when done with clear boundaries and healthy partners became dangerous for me as a sex and love addict, because of my addiction and the unhealthy dynamic that formed around it.

Based on my experience, I formulated three personal BDSM safety requirements:

1. I must be able to feel and set boundaries.
2. There has to be a balance of power between partners.
3. I require a healthy, emotionally stable partner.

None of these conditions were ever present for me. As a sex and love addict, I idealized my partner, put him on a pedestal, and mistook obsession for connection. He was also an unhealthy person who did not see himself as an addict. The familiarity I felt was not intimacy; it was trauma bonding.

Today I prioritise serenity, and anything resembling BDSM feels too extreme. If I want a connection, I need something warm and safe. I no longer want pain, discomfort, or intensity at the cost of myself.

Core ethical principles of the BDSM community:

Safety: Safety was impossible to define with my lack of boundaries and my tendency toward self-destruction. Due to my extremely

low self-esteem, any attention or validation felt like a gift, so safety was not something I prioritised. Today, when I receive attention, I do not become obsessed. I ask myself whether this person is actually interesting to me and whether this contact is good for my recovery.

Sanity: Even after I stopped using substances, I was not sober within BDSM. As an addict, I got high on the emotions and intensity that BDSM gave me. Subspace—with its cocktail of dopamine, adrenaline, endorphins, oxytocin, and cortisol—became another form of “using.” For an addict, this euphoric state can become the addiction.

Today I am very cautious with emotional states. I avoid extreme emotions because every euphoric high ends with a crash. Even choir rehearsals can overstimulate me. I get insomnia from emotional overwhelm, so I actively protect my emotional sobriety.

Consent: Consent happens when everyone agrees and understands. Consent blurs when a person cannot feel or set boundaries.

I often could not distinguish what I actually liked from what I had been conditioned to tolerate. My abandonment issues erased the word “no”; numbness replaced discernment.

When a BDSM play partner becomes the qualifier, the dynamic itself can reinforce obsession, surrender, and loss of self—making genuine consent almost impossible.

Today I choose to avoid intimate interactions with men until I truly know myself and my own body. Once I discover who I am, a real conversation about consent may be possible.

Why BDSM may become unsafe for someone with sex and love addiction:

Sex can become a substance where tolerance grows and “more” becomes the only goal. For me, sexual activity escalated from ordinary to painful and humiliating.

The goal stopped being intimacy and became intensity. When trauma, blurred boundaries, emotional instability, or obsession are involved, BDSM can stop being consensual play

and start becoming illness. Intensity replaces connection, and emotional activation feels like bonding. For a sex and love addict, this creates a high-risk environment where obsession, trauma bonding, and loss of self can develop unnoticed.

Through Step work, this changed. Today I do not even find BDSM interesting anymore, and I am not sure I need sex at all. I am too busy getting to know myself.

Why BDSM is dangerous for a love addict:

BDSM allowed me to escape into another reality. Acting out fantasies behind closed doors created a bubble where intensity replaced connection. It was the perfect form of isolation from reality.

People practicing BDSM often live a double life, hidden because of shame and stigma. In S.L.A.A., we idealize partners and make them our Higher Power. Power-exchange dynamics mirror this glorification almost perfectly. A structure where one person surrenders, idealizes, obeys, and seeks approval aligns frighteningly well with love addiction.

For a love addict, being accepted and praised for “getting attached” feels like paradise. Inside BDSM such worship can seem normal, while people who do not engage in BDSM may find that dynamic frightening.

Today I’m working on building a relationship with my Higher Power. I know there’s a power imbalance—I’m powerless over my addiction—but it feels like a safe and caring one.

As for worship... well, maybe I just reserve a little of that for my cat. :)

How my BDSM experience fed my S.L.A.A. anorexia:

In BDSM, I was alone in my role—open, oversharing, emotionally exposed—while my qualifier was distant and avoidant. Our open/distant pattern was the only relationship we had: no real conversations, only the bubble.

The attention I received during our encounters was a drug. Someone noticed my every breath, gesture, expression, and word, but that attention existed only during our sessions. Outside those encounters, there

was cold emptiness. I had to face the truth: My hunger for attention was enormous—a void I did not know how to fill.

