



Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous

You are not alone

Welcome

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

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

What is Sex and Love Addiction?

We believe that sex and love addiction may take many forms such as a compulsive need for sex, extreme dependency on one person (or many), and/or a chronic preoccupation with romance, intrigue or fantasy.

Sex and love addiction may also take the form of a compulsive avoidance of giving or receiving social, sexual or emotional nourishment. This isolation and avoidance of intimacy is known in SLAA as anorexia.

We have found that obsessive/compulsive patterns exist in which relationships or sexual activities have become increasingly destructive to career, family and sense of self-respect. Sex and love addiction leads to ever worsening consequences if it continues unchecked. In SLAA, we learn to accept the reality of having this addiction and surrender any notion that we can control it successfully on the basis of our unaided will.

Admitting personal powerlessness over this affliction, we cease our addictive behaviour and turn to guidance from a Power greater than ourselves, make restitution for harm done to others and reconstruct our lives physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally.

Each of us in SLAA knows the confusion and difficulty of walking into the first few meetings, feeling like a newcomer in new surroundings. Whether we took this courageous step out of pain and hopelessness, sought relief from longing and emptiness or were directed to attend, we make another step toward recovery by being here.

What is SLAA?

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is a fellowship based on the 12 Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. The fellowship is open to people of any age or sexual preference.

Members include those who suffer from a compulsive need for sex, and those with a desperate attachment to one person. What all members have in common is an obsessive/compulsive pattern, either sexual or emotional or both, in which relationships or activities have become increasingly destructive to all areas of their lives.

Although SLAA was started by recovered alcoholics and is modelled after AA, meetings are open to any person who believes they have this problem, regardless of the presence or absence of chemical addiction.

SLAA first began in 1976 in Boston by a few people who had come to realise that sex, romantic intrigue and dependency were affecting their lives in the same way others had their chemical addictions. They found that the compulsion to continue with promiscuous sex or to return over and over to a destructive relationship could not be controlled by will power alone.

Typical stories include those who frequented prostitutes or sex premises, in spite of repeated bouts with venereal disease and fear of discovery by their families. Others found it impossible to break off destructive relationships or ended one only to find themselves in

a new one that was just as bad. Others engaged primarily in solitary acts with pornography and masturbation.

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

- 01 **SOBRIETY.** Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom-line addictive behaviour on a daily basis.
- 02 **SPONSORSHIP & MEETINGS.** Our capacity to reach out for the supportive fellowship within SLAA.
- 03 **STEPS.** Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sexual and emotional sobriety.
- 04 **SERVICE.** Our giving back to the SLAA community what we continue to freely receive.
- 05 **SPIRITUALITY.** Our developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves which can guide and sustain us in recovery.

Many people have found hope and recovery in sharing their experiences with each other. Some of these addicts are finding themselves capable of satisfying committed relationships for the first time in their lives.

More importantly, with or without a love partnership, these recoverers have found a new sense of freedom and dignity of self. Some feel that without

the support and recovery facilitated through SLAA their dilemma of having to choose between acute loneliness and isolation from others on the one hand, and addictive relationships or activities on the other, would have set them up for committing suicide.

As a fellowship SLAA is united in a common focus: dealing with our addictive sexual and emotional behaviour. We find a common denominator in our obsessive/ compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal difference of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Making a beginning

What can you do if you admit, however reluctantly, that sex and love addiction might be the problem, instead of the lack of “enough” or the “right kind” of sex or love partner?

First you must face honestly that it is not simply “the other person” but primarily the neediness inside yourself that is the real source of the terrible pain. If you have doubts, the quickest way to determine if this program is for you is to try to stop the pattern abruptly and stay sober for 30 days or ideally 90 days. How did that go?

Generally, intense longing and anxiety emerges and continues to grow. This will usually be coupled with failure of the resolve to live in accordance with consistent values and without self-destructive entanglements. If this happens, little doubt should

be left about the seriousness and hopelessness of the problem.

The beginning is simple, but not easy. The admission of powerlessness has to be coupled with a readiness to break the addictive pattern; to stay away from all sexual activity except that which is achieved within a nourishing and committed relationship. Often, even within a committed relationship, a period of total sexual abstinence is necessary in order to experience non-addictive sexuality.

The road to recovery

Love and sex within a true partnership does not seem to feed the addiction. This kind of relationship ultimately seems to embody much of what we sought so desperately and futilely elsewhere. But the road to such partnership requires much self-undoing before building can commence.

First we find a sense of wholeness and dignity within ourselves. This comes from continued sobriety on a daily basis and from working the Twelve Steps.

Our personal wholeness is a natural result of willingness to trust God, clean house and help others.

For all of us the path to recovery, chosen only because the pain of our addiction had come to exceed the short-term relief of tension, has brought us returns we would not have expected. While recovery is difficult, this way of life has given

us new freedom and a deep sense of purpose. The SLAA program has given us, in recovery, real autonomy and self-respect. With these attributes has come the capacity for partnerships based on authentic love and intimacy, whether they be with children, spouse, or friends.

