

# HOW Program Step and Sponsorship Guide

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous



THIS IS DRAFT S.L.A.A. LITERATURE

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## An Introduction to S.L.A.A. HOW

**I**n this guide you will find information you need to work the program of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (S.L.A.A.) the HOW way (Honesty, Open-mindedness, and Willingness)—a systematic method for working S.L.A.A.’s Twelve Steps. This guide is designed to help the reader find a HOW sponsor, get sober in S.L.A.A., work the Steps using the HOW approach, and, when you are ready, become a HOW sponsor yourself.

The S.L.A.A. HOW way of working the S.L.A.A. program was inspired by the Overeaters Anonymous (OA) HOW approach. OA HOW still exists within OA, as well as a separate fellowship called Compulsive Eaters Anonymous (CEA) that also works the Steps the HOW way. The HOW approach is also used by Debtors Anonymous (DA).

S.L.A.A. HOW originated in Australia around 1996, when some members from S.L.A.A. replaced “compulsive eating and food” with “sex and love addiction,” thereby creating a HOW approach for S.L.A.A. The authors believed that S.L.A.A. would benefit from a structured and disciplined approach to help members who were struggling to define and maintain sobriety. These founding members adopted the entire OA HOW program, including the format, tools, and writing assignments for Steps One to Twelve. Where OA HOW used a specific food plan to define abstinence, the S.L.A.A. HOW authors created questions for the first seven days to define bottom lines so that, in consultation with their sponsors, members could define the addictive behaviors that they chose to abstain from in order to begin recovering from sex and love addiction.

The acronym HOW originated in Alcoholics Anonymous—AA’s *Big Book*. We found a reference in the story, “Freedom from Bondage of Self” (Fourth Edition, page 549):

*The A.A. members who sponsored me told me in the beginning that I would not only find a way to live without having a drink, but that I would find a way to live without wanting to drink, if I would do these simple things. They said if you want to know how this program works, take the first word of your question—the “H” is for honesty, the “O” is for open-mindedness, and the “W” is for willingness; these our Big Book calls the essentials of recovery.*

We found the three words also mentioned in its appendix, The Spiritual Experience (Fourth Edition, page 568): “We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness,

honesty, and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.”

## **S.L.A.A. HOW Is a Choice**

There is no requirement to work the S.L.A.A. program the HOW way; it is merely a choice for those who wish to and who find that it helps them. There are other ways of working the S.L.A.A. program and we make our choice before beginning to work the Steps. Those of us who decide to work the S.L.A.A. program with the S.L.A.A. HOW approach follow the structure described in this Step and Sponsorship Guide. The choice to work the Steps this way is an individual one.

All S.L.A.A. HOW meetings are open to anyone working the S.L.A.A. program—even if they are using a format other than HOW. Additionally, people using the S.L.A.A. HOW approach can attend any S.L.A.A. meeting, not only S.L.A.A. HOW meetings.

In S.L.A.A. HOW, everything associated with working the S.L.A.A. Twelve-Step program applies, including all Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts, and all conference-approved S.L.A.A. literature. The HOW way of working the Steps also suggests that sponsees work through the Twelve Steps, attend meetings, and work with a sponsor. S.L.A.A. HOW is a way of working the Twelve Steps. It is not a different program.

## **The HOW Concept**

There were, and still are, no absolutes for sobriety in S.L.A.A., as individual patterns of sex and love addiction vary. We remember that the S.L.A.A. HOW groups were formed to suggest an alternative path to long-term sobriety for those of us who had tried other ways of working the S.L.A.A. program and were unsuccessful, for those of us who knew that we needed this kind of approach, and for those of us who were not experiencing the level of sobriety we had hoped for.

Therefore we accepted our bottom-line sobriety, Step Questions, Maintenance Questions, outreach calls, the Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, and other tools as requirements for our recovery. We committed ourselves to a black-and-white sobriety in order to deal with the gray areas of living.

In HOW, we found that if we committed to using the tools of recovery on a daily basis, our disease of sex and love addiction could be arrested one day at a time.

## How the HOW Approach Works

We begin the HOW approach by answering thirty-seven questions. We answer one question a day, working with a sponsor (an S.L.A.A. HOW member whom we have asked to guide us). We normally call our sponsor at an agreed time every day and read our answer to them over the phone. For many of us, this approach offers a welcome safety net, a sense of security, and a structure to our recovery and our new lives. This approach can seem difficult at times, but we value the structure it provides. The first seven questions of the thirty-seven questions lead to us defining our bottom lines. After answering these first seven questions most of us are clearer about the actions we need to avoid or start taking in order to give ourselves a chance to heal from an often exhausting, debilitating disease that can make our lives unbearable. We review our answers to the first seven questions with our sponsor and set bottom lines that will serve to heal and support us in our recovery.

After we have answered the bottom-line questions we proceed to answer the questions for Steps One, Two, and Three—one per day for the next thirty days. Through this process, we develop an understanding and acceptance of the first three Steps. Daily calls with our sponsor, outreach calls to other S.L.A.A. members, the questions, meetings, and trust in our Higher Power are the tools we need to keep the addictive patterns out of our lives one day at a time.

## The Tools

Having identified our personal bottom lines with our sponsor, we become sober by abstaining from these behaviors on a daily basis. We consider ourselves “sober” when we have a minimum of thirty consecutive days free from our bottom lines. We refer to S.L.A.A. and AA literature to help us in the process of recovery.

We recommend attending at least three meetings per week. These can be regular S.L.A.A. meetings or meetings using the S.L.A.A. HOW approach. During the first seven-day period, it is suggested we make four phone calls each day—one to our sponsor and three outreach calls to other S.L.A.A. members. During the following thirty-day period the HOW concept does require that these four calls are made daily. The phone is a lifeline. We need the contact. Each call can be like a mini-meeting.

We practice daily prayer and meditation to develop a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves that can guide and sustain us in recovery, being constantly aware that our Higher Power is doing for us what we have never been able to do for ourselves.

Service is freedom from the bondage of self, giving back what we have freely and lovingly received. It is helping out at meetings by setting up chairs, making coffee, or welcoming newcomers. Sobriety is service to ourselves and the group.

An S.L.A.A. HOW sponsor is a sex and love addict who has at least thirty days of continuous sobriety working the S.L.A.A. HOW concept and has taken the first three Steps. Discretion, common sense, and our Higher Power guide us in our selection of a sponsor.

In summary, the way we work the Twelve Steps using the S.L.A.A. HOW approach during Steps One, Two, and Three is as follows:

- ♦ We attend at least three meetings per week. These can be regular S.L.A.A. meetings or meetings using the S.L.A.A. HOW approach.
- ♦ We make one call per day to our sponsor to discuss our answer to the assigned Step question.
- ♦ We make three outreach calls to fellow members in S.L.A.A. daily (optional for the seven-day bottom-line identification questions).
- ♦ We maintain our bottom-line sobriety.
- ♦ With the exception of bottom-line sobriety, after the first three Steps the requirements set out above become suggestions.

Some sponsors and sponsees agree to continue the approach outlined above, others reduce the frequency of required meetings or the number of calls to be made. Some establish new approaches to answering and sharing the answers to the Step Questions—for example, by calling their sponsor once or twice a week, or meeting face-to-face to read through all the answers for that Step.

## **Finding a Sponsor**

To start working the Twelve Steps we need to find a sponsor who has already reached at least Step Three using the S.L.A.A. HOW approach. We have found the best way to do this is to attend as many meetings as possible. These can be meetings that use the HOW approach or not, as long as the sponsor chosen has been sponsored in the S.L.A.A. HOW way. If we are not able to attend face-to-face meetings, or if meetings using the HOW approach are not available in our country or city, we find meetings online. We keep asking until we find a suitable sponsor. We want a sponsor who has worked through the Steps the HOW way, understands the HOW approach, and can share their experience, strength, and hope.

Within the HOW approach, we find that different sponsors work the program in different ways. We talk with them about their expectations before

starting to work together in order to see if we are a good fit. We discuss practical matters such as availability or any other issues we anticipate. For many of us, setting bottom lines with our sponsor is the first time in our lives we have consulted anyone about setting healthy boundaries for ourselves. It can be a great relief to have this kind of help. We find that, ultimately, our sponsor is there to listen, guide, encourage, and to share their experience, strength, and hope with us. Sometimes they need to challenge us. In the early stages, some of us find it better to find a “good” sponsor rather than wait for the “perfect” sponsor. The HOW approach specifies that a sponsor only sponsor up to the level of the Step they themselves have completed and must have at least thirty days of continuous sobriety.

## **Sponsoring**

A sponsor is someone who works with another member of the fellowship to provide support and guidance in working through the Twelve Steps. An S.L.A.A. HOW sponsor is someone who has worked or is working the S.L.A.A. HOW approach and can guide fellow sex and love addicts in the HOW method.

There are various Step sponsors in S.L.A.A. HOW. A Step Three sponsor, having completed Step Three, can sponsor other fellow members up to Step Three. A Step Five sponsor, having completed Step Five, can sponsor up to Step Five. A Step sponsor can sponsor any Step between Steps Six to Twelve, up until the last Step they have completed. A Maintenance sponsor is someone who can sponsor those who have completed the Twelve Steps in S.L.A.A. HOW. To qualify as a HOW Maintenance sponsor, the fellow member must be a Step sponsor, have completed all Twelve Steps in S.L.A.A. HOW, and have ninety days of continuous sobriety in addition to completing the HOW Maintenance Questions.

Before deciding whether we are ready to be a sponsor, some of us read the S.L.A.A. pamphlet entitled Sponsorship, a Return from Isolation. This is primarily a guide for those seeking sponsors but it helps the prospective sponsors among us too. We also consult our own sponsor and seek guidance from our Higher Power.

As a sponsor, we have to remember that:

- ♦ We are not a parent, a therapist, an instructor, or a confessor. We provide guidance, we make recommendations, and we provide instructions on working the Steps.
- ♦ We share our experience, strength, and hope. We share what has worked for us. We try not to say things like, “What we do in S.L.A.A. is...” or “What you should do...” Instead, we use phrases like, “What I did was...”



and this worked for me.” We find it is best to avoid trying to convince the sponsee of anything. Whether they know it yet or not, their Higher Power is guiding them in its own time. We needn’t worry about the sponsee; merely keep them and their struggles in mind.

- ♦ We share our program. As much as possible, we make outreach calls focused on the program, our experience of the program, and program literature.
- ♦ We share our struggles, avoiding traps of ego, dependence, and reliance, or any combination of these. We trust our Higher Power is helping both of us grow along spiritual lines.
- ♦ We share our compassion without judgment or criticism. When the sponsee says they are struggling, feeling the pain of withdrawal, or saying that they have slipped—we express our compassion. We try to say things like, “That sounds painful...” or “I remember how it felt when I was in withdrawal...” We try not to judge what the sponsee says or does by commenting, “That’s good...” or “That’s bad.” Rather, we acknowledge what they have shared with us and let them know we have heard them.
- ♦ We share our perspective. We convey the importance of service and giving to others.
- ♦ We share the concept of “Just for Today” or “One Day at a Time” as a means of survival.
- ♦ We avoid being drawn into philosophical argument, discussion, or gossip. If we think we are going beyond our responsibility as an S.L.A.A. sponsor, we stop ourselves. We use gentle phrases such as, “I don’t know about that...” or “If it were me, I would consult my Higher Power.”
- ♦ We share our honesty. If we slip or act out, we tell our sponsee; they have a right to know. We don’t shame or isolate ourselves from our sponsee. We pick ourselves up and carry on. We show them how it is done and that we are not superhuman.
- ♦ We share with our sponsee the ways in which we are disciplined in our lives. After all, this may be the only example of discipline they have experienced.
- ♦ We make sure we are familiar with the HOW concept requirements as set out in this guide. Things not listed in this guide are not requirements of the HOW approach. It is possible that anecdotal requirements can become misconceptions about the HOW approach. Sponsors need to be wary of these and ensure they are fully informed about the HOW

concept. A few common misconceptions are listed in the section Common Questions about HOW.

## Defining Bottom Lines—First Seven Days

During the first seven days, we work with our sponsor to decide what behaviors we need to stop in order to best support our recovery. We answer one of the bottom-line questions each day and read the answer to our sponsor who is there to listen, gently guide, and give feedback when and if we need it. We answer the questions in order, one per day, confining our work to the appointed day, so that our answers are as current as possible.

Once we have answered these questions, with the help of our sponsor, outreach calls, and the guidance of our Higher Power, we are able to set our bottom lines. We are addicts, and each of us is unique, so it is important to tailor our bottom lines to our own specific addictive or anorexic behaviors. In order to support our recovery, sometimes we also agree middle-line and top-line behaviors (see page 12 for definitions of these types of behaviors).

To answer the bottom-line questions in the first seven days, we need the following books: *Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous* (S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*), *Alcoholics Anonymous* (AA's *Big Book*), and AA's *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. It is helpful to read S.L.A.A.'s *A Framework for Living*. We also need the following S.L.A.A. pamphlets to support our research into our behaviors:

- ♦ *40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis*;
- ♦ *Anorexia: Sexual, Social, Emotional*;
- ♦ *Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy*;
- ♦ *Romantic Obsession*;
- ♦ *Questions Beginners Ask*; and
- ♦ *Setting Bottom Lines*.