Recovery: Through the Steps, I learned to meet the needs I once tried to feed through BDSM:

- I learned “intensity” through courage, growth, competition, and stepping out of my comfort zones.
- I learned “sharing” through groups, outreach, sponsorship, and mutual friendships.
- I learned “service” to my Higher Power, myself, my loved ones, and those in need.
- I learned “surrender” through meditation, dancing, and singing.

Surrender in Step Three does not remove responsibility—it transforms it. As it is written and often repeated, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:14-26).

—Maria N.



Learning to Stop Disappearing

For most of my life, I believed something about me was fundamentally wrong.

I don't remember much from before fifth grade. I don't remember teachers taking a special liking to me or playground moments full of laughter and belonging. What I do remember is how I felt.

Afraid. Different. Waiting for someone—anyone—to make me feel like I belonged somewhere.

When that sense of belonging didn't come, I learned another strategy: how to make myself smaller. I watched people carefully and adapted to what they seemed to need from me. If someone wanted confidence, I could perform it. If they wanted humor, I could deliver it. If they wanted silence, I could disappear.

That pattern followed me into adulthood.

Connection became something I chased rather than something I truly experienced. Attention, validation, and intimacy quieted the constant doubt inside me—but only temporarily. When the feeling faded, I went looking for it elsewhere.

In 2023, I was diagnosed with ADHD. For the first time in my life, medication helped quiet the constant noise in my mind. Once the chaos slowed, my head filled with everything I had spent years avoiding.

The relationships I had damaged. The compulsions I had justified. The hurt I had inflicted on the person closest to me.

In May 2025, I confessed to my partner of thirteen years that I had betrayed him multiple times. Seeing his pain was devastating.

Instead of leaving, he reached out for help. He found Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous and invited me to attend a meeting with him.

Walking into that room was terrifying. But as I listened to others share their stories, I realized something I had never understood before. The patterns

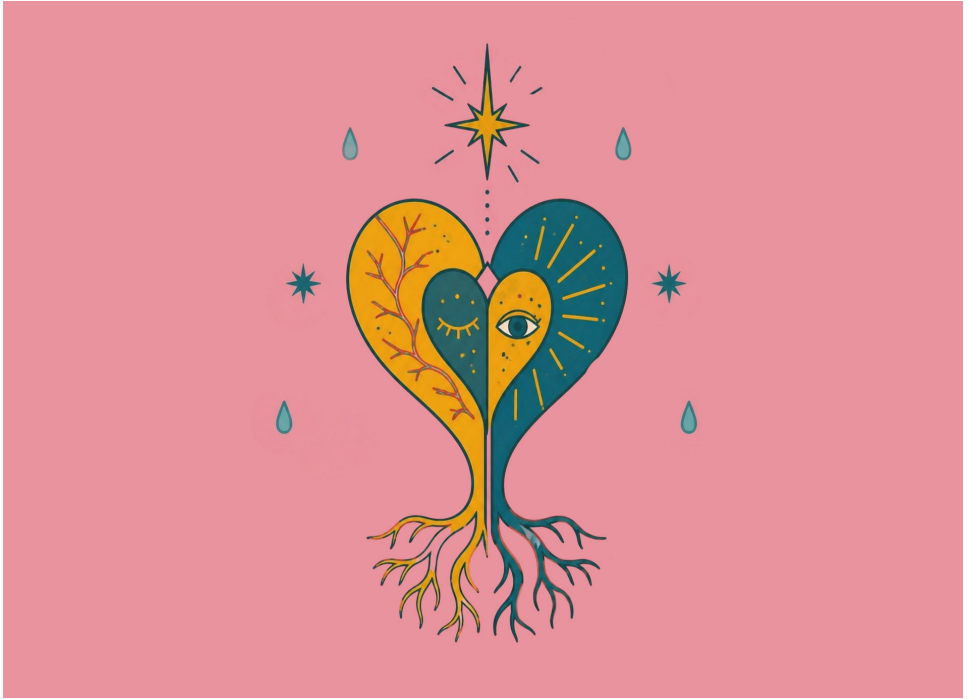
that controlled my life had a name, and recovery from them was possible.

