



the **Journal**

Issue #218
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Recovery from BDSM

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,

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Speaking as an S.L.A.A. member who has BDSM behavior as a bottom line addictive behavior, I was worried about printing some of the concepts contained in the articles in this issue. Some S.L.A.A. members have different bottom lines than others. S.L.A.A. meetings and submissions to *the Journal* (our meeting in a magazine) are both safe spaces to share honestly. Just like it is suggested that if someone is triggered by another member's share in a meeting, they can raise their hand and the speaker will have the responsibility to redirect their share, if an article in *the Journal* is triggering, please reach out to other sober members of S.L.A.A.

I am grateful to everyone who submitted articles to this issue and shared their experience, strength, and hope.

This may be one of the last issues of *the Journal* that I am the editor of. I've been the Managing Editor for 16 years now. It's time to turn it over to a new crew.

If you would like to be a part of this new chapter, contact the Conference Journal Committee at slaafws.org.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

Letter to the Editor

Subject: Serious concern re: DV framing and survivor safety
in Journal Issue #216
To the Conference Journal Committee,

I am writing in response to content in Journal Issue #216, specifically the framing around “healing pain vs. hurting pain,” and the associated references and metaphors that suggest a possible link to domestic violence. I am stunned by this framing — and I do not use that word lightly. I am both a practitioner with professional expertise in domestic violence prevention and accountability work (including direct work with men who have used violence) and a survivor of domestic violence. I continue to live with its impact. I am therefore speaking from both professional responsibility and lived reality.

From either position, I want to be unequivocal: any language that allows ambiguity about responsibility for domestic violence is dangerous. In the current text, references suggesting that certain forms of pain “can lead to DV,” combined with moralized binaries (“right pain vs. wrong pain”) and metaphors such as “both sides of the street,” create a serious risk of victim-blaming interpretations. The text does not clearly distinguish between inflicting violence and suffering violence — and in trauma-informed work, that distinction is non-negotiable.

Domestic violence is not a mutual dynamic, not a shared moral failing, and not the outcome of “choosing the wrong pain.” It is the result of a unilateral choice to use power and control. Survivors do not “participate” in their abuse, and recovery literature that even subtly implies otherwise can cause real harm — especially when positioned as a “meeting in print.” I am particularly concerned because this is new Journal content. It’s bad enough that a lot of 12 step literature is painfully outdated when it comes to words like “enslaved”, but in a new issue? We know better now. Trauma-informed, survivor-safe

I am raising this concern because the Journal's mandate includes responsibility for content, framing, and policy. As it stands, this section does not meet survivor-safety standards that are widely accepted in contemporary domestic violence and trauma work. I urge the Committee to review this framing carefully and to consider how easily it can be read — and internalized — as moral judgment or victim responsibility. Clarity here is not a matter of opinion; it is a matter of safety.

Sincerely,
Verena W

Dear Reader,

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Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

*In further communication with the author, the CJC and the new production team has invited this individual to consider participating in our committee or service.

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day for this issue is BDSM (bondage, discipline (or domination), sadism, and masochism)— “Is BDSM a bottom-line or

accessory behavior* for you? How did you recover from your addiction to BDSM?” *see "Setting Bottom Lines" pamphlet. 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: #219 — March/April Fantasy — “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?”— Deadline for submissions is Jan. 15, 2026. And: #220 — May/June — Retreats — “Which ones did you find worthwhile for your recovery? Special stories from participation in retreats. Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2026. Please go to <https://slaafws.org/thejournal/> and click on “Answer Question of the Day.”

“Is BDSM a bottom-line or accessory behavior for you? How did you recover from your addiction to BDSM?”

S.L.A.A. helped me to 1) get sober from my sex and love addiction 2) understand that in my fantasies BDSM played a key role 3) set clear bottom lines and boundaries 4) allow me to enact some of my fantasies in a committed and loving relationship by respecting the bottom lines and boundaries set in 3). Recovery does not mean for me avoiding, but including this sexual preference in a healthy and sober way.

—R.

Bottom line. Working on recovery, first in S.A.A., now in S.L.A.A.

— DAVID T, SANTA ROSA, CA

Question of the day

I came into S.L.A.A. in 1989 with the specific goals of ending sadomasochism and inappropriate relationships.

I have achieved these goals through magnificent and spiritually generous sponsorship, meetings, the phone, and a horrified honesty that has been the core of my recoveries. All of them.

The hardest part of my recovery has been acceptance of evil and power-madness in my family, schools, summer camps situated within a minority community regarded as the Mandate of Heaven and a haven for geniuses.

Horrible historical events have not posed our community or its membership to do what S.L.A.A. does: hold up the mirror.

I looked into the mirror of my heart and accepted the unacceptable: my parents and sister were in all probability sexual sadistics.

I also accepted their childhood vulnerability as well as mine.

The incredibly hard work of my recovery has allowed my wonderful marriage and much more.

The greatest factor in my recovery has been accepting The Creator's infinite love for me as well as everyone else.

This is still very difficult, but my therapist specializes in trauma combined with Attachment Deficit Disorder.

We do not choose our parents.

But we can choose to survive.

— KARI ANN O., MISSOULA, MT

Question of the day

S.L.A.A. helped me IMMENSELY in my BDSM addiction by giving me a room to share openly about my sexual orientation, which is BDSM, and my struggles with that. Sharing with and listening to fellow addicts who are seeking freedom from BDSM addiction helped me overcome the fear and shame that separated me from my Higher Power, myself and others. I came to accept my sexuality, instead of hating and refusing it. S.L.A.A. also gave me a caring and inspired (non-kink) sponsor who guided me in this process and helped me to define bottom lines and top lines around my sexual orientation. She encourages me to explore what is healthy sexuality for me. I feel a lot of gratitude!

— CHRISTIANE, GERMANY

Recovery is still in progress. Can aspects of BDSM be in my healthy sexuality?