Here are the seven HOW bottom-line questions and suggestions we work within the first seven days:

1. What is sex and love addiction for you? Discuss in writing. Read the S.L.A.A. document *Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction*. Underline any words or concepts you are unfamiliar with and discuss them with your sponsor. Also underline passages that you identify with or that remind you of your own behavior. Discuss in writing how they relate to you. Discuss these on your daily outreach calls and also with your sponsor.
2. Read Step One from Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*, pages 68-73. Do you identify as a sex addict, a love addict, or both of these? Referring

to examples from your life, discuss in writing how you have acted out in these areas in the past.

3. Read the S.L.A.A. pamphlet *40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis*. Tick the behaviors you most identify with. Choose the ten most relevant and write a few sentences on each, using specific examples from your past.
4. Read the S.L.A.A. pamphlet *Anorexia: Sexual, Social, Emotional*. Do you relate to any of these behaviors? Discuss in writing.
5. Read Chapter Five “The Withdrawal Experience” in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 104-115 and also the S.L.A.A. pamphlet *Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy*. Discuss in writing how you experienced withdrawal in relation to sex and love relationships; for example, when a relationship ended.
6. Read the S.L.A.A. pamphlet *Romantic Obsession*. Discuss in writing anything that is meaningful and reflect on what you have learned. Read the sections, “What is Acting Out?” and, “What are Slips?” from the Questions Beginners Ask pamphlet. Have you tried to control your compulsive behavior in the past? Discuss in writing how, in what way, and why you slipped and acted out after decisions to behave differently.
7. Read the S.L.A.A. pamphlet *Setting Bottom Lines* and also the “Top Lines” section in this guide. Write a list of the obvious behaviors that you would consider necessary to list as bottom lines or top lines. Write and reflect on how absolute honesty is necessary to combat sex and love addiction. Next, write a list of more subtle behaviors, sometimes called middle lines, that you suspect may cause you trouble or put you in danger of breaking bottom lines. Discuss these with your sponsor to arrive at bottom-line, middle-line, and top-line behaviors for the 30-day, Steps One to Three period.

## Setting Bottom and Top Lines

### *Bottom Lines*

Bottom lines are behaviors we choose to abstain from in order to begin recovering from sex and love addiction. Bottom lines help define our sobriety. They are guidelines for our new life. When we stop the unhealthy behaviors that have made us so unhappy in the past, we begin to experience physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness. We start to engage with life.

Bottom-line behaviors seem hard to let go of in the beginning. We believe we cannot survive without our old behaviors, although they have driven us to despair, and, for some, to suicide.

In spite of our reservations and fears that we will not be able to maintain abstinence from our bottom lines, we find that with the help of a sponsor, our peers in recovery, and our program of recovery, we can do it one day at a time.

Some of us come to the program having deprived ourselves of sex, sexual contact, and intimate relationships throughout our lives. If we identify as anorexics in S.L.A.A., then our addiction is about deprivation. As anorexics, we often “act in” rather than “act out.” While acting out is defined as engaging in addictive bottom-line behavior, acting-in behavior isolates us or withdraws us from others, it reflects avoidant patterns. Acting in and acting out define a wide spectrum of behavior used to avoid building relationships with our Higher Power, ourselves, and others.

But how can we set bottom lines? Once we have found an S.L.A.A. HOW sponsor, we begin to answer the first seven questions set out above. As trust in the relationship with our sponsor develops, we identify the behaviors that are harmful to us and the people around us. The pamphlet *Setting Bottom Lines* offers us a plan to help break the destructive cycles of sex and love addiction. At the end of the seven days we agree on our bottom lines with our sponsor, then begin answering a question each day for the next 30 days.

### ***Top Lines***

In contrast to bottom lines, top lines are positive, affirming behaviors that we now choose to include in our lives. They are a tool for sanity when we feel least sane—a way to get out of our head and into our heart. For many of us top lines are the start of living a sober, contented life.

In the past we exerted much time and energy in our acting out or acting in; we didn’t know what a healthy lifestyle looked like or felt like. We had lost the ability to nurture ourselves, to pursue healthy interests and activities. We may also have lost the ability to build friendships with people who were truly available and trustworthy. It matters little if our addiction was compulsively pursuing sex and love or isolating from sex and love, we now know that if we are to truly live beyond the addiction we have to learn new skills.

While some instinctively know what is lacking—for example, spiritual connection, exercise, or food choices—there often seems to be something greater missing from our lives. Some describe it as purpose, meaning, or a need for learning, creativity, enjoyment, or connection to ourselves and to our community. Some describe it simply as being in the moment.

Being in recovery even for a short time brings us some clarity and a feeling of relief. Some begin to use the tools of prayer and meditation. For some of us it is the first time that we fully connect to or experience our past grief or trauma.

We set top lines from the beginning—soft, slow steps toward more positive, reinforcing behaviors. We give ourselves time for peaceful reflection and some activity (or non-activity) to help process the painful resentment, anger, shame, or fear that has been suppressed for many years.

Top lines can be difficult to put into practice. We acknowledge our powerlessness and work the Steps, practicing progress, not perfection. We pray for courage and ask for support from people we trust.

Some of us view top lines in the same way as bottom lines. So, not adhering to them may be interpreted as a slip or a loss of sobriety. Some sponsors suggest that we create at least as many top lines as bottom lines. This helps us replace destructive behaviors with new, healthy ones. Or it might help us begin to open our lives to healthy contact where there is complete or near-complete deprivation. Some of us respond to a gentler approach so that some or even all our top lines are defined as guidelines rather than requirements. Ultimately, in defining our bottom lines and top lines, we listen to guidance from our sponsor and our Higher Power.

When choosing a top line, we find it best to start slowly. We start with one activity. We try not to judge our progress or quality of performance. Showing up for ourselves is what matters. Doing an activity for two or ten minutes can be wonderfully life-affirming if we haven't done so for a long time. We stop or leave before we become overwhelmed.

We keep top lines simple, uncomplicated, and focused on the process rather than the end result. We learn it is okay to change top lines if they don't move us toward our recovery goals. We treat ourselves in a loving, gentle, and encouraging way.

### ***Suggestions for Top Lines***

The following top lines are recovery-positive suggestions for activities we can incorporate into our daily lives. We review the following sections with our sponsor and make a list that is appropriate for each of us.

**Spiritual Top Lines:** These can include daily readings, reflection, prayer, meditation, mindfulness, Step work, journaling, walking in nature, or visiting a place of worship. Some seek solace or reconnection with their faith by attending an S.L.A.A. retreat or convention, or by visiting a specific place, tree, lake, or rock.

**Personal Top Lines:** These are nurturing or fun activities such as going to a concert or an exhibition, a swimming pool, a park, or a particular spot in nature that is special to us. It can be cooking a favorite meal or going to our favorite restaurant or coffee shop on a regular basis. It can be picking up a long-abandoned musical instrument or buying ourselves flowers. For some of us, personal top lines are trying a new skill that has nothing to do with our past or with our career, or it might be signing up for a class we have always wanted to take but have never had the time or courage to. For example, learning to draw, paint, write, sail, sing, cycle, bike, climb, drive, or swim—whatever activity that facilitates growth. Some find regular exercise a safe release for anger—for example, using a punching bag, a mattress, or a pillow to hit (useful in Step Four). This activity can release anger from the body. If we have experienced a long period of abstinence or withdrawal, having the physical contact of massage is healing. We might seek medical advice and therapy for untreated symptoms that affect our health, our ability to have sex, or to be intimate in a relationship. Some of us enter psychotherapy as a way to support our recovery and help deal with the trauma of our past.

**Social Top Lines:** These start with saying “yes” to social invitations from those we trust. If we feel socially anorexic we practice organizing a meet-up (coffee, lunch, cinema, concert, sports game, cycle, run, or walk with a group). Some of us sign up for a dance, exercise, woodwork, carving, bread-making, drumming, or self-defense class. By engaging with people we trust and who are able to help us, we also learn how to tolerate people that we find difficult, challenging, or triggering.

**Community Top Lines:** Sponsoring and doing service in our home groups and intergroup are useful ways to learn about giving. Some of us practice small acts of kindness. Some go on to volunteer in their communities: teaching, coaching, and facilitating for a cause that we feel passionate about. We find many needs in our world that can benefit from people like us who have gained personal awareness through recovery. There is a great reward in being able to contribute to the community around us. Giving hope to one person can make a huge difference in their life and our

**Relationship Top Lines:** As we move through the Steps and develop a relationship with a Higher Power and an ability to nurture ourselves, some of us decide to practice healthy behaviors in relationship with others as well. We initially work on developing friendships or improving relationships with the family (as appropriate). In due course and in consultation with our sponsor, we

commence dating or recommitting to a partner, having devised an appropriate plan for dating. We think carefully before commencing romantic relationships, reviewing the robustness of our recovery, the extent of Step work we have committed to, our progress in recovery, and our vulnerability to addiction. The answer as to when and how to work on romantic relationships is entirely a matter of Higher Power direction, middle individual experience, consultation with our sponsor, and personal journey. Most sponsors don't recommend dating before completing Step Nine because developing a relationship with our Higher Power and with ourselves are most vital to our recovery, and need to be strong before starting a romantic relationship.

## **Breaking Bottom Lines—What Are Slips?**

In terms of the HOW concept, we define a slip as breaking one of the bottom lines from the list of bottom lines we had previously agreed upon with our sponsor.

Sometimes we act out in ways that haven't clearly been identified or defined in our bottom lines. When this happens it is not technically a slip. But such acting out provides an opportunity for sponsor and sponsee to discuss the behavior. In reviewing what happened we gain new insights, potentially identify other addictive behaviors that need to be on our list of bottom lines, and, if appropriate, actually treat it as a slip (see next section "Slip Questions and Sobriety").

Experience has shown us that slips don't just happen. Most S.L.A.A. members who have been through these periods could say that slips can be traced to specific causes. We forget that we are sex and love addicts and can become overconfident or complacent. Or we become too preoccupied with business or social affairs to remember the importance of abstaining from acting out. Or our foundation of Steps One, Two, and Three are not strong enough. Or we let ourselves become tired and are caught with our mental and emotional defenses down. In any event we withdraw from taking advantage of the help available to us. We cease maintaining our S.L.A.A. lifeline. Getting honest and current with another S.L.A.A. member or at an S.L.A.A. meeting helps us overcome the despair that can arise from slipping, and put our recovery back on track. It may be useful to read about slips in the S.L.A.A. Questions Beginners Ask pamphlet.

## **Slip Questions and Sobriety**

An important principle in the S.L.A.A. HOW approach is that, while working the first three Steps and answering the first 30 questions (see pages 19-23),



we maintain 30 days of continuous sobriety. Sobriety in the S.L.A.A. HOW approach is defined as 30 days of abstinence from bottom-line behaviors. Top lines are often not defined as strict sobriety requirements, but they can be if this is deemed appropriate or useful.

If we slip—if we break our bottom lines—we will need to start again. This means regaining our sobriety through daily contact with our sponsor and by answering questions from Further Thoughts on Sobriety—The Slip Questions (see list on page 65) for the same number of days that we have been working the Steps. For example, if we are on day 21 of the 30 questions when we break a bottom line, we answer 21 Further Thoughts on Sobriety questions and read our answers to our sponsor each day, and then resume the 30-day questions from where we left off. In this case, from day 21. This practice is to support us in reestablishing our sobriety before continuing our Step work. This is a time to pause and reconnect with our Higher Power and our authentic selves. We do this to ensure that our Step work isn't undermined by our addiction, and that we have a solid foundation in Steps One, Two, and Three.

The objective is not to punish ourselves but to provide us the support and connection we need to help us through this period of our recovery.

Slips that take place after Step Three are discussed with our sponsor. There are no hard and fast rules about the return to sobriety, but typically this is a process of reflection, review, and discussion of bottom or top lines, and agreed-upon action to take. Each sponsor passes on the learning that has been passed on to them. Some assign 30 days of slip questions. Others consider the nature of the slip and assign a varying number of slip questions depending on the context. Some agree on a period of checking in and writing about the slip.

## **Withdrawal**

Between the journey from the unhappy, out-of-control circumstances that brought us to S.L.A.A. and the arrival at the miracles we hear people describe as recovery—there is a challenging stage called “withdrawal”.

This period can definitely be difficult and painful. Suddenly we are no longer using our old ways of acting out or acting in to get by in life. This can come as quite a shock and in fact many members describe this early period of “withdrawing” from their past lives of sex and love addiction as exactly that, a state of shock.

So, what is withdrawal? Withdrawal is what happens when we stop using our old patterns of escape and are suddenly left alone with ourselves. In other words, we draw back from the old to take on the new and it is this period between the old and the new that we call withdrawal.



Withdrawal can seem very disconcerting. Here we are at a turning point, gradually choosing to let go of our past painful yet familiar lives to take on an unknown source of pain that seems like it might well be worse and might go on forever.

Sometimes we have a sense of feeling downright strange, maybe panicky, and possibly even a little surreal. We may lose sleep and often feel very uncomfortable in our bodies. Some of us have thoughts of suicide.

However, in our experience, all of us who are willing and sincere get through this period with the help of the program and each other.

Common experiences and feelings in withdrawal include: intense feelings of sadness and excitement, sleep disturbances, craving past partners, craving past activities, loneliness and isolation, anger and frustration, headaches, sadness or depression, emotional pain, physical symptoms such as flu-like symptoms, decreased or increased appetite, a desire to use alcohol or drugs, and exhaustion or compulsive activity.