If you have shared our experience of pain, perhaps you may now accept our experience of hope and redemption. May you join us now, as we help each other — one day at a time — to discover true freedom and dignity of self!

Key Ideas

Among the first questions we faced as we attended meetings were:

“Am I an addict? Am I a sex and love addict? What is the nature of my addiction?” Please complete the 40 questions survey and take the time to answer these questions for yourself.

We suggest attending SLAA meetings as often as you can, with three meetings a week recommended.

Attend more if you can. Get phone numbers and call other members each day. We discover that we are not alone. We find support in the fellowship and begin to address our patterns of destructive behaviour.

There are many kinds of meetings including online meetings and each has its own personality. If you don't find quite the right meeting the first time, we suggest attending other meetings: “Take what you like and leave the rest.”

You will hear a variety of stories from members in recovery from sex and love addiction. Our common denominator is our obsessive/compulsive behaviour. We have found that recovery works best when we are willing to stop living out a pattern of addiction, even if we have not achieved sobriety yet. Our program stresses acceptance — acceptance of who we are, just as we are, wherever we may be in the recovery process.

In these meetings, we listen and let go of judgment.



The Serenity Prayer



*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can, and
wisdom to know the difference.*

We may recognise ourselves in some of the following characteristics. As we recover, we may see in ourselves additional traits we did not previously detect. These characteristics are not offered as a definitive, diagnostic checklist. They do express the shared experiences of many within the SLAA fellowship.



12 Characteristics of Sex & Love Addiction



- 01 Having **FEW HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
- 02 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.
- 03 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.
- 04 We **CONFUSE** love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
- 05 We feel **EMPTY** and **INCOMPLETE** when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
- 06 We **SEXUALISE** stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional **DEPENDENCE** as substitutes for nurturing, care, and support.
- 07 We use sex and emotional involvement to **MANIPULATE** and control others.
- 08 We become **IMMOBILISED** or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.
- 09 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 idealise and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.





12 Steps of SLAA



- 01 **WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS** over sex and love addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 02 **CAME TO BELIEVE** that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 03 **MADE A DECISION** to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
- 04 **MADE A SEARCHING** and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 05 **ADMITTED** to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 06 **WERE ENTIRELY READY** to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 07 **HUMBLY ASKED** God to remove our shortcomings.
- 08 **MADE A LIST** of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 09 **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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Some Common Guidelines

The only requirement for membership in SLAA is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SLAA provide tools and a framework for recovery. In support of that recovery, we have found certain guidelines useful.

Meeting Guidelines

- ◇ At SLAA meetings, we share our “experience, strength and hope” of recovery from sex and love addiction.
- ◇ For our group unity, we seek to provide an environment free from shame, judgment, criticism, manipulation and abuse where members can feel safe to share what they think and feel. We ask members to help maintain that supportive environment.
- ◇ We maintain confidentiality and refrain from disclosing names or identifying group members outside the meeting. We understand anonymity to be critical to the foundation of our recovery.
- ◇ We refrain from crosstalk or interruption while another is sharing. Crosstalk is advice, making direct reference to what someone else has shared or otherwise drawing attention to another member’s story.

Newcomer Suggestions

- ☞ Focus on your own experiences and feelings.
Remember to use “I” rather than “we” or “you” when you share.
- ☞ Participate only as you wish.
It is okay not to share.
Listen to others; accept silence.
Healing can happen when we listen as well as when we share.

- ☞ Identify yourself by first name only. Many of us say “My name is _____ and I’m a sex and love addict.” You are not required to identify as an addict; you may identify yourself in any way that feels safe and comfortable to you.
- ☞ Feel free to take a break from the meeting if you are feeling uncomfortable. You can also talk to someone about your feelings after the meeting.

Tools for the Newcomer

- ◇ Get names and phone numbers of sober SLAA members
- ◇ Make outreach calls daily
- ◇ Read the basic text of SLAA - available at meetings or as an ebook (eg Amazon kindle)
- ◇ Attend six meetings within 2-3 weeks before deciding if SLAA is for you (or not)
- ◇ Find a Sponsor
- ◇ Prayer and meditation
- ◇ Study the Twelve Steps
- ◇ Identify self-defined bottom lines
- ◇ Write your feelings in a journal
- ◇ Attend different meetings (face-to-face and online)

How Meetings

Most of our meetings use the **HOW method** - we stay **Honest**, **Open-Minded** and **Willing** to listen by using the **HOW** handbook and suggestions which guide us through the 12 steps of this *program of recovery*.



12 Signs of Recovery



- 01 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.
- 02 We are willing to be **VULNERABLE** because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power.
- 03 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.
- 04 We learn to **AVOID SITUATIONS** that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.
- 05 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.
- 06 We become willing to **ASK FOR HELP**, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others.
- 07 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.
- 08 We begin to accept our **IMPERFECTIONS AND MISTAKES** as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects.
- 09 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.

Find out more about SLAA by visiting slaa.org.au