— ANONYMOUS

I was ashamed of my submissiveness as a male. So I ran from it, got stuck in a toxic relationship where I confused the toxicity (a lot of emotional violence, controlling and manipulative behaviour by her) of my partner with the dominance I craved and I overstayed in this relationship. Healthy BDSM and being true to myself can in fact be a topline for me. I have to be true to who I am and not run away from it.

— JULIEN, STUTTGART (GERMANY)

Question of the day

Before I even had language for sexual and emotional anorexia, I was attracted to BDSM communities because it was a place where people were communicating clearly and directly about consent, boundaries, power, control in the context of sexual relationships. That cultural norm helped me to feel more confident and secure about entering into sexual relationships. I got involved in BDSM dynamics many years before I entered Twelve-Step recovery and many of my character defects were yet unidentified, which contributed to dysfunctional and worse experiences in that cultural arena. I also had many healthy and healing experiences in that time and place. My unacknowledged avoidance issues continued to increase, which brought me into 10 painful years of sexual and emotional anorexia in my long-term cohabitating relationship. The following four years was a quickly escalating and destructive period of acting out in increasingly addictive relationships until I hit bottom and got into my first S.L.A.A. meeting. Working the steps of S.L.A.A. with increasing awareness that my anorexia behavior was an unskilled attempt to set boundaries to try to control my acting out behavior, I worked into my sober dating plan a more moderate approach to these extremes. In the Personal Stories of Addiction and Recovery section of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text a member shares about “The Flame That Didn’t Blow Out.” This was the member’s practice of conscious contact with their Higher Power that was envisioned as a burning candle, “When it burned steadily, I was usually on good spiritual ground. When it flickered or went out, I was headed for trouble.” I have come to understand that my sobriety is granted to me by my loving Higher Power, and that the most important bottom line for myself is to not do anything without my loving Higher Power’s consent. Just for today, that is working for me.

— ANONYMOUS

Question of the day

This is an interesting question! Is a particular sexual fetish a bottom-line addictive behaviour for me? Is it a bottom-line behaviour when other "non-fetish" or "vanilla" sexual behaviours aren't bottom-lines? In this particular example, I would have to say that BDSM is NOT any sort of bottom-line (or even middle-line) behaviour for me, provided that I'm in a committed loving relationship with my partner and provided that she is into it and feels safe and comfortable with it.

Having said this, my own experience with BDSM activity has come with some challenges. My experience with fetishization is that it seems to narrow my sexual interests over time. Such that the fetish becomes the only thing that excites and engages me. This "narrowing" makes the sex very one-dimensional and repetitive like a really specific script or recipe. This can make things quite boring for my partner who might not be "locked into" it as much as I am. It's like going to a restaurant with a huge buffet offering, and only getting one dish time after time. That doesn't seem so good.

The other experience I had with this was that, as my long-term relationship failed, the sexual activities we were engaged in gave me doubts about my partner. Was she doing this sort of activity because she was truly into it? Or, was she doing something that she felt was distasteful because she was afraid of losing me? She assured me that she was good with our expression of sexuality, but as our relationship came to its end, I'm not sure I believed her. And this lack of belief undermined the relationship even more. The distrust introduced a discomfort into the expression of our sex life. BDSM requires trust; mountains of trust. The last part of the question, "how did I recover from my addiction to BDSM?" The answer to this question is the same for me regardless of how any addiction manifests itself within me. The answer is, always, work the Steps. The Steps are the same regardless of the program or the addiction.

— ANONYMOUS

My Experience Editing This Issue



As I read the articles in this issue, I began to worry that they would trigger people and maybe *the Journal* shouldn't delve into controversial issues. I was expecting a lot of answers to the question of the day that gave tools to avoid BDSM because of the fantasy, intensity and pain that comes along with it. But that's not what happened. It made me think I might need to rethink my bottom line of no violent sexual behavior.

My history with this behavior was that I was introduced to it in my first few years of sobriety in A.A. I thought I was in love with a fellow member of

A.A. and that we were in a healthy relationship. He introduced me to pain and even though I was sexually and physically abused in a nine year relationship when I was a teenager, I went along with this new way of exploring sexuality. I usually blanked out with my PTSD episodes but didn't know I had PTSD at the time. I eventually found out that my boyfriend was lying about being sober in A.A. and when I broke up with him, he stalked me. I joined S.L.A.A. at the time, finally got away from him and got into another seemingly healthy long distance relationship. One year

later, he proposed to me over the phone and I flew to France to get a proper marriage proposal. When he changed his mind, I was devastated. I thought I wanted to stay with him. We started getting into BDSM. A few months later, he called me and told me it was twisting his mind and he was afraid he might come to America, kick down my door and kill me.

My S.L.A.A. fellows helped me see that I was using pain to numb out and I needed to leave the relationship.

I was able to leave but I was like a crack addict in withdrawal. A year later, I had a spiritual experience and have been sober since.

The reasons why BDSM doesn't work for me:

- It's too intense;
- Pain triggers my PTSD;
- It's too much fantasy;
- It's not real intimacy for me.

Whenever I hear shares in meetings from people that en-

gage in behaviors that I know I can't handle soberly, I get a little jealous that they can engage in these behaviors and be ok but I can't. But I think of it like my food program. Even though I'm different because I am abstinent off of flour and sugar, it's ok. When I got sober in my food program, I stopped bingeing on food and actually started enjoying the taste of food. Mindlessly shoving food in my face never gave me the satisfaction and freedom from obsession that my food program gives me today. I couldn't really taste the food that I was bingeing on.

I go back to the words of my S.L.A.A. sponsor: Don't debate it, you'll lose.

My sober life has been working for me for 29 years now. In A.A., S.L.A.A. and food sobriety, I have found peace, freedom from obsession and connection with a Higher Power and wouldn't trade that for all the excitement in the world.