S.L.A.A. gave me a place where honesty mattered more than performance. For the first time, I began to understand the difference between seeking validation and building real connection.

Recovery is a daily process. But S.L.A.A. taught me something I never learned as a child: Belonging doesn't come from shrinking yourself to meet other people's expectations.

It comes from finally learning to be visible.

— Daron Q, Los Angeles



The Twice-Born Soul, From Fantasy to Presence

I grew up within an Arab family structure. While my immediate home had its own rules, my mother's side of the family was truly rigid, almost cultish in its expectations. This invalidating environment left me with profoundly low self-esteem and a deep sense of social and emotional anorexia. By thirteen, this internal void

manifested as intense limerence for a Persian girl in my cousin's class. I was obsessed with her for two years, but it was entirely one-sided, as she was straight and had no interest in me. Looking back, she was my first "qualifier," which was a reflection of the abandonment and rejection I felt from my own

extended family.

As I grew older, my social and emotional hunger evolved into a frantic search for physical touch. I experimented with many partners, both men and women, moving through connections in an attempt to feel alive in a body I had spent years trying to diminish. I was searching for love, but I was settling for immediate fixation, instant gratification, and validation.

My relationships followed a self-sabotaging pattern: I was often crippled by a fear of getting hurt or hurting another person. If I couldn't see a guaranteed end result, I would walk away. A real future felt unrealistic anyway because I knew my family would never approve of my partners, since all of them came from different cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds.

I was desperate to control my social, emotional, and sexual anorexia, but I didn't yet have the tools to change that.

This cycle reached its peak after I moved to Canada. Isolated and lonely, I met a man who became my most recent qualifier. Visually, he was exactly my type: tall, slender, with long dirty blonde

hair, full beard and glasses, looking like a wholesome, innocent dork. Our connection was amazing at the beginning. I had experienced intense intrigue before, but this was different—it was the most recent and visceral version of my addiction. Because he shared his own history of abandonment by his family and betrayal by people in his life, I felt a level of "seen" that was dangerously intoxicating.

We bonded over deep conversations where I felt truly heard for the first time in years. I was mesmerized by his wit, sensuality, and goofy nature. The chemistry was undeniable, and his wit and warm, sensual nature were real, not an act. Things were moving too fast, even though that felt wrong, I kept lying to myself and pretended it was going to be different this time and I imagined we'd end up together in a healthy partnership.

As we grew closer, the genuine bond became tangled in an intense sexual and emotional addiction. I wanted more of him, and it was never enough. During one of our most intimate moments, he mentioned wanting to have a baby with me.

Even though I had always believed that no one consents to being born, I was so lonely in Canada that I attached to that idea instantly. Being here in Canada with no one, I was desperate for deep connection. I wanted him to be my chosen family, and at some point, I truly believed he was. I let the vision take over, fantasizing about having blonde, blue-eyed children who looked just like him. Because I was so addicted to the fantasy and the feeling, I began to ignore a growing mountain of warning signs. I discovered signs of his own sexual compulsions and substance use. He pushed for an open relationship, which felt like a crushing rejection. When I learned he had been reported to the police by previous women, I knew something was fundamentally wrong. Yet, I stayed.

The relationship became a site of profound conflict and "self-erasure." The power-play dynamics became addictive and dysregulating to my nervous system. I gave so much of myself to his needs that I began to experience a total self-erasure (which does resemble addiction to me, in retrospect).

The constant back-and-forth dynamic became too chaotic, as he would change his mind in an instant, one moment talking about marriage, the next pushing for an open relationship or just 'friends with benefits.' I didn't know what I wanted either after getting to know him a little more and seeing his flaws, I wasn't sure if we'd have that healthy relationship I thought was possible in the beginning.

When he told me he didn't need the program, I had to accept that it wasn't my place to decide his path, and I stayed. I tried to "fix" him, taking his inventory to avoid my own, and telling myself his violence and instability were simply the result of a neurodivergent brain and a difficult past.

Between his history and his autism, he just didn't have the tools to handle the situation differently.

Despite my attempts to save him, the relationship turned dangerous. During a moment that should have been safe, he became physically violent toward me.