## **Facing Withdrawal**

The S.L.A.A. HOW approach supports us with a very strong program of tools, including sponsorship, daily questions, partnership with a Higher Power, and the fellowship of others sharing our path so that we have a safe space to help us move through this withdrawal stage of our recovery.

This is one of the reasons it is highly recommended to make four outreach calls a day (three to fellow members and one to our sponsor). It is also why HOW places such emphasis upon bottom lines, answering written questions, going to meetings, and regular contact with our sponsor and fellow members.

Many of us find these HOW suggestions challenging at first. But we take courage and support from the fact that, time and again, fellow S.L.A.A. members say these tools are what pulled them through the challenging period of withdrawal. Most of us find that the more willingly we adopt the strong support and structure of HOW, the more gracefully we allow our old lives to fall away and our new lives to be rebuilt.

It is through withdrawal that we meet ourselves as we are, because it is only behind the fear that we find the seeds of our own personal wholeness.

Here are some other ways that we help ourselves through withdrawal:

- ♦ we keep up our outreach calls;
- ♦ we keep answering one HOW question a day;
- ♦ we keep in touch with our sponsor;
- ♦ we attend meetings;

- ♦ we go for coffee and fellowship after meetings;
- ♦ we pray;
- ♦ we take a service position;
- ♦ we are kind to ourselves;
- ♦ we connect with our body by—for example—walking, exercising, practicing yoga, or bathing;
- ♦ we meditate;
- ♦ we journal and write;
- ♦ we use positive affirmations;
- ♦ we make a gratitude list each morning or before going to bed;
- ♦ we read Steps One, Two, and Three.

Some of us find that the S.L.A.A. pamphlet *Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy* is an invaluable source of suggestions for entering, coping with, and emerging from withdrawal. Others read Chapter Five of S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*, which deals more fully with the experiences members have had in this process, and the tools they have used to survive the withdrawal experience without relapsing into the addictive patterns.

## Guide to Steps One through Three

Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction—that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Step Two: “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

Step Three: “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.”

**T**o start working the Steps with a sponsor, we need a copy of S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*, AA's *Big Book*, and AA's *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. As with the seven-day identification questions to determine our bottom-line behaviors, we answer a question per day and read it to our sponsor. After 30 days, our sponsor takes us through a Step Three Ceremony (see section below)

and then steps us up at a HOW meeting to celebrate the completion of Steps One to Three. Remembering the old-timer saying, “Service is sobering”, after the Step Three Ceremony we start sponsoring fellow members of S.L.A.A. up to Step Three, if we feel ready to do so.

If we are sponsoring and are unavailable on a particular day, it is our responsibility to let our sponsee know that and to arrange a different time or options. If, for some reason, we are unavailable for a longer period of time, it is our responsibility to find another temporary sponsor for our sponsee. Sometimes this is our own sponsor.

We also let our sponsee know that if they consistently fail to meet agreed commitments without good reason, we may decide to no longer sponsor them. An example might be failing to call us at the agreed time for three consecutive days without good reason.

We encourage sponsees, or those that have slipped to share in the prioritized share portion of S.L.A.A. HOW meetings after 14 days of sobriety or as the meeting allows. We are aware that some meetings have different policies. This is to ensure the meeting focuses on carrying the message of recovery.

If we slip while we are sponsoring, we notify our own sponsor and all our sponsees, giving them the option to continue with us or not. We do not stand up as a sponsor or accept new sponsees until the time agreed upon with our sponsor. If we have a slip, we share after seven days of sobriety. All of the above is designed to heal and to support us whilst we regain sobriety.

## The First 30 Questions

In working through this guide with our sponsor, we find that no sheet of paper or list of ideas is the be-all and end-all for everyone’s recovery. We designed these questions to guide us through the first three Steps. There are no right or wrong answers. Many who have worked the HOW concept find that it is helpful to keep it in the present by focusing only on the question of the day and the Step being worked on, and by not skipping ahead to the next questions and Steps. We write out our answer to each question, send it to our sponsor, and read it on our daily call.

In order to answer these 30 questions we need the following books: Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*), Alcoholics Anonymous (AA’s *Big Book*), and AA’s *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and the following additional reading material: Bill W.’s “This Matter of Honesty” article (see References section):

1. Read “The Doctor’s Opinion” in A.A.’s *Big Book*, pages xxv-xxxii. Write a history of your sex and love addiction, beginning with the first time you

can remember such things being an issue. In writing, discuss how many partners you have had (or not had in the case of anorexia), what medical or psychological attention you have sought for the problem, and what attempts you have made at controlling your behavior.

2. Read the section “Step One” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 68-73. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the effect sex and love addiction and anorexia have had on you over the years. Do you truly see yourself as a sex and love addict?
3. Re-read the section “Step One” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 68-73. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the following ideas found in Step One: the progressive nature of our disease and the need for unconditional surrender.
4. In writing, discuss and reflect on the fatal nature of your disease as described on page 24, second paragraph, in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, starting with, “Under the lash of alcoholism, we are driven to A.A...” Focus on how the disease has diminished your life.
5. Read Chapter Two, “There is a Solution”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 17-29. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the idea that your discipline or lack of it has played an important part in your life.
6. Read Chapter Three, “More about Alcoholism”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 30-43. In writing, discuss and reflect on this chapter.
7. Read Bill W.’s “This Matter of Honesty” article. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that deception of others is nearly always rooted in deception of ourselves. How does this relate to your sexual relationship history.? What have you done in the past, due to sex and love addiction, that reaffirms this idea?
8. Re-read the section “Step One” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 68-73. Underline and note words and passages that are meaningful to you. Why are they important? Also, in writing, discuss and reflect on what a complete understanding of Step One can do for you.
9. Read the section “Step Two” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 73-76. Why is it necessary to take Step One before taking Step Two?
10. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the effectiveness of the S.L.A.A. program in your personal experience and from what you have observed in others so far. Also discuss whether what you have experienced could have emanated solely from you. If so, why had it not happened before?

11. Read Chapter Four, “We Agnostics”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 44-57. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the concepts of honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. How do these concepts support growth?
12. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the concept of insanity as it applies to you in S.L.A.A.
13. Read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 25-33. Have you substituted your addiction for your Higher Power in the past and do you still do this?
14. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the following concepts in Step Two: belief means reliance, not defiance, and defiance is an “outstanding characteristic” of many sex and love addicts. Refer to the chapter Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, starting at paragraph 16 (“When we encountered A.A...”) (page 31).
15. Re-read the section “Step Two” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 73-76, and Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 25-33. In writing, discuss and reflect upon your childhood exposure to any religious concept. On a two-columned balance sheet, list your feelings as they relate to your early religious experiences. List on one side your negative feelings, and on the other side your positive feelings. What conclusion do you reach when you reflect on the balance sheet?
16. Read the section “Step Three” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 76-79. Create another balance sheet. On one side, list all the reasons you can for believing in God. On the other side, list all the reasons for disbelieving. Write about the conclusions you reach when you reflect on the balance sheet.
17. Read Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (pages 34-41). In writing, discuss and reflect upon the following quote, “Faith alone can avail nothing.”
18. Read Chapter Five, “How it Works”, in AA’s *Big Book*. Write on dependence as you understand it. Answer the question, in writing, How can dependence lead to greater independence? Refer to paragraph six (“Let’s examine for a moment...”) of the chapter Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (page 36).
19. Read Chapter Two, “There is a Solution”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 17-29. Are you a grateful sex and love addict? If so, why? Write out your answer.

20. Re-read the section “Step Three” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 76-79. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the following idea: I am responsible for only one person’s actions. Whose and why?
21. Read Chapter Three, “More about Alcoholism”, in AA’s *Big Book* (pages 30-43). In writing, discuss and reflect upon the idea that sobriety is the most important thing without exception.
22. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea of “calling a HALT” (hungry, angry, lonely, or tired), pausing and taking stock when your life becomes unmanageable.
23. Read Chapter 11, “A Vision For You”, in AA’s *Big Book*. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the idea that the more you give the more you shall receive.
24. Read Chapter Six, “Into Action”, in AA’s *Big Book*. S.L.A.A. teaches us a sense of dignity. How have you used your newfound dignity in your relationship with yourself, your family, and your friends? Write out your answer.
25. Read Chapter Seven, Working with Others, in AA’s *Big Book*. Answer the questions, in writing: What is the importance of giving service in S.L.A.A.? Why are meetings important? How are they both part of your road to recovery?
26. Answer the questions in writing: What is the importance of the telephone in S.L.A.A.? Why is anonymity important? How are they linked?
27. In writing, discuss and reflect on reading and writing as a tool of the program. Why is it essential to your recovery?
28. Read Appendix II, “Spiritual Experience”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 567-568. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the concept that spiritual growth is a daily commitment. How can you grow daily?
29. Re-read the section “Step Three” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 76-79. Write on the idea that, having taken Steps One and Two, the degree of your success in the whole program depends on how sincerely you surrender in accordance with Step Three.
30. In the morning, re-read the section “Step One” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 68-73. Review your two balance sheets from questions 15 and 16. Write about whether the act of surrender in Step Three brings you peace. And, if not, do you think there is anything you are holding onto that you need to let go of in order to reach such peace? Do you think this is something you should do? Are you doing it willingly?

After you have written answers to these questions, make a sincere commitment to turn your will and your life over to the care of your Higher Power. Finally, in writing, discuss and reflect on your own personal surrender.

## Step Three Ceremony

After completing the seven questions for setting bottom lines and the 30 questions that guide us through the first three Steps, we meet with our sponsor to celebrate the completion of the first Three Steps with an optional ceremony.

The texts that we need to perform the Step Three Ceremony are AA's *Big Book*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and *Came To Believe*. After completing the ceremony we also celebrate the completion of the first three Steps by stepping up sponsees at a meeting of our choice (see section after the Ceremony).

### *Step One*

#### SPONSOR

"The disciplines of setting and maintaining bottom-line behavior, phone calls, reporting to sponsors, and attending meetings help us grow. In recovery, action is the magic word. I thank you for asking me to be your sponsor. I have and will continue to need you as much as you need me. Let us join hands and pray."

#### SPONSOR AND SPONSEE

"Higher Power, if it be your will, help us to commit ourselves to these Steps in accordance with Thy will."

#### SPONSOR

"There are five candles in front of you. Each candle represents a Step in recovery. The first two represent TRUTH and REALITY. Without these two qualities, we would not be recovering sex and love addicts."

Sponsor lights the first candle.

"The candle of truth is the guiding light of all who strive to recover from sex and love addiction. It is a force that brings peace. The sex and love addict must make truth their watchword. They must fearlessly face the truth to avoid the pitfall of self-deception."

Sponsor lights the second candle.

"This is the candle of reality and it is a new light. It opens the door to a new life. It holds the promise of new understanding. It offers a chance for personal renewal. It goes beyond fantasy and holds the dream of a better tomorrow. Without the light of reality we are destined to remain in the sick, shadowy world of past mistakes and unrealistic dreams of false tomorrows."



Sponsor asks their sponsee the following questions so that they may retake the first Step.

“You have spent a great deal of time getting in touch with your feelings. Can you recall how you felt on the first day of your recovery?”

“Do you want recovery and the S.L.A.A. program to become a way of life? If so, why?”

Sponsor reads page 45, paragraphs four and five in *Came To Believe*, starting with, “Then as this power began to unfold...”

“What do the words personal powerlessness mean to you?”

“Step One asks that you learn to let go. Do you believe you have learned to let go?”

“What does letting go mean to you?”

“It is said that we have an obsession. Explain what that means to you.”

“Do you recognize the symptoms when your life is unmanageable? What do you do when you feel things are getting unmanageable?”

“What does the word compulsion mean to you? Have you ever felt that you were compelled to do things?”

“Did you understand obsession and compulsion to be part of your life? How? How did you try to control these aspects of your life?”

“How long have you been seeking remedies for your obsession? What did you do when you felt your behavior was getting out of control? What happened to the ideas you tried? What did you do when you noticed you were different? Did you ever realize you had an addiction to sex and love? Did you ever try sheer willpower? Are there other methods you would like to investigate to manage your compulsive behavior? Do you think there is a solution to your problem today?”

“In recovery we seek to practice humility, and let go of ego and pride on a daily basis. Are you willing to do this?”

“Is working the S.L.A.A. program a life-or-death matter for you?”

“Read page 24 in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, from the last paragraph ‘Under the lash...’”

Sponsee reads:

SPONSOR

“Are you totally powerless over sex and love addiction and anorexia?”

“Read page 21 (Step One) in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.”

Sponsee reads:

SPONSOR

“You’ve accepted powerlessness. What must you do now?”



Sponsee should realize that recognition of these concepts is not enough. Action and willingness are next. This is the transition to Step Two.

SPONSOR

Sponsee lights the third candle.

“You have just taken the First Step. At this point I ask that you light the third candle, which is the candle of SURRENDER. As you do so, I will read:

“In recovery surrender is the first and most important act necessary to launch you into the other Steps. Without the surrender of your sex and love addiction, your ego, and your will, all else is hopeless. When you surrender you let go of negative thoughts, disbelief, and grandiosity and you open yourself up to the process of learning who you are and where you fit into the scheme of things.”

### *Step Two*

Sponsor should ask their sponsee the following questions, so that they may retake Step Two.