— LISA C.

Surrendering Control: How S.L.A.A. saved my life



Over five years of actively participating in all aspects of S.L.A.A., programme has given me transformative insight into my obsession with domination and submission (D/s) and helped me regain control over my life.

1. Responsibility but No Control

I was raised in a loving, and emotionally very stable, family where I was cherished and nurtured with care. There was nothing that could account for my kinky sexuality. However,

working the Steps has given me an opportunity to look back on my whole life. I have noticed occasions of unbearable stress, and resulting emotional pain, caused by situations where I had responsibility but lacked full control.

Numerous times I have experienced something for which I had responsibility going badly wrong, only to discover that I had no control over the outcome. The ensuing panic, and feelings of powerlessness, rapidly become overwhelming. Whenever I could no longer influence the outcome of

something in which I am highly invested, I always felt the powerful emotions associated with fear.

Let me explain with two examples from different stages in my life, starting with the earliest:

Firstly, when I was so proud to be entrusted with care of my younger brother. The river looked placid when I sat him in the rubber inflatable dingy and took hold of the rope to give him a little boat ride. I wasn't prepared for the changing of the tide in the estuary and the power of the current ripped the rope from my grip. I was responsible for my brother's safety but had no control over the conditions rapidly carrying him out to sea.

Secondly, months of planning and years of fundraising were finally being fulfilled as the work on a new building began. I was responsible for the project but the award of the contract was out of my hands. The warning signs were there, but I had no choice but to try and manage the appointed builder. The project spiralled out of control and nothing was going right. I was accountable for delivering on the promises to fulfil the dreams of many people but had no control over the catastrophic mistakes.

I had responsibility without the required control and it was devastating.

2. *Control but No Responsibility*

Life's events, over which I had no control, created fear, panic and suppressed frustration. To save me from being overwhelmed by these painful emotions, I acted out the creation of lovely, serene, spaces where my requests were met with obedient compliance. I created opportunities for consensual acts of willing submission, sometimes cleverly manipulating ways to achieve the desired responses. As a young boy I made sure that childhood games became excuses for spanking.

These cravings laid the foundations for an obsession. In my early twenties, while at university, I discovered a whole genre of porn that catered for my kink and I was hooked. Getting high on the joy of fantasies that offered the experience of being both responsible and in control brought release from stress.

As fantasy became reality, in consensual D/s encounters, the wonderful world of authority and submission became the 'perfect' antidote to my feelings

of powerlessness. There was no shortage of women willing to share the heady and thrilling explorations of impact play. The intensity of kinky sex, with the brain's most potent reward chemicals flooding my system, became increasingly obsessive. Compulsive acting out was destroying my life as I became totally addicted to my self-made solution.

I was able to temporarily regain a sense of control but in increasingly irresponsible ways.

3. *Hope at the Point of Suicide*

The Covid Pandemic of 2020 was particularly significant for me. Just as the deadly virus was establishing a foothold in England, I walked into my very first S.L.A.A. meeting. In spite of destroying my first marriage through my obsession with spanking, I was still utterly powerless over my obsession. Acting out through compulsive inappropriate conversations had resulted in yet another forced resignation from a job I loved. In a desperate state, a helpful therapist encouraged me to explore S.L.A.A. A small but faithful group introduced me to the meeting format and the Basic

Text. However, I had only been to three meetings when the entire country went into our first 'lock down'.

I was utterly trapped in a highly toxic co-dependent relationship. It was my second marriage, to a deeply hurting, and life-bruised woman, who was living with Borderline Personality Disorder. I thought I was the only person who truly understood her enough to help. I wanted to be her rescuer but, despite hugely sacrificial efforts, I couldn't help her. I had the responsibility of a husband but I had no way of controlling increasingly alarming psychotic episodes that were causing serious harm to my three children from my previous marriage, my parents and our friends. The prospect of being locked down with my seriously ill wife was unbearable.

I was wracked with guilt, shame, despair and self-loathing for the pain I had caused so many people. I genuinely thought the only way to stop my unbearable agony was to end my own life. I determinedly figured out several different options for suicide.

However, after my first meeting, I had ordered my own copy of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text. During the Pandemic, you

were allowed a brief walk and I took the opportunity to disappear off with the dog and find somewhere to devour it. For me, in that moment of utter despair, loneliness and agony, I don't think it is an exaggeration to say those snatched moments of reading the Basic Text saved my life.

You see, for the first time, I felt seen and known. There were other people just like me. I wasn't the only one driven by uncontrollable compulsions and plagued by obsessive sexual thoughts. I wasn't the only person who had risked everything, career, family and life itself, for just one more sexual encounter.

This is the paragraph that saved my life.

We had not consciously chosen to be sex and love addicts. Often our normal, right-sized human needs had somehow never been met during the formative period of our lives. We realized that there was a basic loneliness which had made us afraid to be alone . . . We had hidden the yearning of a lonely and fearful child, an emptiness that cried out to be filled. We did not cause it, and we could

not control it. In this realization was the beginning of compassion, our first glimpse of self-forgiveness.

S.L.A.A. Basic Text First Edition p. 81 para 2

I did not choose this path. Bearing in mind everything that had shaped my life, it could not have been any other way.

I didn't deliberately set out to harm others. I was caught up in an illness that I could not control. That First Step of acknowledging that I am powerless over sex and love addiction was hugely liberating.

For me, it is not in any way an abdication of responsibility – my actions caused harm – however, at the moment of my weakness, I found strength. The minute I admit helplessness, I put myself in the very place where a greater power can raise me up.

4. A Balance of Responsibility and Control

In the light of these insights I felt a shift. As I sat with the intense guilt and shame that motivated a desire to end my life, something changed. Those feelings didn't disappear, but I felt I could embrace them. Rather than avoid those poten-

tially crushing emotions, I acknowledged them, even thanked them, for they too believe they are serving a good purpose for me. And we still hang out together, whenever they show up.