He put me in an arm-choke which is a terrifying, non-consensual act of violence that came out of nowhere while we were simply cuddling in bed. I never hit him, and I'm still unsure what I did to provoke it. I don't think I did anything to warrant such an act of violence. I was suddenly fighting for my breath, and I could have died in a moment that should have been safe and loving. I later found out that he had a history of this behavior with other women, which helped me realize that it wasn't my fault, but at the time, the experience left me completely immobilized by trauma. Subconsciously, I began to push him away through my own behavior to keep myself safe when I didn't have the tools yet to walk away from this addictively attractive relationship.

He is not perfect, and I made the mistake of idealizing him. The way I felt about him was identical to the limerence I held for that girl at school, and several other lovers with a similar background and similar zodiac signs.

Ironically, he was the one who helped me realize I was "sick" because of my obsessions with people. That realization was a wake-up call that my health and

sanity were at stake. Searching for support groups for "addiction to a lover," I found S.L.A.A. I see now that the patterns and insecurities that came up were my own.

I'm so grateful for finding out about this program, and I believe it came at the right time for me. For someone who grew up with no one available to listen, the fellowship gave me back my agency and community. Attending meetings and doing outreach with safe people has been incredibly helpful. Doing the steps and doing service has helped me regain confidence. I feel a deep sense of belonging and protection by a Higher Power.

I have now been in no contact for several months. While I still care for him and sometimes wonder "what if," I am no longer fawning for scraps of validation or trying to save those who cannot be saved. I care about him still, and I pray for his health and success. I sometimes wish I had found the program before I met him and wonder if we would have been together by now. While I hope to reconcile eventually, I am no longer fawning. I am regaining my

agency and learning to be my own source of stability, moving out of the shadows and into a life where I am finally visible to myself.

I find deep meaning in the words of William James, as they finally gave a name to the internal conflict I lived for so long. For years, I tried to force myself to be "Healthy-Minded" by fawning and pretending everything was okay, but that performance was exhausting. I realize now I am what James called a "Sick Soul," one who is acutely aware of the radical suffering and discord in life.

He wrote that "the once-born are those for whom the transition from the state of discord to the state of harmony is easy; the twice-born are those for whom it is a difficult and slow process."^{*}

My path has certainly not been easy, and it has not been fast. To heal, I had to hit a wall of total powerlessness and descend into the darkness of my own obsessions to find a truth that actually worked.

Joining the program was the beginning of my second birth. This "twice-born" journey has

taught me the importance of mindfulness and presence—the discipline of staying in my own body rather than escaping into a fantasy future. By surrendering the old version of myself, I am finally learning to provide my own stability and navigate life by my own light.

—Anonymous

* James, W. (1902) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

Conference Journal Production Team Openings

The Conference Journal Committee (CJC) would love to have you fill one of our ongoing roles (outlined here - links within):

<https://bit.ly/SLAAJournalTeam>

Why not join our monthly meeting on the 4th Sunday to see what we are about? Request to join us at slaafws.org and find our contact form under the service tab/conference committees/CJC journal committee

<https://slaafws.org/committee/cjc/>

WRITE/ANSWER/PURCHASE/READ*¹ *theJournal*, the "meeting in print" available 24 hours a day. Your new production team encourages everyone to subscribe for your own "hot off the press" two-year print copy of *theJournal*.

<https://slaafws.org/thejournal/>

*¹ Older versions of *theJournal* are available online (some focused editions in our SLAAFWS Store). Newly published issues are delayed to give our valuable subscribers the opportunity to read their paid copies first.

JOIN A BOARD COMMITTEE

Monthly Meetings

One hour/ mo.



- **Board Annual Business Meeting Planning Committee (BABMPC)**

a task-oriented, deadline-driven work group committed to executing specific responsibilities efficiently and collaboratively. Unlike a traditional Board of Trustees (BOT) committee, the BABMPC focuses on action and implementation to meet deadlines for the Annual Business Conference/Meeting (ABC/M), over policy formulation.

[90 minutes] - **4th Thursday @ 5:30 PM Central (CT)**

- **Board Copyright and Translation Committee (BCTC)**

focuses on protecting and maintaining copyright and trademarks and following up on royalties from the translation of literature.