SPONSOR

“Read aloud the introduction to Step Two, page 25 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.”

“What does this Step mean to you?”

“Do you believe that a Power outside yourself will restore you to sanity and help you?”

“Read pages 32-33 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, ‘To clergymen, doctors...’”

Sponsee reads:

SPONSOR

“In the S.L.A.A. fellowship belief in anything outside of ourselves, larger than ourselves is enough to take us to the next Step. The idea is not to take back your old ideas, and not to rely on self-will. S.L.A.A. does ask that you have an open mind. How open are you?”

“Have you always been willing to listen? If you are willing now, how did this change?

Did indifference play an important part in your life? How?”

“What about disappointment? Did this reinforce your compulsiveness?”

“Step Two mentions fear. Can you discuss your fears?”

“Our fears and lack of power are self-centered and selfish in origin. But this selfishness and self-centeredness can be replaced by a partnership with a Higher Power. Faith in your Higher Power replaces fear and allows the power of your Higher Power to flow through you. You can then follow your Higher Power’s will and exercise your will by asking, ‘Thy will, not mine, be done.’ A

further explanation of this is on pages 44-45 in AA's *Big Book*, 'We Agnostics'. Will you read it please?"

Sponsee reads:

SPONSOR

"Defiance often comes between ourselves and a Higher Power. Can you describe any defiance you have in relation to your Higher Power?"

"Most of the time our problems with a Higher Power come from debating the question of whether or not our Higher Power is there to help us. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* discusses this idea. Let me read from pages 26-27 'At this juncture ...'"

Sponsor reads:

SPONSOR

"Now would you turn to page 12 in AA's *Big Book*? 'Despite the living....' Read it and then we'll discuss it."

Sponsee reads:

SPONSOR

"Are you willing to go to any lengths to get rid of your old ideas?"

"Step Two is a rallying point. It puts us on the right path. It shows us the insanity of our addiction. It puts right our relationship with our Higher Power. It shows us where we can end up if we lose our connection with our Higher Power. Discuss your relationship to your Higher Power as it is today. How do you relate to the word 'insanity? Do you believe your Higher Power can restore you to sanity?"

"You have just taken the first two Steps."

SPONSOR

"Let us now light the candle of ACCEPTANCE. As you light it, I shall read to you:"

Sponsee lights the fourth candle.

"Without acceptance you could not have progressed this far. Acceptance is seeing things as they really are. We must open up our hearts as well as our minds and accept. We must accept the will of our Higher Power and accept that only our Higher Power can restore us to sanity."

### ***Step Three***

SPONSOR

"Before we go further, I would like to read something from pages 567-568 in AA's *Big Book*, 'Spiritual Experience'."

Sponsor reads:

"Making a decision to turn your will and your life over to your Higher Power is part of the process of Step Three. Your Higher Power is with you now. A

spiritual awakening can be compared to planting a seed. Growth does not begin when you can see the bud breaking its way through the earth. It begins at the moment the seed is planted. Your spiritual awakening began at the moment of your surrender in Step One.”

“Read pages 62-63 in AA’s *Big Book*, ‘Selfishness, self-centeredness...’”

Sponsee reads:

SPONSOR

“I’d like to ask you a few questions: Step Three in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* says that ‘practicing Step Three is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked.’ Was this your experience? How was your vision of life like a locked door?”

“How shall you keep your Higher Power in your life?”

Sponsor tells the sponsee what the sponsor has done to keep their Higher Power ever present.

“Do you feel that you are aware of the dangers of self-sufficiency?”

“Step Three calls for us to make a decision. We must decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power. Are you willing to make that decision?”

“We realize that faith does not automatically mean that we have let our Higher Power into our life. But our willingness is already demonstrated in the way we work at casting out our old ideas and turning ourselves over to the S.L.A.A. program to relieve our sex and love obsession.”

“Let us spend some time now praying that our Higher Power will come into our lives and actively guide us. Will you read the prayer on page 63 in AA’s *Big Book*, ‘God, I offer myself...’ whilst I bow my head?”

Sponsee reads:

God, I offer myself to You—to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your power, Your love, and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!

SPONSOR

“Now I will read it to you while you pray to your Higher Power letting them know of your decision to turn your will and life over to them.”

Sponsor reads.

“You have just made a commitment to your Higher Power. You have asked your Higher Power to relieve you of the bondage of self.”

“You have turned it over, you have made a decision. Sex and love addiction will no longer be the focus of your life. Now you must get out and help others.”

“S.L.A.A. has taught you to live for today and to work at loving your Higher Power, yourself, and others. Your Higher Power loves you enough to remove your obsession. If your Higher Power can love you, can't you love yourself? If you learn to love yourself, then it will be easier to love and forgive others.”

SPONSOR

“You have just taken the Third Step.”

SPONSOR

“Will you please light the fifth candle as I read?”

Sponsee lights the fifth candle.

“This is the candle of KNOWLEDGE and it opens the door wide. You now know that your Higher Power is on your side. You can see and hear your Higher Power's pronouncements in your life. You recognize what you may do and what only your Higher Power can do. You acknowledge the greatest gift your Higher Power has given you is knowing yourself.”

End of Ceremony.

## **Stepping Up the Sponsee at a Meeting**

After the Step-Three Ceremony we also celebrate by being stepped up by our sponsor at an S.L.A.A. HOW meeting. This is an opportunity for the group to join us in celebrating another example of the miracles that abound in S.L.A.A. Our sponsor is asked to introduce the newcomer who has 30 days of continuous sobriety, has taken the first Three Steps, and is ready to become a sponsor. At this meeting, we share for two minutes each. Stepping up a sponsee at a meeting can also be done when they have completed Steps Five and Twelve, and the Maintenance Questions. [Some people also step up after Steps Seven and Nine, or even each step from five through twelve.]

## Guide to Step Four

Step Four: “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Once we have completed the first three Steps in the program, it is time to start on Step Four. This can often seem a daunting undertaking and it is one of the Steps in the program where many of us falter, procrastinate, and occasionally slip. Our sponsor’s experience, love, support, and encouragement are especially important during this phase of our recovery.

Before embarking on Step Four, some of us find it appropriate to discuss and review boundaries with our sponsor. The S.L.A.A. HOW approach no longer requires daily phone calls and it may be that these are no longer needed. However, it may be helpful to continue regular meetings, phone calls to our sponsor, and outreach calls to provide support during the challenges of Step Four. These actions keep us connected and help us avoid slips and relapses.

It can also be appropriate to reconsider our bottom or top lines. The experience of those who worked the program suggests that it is rarely appropriate to remove bottom lines completely at this stage. However, that is not to say it is wrong; every person and situation is different. It is also now helpful to add more top lines since they are positive, affirming behaviors and actions. Discussion with our sponsor and connection with our Higher Power guide the way.

We work Step Four following the Step Four Guidelines contained in this booklet. We are asked to read the following before commencing our inventory:

- ♦ Read the section about Step Four in Chapter Five (“How it Works”) in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 63-71, starting with, “Next we launched out...”;
- ♦ Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 42-54;
- ♦ Step Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 78-81;
- ♦ Step Four in S.L.A.A.’s *A Framework for Living*;
- ♦ Step Four in S.L.A.A.’s *A Guide to the Steps*, pages 10-15; and
- ♦ Step Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Step Questions Workbook*, pages 38-45.

Before starting work, we meet (if possible) or speak to our sponsor so they can explain the guidelines and how to complete the inventory and deal with any questions.

We write down the inventory and complete it as suggested in Chapter Five of AA’s *Big Book*. We sometimes use the same or a format similar to the

table attached in this section. Our inventory is split into four parts: a review of resentments, a review of fears, a review of sex conduct, and a review of harms other than sexual.

Many of us set a date for the Fifth Step before starting the Fourth Step, so that there is a deadline in place, even if that deadline is subsequently moved. Whatever is agreed, our sponsor guides and supports us as we work through the inventory.

Regular check-ins are made to review progress and to ensure that we are completing the inventory as suggested. Above all, it is important that progress is made on this Step and that it is completed as quickly as possible. The experience of those who have worked the program is that it is easy to get stuck and let things slip (or to have a slip!) at this time.

## Getting Started

We find paper and pen and start writing. A.A.'s *Big Book* states on eight different occasions that we are to write out a Step Four. It has been our experience that when we stop acting out, the problems that are actually caused by the sex and love addiction begin to dissipate. This often leaves us with the underlying issues or problems that have caused us to act out in the first place. And these are the issues that stay with us, causing pain, unless we do something about them. In the past, they were so painful that we needed something to relieve the pain.

In taking Steps Four through Nine, we aim to get to the causes and conditions of our disease. This process allows us to take the right actions that lead to greater contentment and comfort. We then no longer need to act out to relieve the pain, because the emotional pain itself has lessened.

It has been our experience that it doesn't matter what our intention or attitude is when we take Step Four, or what our ideas are as to what it will do for us and how. What matters is that we take the Step honestly and to the best of our ability. We stop rationalizing that we will complete Step Four better if we do it later—or after being in the program a little longer—or any of the other excuses that all of those who have gone before us have tried!

We try to stop telling ourselves that we need to get in the right mood to take this Step. We are in the right mood to take this Step when we are ready to stop hurting and want to get well. All of our lives, we have tried to think our way into right action. This time, we have to act our way into right thinking.

As sex and love addicts, we all want to excel—really excel—at some activity or other. A thorough Fourth and Fifth Step can bring us great relief and comfort. It can lead to a real joy in living—something that we haven't experienced for a

long time, if ever, or something that we had been searching for but could not find.

In writing our Step Four we remember that we are not being graded on spelling, punctuation, or grammar. This Fourth Step is for our eyes only. We are going to read it to someone, but this document is for us. If we feel the urge to erase something, we try not to because it might be one of the keys that will unlock some important piece of information from our past. We try to remember we can't take a perfect inventory, but we can do our best."

We try not to tear up any part of our inventory. If we believe the statement we have made is wrong, we make a note as to why it is wrong. We promise ourselves to be honest and fearless. We try to keep making progress and gradually work through our resentments, fears, and harms.

Some of us get discouraged because we don't believe we have become honest enough, or can't remember everything that has happened to us. We do our best—our honest best. No one is capable of remembering every incident of their lives, so we write down what we can remember. We trust fellow members when they encourage us to complete Step Four because of the rewards that they experienced.

A.A.'s *Big Book* states on page 65, "We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty." Many of us find that it helps to carry around a notebook so that we can jot down anything that pops into our heads. We arrange to have a safe place to put our Fourth-Step Inventory. We don't leave anything out. In Step Four, we put down all the things that we wince at. We just write them down. They aren't hurting anyone but us.

A.A.'s *Big Book* refers to the "wreckage of your past" on page 164. This might lead us to deal only with the problems left in the wake of our sex and love addiction, the problems outside of us. But Steps Four and Five deal with how the past has affected our world within and how our negative thoughts and feelings about ourselves and others have affected us spiritually, mentally, and physically. A.A.'s *Big Book* instructs us to write about our fears, resentments, and harms done—those harms due to our own sexual and damaging behaviors.

Thoroughness is the watchword when taking inventory. When we are truly honest with ourselves and put our deeply buried secrets and what we consider our most shameful thoughts and deeds on paper, we find a liberation we have never felt before. It is the act of writing that gives us clear thinking and an honest appraisal of our life to that point. This is tangible evidence of our complete willingness to move forward.

What we are experiencing is not mere relief (we will get that, no doubt); what comes is an exhilarating hope for a new way of being in the world. We give

ourselves permission to believe, perhaps for the first time ever, that we truly have another chance in life. As we continue to dump accumulated baggage we have been carrying around by putting it in writing, we ask for forgiveness in our prayers and meditation. The outcome is a newly discovered, previously unimaginable, joy for living. So, we get out our pen and paper and begin!

The questions that follow are designed to be used as prompts in case we might forget something. They are merely a mechanism for triggering the relevant information. The information can be relevant to the past or to present feelings. They are not the only questions that may be helpful.

## **Prompts for Resentments**

1. If your parents fought, did you resent it?
2. List all the feelings of resentment you had or still have toward your parents.
3. Do you resent your status in the family? (Are you the only child, youngest child, oldest child, twin, and so on?)
4. Try to remember each successive year in school and as you do, write out the resentments you felt toward teachers, classmates, and anyone else. Write about any fights, slights, hurts, and embarrassments.
5. Do you resent your church, relatives, or other adults? If so, list them. No resentment is too small to mention.
6. Did you resent the leaders at school, either physical or mental leaders? Did you resent not being the most handsome or beautiful person at school?
7. Did you resent not being a part of a crowd? Or not being a leader? Or not being in a particular group?
8. Did your parents compare you to other family members or friends? Do you resent them for wanting you to be like someone else?
9. Do you resent the responsibilities of marriage and family?
10. Do you feel that the world owes you a living?
11. If revenge were possible right now, who would be the top people on your list? Why?
12. In business relationships, write out your resentments toward bosses and co-workers. Do you feel jealous of them? List all the negative feelings you have about the people involved in your work life.



13. If you are divorced or getting divorced, write out any resentments about the situation and the people involved, including fears and guilt concerning your relationship with your spouse and your children.
14. What resentments do you still have?
15. Do you feel resentment toward another S.L.A.A. member?
16. Do you argue with people? Is it important for you to be right? Do you become angry when people don't see things the way you do?
17. Do you resent others who don't seem to have problems finding happiness?
18. Do you resent people who don't seem to have issues with sex and love?
19. Are you resentful because you don't like the hand life has dealt you?