In this moment of acknowledging powerlessness, I surrendered any need to control situations. I gave back to my Higher Power everything I was responsible for and released myself from any sense of it being my job to sort things out. As the Serenity Prayer encourages us to say, 'Thy will, not mine, be done'.

Only a spiritual solution could heal deep wounds, soothe hurt, restore sanity and bring me to a point where I notice the resources within myself to meet my emotional needs. My S.L.A.A. programme has become an absolute joy. The Step work continues to challenge and inspire in equal measure as I cycle back through the Steps with my sponsees.

My daily meetings over Zoom provide poignant moments of connection with fellows sharing authentic experiences of recovery. Service is keeping me sober, helping to pioneer a BDSM addiction recovery group, and taking ser-

vice roles in the meetings.

I have surrendered control to my Higher Power. In the paradox of the first three Steps of S.L.A.A., by admitting my powerlessness, and handing over my sexuality to God, I have regained control of my life. For some folk BDSM is so toxic that they can never again have anything to do with it. My kinky sexuality, however, has not been removed.

Set free from the characteristic traits of addiction, kinky sex becomes a beautiful expression of mutual self-giving and unbelievable levels of trust. A sense of responsibility is expressed as care. It is now a dance of kindred spirits, enjoying the natural flow of authority and submission, within shared boundaries that offer a balance between responsibility and control.

My journey is far from complete, and never smooth, as I continue to work the programme and give service in S.L.A.A. I have moved into a measured rhythm of life that blends my sexuality with a deep spirituality, producing a rich and fulfilling balance between control and responsibility.

— MARTIN H

More Is Being Revealed



My name is Gregory, sex and love addict. I'd like to begin by sharing how my step-grandfather inspired my passion for leather work. He was a talented artist who crafted belts, purses, wall hangings, and other items. As a child, I was captivated by the smell of leather and often tried my hand at tooling and creating pieces myself. When I turned twelve I found sex, and, from that point forward, it shaped much of who I was.

Later, after coming out, when I was with my first husband, I was introduced to the gay leather community. For

me, it felt like I had found heaven—I was surrounded by the familiar scent of leather, able to wear it, and share meaningful experiences with my husband. I didn't see anything unsafe, and I always saw this as a beautiful and sacred part of our relationship, something built on trust and connection.

Tragically, my husband passed away from AIDS in my arms. That moment was deeply sacred and left a lasting impact on me.

And so, I always held, anytime that I was going to be with another human, that it

was a sacred bond that I had. I had a trust that was given to me, and at the time, I really just truly believed that I was carrying this through him, by keeping him alive, by participating and getting further into things that I had not before. I probably, when I first thought of them, was very disgusted by them. When I still look back at them, some things I'm very disgusted by, but at the same time, I can see now it was just a progression.

At the time, I believed that by continuing to participate in the community, I was keeping his memory alive.

Looking back, I realize that some of my actions were influenced by struggles with sex and love addiction. I often found myself caught up in romantic obsessions and fantasy thinking. Eventually, I got sober in the beverage program, several years after my husband's death. During this period, I distanced myself from the scene, recognizing that certain behaviors were problematic for me. They said in the program, if sex is a problem, throw yourself into service to others. I spoke openly with my sponsor and took on various service commitments, trying to channel my energy into helping others.

In some ways, I turned my involvement in the community into a form of service—providing what others needed or wanted. While there was a strong code of ethics and mutual respect, I sometimes questioned whether my actions were truly healthy for me. The experience was complex and, at times, confusing. I became part of a small, close-knit group, even taking on leadership roles and helping to raise money for organizations.

Despite the sense of community, I eventually stepped away, realizing I needed to focus on my own well-being.

And so, it was very confusing. It still is. I've not gotten back into it at all. I'm just still trying to have knowledge about how I ended up being in a relationship with a sociopathic man who had sociopathic narcissistic tendencies who was abusing me, and I didn't know, so that was all caught up in love addiction. I ended up dating a drug dealer. I also dated another guy who bit me on my neck, not in a position of passion. And those are the things that got me into S.L.A.A. back in November of 2022. So anyway, I just keep coming back and more is being revealed.

— GREGORY

I Don't Want Vanilla—But I Want Peace Led by a Higher Power, Not a Hunger



I grew up in a loving home. There was no abuse, no violence, no shadows looming over my childhood. My parents cared for me. I had safety, warmth, and stability. From the outside—and even in many ways on the inside—there was peace.

But even in that peace, something stirred.

Very early in life, I became aware of my body and the sensations it could bring. I started exploring my sexuality at an age when I didn't even have the words to understand

it. I wasn't harmed - I wasn't introduced to it by anyone else. It just lived inside me, like a flame that I didn't know how to name.

My fantasies were intense. From the beginning, I found myself drawn to dynamics that involved surrender, control, and power. The idea of being taken—of someone telling me what to do—was incredibly powerful for me. I didn't see it as wrong. It was just what came naturally to me, what felt hot, even if I couldn't explain why.

But as I grew older, I started to carry shame around it.

Nobody told me it was wrong, but I absorbed it anyway. I compared myself to others. I watched how people talked about sex—or avoided it—and I realized my desires didn't fit into the "normal" mold. And so I started to hide. To split. There was the me that lived in the world—kind, present, functioning. And then there was the part of me that lived in the dark, chasing intensity like it was oxygen.

As I grew older, I discovered porn—and with it, a sense of strange relief. I wasn't alone. I wasn't the only one drawn to this world of dominance and submission, of power play, of intense erotic energy. Others were watching it, craving it, building fantasies around it too.

I'm a woman. A feminist. Someone who believes in equality, autonomy, and strength. And yet, the things that aroused me most seemed to stand in contrast to those values. The fantasies of being used, of surrendering control, of being taken—how could they live inside someone who also believed in empowerment? I couldn't make sense of it. Part of me believed it meant something was broken in me —

that this part of my desire was a betrayal of who I was supposed to be.