3rd Thursday @ 4:30 PM Central (CT) or at the call of the chair

- **Board Development Committee (BDC)**

focuses on the internal activities, systems and procedures of the Board of Trustees (BOT) to ensure its long-term effectiveness.

3rd Tuesday @ 1:30 PM Central (CT)

- **Board Finance Committee (BFC)**

mandated by the By-Laws and focuses on matters of a financial nature or which have potential financial implications for the Fellowship.

[90 minutes] - **4th Wednesday @ 6:30 PM Central (CT)**

- **Board Human Resources & Personnel Committee**

focuses on all matters related to staff and volunteers in or associated with the F.W.S. Office.

2nd Monday @ 6:30 PM Central (CT) or at the call of the chair

- **Board Publishing and Distribution Committee (BPDC)**

handles its part in the Literature Creation, Editing and Publishing (LCEP) process...

[75 minutes] - **1st and 3rd Wednesdays @ 5:00 PM Central (CT)**

- **Board Outreach Committee (BOC)**

focuses on matters relating to oral or written communications emanating from F.W.S.

2nd Wednesday @ 12:00 PM UTC/*7:00 AM Central (CT)*Mar-Oct, *6:00 AM Central (CT)*Nov-Feb or at the call of the chair

- **Board Technology Committee (BTC)**

promotes, supports, and coordinates the use of technology to benefit the S.L.A.A. fellowship.

at the call of the chair

- **Board 7th Tradition Committee**

ensures the long-term financial well-being of the Fellowship (while abiding by all Traditions - especially the 7th)

[75 minutes] - **3rd Sunday @ 4:00 PM Central (CT)**

- **Special Committee on S.L.A.A.'s 50th Anniversary (+other special groups TBD)**

coordinates activities for S.L.A.A.'s 50th Anniversary (2026) - and other special purposes in future years

at the discretion of the chair/ongoing

Non-Board Members on Board Committees

The Board of Trustees appoints its own members to committees. S.L.A.A. members who are not BOT members and have six months of continuous sobriety are invited to apply by going to the following page: **<https://slaafws.org/nonbot>**

for the most updated info:



<https://slaafws.org/board-committees/>



JOIN A CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

MONTHLY MEETINGS ONE HOUR/MO.



- **Anorexia (CAC)**

Carries the message to the S.L.A.A. community that sexual, social, and emotional anorexia can be an inherent part of sex and love addiction and encourages integrating this idea into all areas of the Fellowship and its literature.

4th Sunday @ 1:00 PM Central (CT)

- **Bylaws (CBC)**

Responsible for maintaining and updating the current S.L.A.A. By-Laws, in cooperation with the BOT. It acts in an advisory capacity to the BOT, Fellowship-Wide Services, and the Conference with regard to potential or requested By-Law changes. The Committee also works with the BOT to facilitate changes to the By-Laws passed in accordance with Article XIV of the By-Laws.

3rd Sunday @ 5:30 PM Central (CT)

- **Charter (CCC)**

Responsible for the planning and facilitation of the ABC/M in cooperation with the BOT and F.W.S. (In the absence of a CCC, the BOT and F.W.S. are responsible for running the ABC/M.) Creates the ABM Agenda, chairs the ABC/M, and is liaison for the entire Conference to the BOT and F.W.S.

[90 minutes] - **1st Friday @ 7:00 PM Central (CT)**

- **Diversity (CDC)**

Carries the S.L.A.A. message to broader groups of people around the world.

2nd Saturday @ 3:00 PM Central (CT)

- **Fantasy (CFaC)**

Works to meet the increased demand for literature and S.L.A.A. meetings focused on the role fantasy plays in sex and love addiction. It also explores the creation of study groups, events, and retreats for the addict that struggles with fantasy as part of their sex and love addiction.

4th Saturday @ 5:00 PM Eastern (ET)

- **Finance (CFC)**

Allocates funds to the committees based on requests and available funds to increase financial support from groups, Intergrups, and other sources.