## **Prompts for Fears**

20. Do you have, or have you had, unrealistic fears? If so, what are your fears?
21. How do you react to conflict? If your parents fought, did it scare you?
22. List all the feelings of fear you had toward each person in your life as a child. If any of these fears remain, add them to your list.
23. Do you fear any particular type of person?
24. What is your greatest fear?
25. Are you afraid of being sexually rejected?
26. Are you afraid of being sexually abused?
27. Are you afraid of being alone? Or of not being in a relationship? Write about these fears.
28. Are you afraid of being rejected within a relationship?
29. If you are divorced or getting divorced, write out any fears about the situation and the people involved.
30. Are you afraid of getting too close to another person because you are afraid of being rejected?
31. What are your fears concerning money? Are you miserly with money? Or do you spend it with no thought of tomorrow?
32. What kind of things do you spend the most time worrying about—the future or the past?
33. What are your present fears? List them.
34. Did fear and inferiority about fitness for your job destroy your confidence and fill you with conflict?

## **Prompts for Our Own Sexual Conduct**

35. In your life have there been any significant or negative consequences from acting out sexually? List any harms done to self or others (for example, unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases).
36. Have sexual relations resulted in harm to yourself or others?
37. When, how, and in what instances did your selfish pursuit of sex relations damage other people and yourself? What people were hurt and how badly? Did you spoil your marriage and injure your children? Did you jeopardize your standing in the community? Did you insist that you were the pursued and not the pursuer, and thus absolve yourself?
38. How have you reacted to frustration in sexual matters? When denied, did you become vengeful or depressed? Did you take it out on other people?
39. If there was rejection or coldness at home, did you use this as a reason for promiscuity?
40. Do you use sex as a punishment or reward? Are you insensitive to your partner's feelings?
41. Consider any other sexual experiences that made you feel uncomfortable. Was that discomfort as a result of harm to others or yourself?
42. Do you engage in sex in order to build your ego?
43. Are you or have you been involved in a love affair that could bring yourself or others harm?
44. Have you deprived yourself or others of touch or sensual experiences through your sexual or emotional anorexia?
45. Have relationships or marriages come to an early conclusion, or has conflict arisen as a result of your inability to participate sexually?
46. Have you pushed people away or deprived yourself when it comes to relationships?
47. Have you lied to yourself or others by pretending to want sex, or to enjoy sex, in order to please others and not face your own sexual reality?

## **Prompts for Harms Other Than Sexual**

48. List the first time you ever stole anything. Inventory all your thefts. Don't forget to include employers' time.
49. List the harmonious relationships that you had and that you have destroyed.

50. Are you a troublemaker? If so, in what way? Do you destroy property?
51. What kind of lies do you tell? If people were hurt as a result, list them.
52. Are you unreliable? For example, did you break off relationships without any explanation when something or someone who seemed better came along?
53. Do you set one member of your family against another?
54. If you partnered with a cold, unloving person, ask yourself why you chose them. Is this reminiscent of something from your upbringing?
55. Do you make financial commitments while lacking sufficient funds to cover the amount promised?
56. Do you use people to get what you want? Do you perform character assassination on others in order to make it in the social or business world? Or do you put others down in an effort to feel superior?
57. Do you use illness as an excuse to avoid responsibilities or to get attention or sympathy?
58. If you are divorced or getting divorced, write about any guilt you have about the situation and the people involved. What harm have you caused?
59. Do you pad your expense account or use food allowances to buy personal items?
60. What kind of things do you lie about?
61. Do you find yourself punishing your children for the wrong reasons? List the harms you have done to your children.
62. Are you cold and indifferent to your family, friends, work, or your own needs?
63. Do you threaten others by saying that you can't maintain bottom-line sobriety if you don't get your family back, your own way, and so on?
64. Do you gossip or make up things about other people?
65. Do you double-cross or undercut your associates?
66. Are you extravagant? Do you recklessly borrow money, caring little whether it is repaid or not? Are you a penny-pincher, refusing to support your family properly?

## **Facing Ourselves Honestly**

We find that the most common symptoms of emotional insecurity are fear, anxiety, anger, self-pity, and depression. These stem from causes that

sometimes seem to be within us, and at other times come from without. To take inventory in this respect, we have to consider carefully all personal relationships that trigger these symptoms. We remember that this kind of insecurity may arise in any area where instincts are threatened, needs are not met, or emotional wounds are triggered. Questions asked in our inventory to find answers for this kind of insecurity run like this:

- ♦ Looking at both past and present, what sex and love situations have caused us fear, anxiety, bitterness, frustration, anger, or depression?
- ♦ Appraising each situation fairly, can we see our own responsibility in things?
- ♦ Do these problems arise because of ego, selfishness, dishonesty, or unreasonable demands?
- ♦ Or, if our disturbance is seemingly caused by the behavior of others, why do we lack the ability to accept conditions we cannot change?

These are the sort of fundamental inquiries that disclose the source of our discomfort and indicate whether we can change the things we can and live serenely with what we cannot.

Suppose that financial insecurity constantly arouses these same feelings. We ask ourselves to what extent have our financial mistakes fed our gnawing anxieties. If the actions of others are part of the cause, what can we do about that? If we are unable to change the present state of affairs, are we willing to take the measures necessary to adapt our lives to conditions as they are?

## Suggested Structure for a Step Four Inventory

**B**elow is an example of a Step Four Inventory. It is not the only worksheet used by S.L.A.A. HOW members. Each sponsor has their own approach for a Step Four Inventory but all worksheets are similar. As we fill in the columns for each part, we write the appropriate data in the first three columns of the relevant review. For instance, if we have a resentment against our neighbor for playing loud music, we write “neighbor” in column one of Review of Resentments, and “plays loud music” in column two. In the third column we write down what part of ourselves is affected by our resentment. It is important to recognize that in the first three columns we are looking at what we consider are wrongs against us by others, and that in the last two columns we focus on our part and become willing to admit our wrongs and become willing to take corrective action. In the last column we look at where we have been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, or afraid.

Different sponsors make various suggestions about how and in which order the columns are to be completed.

The tables below are available for download as a Word document from Step Four Forms

## ***REVIEW OF RESENTMENTS***

I AM RESENTFUL AT:

*List people, institutions, or principles with whom or with which I am angry.*

THE CAUSE

*I ask myself why I am angry, what did they do to me to cause the anger?*

AFFECTS MY

*On my grudge list I set opposite each name any injuries. Was it my self-esteem, my security, my ambitions, my personal or sex relations that had been interfered with?*

WHAT DID I DO?

*Putting out of mind the wrongs others have done, I resolutely look for my own mistakes. What did I do, if anything, to set in motion trains of circumstances, which in turn caused people or institutions to hurt me and eventually led to my resentment of them for doing so?*

WHERE HAVE I BEEN

- *Selfish?*

- *Dishonest?*

- *Self-seeking and frightened?*

- *Inconsiderate?*

*Which of the above character defects caused me to do what I did, or cause me to want to hold on to the old resentment, even though I may have done nothing to cause it?*

## ***REVIEW OF FEARS***

WHO/WHAT DO I FEAR?

*I list people, institutions, and principles that I fear.*

THE CAUSE

*What are they going to do to me? Am I going to jail? Am I going to lose something with material value? Am I going to lose face? Will it result in divorce? Will it destroy a personal relationship? Might I lose my job, etc?*

AFFECTS MY

*On my fears list, I set opposite each name the part of self that is affected. Was it my self- esteem, my security, my ambitions, my personal or sexual relations that have been threatened?*

WHAT DID I DO?

*Putting out of mind the wrongs others have done, I resolutely look for my own mistakes. What did I do, if anything, to set in motion a chain of events that has led to my being fearful?*

WHERE HAVE I BEEN

- *Selfish?*
- *Dishonest?*
- *Self-seeking and frightened?*
- *Inconsiderate?*

*Which of the above character defects caused me to do what I did, or cause me to want to hold on to the old fear, even though I may have done nothing to cause it?*

### **REVIEW OF SEXUAL CONDUCT**

WHOM DID I HURT?

*I list people I have hurt through my sexual conduct.*

WHAT DID I DO?

*What did I do, or not do, that caused harm to the other person or people involved?*

AFFECTS MY

*Which part of self caused me to do what I did? Was it caused by the social instinct, the security instinct, or the sex instinct?*

WHAT FEELINGS DID I CREATE IN OTHERS?

*Did I unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness, or a desire to retaliate? What should I have done instead?*

WHERE HAVE I BEEN

- *Selfish?*
- *Dishonest?*
- *Self-seeking and frightened?*
- *Inconsiderate?*

*Which of the above character defects caused me to do what I do to harm another?*

### **REVIEW OF HARMS OTHER THAN SEXUAL**

WHO DID I HURT?

*I list people (partners, friends, family, colleagues) I have hurt through my conduct.*

## WHAT DID I DO?

*What did I do, or not do, that caused harm to the other person or people involved?*

## AFFECTS MY

*Which part of myself caused me to do what I did? Was it caused by the social instinct, the security instinct, or the sex instinct?*

## WHAT FEELINGS DID I CREATE IN OTHERS?

*Did I unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? What should I have done instead?*

## WHERE HAVE I BEEN

- *Selfish?*

- *Dishonest?*

- *Self-seeking and frightened?*

- *Inconsiderate?*

*Which of the above character defects caused me to do what I do to harm another?*

# Guide to Step Five

Step Five: “Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

**I**n Step Five we read out our Step Four Inventory. It is up to us to decide with whom we wish to take this Step. It is common to do it with our sponsor, but this is not a requirement. Some of us choose a therapist, a member of the clergy, or a close friend. Our sponsor sometimes helps us make this choice by referring us to the literature and by advising us to seek guidance from our Higher Power. Whatever we choose, the choice is respected. We are choosing someone with whom we feel safe to make ourselves vulnerable and to share some of our innermost secrets, perhaps things that we have not felt able to share with anyone else. We are placing great trust and confidence in that person.

Sponsors who hear a Step Five must ensure that what they hear is kept confidential and, outside special extenuating circumstances, not revealed to anyone.

It can take many hours to complete a Step Five so some of us choose to do this in a few sessions. Sometimes our sponsor asks us to read the entire

inventory in one session, other times we read it as we write it, and in other cases we read only key parts. This is agreed upon between sponsor and sponsee.

For most of us Step Five is a transformational experience, and one that can often be exhausting and emotionally draining (for both sponsee and sponsor). It can leave us feeling triggered and vulnerable so it is important that we take our needs into account when arranging the Step Five process. Some of us go to a meeting or make outreach calls at the end of each Step Five reading, when it is done in parts, or do a top line for self-care. It is important to complete this Step without undue delay. Our sponsor therefore needs to be available as much as reasonably possible to go through and hear this Step with us.

Our sponsor's role when hearing a Step Five is mainly to listen. They are not a parent, therapist, or confessor. However, at appropriate times, they share their own experience, strength, and hope. For example, telling us, "I've done that too," or, "That's exactly the way I felt," if it helps us reveal things we find embarrassing. However, our sponsor avoids trading war stories or embarking on their own Step Five. This is our inventory and we need to be given the time and space to share it.

Occasionally, during a Step Five session, it becomes clear that we have not completed our Step Four inventory thoroughly. If that happens then our sponsor suggests that we go back to Step Four and complete the inventory, specific resentment, or the relevant part, before carrying on with Step Five.

Before commencing this Step, we read the following:

- ♦ The first four pages of Chapter Six "Into Action" in AA's *Big Book* - Fourth Edition, pages 72-75, ending with, "Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"
- ♦ Step Five, in S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*.
- ♦ Step Five, in S.L.A.A.'s *A Framework for Living*.
- ♦ Step Five, in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

In all cases, once we have completed reading our inventory out loud, we read page 75 in AA's *Big Book*, Chapter Six "Into Action", starting with, "When we decide who is to hear our story..." As recommended, we find somewhere where we can be quiet for an hour and reflect on the Steps we have taken so far. We have just taken a significant Step in our recovery. Our sponsor sometimes can decide it is appropriate to share how they felt after taking the Step and let us know that it affects different people in different ways. They let us know that it can take a few days, or longer, for us to fully process the effects of Step Five.

Some questions that might help clarify our feelings are listed below.

1. How did it feel to say your inventory out loud?



2. Was there a particular part of your body where this feeling was the strongest?
3. When you noted the character defects (or character defenses) as part of your Step Four, were there particular items that recurred more than others? The most frequently used words might aid your work in Steps Six and Seven.
4. Is there anything that you were too ashamed to share? If yes, how could withholding something eventually result in leading back into your addiction?

## Guide to Steps Six through Twelve

**T**hese questions are designed to assist those of us working the program from Steps Six through Twelve. Before embarking on the following Steps we need to have completed Step Five.

Many of us find that it is essential to continue reading and writing, attending meetings, and making outreach calls, in order to maintain our progress in the program.

The following questions are only suggestions and are an optional way to work the program; they are not a requirement.

Before answering each set of questions, we are advised by our sponsor to read the appropriate chapters in AA's *Big Book*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*. Reading the appropriate step in S.L.A.A.'s *A Framework for Living* is recommended.

After completing Steps Six and Seven it is suggested we meet with our sponsor to share out loud our answers to the questions.