So I split even more.

On the outside, I was a wife, a mother of two, a woman with a regular, grounded life. I showed up. I managed everything. No one knew the other life I was living—the one ruled by secrecy, compulsion, and the endless chase for validation through sex. I cheated again and again. Sometimes I didn't even recognize the person I became in those moments. I had no control anymore over who I slept with or why.

I used sex to silence my low self-esteem.

I used intensity to cover the aching silence inside me. And I became a full-blown addict.

For twenty years, I lived in this cycle. Keeping the two parts of me apart. Pretending I could control it. That I could balance it. But addiction doesn't care about balance. It only wants more.

Eventually, I couldn't take it anymore. The secrecy, the shame, the lying, the internal war—I was exhausted. I reached my breaking point. I found S.L.A.A.

And through that program, something inside me began to soften. I started to heal. I

began telling the truth, even just to myself at first.

I began to invite something greater into the conversation—something I came to call my Higher Power. At first, that idea felt abstract. But slowly, through quiet moments in meditation, through the stillness I used to run from, I started to feel a presence that wasn't judging me or trying to fix me. Just something sacred holding me. Listening. Offering peace, not punishment.

I learned that I wasn't alone, and that I wasn't broken. That I could find a different way to live, one that was honest and peaceful—even if I was still figuring out what that really looked like.

Because here's the truth I'm still holding:

I don't want a "vanilla" life. Not in the sense of losing passion, eroticism, or depth.

I still feel drawn to the intensity, to power exchange, to the edges of my desire.

But I want it in a sober, conscious, loving way.

I just don't know how—yet.

And that's okay.

Right now, I'm doing the work. I'm learning how to sit with myself without needing to escape. I'm learning how to build trust, both in others and in myself.

That integrity, for me, now includes a spiritual practice—daily time in prayer and meditation, moments when I ask my Higher Power to guide me, to show me where I'm still clinging to old patterns or false comfort. It's not always clear. But I keep showing up, not just to stay sober, but to live connected—to myself, to others, and to something bigger than all of us.

I'm learning that I can still be a sexual, passionate, powerful woman—and also live in integrity.

There's peace growing in me now.

Not perfect. But real.

And for the first time in a long time, I believe I'm worth that peace.

Being in S.L.A.A. while identifying as a submissive—and, more deeply, a BDSM addict in recovery—is complex in ways that are hard to talk about. But I've learned that shame thrives in silence. And I'm done keeping this part of me hidden.

Still, it gets complicated.

One thing I've noticed in recovery is how the structure of the program — especially the sponsor and sponsee relationship — can feel familiar to my nervous system. It has echoes of power dynamics I've

known, but this time in a container of safety, integrity, and boundaries. At first, I questioned whether that pull meant I was acting out. But I've come to see it differently.

When my sponsor affirms me, it touches something deep—yes, something that used to be entangled with my need for sexual validation. But in recovery, that affirmation feels healing because it's not about being used or desired. It's about being seen and supported as I grow. I'm learning the difference.

That said, I'm aware of the risk of projection. I take it seriously. I do my inventory. I sit with my motives. I don't want to confuse support with fantasy, or guidance with submission. That's why I'm writing this—not to glorify the dynamic, but to name the complexity so I can stay conscious and sober within it.

I've started sharing these questions in the special interest group within S.L.A.A. for people with BDSM-related addiction or complexity. And for the first time, I feel like I'm not broken for seeing the world this way. I'm not wrong for feeling the charge in these dynamics. I'm just human. Healing. Curious. Honest.

The truth is, I don't want to

amputate this part of me.

My submission isn't the enemy.

I want to find a way to be a submissive and be sober.

To be empowered through surrender, not destroyed by it.

And I believe there's a way.

I don't know exactly what it looks like yet.

But I'm here, doing the work, choosing presence over escape.

And letting my kink become conscious, not compulsive.

There's something holy about that shift—from hiding to honesty, from compulsion to consciousness. I sometimes think of my submission now as something I can offer to my Higher Power, not just to a partner. A way of releasing my grip, of saying, "I don't have to control everything to be safe." That, too, is spiritual surrender.

When I came into S.L.A.A., I was lost—but willing. That willingness became the seed of transformation. Through this program, I found language for things I had only ever experienced in isolation. And even more importantly, I found people—fellow travelers who had walked a similar road and who could hold space without judgment.

One of the greatest gifts of

this program has been the outreach calls. I used to think I had to carry everything alone. But now, I know that connection is my lifeline.

Each time someone picked up the phone, they helped me put down the shame. They reminded me that I don't heal in isolation—I heal in community.

And through those connections, I also felt my Higher Power at work—not as some distant force, but as a quiet presence woven into every honest conversation, every moment of being truly seen and heard. Each outreach call, each share, each time I told the truth and wasn't met with rejection—I felt something sacred there. Not just support, but grace.

Closing: A New Kind of Peace

I don't have all the answers. I still live in the questions, in the spaces between craving and clarity, between who I've been and who I'm becoming. But I know this much:

There is hope.

There is a version of me—a whole, integrated me—that is both sober and not vanilla. A woman who can own her desire without being owned by

it. A woman who can explore intensity without losing herself inside it. A woman who doesn't have to hide, lie, cheat, or fragment in order to feel alive.

I'm learning that my submission doesn't have to be a wound—it can be a gift, when it's offered in truth, love, and safety.

I don't know exactly how to live that life yet. But I'm willing to learn.

And I'm willing to let my Higher Power lead me there—one honest moment at a time.

And for the first time, I believe I can.

I've learned that my story doesn't have to end in shame. In fact, this may be the first time I'm learning how to live my story out loud—rooted in recovery, grounded in grace, and open to whatever healing lies ahead.