3rd Wednesday @ 5:30 PM Berlin (CET)/ *10:30 AM Central (CT)*except 3rd week in March @ 11:30 AM (CT)

- **Healthy Relationships (CHRC)**

Responsible for the development and implementation of resources and tools that enhance our recovery as sex and love addicts by increasing our capacity for building and sustaining healthy relationships of all types.

3rd Sunday @ 9:00 PM Universal Time (UTC)/*4:00 PM Central (CT)*Mar-Oct, *3:00 PM Central (CT)*Nov-Feb

- **Journal (CJC)**

Creates the monthly/bi-monthly "meeting in print" magazine focusing on S.L.A.A. recovery and related issues. Works w/BOT & F.W.S. for publication.

4th Sunday @ 10:00 PM Universal Time (UTC)/*5:00 PM Central (CT)*Mar-Oct, *4:00 PM Central (CT)*Nov-Feb

for the most updated info:

 **(meeting links) <https://cc.slaafws.org/>**

  **<https://slaafws.org/conference-committees/>**

JOIN A CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

MONTHLY MEETINGS ONE HOUR/MO.



- **Literature (CLC)**

Fosters quality literature in support of S.L.A.A. recovery; guides the planning, writing, and editing of literature from writers, writing groups, or service bodies. Approves draft literature prior to submission for full Conference approval.

[90 minutes] - 4th Saturday @ 11:00 AM Central (CT)

- **Member Retention (CMRC)**

Responsible for the development and implementation of tools and methods to retain members. We encourage long-term members to commit to our cherished tradition of service. By members' commitment to service as a spiritual principle, we retain their collected shared wisdom, experience, strength, and hope in all areas in S.L.A.A. Our message is heard by newcomers and inspires those who are stepping up for service. We are the committee behind long-term members staying in our program of recovery.

2nd Sunday @ 7:00 PM Central (CT)

- **Public Information (CPIC)**

Carries the S.L.A.A. message by: working with national & international service entities, intergroups, & local groups to convey S.L.A.A. information to the potential members & their supporters; providing materials to help members carry the S.L.A.A. message; and supporting service bodies to do outreach at intergroup & group levels.

1st Sunday @ 8:00 PM Universal Time (UTC)/*3:00 PM Central (CT)*Apr-Nov, *2:00 PM Central (CT)*Dec-Mar

- **Service (CSC)**

Carries the message of sobriety through service by attracting, educating, and unifying members to be of service, giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely receive.

2nd Sunday @ 12:00 PM Central (CT)

- **Sponsorship (CSpc)**

Dedicated to promoting recovery by drawing on the tool of sponsorship. Our goal is to make sponsorship accessible and rewarding to sponsors and sponsees in the fellowship of S.L.A.A.

3rd Thursday @ 5:00 PM Central (CT)

- **Steps, Traditions, and Concepts (CSTCC)**

Promotes the study, understanding, and application of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts throughout the S.L.A.A. fellowship.

4th Sunday @ 2:00 PM Central (CT)

- **Translation and Intergroups Outreach (CTIOC)**

Responsible for providing support to International S.L.A.A. Intergroups and/or groups to carry the message of recovery to the suffering sex and love addict in their own language.

4th Sunday @ 3:00 PM Universal Time (UTC)/*10:00 AM Central (CT)*Mar-Oct, *9:00 AM Central (CT)*Nov-Feb

for the most updated info:

 **(meeting links) <https://cc.slaafws.org/>**

  **<https://slaafws.org/conference-committees/>**

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.**

Where to find retreats?

The Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (S.L.A.A.) community provides a variety of events worldwide to support individuals on their journey to recovery from sex and love addiction.

These events are accessible through two main platforms.

Firstly, the S.L.A.A. Fellowship-wide services events page, available at slaafws.org/events, is a comprehensive list of events that cater to the broader fellowship, providing opportunities for connection, learning, and growth.

Secondly, [each Intergroup within the S.L.A.A. network manages its own events and retreats page](#), which can be found at slaafws.org/meeting-management/intergroups. These local Intergroup pages are particularly useful for individuals seeking events that are more regionally focused, allowing members to engage with others in their area and participate in tailored activities and workshops. Both platforms serve as crucial resources for fostering community and support within the S.L.A.A. fellowship.



RETREATS