We also meet after the Step Nine questions have been completed. In this meeting we agree on the list of amends.

Finally, we meet after the completion of Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve.

### Step Six

**Step Six: "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."**

Additional suggested reading material: *Drop the Rock* (see References section).

1. Read pages 75-76, Chapter Six ("Into Action") in AA's *Big Book*, starting with, "When we decide who is to hear our story..." and ending, "...we

would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.” Make a list of the character defects that you are ready to have God remove.

2. Do you truly believe that your willpower alone will not overcome your sex and love addiction?
3. Has your obsession with sex, love, and relationships vanished? If not, what steps can you take? If yes, why? What can you do to bring about the permanent removal of the obsession?
4. Read from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Step Six, first paragraph of page 66 and all of page 67, starting, “Some who feel they have done well...” and ending, “...at least until they cause us excessive misery.” Pick a defect of character that seems to be troubling you such as a resentment or jealousy of a person, place, or thing, or perhaps pride or procrastination. Ask yourself if you are entirely ready to give it up. If you are, then it is time to take Step Seven. If you are not ready, make a list of the reasons why you would like to give it up. Then make a list of the reasons why you still want to keep that defect. What are the payoffs for giving the defect up? What are the payoffs for keeping it? Now, ask God to help you to be willing to give up this character defect.
5. What does the concept of “patient improvement” (page 65 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, starting with, “So Step Six...”) mean to you as stated in Step Six?
6. Make a list of your “No, I can’t give this up yet” items. Refer to the seven deadly sins (page 48 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Step Four, starting, “To avoid falling into confusion...”). Why is it necessary to make a beginning and keep trying?
7. In writing, discuss and reflect on the potential consequences, in terms of your addiction, of putting off right action.
8. List the character defects you really enjoy that masquerade as something other than what they are. Now make a list of your positive character assets. Check and see if any positives are really masquerading as negatives. Write on what this question has meant to you.

## Step Seven

Step Seven: “Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.”

Additional reading material: *As Bill Sees It* (required) and *Drop the Rock* (suggested) (see References section).

9. Read *As Bill Sees It* numbers 22, 61, and 75. How has working the Twelve Steps helped you work through fear?
10. Do you truly understand humility? Read Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 70-76. Reflect on and discuss how humility has affected your life.
11. Read *As Bill Sees It* number 139, “Basis of all Humility” and number 212, “Faith and Action.” In writing, discuss and reflect on the act of:
  - (a) humbly asking God to remove defects.
  - (b) having faith that is vital, accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action.
12. The mental hygiene and spiritual housecleaning we have started in our inventories and continued in Step Five reach their pinnacle in Step Seven. Read numbers 48, 103, 136, 196, 281, and 327 in *As Bill Sees It*. Are you ready to fully subject your will to God? Do you wish to surrender all your moral imperfections?
13. What has there never been enough of for you?
14. How do you make, or how can you make, honesty, tolerance, and true love of humankind and God the daily basis of living?
15. Do you still place self-reliance first? Are you still rebellious?
16. How can humility give you serenity?
17. How does the taking of the Seventh Step aid in the reduction of ego?
18. Make a gratitude list of what God has done for you that you could not do for yourself.
19. What unreasonable demands have you made upon others, yourself, and God? How did self-centered fear play a part?
20. What proof have you had that other problems besides the deadly obsession (Step Seven, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 76) of sex and love addiction can be banished?

## Step Eight

**Step Eight: “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”**

Additional suggested reading material: *Came to Believe* (see References section).

21. Read “No Man Is an Island,” page 118 in *Came to Believe*. Why is it necessary for you to make a list of all persons you have harmed and become willing to make amends before you can start relating harmoniously to God and to other people?
22. What emotional harm have you done to yourself?
23. What kinds of harm have you done to others? What personality traits have injured you and disturbed others?
24. Construct a long list of people who have been affected by your behavior—this can be in a positive as well as in a negative way. This will form the basis of your amends list for Step Nine.
25. Why is forgiveness of the utmost importance in working Step Eight?
26. Why is the taking of this Step the beginning of the end of isolation (Step Eight, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 82, last paragraph) from fellows and God?

## Guide to Step Nine

*(with some overlap with Step Eight)*

**Step Nine: “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”**

Once we have taken the first eight Steps, we are ready to embark on building better relationships with others by taking responsibility for our behavior in Step Nine. We read this guide before starting the questions for Step Nine. We find it to be a useful resource in assisting us to identify what is a harm, what constitutes an amends, and how the amends can be made. We take these suggestions from AA’s *Big Book*, S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and the experience of other seasoned members who have worked the HOW approach and have shared S.L.A.A.’s experience, strength, and

hope. We find we can work Steps Eight and Nine best as a joint effort with our sponsor.

Sometimes our sponsor requires us to check in with them before and after each amends. This check-in is sometimes used to review the purpose of our amends and the agreed approach—what will be said and what will not. It is sometimes helpful to discuss how to word things. Or it can also be used to remind us that forgiveness may not be forthcoming and our amends may be met with hostility.

Our sponsor may suggest that we check in with them after the amends to review the process and to share the blessings and relief that come from well-made amends.

### ***The Nature of Harms***

Harms occur when we inflict physical and emotional suffering, cause a loss of money or time to others, or damage property. In addition, interfering with another's path or spiritual growth by engaging in rescuing behavior such as preventing a crisis, doing something someone should do for themselves, and stopping someone from accepting the consequences of their actions can also be considered a harm.

### ***When Not to Make an Amends***

If the amends would actually make it harder for us to be of maximum service to God and to the people around us, we need to be careful and consult with others and God. This concept is taken from AA's *Big Book*, page 80, "Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink." For example:

If a person is not aware that we have harmed them, then we do not make amends because drawing the matter to their attention might be a harm in itself.

Other examples include causing ourselves to be unemployable or costing taxpayers money through court cases, or placing those dependent on us financially in a worse financial position.

### ***Making the List***

Once we have defined a harm, we place the harm into sections for each person and form a list as follows:

- ♦ The name.
- ♦ The action taken.
- ♦ What should have been done instead.

- ♦ Who suffered as a result and how, as defined in “The Nature of Harms” above.

### ***Reviewing the List***

We then review the list of people with our sponsor to make clear who suffered and what actions need to be taken. In reviewing the list, the nature of the proposed amends and form of the amends are agreed upon.

### ***Types of Amends***

#### **Direct amends**

Direct amends are those that can be made if the person consents and direct contact will not cause further harm.

#### **Indirect amends**

Indirect amends are those that we make to people we have harmed but that we cannot make direct amends to because that person is dead, unable to be reached, their identity is not known or remembered, or the nature of the suffering makes it inappropriate. In such cases an appropriate amends might include a donation to a charity, writing a letter (but not sending it), or changing behavior towards ourselves and others as a way to deal with the amends in question.

#### **Living amends**

Living amends is a change in our behavior toward ourselves and toward the people we have harmed. Living amends can be made to those people who are in our lives so that, from the point of the amends on, we do the hard work of changing how we relate to them. Sometimes a direct amends is appropriate first, followed by the continuous behavior of a living amends.

We find there is no need to continue to make amends for the same wrongdoing, but to live the amends in interaction with those we have harmed.

### ***Making Amends***

Our sponsor provides support during the amends process. Some of us discuss timelines to help combat complacency.

When it actually comes time to make the amends, we may feel deeply uncomfortable. How do you actually go about reaching out to the people you want to make amends to? There are at least two options:

- ♦ If the person knows that you are in recovery, something like this may be appropriate:

As part of my recovery I want to make an amends to you. Would you be willing to hear from me on this?

- ♦ If you don't intend to share your Twelve-Step recovery, something like this may be appropriate:

I've been thinking about our time together. You didn't get the best of me and I didn't always treat you as you deserved to be treated.

Would you be willing to have a conversation with me so I can share about this, listen to your perspective, and see what I can do to make it right?

The process of making amends has the following components:

- ♦ Description of our recovery (where appropriate).
- ♦ Admitting fault —this is the harm and the nature of the suffering. This may include initial disclosure of the actions taken in our addiction.
- ♦ Expressing regret.
- ♦ Asking forgiveness.
- ♦ Asking if there is anything the harmed person would like to say, and if there is anything else that we did not mention that still affects them.
- ♦ Asking how we can make it right.

## Step Nine Questions

Before embarking on the Step Nine Questions, to familiarize ourselves with Step Nine, we read pages 76-84 in Chapter Six ("Into Action") in AA's *Big Book*, pages 83-87 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and pages 92-96 in S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*.

Additional suggested reading material also includes: *As Bill Sees It* (see References section).

27. Read the story from AA's *Big Book*, "Freedom from Bondage", pages 544-553. Write about a resentment you have. How are you using the program to be free of it?
28. Do you deeply and honestly search all your motives and actions in your past and present relationships when completing your list of any amends you may need to make? Think carefully of past relationships and any resentment you may have and check your own part in creating these disturbances. Write on at least one of these relationships.
29. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 39, 58, and 153. How have righteous indignation and resentment wreaked havoc in your life? How do you handle anger today?

30. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 179 and 286. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that nothing pays off like restraint of tongue and pen. How have you used this to avoid conflict?
31. Read page 13 in “Bill’s Story” in AA’s *Big Book*, starting with, “My schoolmate visited me...” In writing, discuss and reflect on your willingness to approach those individuals whom you have harmed. Also, write about what attitude you should have in making amends.
32. Make an amends list to discuss with your sponsor and meet your sponsor in accordance with the guidance for Step Nine. Are you ready to work on making amends? How will you make direct amends on a daily basis?
33. Read the third and fourth paragraphs, page 76 of Chapter Six of AA’s *Big Book*, starting with, “Now we need more action...” In writing, describe the lengths to which you would go for victory over sex and love addiction.
34. Besides your sex and love addiction, what other defects of character have you had to live with?
35. Have you experienced any of your most severe critics meeting you more than halfway when making admissions and amends? How do you stay in balance when this happens or does quite the opposite happen?
36. Are you delaying making amends because you are afraid? If so, how can you move into the spirit of Step Nine as mentioned in the last paragraph of this Step in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*?
37. Write on the amends you have to make that scares you the most and how you will move into action to make the amends.

## Guide to Step Ten

**Step Ten: “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”**

Step Ten in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text* states (page 96), “If we were to continue the lifetime process of reconciliation and intimacy with ourselves and others, we would need to process life as it was happening, day by day.”

On Step Ten our sponsor usually asks us to do a five-to-ten-minute review and inventory of the day, at the end of each day. We begin each daily inventory with remembering and realizing that a loving God is present with us. We then ask God to show us the truth. It is important we do not beat ourselves up for what we find. We review the day against the following questions, which are found



on pages 86-88 of AA's *Big Book*, starting with, "When we retire at night...". We regularly open this book and re-read these pages as part of our Step Ten process.

*"Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest, or afraid?" (page 86). If so, we consider the right action for the next day, in consultation with others if needed.*

*"Do we owe an apology?" (page 86). If applicable, we make an apology or amends the next day.*

*"Have we kept something to ourselves that should have been discussed with another person at once?" (page 86). If so, we take the action of discussing it with them as soon as possible.*

*"Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better?" (page 86).*

*"Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?" (page 86).*

*"(But)...we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse, or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others." (page 86).*

*"(After making our review)...we ask God's forgiveness" (page 86) trusting that it will be totally given.*

*"and inquire what corrective measures should be taken" (page 86). We keep it simple. If we are new to this or unsure, we check them out with someone with more experience in the program.*

Once the review is complete and actions noted where needed we leave the review with our Higher Power. We take the action the next morning and cease worrying about the day passed, as the work of reviewing and corrective action has been completed.

Further reading on pages 86-88 of AA's *Big Book*, starting with, "On awakening..." directs us, at the beginning of the day, in the following way:

*"(Before we begin,) we ask God to direct our thinking" (page 86).*

*We ask God especially that our thinking "be divorced from self-pity, dishonest, or self-seeking motives" (page 86).*

*"We consider our plans for the day" (page 86). If we have none, we ask God to show us how to be useful and draw up plans.*

*We consider how the corrective measures from the night before can be applied.*

*We ask that God show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness, and love.*

*We ask God to show us how we can help anyone who is suffering from sex and love addiction.*

*If “we (may) face indecision. [...] (Here) we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle” (page 86).*

*We pray to our Higher Power to live according to the principles of S.L.A.A.*

*We read some spiritual literature and ask God to show us how we can apply it to our day.*

Finally, we pray “that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped” (page 87).

If agitated or doubtful:

*We ask God “for the right thought or action” (page 87).*

*“We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show” (page 88).*

*We say “to ourselves many times each day, “Thy will be done.”” (page 88).*

## Step Ten Questions

Additional required reading material: *As Bill Sees It* (see References section).

38. Re-read page 91 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, starting with, “In all these situations....” Write on the concept of progress rather than perfection as it applies to your life today.
39. Have you begun to practice respect and courtesy to those you dislike? Write about how you can start practicing these principles.
40. Read number 233 in *As Bill Sees It*. Draw up a two-column balance sheet for the day. On one side write the things you’ve done right—for example, good intentions, good thoughts, and good acts. On the other side write the things you think you could have improved upon.
41. Read the section “Step Ten” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, and note any passages that particularly resonate. In writing, discuss and reflect on these passages.
42. Read Step Ten in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 88-95. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the following concept on page 90, “Every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us.”