This is not the end of my story.

This is the beginning of living it out loud with the help of my Higher Power.

Anonymous, by someone who is learning to choose peace over chaos Member of the S.L.A.A. BDSM Addiction Recovery Special Interest Group.

— ANONYMOUS

Grateful to Have Found S.L.A.A.

By way of background:

My sex addiction manifests itself in an addiction to acting out involving elements of BDSM – bondage, discipline and sado-masochism

I am 74 years old; I am a lawyer and I practiced law for about 45 years before retiring two years ago.

I practiced law in Los Angeles for about 4 years starting in 1978; then in Paris, France for 14 years; next in Geneva, Switzerland for 10 years; finally in Northern California for about 17 years.

I met my wife in law school in 1972, we lived together from 1977 and were married in 1983. We are still married. We have tried to incorporate BDSM play into our sex life a few times over the years, but without success – it is just not a turn on for her.

I have been involved directly in the BDSM scene for nearly 50 years, since my mid-twenties, mainly in a submissive role with professional dominants and, to a much lesser extent, with non-professional players. As I will mention later, my first experience with a professional domme came when I was

about 25. Since that initial experience I have done BDSM sessions with Pro Domes on a regular basis, totaling hundreds of sessions over the nearly 50-year period up to quite recently.

I have had an interest in the relationship between pain and sexual arousal from a very early age.

I recall being spanked on my bare bottom by my mother, who I remember as a kind and gentle person, as a very young child – three or four years old. I do not remember the spankings as being very harsh, but I do remember there being an element of sexuality in the ritual of the spankings: the nakedness, the humiliation of being helpless and the mild pain from the spankings themselves.

Three different psychiatrists over the years have independently indicated that those spankings were likely the source of my obsession with the relationship between pain and pleasure.

However, none of them told me in so many words that the spankings could have led to an addiction to practicing BDSM. I assumed that what they were

telling me was that the spankings could have caused me to have a preference for mixing pain with sexual pleasure rather than engaging in straight, vanilla sex. I never even considered that I was affected by an addiction for many, many years. In fact, I was baffled that not everyone else shared my interest in BDSM – it seemed like such a compelling and pleasurable choice.

In years of therapy no one has suggested that these three psychiatrists were wrong and I consider that their explanation is a reasonable one, particularly when I consider the general similarities between the spankings by my mother and my BDSM sessions with Pro Domes.

I can remember a few other instances of me associating pleasure with pain at an early age or in adolescence:

At age 6 or so I tried to provoke a young woman who was babysitting for me and my brother to spank me by exposing my buttocks to her and otherwise misbehaving. I was not successful in provoking her, but it was definitely an erotically charged episode.

At about age 12 I came across an ad in a magazine depicting an adolescent girl dressed in riding clothes and

boots and holding a riding crop. I found this ad extremely arousing and kept it hidden in my room for some time.

As a teenager I discovered and devoured various BDSM-themed books which inflamed my BDSM fantasies and which became close companions.

Over the years, before I discovered Pro Domes, I also tried to interest various girlfriends in BDSM play, with very little success.

Finally, when I was about 25, I made contact with a Pro Domme in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I found her through an “underground newspaper”, which, in the pre-internet era, was about the only way to locate providers of sexual services. I arranged to do a session with her. She turned out to be a young African American woman who delivered a harsh session, involving bondage, impact play and so on, leaving me with a strong taste for the full BDSM experience.

A couple of years later in 1978, after my wife and I began living together, we moved to Los Angeles, where we both started our legal careers. At the time, Los Angeles was a paradise for anyone seeking experiences with Pro Domes, who were plentiful, charged reasonable prices and could be locat-

ed easily through underground papers. Encounters were arranged by telephone and took place at the Dommés' studios, which were generally well equipped with BDSM paraphernalia.

I also traveled a considerable amount on business within the U.S. during those years – mainly New York, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. Through underground newspapers, I was able to locate and arrange sessions with Pro Dommés in those cities as well.

When we moved to Paris and later to Geneva, I did not do any sessions with Pro Dommés in those cities. However, I continued to travel frequently to various cities in the U.S. and to London, where I continued to participate in BDSM sessions with Pro Dommés whenever I had the chance.

Finally, when we moved to Northern California about 20 years ago, I continued to do sessions with Pro Dommés in the San Francisco Bay Area and in other parts of the country when I traveled on business, right up until the last year or so.

Why did I find such sessions so compelling that I would take all the associated risks and incur all the costs of the sessions? I think that the psychia-

trists who attributed my BDSM obsession to the spankings I received as a young child from my mother were absolutely right. My BDSM sessions with Pro Dommés track with the outline of those spankings – the humiliation of undressing, the infliction of pain while in a helplessly vulnerable posture, and, in the case of the sessions with Pro Dommés, the sexual release that generally was the culmination of the session.

All those years I thought that I was being clever by satisfying my BDSM needs with Pro Dommés. What I told myself:

-The financial burden was not too great

-There was no risk of emotional involvement

-There was no risk of sexually transmitted diseases as there was no direct sexual contact

-Pro Dommés are generally very professional in performing BDSM activities and do provide a satisfying experience

-I could conceal my activity from my wife, friends and colleagues

What I failed to take account of were:

-The actual expenses, which, while not ruinous, were not inconsiderable

-The risk of actual physical harm or worse caused by any Pro Domme, either maliciously

or because of a lack of professionalism

-The physical risk of going to questionable neighborhoods to see Pro Dommies, often late at night

-The risk of legal consequences; such as, potentially, the loss of my law license

-The risk of exposure to family, friends and colleagues

-The pain that I was causing my wife by not fully addressing her sexual needs. She is purely vanilla sexually and although I always believed that we had a reasonable sex life, I know that she has never been fully satisfied with it and I know that my predilection for engaging with Pro Dommies has been extremely hurtful for her. I don't have sufficient time today to go into the details of the effect on my wife and on our relationship – maybe I will speak at another meeting on that subject.

Miraculously, other than the pain and heartache that I have caused my wife by not satisfying her sexual and emotional needs, none of these negative possibilities ever came to pass. It must be a measure of my addiction that I was willing to run all these serious risks for fleeting moments of submissive pleasure.

How did I get to S.L.A.A.?

About a year and a half ago,

after catching me out following an episode with a Pro Domme that left me with visible marks, my wife declared that I was a sex addict and that she was going to separate from me until I entered recovery and joined a Twelve-Step group to deal with my addiction. She made good on the threat and left our home for what turned out to be a three-month separation.

This separation finally got it through my head that my obsession with BDSM was not just a harmless preference but was truly an addiction and that my addiction was a serious problem that needed serious attention.

I first tried to address the problem by becoming involved in an S.A.A. group that I found online and which met via Zoom. This was a very rigorous and intense group – one might say Big Book fundamentalists - that required the following daily regimen:

Prayer first thing in the morning, on one's knees.

Next, select and prepare comments on two passages from the Big Book and one selection from a book of meditations.

Call at least five guys in the group promptly in the morning and share one's selected readings and comments.

Attend at least two meetings a day, one of which usually was focused on you personally and your recovery and progress through the Steps.

Complete a checklist at the end of the day describing what you had accomplished during the day towards recovery.

Attend a mandatory two-hour general meeting of about fifty guys early on Saturday morning and a mandatory two-hour meeting of about fifty guys on Sunday evening.

Be available at all times to receive phone calls from guys in the group to listen to their selected readings and comments.

Work the Steps with a sponsor and co-sponsor while doing all the foregoing.

I know that recovery is not supposed to be easy, but the demands of this group were just too much for me – I literally became ill from the stress and the demands on my time. However, I persisted and stuck with the program until I had completed the Steps with my sponsor and co-sponsor. Once I completed the Steps, I separated from the group – amicably - and began to look for a group where I would be more comfortable but in which I could continue working on my recovery.

Looking back, despite the difficulties I had with the S.A.A. group, I am glad that I accomplished working the Steps with them. It finally made me acknowledge that my life was unmanageable and to start to address that unmanageability through practicing the Steps. Among other things, identifying my character defects, identifying the people who I have injured, becoming willing to make amends and actually making amends have all been important exercises for me.

Moreover, following my three-month stint with the S.A.A. group, my wife was satisfied that I was making a serious effort to address my sex addiction and she moved back into our home. Our relationship has been warm and affectionate since then.

After leaving the S.A.A. group, I located via the internet a local S.L.A.A. group, which I found to be much more accommodating to my needs and my lifestyle than the S.A.A. group had been. However, I still feel somewhat awkward identifying myself as a sex and love addict whose bottom line is consorting with Professional Dommies – it took several meetings before I was comfortable making that admission.

Shortly after coming to the local group, I located an S.L.A.A. special purpose group dedicated to sex and love addicts whose acting out included some elements of BDSM. With that group I began to feel fully comfortable and unashamed acknowledging my addiction to BDSM. Just being able to open up about that addiction has been a tremendous support in maintaining my sobriety and addressing my relationship with my wife, which now seems to be on a good track.

I now also feel at home in the local S.L.A.A. group and I am no longer reticent about sharing about my particular flavor of addiction. I hope that

my contributions to the S.L.A.A. groups in which I participate and this story are helpful to anyone else who is struggling with any flavor of addiction, particularly mine.

To conclude, I am very, very grateful to have found S.L.A.A., where I now no longer feel any hesitancy or shame being completely open about my BDSM addiction. It is a great support in dealing with what I finally came to recognize as a true addiction, one that I am unable to address or control on my own.

— ANONYMOUS

Spiritual Masochism



Spiritual masochism is not the same as BDSM. BDSM, in my experience, is inherently neutral. It is a tool, a language, a container that can hold either empowerment or harm, depending on how it is engaged. It has a rich history, braided into queer liberation and the cultural legacy of LGBTQ+ people who came before me. Many found expression, solace, and pride in S&M spaces, identities, and play, a lineage I find meaningful as a young gay man. I want to be clear that BDSM is not inherent to queerness, and queerness is not inherent to BDSM, but there is a historic overlap that I

honor. For myself, there have been times that stepping into these roles has been deeply fruitful in my exploration of healthy sexuality. And I would be dishonest if I said it never felt unhealthy.

To put things lightly (and not trigger any readers), I have explored different sides of the vast spectrum regarding BDSM. I've been a "Dom" and a "sub", to different lovers (and sometimes the same lover but for different dynamics). There are times I can reflect on these roles feeling fruitful in my self-expression and exploration regarding healthy sexuality. And it would also be dishonest of

me if I said it never felt unhealthy.

I remember talking with my therapist a few years ago about my on again off again relationship with a man I felt deeply attached to. I thought it must be "love" because the passion was (not to sound trite) like a fire inside me that burned so bright, I couldn't fathom it to be anything else but! This lover and I had an S&M dynamic together where he was a soft, kind-hearted Dom and I was loyal and subservient. Unfortunately, his kind-heartedness did not span past the bedroom (or our scenes), where the fights were vicious, and I would end up in dangerous and risky situations.

However, because of the role he played in the bedroom, I could hide beneath my denial that there was kindness and unconditional love somehow behind it all. I played the role of loyalty to him a little too well and was not loyal to myself, resulting in self-abandonment. This is not fruitful soil for love.

My therapist told me simply, "It sounds like an S&M relationship." I thought my therapist was being redundant. "Yes," I said, "That's been the basis of our whole dynamic." My therapist shook his head

and said, "I meant less literally and more psychologically and spiritually that you are engaging in a deeper type of masochism every time you return to him."