43. Read from, “The portion of S.L.A.A. meetings...” on page 98, the section “Step Ten” in Chapter Four of S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text* to the end of the paragraph. In writing, discuss and reflect on the importance of getting current.
44. Read pages 90-92 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, starting with, “Before we ask what a spot-check inventory is...” to “...is far more His success than ours.” In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that justified anger ought to be left to those better qualified to handle it. How have you dissipated some anger in a healthy way today?
45. Read pages 92-95 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, starting with, “Finally, we begin to see...” Write about the idea that “pain is the touchstone of spiritual progress.” Write about some pain you have been in lately. How did it help you grow?
46. Read pages 84-85 in AA’s *Big Book*, starting with, “This thought brings us...” The purpose of Step Ten is to continue our daily inventory and check our daily progress. Name some things you need to guard against if you are to continue your progress.
47. Have you stopped trying to make unreasonable demands on the ones you love? Write on the last unreasonable demand and the results of that demand. How do you tell what is reasonable and what is unreasonable?
48. Most feelings or defects of character will come under one of six categories: fear, jealousy, anger, resentment, pride, and sex. One way to take personal inventory when something disturbs us—as described on page 96, Step Ten, of S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text* (penultimate paragraph)—is to fold a sheet of paper into three sections. In the first section write, “WHAT IS IT?” In the second section write, “HOW DOES IT AFFECT ME?” In the third section write, “WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?” For this question identify a current problem—for example, fear of failure--and write as much as you can about it. Ask yourself, “How does it affect me?” Now ask God, “What can I do about it?” For extra reading, read from *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 39, 65, and 89.
49. Are you able to maintain bottom-line sobriety “keeping emotional balance and living to good purpose under all conditions?” (Step Ten, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 88). What are some of the ways that you work on keeping emotional balance?
50. List your assets and liabilities. How can you convert “the pains of failure into assets?” (Step Ten, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 93,

starting with, “When evening comes...” ) Think of a specific example where you have done this.

51. What can you do to stop having emotional hangovers? Write about the last one you had and the state you were in when it was caused.
52. How can you acquire the habit of accurate self-appraisal through Step Ten?
53. How does the axiom “every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us”, relate to you? (Step Ten, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 90, from “It is a spiritual axiom...”)
54. Step Ten, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 90, starting with, “It is a spiritual axiom...”, talks of dangerous exceptions for our recovery. What are your dangerous exceptions?
55. How are you developing tolerance?
56. Step Ten, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, in the penultimate paragraph, says to “spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character building and good living.” In the spirit of this character building, write a gratitude list of your blessings received.

## Step Eleven

**Step Eleven: “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.”**

Additional required reading material: *As Bill Sees It* (see References section).

57. Read the section “Step Eleven” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea on page 99 of having “a conscious adult partnership.”
58. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 93, 108, 127, 189, and 243. In writing, discuss and reflect on how taking time daily to be with God improves your conscious contact with Higher Power and changes your life.
59. Read pages 85-88 in AA’s *Big Book*, starting with, “Step Eleven suggests...” How have prayer and meditation helped you to be free of self-will run riot?

60. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 33, 101, 117, and 331. Step Eleven is for mental efficiency, for spiritual strength, and for physical endurance. What does this mean to you?
61. Read page 164 in AA's *Big Book*, starting with, "Our book is meant to be suggestive only..." In writing, discuss and reflect on how to "see to it that your relationship with [Higher Power] is right" and the importance of it for you today.
62. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 172 and 270. How do you apply the principle that your recovery depends upon God?
63. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 202 and 250. In writing, discuss and reflect on the importance of spending daily quiet time alone with your Higher Power. How do you do this in your life on a daily basis?
64. Read *As Bill Sees It*, number 264. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that we "shall locate our trouble in our misunderstanding or neglect of... Step Eleven—prayer, meditation, and the guidance of God."

## Step Twelve

Step Twelve: "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."

Additional required reading material: *As Bill Sees It* and *Came to Believe* (see References section).

65. Read the section "Step Twelve" in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*. Read the paragraph on page 102 starting with, "We discovered..." Write on your personal experience of how "our experiences in addiction had been transformed into lessons for living of profound depth and durability."
66. Read Chapter Seven, "Working with Others", in AA's *Big Book*. Did you have a spiritual awakening? Was it vital to your recovery? When did it take place? Can you define it?
67. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 196 and 263. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that the basic antidote for fear is a spiritual awakening.
68. Read pages 417-420 in, "Acceptance Was the Answer", in AA's *Big Book* starting with, "And acceptance is the answer..." In writing, discuss

and reflect on how (page 417) “acceptance is the answer to all of our problems.”

69. Read the second to last paragraph (page 103) in the section “Step Twelve” in Chapter Four from S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*. How have your views of intimacy and sexuality changed through working the Steps?
70. Read *As Bill Sees It*, numbers 3, 5, and 163. Write on how working the program has brought joy to your life.
71. Read *Came To Believe*, pages 46, 47, and 48, “The Belief will Come” and *As Bill Sees It*, number 331. In writing, discuss and reflect on what needs to be done to be most effective in helping those who still suffer.

## The Maintenance Questions

**These questions are optional.** They are designed to support and strengthen our recovery once we have completed the Steps. These questions also help us maintain the practices of reflection, reading, writing, attending meetings, and outreach that we developed when we first worked the Steps. They are a way to continue the practice of sharing with fellow members that we developed during the Steps.

Those of us wishing to continue to use a structured approach to maintaining our sobriety work the Maintenance Questions in conjunction with a sponsor who has completed them. We only answer these questions upon completion of Steps One through Twelve.

How we use the questions and how we share our responses is a matter to be agreed on with our sponsor. Bottom, middle, and top lines may be reconsidered. The questions relate to the Twelve Steps.

Depending on the circumstances, once we have completed the Twelve Steps in this guide, the Maintenance Questions can also be used to review or re-work the Steps. We find the choice is up to us, our Higher Power, and our sponsor.

Additional required reading material: AA’s *Big Book*, Third Edition (see References section).

1. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Re-read Step One in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 68-73, and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 21-24. List the areas of your life that you have surrendered to your Higher Power.

2. Re-read Step One in S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. How is admission of powerlessness the first step toward liberation for you? Do you believe the program can liberate you?
3. Read Chapter Two, "There is a Solution" in AA's *Big Book*, pages 17-29. Write about your feelings regarding the statements made in the italicized paragraph on page 24, starting with, "The fact is that most alcoholics...."
4. Read page 43 in "More About Alcoholism" in AA's *Big Book* (last paragraph). In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that, "at certain times the [sex and love addict] has no effective mental defense against the first [acting out]."
5. Read Chapter Six, "Into Action" in AA's *Big Book*, pages 72-88. In writing, discuss and reflect on how reaching out and helping someone else can be part of your willingness to have all your defects removed.
6. Take time out today and plan some special moments during your day. Perhaps plan some time alone, time with a friend, or time meditating. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that you know how to feel bad but you need to learn how to feel good.
7. Read Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 25-33. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that this is the rallying point to sanity.
8. Read Chapter One, "Bill's Story" in AA's *Big Book*, pages 1-16. "Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning." In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that making a new beginning each day is testimony to your belief in a Higher Power.
9. In writing, discuss and reflect on how doing service in the Fellowship has kept sanity in your life.
10. Read the story in AA's *Big Book*, "The Keys of the Kingdom." Take an inventory of where you are in relation to the Twelve Steps of the program. In writing, discuss what you were like, what happened, and what your life is like now.
11. Read Step Three in S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text* and in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 34-41. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that willingness is the key, and write what action you have taken in the last two weeks within the context of the program.
12. Read Chapter Four, "We Agnostics" in AA's *Big Book*, pages 44-57. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea (on page 55 starting with, "We finally saw that faith...") that the "Great Reality" is deep within us.



13. Read Appendix II, “Spiritual Experience” in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 567-568. In writing, discuss and reflect on your awakening or re-awakening spiritually.
14. How have you learned to listen to yourself and others and stay quiet within?
15. Read the story “Fear of Fear” in AA’s *Big Book*. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that your greatest fear is often that you will become a different person.
16. Read Step Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 42-54. Take a spot-check inventory that can update your inventory from Step Five. In writing, discuss defects that have come back, emotions that won’t be placed on hold, and cravings that might arise as a result of these two states.
17. Read the Serenity Prayer in Step Three, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 41 (last paragraph). Read it four times. In writing, discuss what you accept that you cannot change. Then, write on the things that you have changed. How do you know the difference?
18. Read Chapter Five, “How it Works” in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 58-71, and the idea that people of faith have courage. In writing, discuss and reflect on the courage your faith has given you.
19. In writing, discuss how you use the tools of reading, writing, and sharing to deal with your reality.
20. Read Chapter Five, “How it Works” in AA’s *Big Book*, the last paragraph on page 68, starting with, “Now about sex....” In writing, discuss and reflect on this reading.
21. Read the story in AA’s *Big Book* (Third Edition) “Stars Don’t Fall,” pages 400-417 (see References section). In writing, discuss and reflect on “the black and endless dismal night...” as you experienced it in your life.
22. Read Step Five in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 57, “this is the beginning of true kinship with [humans] and God.” In writing, discuss and reflect on how this has continued to be true in your life.
23. Read Chapter Six, “Into Action”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 72-75. In writing, discuss and reflect on what you have learned about fearlessness, humility, and honesty. How do you use them in your life today?
24. Review what happened to you when you wrote your inventory—your feelings, your hopes, your defects. In writing, discuss what happened



when you finally took Step Five. How did you feel afterward? Have you left anything out?

25. Read the story “Promoted to Chronic” in AA’s *Big Book*, (Third Edition), pages 464-473 (see References section). In writing, discuss and reflect on how your disease has made you vulnerable to acting out (or acting in).
26. Read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that your defects of character can be lifted if you’re willing.
27. Re-read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that “half measures availed us nothing” as set out in AA’s *Big Book*, Chapter Five “How it Works”, pages 58-71. How are the emotional, physical, and spiritual components of your life coming together today?
28. Read Chapter Six “Into Action” in AA’s *Big Book*, page 75, third paragraph, starting with, “Returning home... .” Meditate on this passage and then answer all the questions posed on page 75, “if we have omitted... .` mortar without sand.” In writing, discuss and reflect on what your answers tell you about yourself.
29. Read the story in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 301-308, “Physician, Heal Thyself!” How is the S.L.A.A. program a testimonial that you do not have to do it alone?
30. Read the synopsis of Step Seven in the table of contents in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 7. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that “[Higher Power] has removed a great deal but there is still work to be done.”
31. Read Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 87-89, and S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 70-76. In writing, discuss and reflect on how taking this Step indicates a change of attitude for you.
32. Read Chapter 11, “A Vision For You” in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 151-164. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. What must you do to maintain what you have gained in recovery?
33. Read Step Seven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 75, the phrase “Of myself I am nothing.” In writing, discuss and reflect on what is working in your life and what you must let go.

34. Think about Step Seven and consider what progress you've made in removing your shortcomings. In writing, discuss and reflect on your accomplishments and setbacks.
35. Read the story in Chapter 17 in AA's *Big Book*, pages 407-420, "And Acceptance Was The Answer". In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that "If I focus on the answer, the answer increases." (page 417, starting with, "I can do the same thing...")
36. In writing, discuss and reflect on your ability to apologize. Write down the name of someone to whom you need to make an apology. Then create an action plan to make that apology.
37. Read Step Eight in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 77-82. Focus on page 78, "These obstacles...are very real." In writing, discuss and reflect on your need (past and present) to control and manipulate others. Be specific.
38. Read the story, "From Farm to City" in AA's *Big Book*, (Third Edition), pages 261-274 (see References section). Looking at the section from the quote (page 269), "But I have laughed...", discuss and reflect (in writing) on your need to make amends. Are you willing to do so?
39. Make a list of those persons you have harmed. Is this your first comprehensive list? What is the difference between this list and prior lists? Are you willing to work this Step?
40. In writing, discuss and reflect on how well you deal with "and became willing to make amends to them all." Who is not on your list? Is there anyone you are still emotionally battling with?
41. Read the synopsis of Step Nine in the table of contents of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 7. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that "prudence means taking calculated chances." How does this translate into "courage to work my program" for you?
42. Read Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Write down the name of someone to whom you owe amends, what you intend to say, and how you intend to contact this individual. Then do it!
43. Read pages 76-84 in Chapter Six, "Into Action," in AA's *Big Book* from "Now we need more action..." to "...materialize if we work for them." Write on the topic "The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it." from page 83.
44. Someone may reject our attempt to make amends. Has this happened to you? In writing, detail what you did and how it was or was not translated

into rejection. If you have not experienced this, create a plan for dealing with any rejected amends.

45. Read page 87 in Step Nine in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (last paragraph). In writing, discuss and reflect on, “Above all, we should try to be absolutely sure that we are not delaying because we are afraid.”
46. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that only when your past is settled can present challenges be met.
47. Read the section “Step Ten” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text* pages 96-99. In writing, discuss and reflect on the dangers of self-centeredness.
48. Create a relationship table. On one side, put the name of the individual with whom you are involved (friend, lover, child, family) and on the other side, discuss your relationship. Next, create another column in which you note whether the relationship works or needs work. What actions does this inventory call for?
49. Consider how the process of reflection recommended in Step Ten keeps us sober. Write out an audit for today of the sort recommended by Step Ten.
50. Re-read the section “Step Ten” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*, pages 96-99. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that if you don’t learn from your past you are in danger of repeating it.
51. Read page 105, the last page in Step Eleven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* from, “The moment we catch...purely human affairs.” In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that self-centeredness continues to create problems in your life.
52. Read Step Eleven in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 96-105. In writing, discuss and reflect on how working Step Eleven is the only way to conquer fear.
53. Read Chapter 11, “Into Action”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 85-88, from the bottom of page 85, starting with “Step Eleven suggests...” to the end. In writing, discuss and reflect on how this section of AA’s *Big Book* contains instructions on learning how to let go.
54. Read Step Eleven, in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 99-101. In writing, discuss and reflect on how practicing self-forgetting is the result of not trying so hard. Be specific.
55. Read Chapter 11, “A Vision for You” in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 151-164. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that willpower alone cannot stop the acting out.

56. The joy of living is a theme of Step Twelve. In writing, discuss and reflect on what is joyous in your life. How have these things come about?
57. Read Step Twelve in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pages 106-125. In writing, discuss and reflect on the actions you have taken to carry the message.
58. Read Chapter Seven, “Working With Others”, in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 89-103. In writing, discuss and reflect on how you can channel your Higher Power to lift you out of bondage and help others.
59. Read “Doctor Bob’s Nightmare” in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 171-181. Focus on pages 180-181, “I spend a great deal...against a possible slip.” How is service to others an insurance policy in your life?
60. Read the story “Freedom From Bondage” in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 544-553. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that “I will have peace of mind in exact proportion to the peace of mind I bring to the lives of others.” Also, write about how this becomes “practicing these principles in all areas of our lives.”

## **Further Thoughts on Sobriety —The Slip Questions**

1. Using a dictionary (but not AI or a search engine), write down the definitions for each of the following words and reflect on them, in writing: life, spirit, spiritual, God, breathe, breathing, meditation, universe, peace, serenity, posture, discipline, prayer, love, hate, anger, sex, pride, resentment, jealousy, read, write, conscious mind, subconscious mind, hearing, speaking, cure, and recover. The point of this exercise is to read the definitions and to think and reflect on them.
2. Why is it important that you put your recovery first? as opposed to serving others above your own needs?
3. Write about the Serenity Prayer. What does it mean to you and how can it help you in your life?
4. Discuss the following slogans used in Twelve-Step fellowships:
  - ♦ Live and Let Live,
  - ♦ Easy Does it,
  - ♦ But for the Grace of God Go I,
  - ♦ Let Go and Let God,

- ♦ One Step at a Time, and
  - ♦ Just for Today.
5. Write about the amount of time you do spend or have spent each day compulsively thinking about sex and relationships. What could you do better with this time?
  6. List the things you want out of life. How many of these things are really important? Why?
  7. What about your life would you like to change? How would you change it?
  8. Make a gratitude list.
  9. What would you lose by giving up the S.L.A.A. fellowship?
  10. What do you fear? How many of these things are beyond your control?
  11. Being unsuccessful doesn't equate to being a failure. Write about this.
  12. Write about the meaning of love.
  13. Reverse a negative thought and write about it.
  14. Write about the importance of growing up.
  15. Do you act out to punish others? If so, who are you hurting in the process??
  16. Why don't you want to get sober?
  17. Read pages 102-104 in Step Eleven, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, from "Now, what of prayer?..." to "...difficult circumstances." In writing, discuss and reflect upon the need for meditation.
  18. Has the striving or drive for perfection been a realistic goal in your life? How has this helped or hindered you?
  19. In writing, discuss the dangers of your obsession as you see them—mental, physical, and spiritual.
  20. Can you afford to have your pre-program insanity back?
  21. In what ways do you look for joy in your life?
  22. Do you really listen when people talk to you? In what ways?
  23. H.A.L.T. stands for hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. Why is it important to call a halt when you are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired?
  24. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the need for self-worth. List your good points.
  25. What were your expectations yesterday? Are you being realistic about them today?

26. How do others in the S.L.A.A. fellowship serve as your mirror?
27. Choose a person to whom you should make amends. Make the amends. How did making this amends make you feel?
28. Open S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text* to a random page. What does it say? How does it relate to your life today?
29. Think of a friend or a fellow member you haven't seen in a while. Find their phone number and give them a call. In writing, discuss and reflect on reaching out.
30. You can't love others until you love yourself. How does this relate to your feelings today? Yesterday?
31. Boredom is a barrier to learning. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the idea that boredom is part of your disease.
32. What does self-awareness bring? Why would you want to remain unaware?
33. Has depriving yourself emotionally, sexually, and socially played a part in your addiction?
34. Action is called a magic word. Why is this word important to you today?
35. In writing, discuss and reflect upon the idea that in recovery we strive to keep things simple.
36. How many people do you fail when you fail yourself?
37. By keeping busy, how do you avoid yourself? When did you last do this?
38. Read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, on page 68, starting with "Many will at once ask..." How does the whole Step make you feel?
39. Write about the benefits of being sober on your bottom lines.
40. Write about procrastination and the self-sabotage behaviors that may result from procrastination. Give some examples.
41. Re-read Step Six in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* or in S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text* and write about your feelings.
42. What was your spiritual rock-bottom?
43. What was your physical rock-bottom?
44. What, in your opinion, is your Higher Power's concept of you?
45. What does sex and love mean to you today? How does it affect you now?
46. How are compulsivity and your sex and love addiction connected?
47. Write about giving in to your addiction and why you do.

48. Write about how fear-based thinking has played a part in your acting in or acting out. Give some examples.
49. Write about your concept of a Higher Power.
50. Write about what the S.L.A.A. Fellowship means to you.
51. With whom are you sharing the load of your recovery?
52. When and how did you allow self-pity to rule your life?
53. How have you allowed pride to defeat you?
54. Do you allow yourself to be vulnerable? Why or why not? Can you give some examples?
55. Read Step Seven in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Write about humility.
56. Write about how defiance was a strong part of your life. How have you changed?
57. Have you allowed arrogance to play a large part in your life?
58. How is your need for control getting in the way of your recovery?
59. What progress did you see in yourself before you slipped? What slippery behavior?
60. Read page 268 from “With trepidation,” to page 269, “so I stayed in S.L.A.A.” in the story “The Language of the Emotionally Damaged” and page 121, and the first page in Chapter Seven, “Starting an S.L.A.A. Group” in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*. Do meetings play an important part in your life?
61. Read the section “Step Four” in Chapter Four in S.L.A.A.’s *Basic Text*. Have you allowed resentment to take over?
62. In our addiction, jealousy and envy played a large part in our lives. In what way can you find some sense of serenity through the program?
63. Make an inventory of the good things in your life.
64. What are the good things that you would like sobriety to bring? How well are you handling your problems today?
65. Are you trying to work the program perfectly?
66. Read Chapter Two, “There is a Solution,” in AA’s *Big Book*, pages 17-29. What does being well look like to you?
67. Write about how you have used sex and relationships to cope with life.
68. Write about following God’s will.

69. Write a self-care to-do list for the day ahead and ask God to help you stick to it. Put at least six things on your list.
70. What are your feelings today concerning God, sex, and love?
71. What is your concept of happiness?
72. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that making mistakes is part of life.
73. What will your life be like in ten years if you don't work the S.L.A.A. program of recovery?
74. In writing, discuss and reflect on when you think you will have achieved success.
75. In writing, discuss and reflect on the idea that everyone has faults.
76. Are you afraid of a healthier sex and love life?
77. How do you feel if you do something you know is wrong?
78. What is the relationship between patience and wisdom?
79. S.L.A.A.'s *Basic Text*, the section "Step Eleven" in Chapter Four, pages 99-101, describes how our Higher Power brings us "many a painful growth fostering situation". Has this been your experience? In writing, discuss and reflect using examples from your life.
80. Are you the master of your emotions?
81. In writing, discuss and reflect on how you would like things to be versus how things are.
82. AA's *Big Book* uses the word "we" 1,102 times in the first 154 pages. Why is it important for you to see S.L.A.A. as a "we" program? What does the word "we" mean to you in this context?
83. Putting things off can actually make them harder to do. In writing, discuss and reflect on this idea.
84. How has honesty changed you as a person?
85. In the last 30 days what have you learned about yourself in the context of your S.L.A.A. recovery?
86. If a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing well. In writing, discuss and reflect on this common saying.
87. Love and friendship bind the Fellowship together. In writing, discuss and reflect on this idea.
88. In recovery, moderation is a way of life. In writing, discuss and reflect on this idea.



89. Anger combined with pride can cause us real difficulties. In writing, discuss and reflect on this idea.
90. In writing, discuss and reflect on what actions you should take when you are wrong and what actions you should take when you are right.
91. Sometimes it seems to be the little things that cause the biggest problems and challenges. In writing, discuss and reflect on this idea.
92. Have you harmed yourself through your acting out or acting in?
93. Can anger be used for good?
94. What one thing would you change in the days preceding your slip, if you could?
95. Self-pity is harmful. In writing, discuss and reflect on this idea.
96. Why are you so afraid of yourself?
97. Tolerance and intolerance—what do these two words evoke for you?
98. Have you truly surrendered to the program?
99. How have these slip questions helped support you in regaining your sobriety?

# Common Myths About HOW

## **1. Myth: If you slip three times, your sponsor has to let you go.**

This is false. A sponsor may have this policy but it is not a requirement of S.L.A.A. HOW.

## **2. Myth: If a sponsee is late with daily calls they are dropped as a sponsee.**

This is false. Learning about boundaries, however, is an important part of recovery, and sponsor and sponsee will need to set acceptable boundaries and consequences between themselves.

## **3. Myth: No dating until Step Nine, or after Step Nine you have to start dating.**

This is false. It is for the sponsor and sponsee to work together to decide what action is required, at what point, and whether dating is appropriate, taking into account whether addiction or anorexia is being tackled.

The purpose of abstaining from relationships for a period of time is to allow the sponsee time to develop a relationship with themselves and God, and to have this vital spiritual experience essential for recovery. This spiritual awakening is promised after Step Nine and reaffirmed in Step Twelve.

Rather than set a timeframe on dating, the sponsor might ask some questions to determine whether it's the right time for dating. A sponsor may ask the sponsee if they have had this vital spiritual experience. A sponsor may ask whether the Signs of Recovery are coming true in the sponsee's life. Another question a sponsor may ask is whether the sponsee feels a sense of personal wholeness from which they can relate to others. (More about the dating decision is set out in the Relationship Top-Lines section of this Guide.) \_

## **4. Myth: You can't go on to Step Ten until all your amends from Step Nine are completed.**

This is false. How and when Step Nine amends are completed is by agreement between the sponsor and the sponsee.

## **5. Myth: Those working the S.L.A.A. HOW concept can't attend or share at a non-HOW meeting, or non-HOW members can't share at an S.L.A.A. HOW meeting.**

Again, this is false.

## **6. Myth: A sponsee must wait until Step Eleven to start a daily practice of prayer and meditation.**

This is false. In fact, in the HOW approach, the sponsee is encouraged to begin this practice as soon as they commence the first “30 Questions”.

**7. Myth: A sponsee can’t reach out to an old sponsor for a set period of time.**

This is false.

**8. Myth: A sponsee must complete these Steps as set out in this document before working the Steps for anorexia.**

This is false. Should the sponsee identify strongly as anorexic, it may be more useful to work the steps for anorexia first. The sponsee should discuss this with their sponsor.

## Acknowledgments

This Guide acknowledges the contribution made by the writing of fellow members of S.L.A.A. who produced draft HOW literature over the years. Most of that writing has been incorporated into this document, including the non-copyrighted documents listed below.

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- ♦ Maintenance Questions—HOW S.L.A.A., Anonymous, retyped 2007.
- ♦ Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous HOW Fourth Step Columns—HOW S.L.A.A., Anonymous, revised 2006.
- ♦ S.L.A.A.-HOW—The Beginners Kit, Anonymous, 2005.
- ♦ Sponsor’s Guidelines—HOW S.L.A.A., Anonymous, 2006. Step 4 Guidelines—Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous HOW, Anonymous, revised 2006.
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- ♦ The (S.L.A.A.) HOW Concept and Tools, Anonymous, Australia, 1996 (<https://www.slaauk.org/files/HOW-Concept-and-Tools.pdf>), derived from The HOW Concept used by Overeaters Anonymous (OA) HOW.

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- ♦ Alcoholics Anonymous, AA's *Big Book*, (Third Edition) story, “Stars Don't Fall,” pages 400-417 (<https://silkworth.net/alcoholics-anonymous/25-stars-dont-fall/>).
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- ♦ *Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction*, The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, TX, 1990.
- ♦ *40 Questions for Self Diagnosis*, The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, TX, 1985.
- ♦ *Questions Beginners Ask*, The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, TX, 1985.
- ♦ *Romantic Obsession*, The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, TX, 2010.
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- ♦ *The Importance of Making Outreach Calls*, The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, TX, 2023.
- ♦ *Withdrawal—Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy*, The Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, TX, 1995.

## **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 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 non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. S.L.A.A. as such ought never to 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 to 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.

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*Available from:*

The Augustine Fellowship,  
S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc.  
2411 NE Loop 410, Suite 122  
San Antonio, TX 78217, USA

Tel: +1-210-828-7900

Fax: +1-210-828-7922

Web: **[www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)**

## **BOOKS**

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