I sat with this concept, a spiritual masochism, for many months as the cycle continued. Consciously I didn't think there was any pleasure to be found in the pain of returning to such a painful and destructive relationship. But there must be some payoff, some unconscious pleasure, some familiarity, some itch being scratched, or else why would I return to said flame again and again just to be burned? Years later, I use this concept of spiritual masochism when talking with sponsees, fellows, friends, when others seek counsel about behavior change and breaking cycles.

A story from Charles Lamb gives a clue to the mystery of self-imposed pain. Once upon a time in ancient China a house burned down, with a pig inside. While poking around the ashes the villagers came upon the roasted pig and began to sample this new delicacy. Captivated by the delicious taste, they got another pig, put it in another house, and set that house afire. Early in life we learn that pleasure accom-

panies otherwise destructive or painful conduct.

When we are sick, we are rewarded with attention; when we bypass pleasure for duty, we are praised; when we are docile and obedient, we are loved. We learn early that the betrayal of our inner feelings and desires is often the price of social acceptance.

Change happens once we learn that it is possible to have roast pig without burning down a house. Pleasure is a gift that doesn't necessarily depend on sacrifice. It takes courage to admit that we have created much of our suffering, and to take steps to dismiss it. Strength and tenderness are needed for us to tolerate happiness.

Reflecting on writer Charles Lamb and the story about villagers who, after tasting roast pig from a burned-down house, began to burn down houses on purpose to recreate the flavor... we learn early in life that pleasure accompanies pain, attention accompanies sickness, love accompanies obedience. And so, I betray myself for social acceptance or

repeat cycles that confirm my earliest experiences of intimacy. As the quote says: "change happens once we learn that it is possible to have roast pig without burning down a house."

For me, that is the invitation of recovery, and the gift of looking at "spiritual masochism" through the lens of intimacy injury and attachment wounding - to stop burning down my own house for the fleeting taste of something that looks like love, to admit I have created much of my own suffering, and to take steps, courageous, tender steps, toward something different. This is also the gift of community. When I talk with fellow travelers about cycles of pain, I return to this language. I remind them (and myself) gently that if we keep touching the same flame, there is something in us that believes the burn is necessary for the pleasure. But what if it isn't? Change begins when we discover that we can still have the sweetness without the fire.

— S., SAN FRANCISCO

Share space

My Most Glaring Character Defects



I have been thinking about the difference between asking for my character defects to be removed and removing them myself and how one leads to

the other. As someone whose understanding of a Higher Power does not include an omniscient being, what does that mean?

When I ask each morning to be free of my ten most glaring character defects, I try to truly think about each one rather than zoom through recitation of them. I try to picture what each one has looked like in my life and how it has harmed me and others. Doing this has helped me be more aware of these defects as they arise during my daily life. Sometimes this awareness is all it takes—just noticing and thinking about something for a bit.

Self-delusion is the hardest character defect for me to trust this approach with, because it almost seems to require an outside force to mediate—otherwise, how do I know I'm not deluding myself? Again, I am trying to lean into the ask, itself. I hope that by asking, I will be able to tap into my "wise mind"—something I learned in therapy is the intersection between logical and emotional mind.

Ultimately, I can ask myself some of the same questions a fellow told me they ask to determine their will versus God's will. Is a given belief dishonest, resentful, selfish, or fearful? Or is it honest, pure, unselfish, and loving? It doesn't matter what my idea of God is—if a belief is honest, pure, unselfish, and loving, it is likely not delusional. And even if it is, it's

still the belief I prefer to have.

Sometimes defects are stubborn even when I notice them, try to use my wise mind or when I ask questions. When this happens, and I really feel self-righteousness or jealousy or another defect, I try to remember the step is not "got rid of all my character defects," but is "humbly asked" for them to be removed. The asking itself is the thing—genuinely wanting to be better and asking the universe to help me is the very change that sometimes lets me actually be better. The combination of desire, intention, and humility are magic.

My idea of a Higher Power does not see this as supernatural in that some being outside of me makes it happen, but I can see it as brain science—the willingness and humble desire tells my brain to work on it behind the scenes and the gentleness allows it to, and I think that gentleness is the difference I've been trying to understand.

In Buddhism, there is the idea of puppy mind. When we are practicing mindful presence, it is like training a puppy. We take the puppy to the rug and say "Sit. Stay." Of course, the puppy gets up immediately, but if we want to train the puppy effectively, we don't yell

at the puppy, because this would only make it aggressive and fearful. Instead, we take it back to the rug and say “Sit. Stay.” We do this again and again and eventually the puppy sits and stays for longer and longer periods of time.

When I ask to be free of a character defect, rather than trying to force engrained habits of mind out of myself through sheer will, it helps train my puppy mind. “Stop being self righteous” is angry—it’s frustrated with myself for letting my brain take the superhighway response patterns I’ve built up over years instead of automatically choosing the newer, longer paths I’m just clearing. On the other hand, “May I be free of self-righteousness” is a reminder that I want to be, a reminder that I intend to be, and an acknowledgement that it’s hard for me in that moment. And when I ask, “May I be free of self-righteousness?” it allows space for a new, quiet part of me to answer, “Yes. We can

try it.” It may not be supernatural, but it is something greater than myself. The state of mind that makes me want to be better for the world and people around me, that is humble, which allows me to be gentle—that is the mindstate that is most removed from a problematic view of “self,” that is trying the least to manipulate and control, and is aware that I am interdependent and interconnected with the larger whole. It is the state of mind that makes me want to connect to what is true and right. This is the mind state that encourages me to ask humbly for my defects to be removed, and when I feel removed from this mindstate because my defects are at the wheel, it is the asking that helps me return. My mind is definitely still a puppy, but I will keep taking that puppy back to the rug and asking it to sit, and the more that puppy starts to listen, the more I will know it is because I am a part of something greater than myself.

—ANONYMOUS

S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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



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