



Meeting Guide

Contents

SLAA MEETING3
Meditation Meeting	5
How it works.	6
12 Characteristics of Sex & Love Addiction	10
Individual Sharing	11
The HOW Concept & Tools	13
Concluding the meeting	16
Conclusion of the meeting	17
The 12 Promises	19
The 7 Blessings	20
The 12 Signs of Recovery	21
The First Step	23
The Second Step	33
The Third Step	38
The Fourth Step	43
The Fifth Step	48
The Sixth Step	54
The Seventh Step	59
The Eighth Step	64
The Ninth Step	69
The Tenth Step	76
The Eleventh Step.	82
The Twelfth Step	87
12 Steps of Sex & Love Addiction.	91
12 Traditions of SLAA	93

SLAA MEETING

Welcome to this online SLAA HOW-concept meeting using ZOOM.

The group conscience has decided that participants leave video on for the duration of the meeting. Please mute your microphone unless you are sharing.

My name is _____ and I am a Sex and Love Addict.
I am the chair for this meeting.

Let's begin with a moment of silence.

(pause)

Let's say the Serenity Prayer:

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

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

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

SLAA has no opinion on outside issues and seeks no controversy. It is not affiliated with any other organisation, movements or causes, either religious or secular.

We are, however, united in a common focus: dealing with our addictive sexual and emotional behaviour.

We find a common denominator in our obsessive and compulsive patterns which renders any personal differences of sexual or gender orientation irrelevant.

We need to protect with special care the anonymity of every SLAA member. Additionally, we try to avoid drawing undue attention to SLAA from the public media.

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

1. **Sobriety.** Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom-line behaviour daily.
2. **Sponsorship & Meetings.** Our capacity to reach-out for supportive fellowship in SLAA.
3. **Steps.** Our practice of the 12-step program of recovery to achieve sexual & emotional sobriety.
4. **Service.** Our giving back to the SLAA community what we continue to freely receive.
5. **Spirituality.** Our developing a relationship with a power greater than ourselves that can guide and sustain us in recovery.

We welcome all who have a desire to stop acting out a pattern of sex and love addiction. We encourage all participants to look for the similarities rather than the differences.

Please do not take notes or record the meeting in any way. Please silence your mobile phones or any other devices that may disturb the meeting.

[Other meetings continue HERE](#)

Meditation Meeting

The 11th step states that we:

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.

We begin our meeting with a **ten-minute period** of silent meditation for each of us to make contact with a God of our own understanding, in our own way.

Please mute your microphone; feel free to move to sit somewhere comfortable for you.

Relax; close your eyes; get comfortable and allow this space and silence to bring healing to your day.

SILENT MEDITATION – 10 MINUTES

Set 10 min timer. Conclude with a gentle tone / gong.

Gently open your eyes and return your body and spirit to the room and this space.

[Continue after 'How it works' HERE.](#)

How it works

- Will someone please read **HOW IT WORKS?** Read a paragraph or two; when you are finished, say “Pass” and let someone else continue.

HOW Concept & Tools

How it works

We invite you to join us in working the steps, and we encourage you to be rigorously honest from the outset. This is a simple program. Those of us who have suffered from grave emotional and mental disorders have noticed that we can recover if we are willing to be rigorously honest and work the steps.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have — and are willing to go to any lengths to get it — then we invite you to work the steps with us.

At some of these steps we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we encourage you to be fearless and thorough from the start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil, until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with sex and love addiction, which is *cunning*, *baffling* and *powerful*. Without help, it is too much for us. But there is one who has all power. That one is God. May you find God now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at a turning point and asked for God’s protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took which we suggest as a programme of recovery:

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.

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it!” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints.

The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the sex and love addict, the chapter on the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after, make clear three pertinent ideas:

- a. That we are sex and love addicts and cannot manage our own lives.
- b. That probably no human power could relieve our sex and love addiction.
- c. That God could and would if God were sought.

[end of How it Works]

[Return to links page](#)

The Chair continues:

- Is there anyone celebrating a significant milestone of sobriety?
(30 days? 60 days? 90 days? 6 months? 1 year? ...)

Congratulations!

- Will someone please act as timer? Thank you.
- Is there anyone to be stepped up?

This portion of the meeting is known as stepping up. I ask the group to celebrate another miracle in SLAA. The sponsor is asked to introduce their sponsee who has 30 days of continuous sobriety. The sponsee has completed the first three steps and is ready to become a sponsor. *[Or the sponsee has now completed the first five or all twelve steps.]* Sponsor and sponsee share your experience for two minutes each.

Congratulations!

We welcome anyone who may be in their first six meetings.

Is there anyone at this meeting for the first time?

Welcome! Please tell us your first name only, so that we may get to know you.

If there are newcomers, please ask someone to read the 12 Characteristics.

Otherwise, continue here

12 Characteristics of Sex & Love Addiction

1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.
3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.
4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
6. We sexualise stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing, care, and support.
7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.
8. We become immobilised or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.

9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.
10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.
11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealise and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

Daily Meditation, Theme or Reading

The Chair continues:

Would someone please read today's reading? Thank you.

Individual Sharing

If it is a steps meeting, the links to the Steps reading will be found below.

I will now call speakers to share for **three minutes** with **one minute** left to wind up.

A share may describe an experience that has helped us grow or given us a new level of awareness. We ask speakers to focus on their **experience, strength and hope** in this program. You may like to focus on how you have used the tools of the program.

This group has no sobriety requirement for sharing. **or** [Only those with 14 days (or 30 days) sobriety may share first. There is time in the middle of the meeting for people without the minimum sobriety to share.]

We appreciate that speakers may need to share on other matters to do with their sex and love addiction.

Please do not refer to other speakers, apps, venues, non-SLAA literature or therapists by name. Whilst it is fine to refer to the general principles of another person's share, please refrain from discussing any specifics, or criticising, qualifying or dismissing other shares.

In the interest of unity, we say our first name and identify as a **Sex and Love Addict**.

The floor is now open for shares.

Please keep to the four-minute limit.

Acknowledge another person's share by giving them a thumbs-up.

Step One

Step Seven

12 Steps

Step Two

Step Eight

12 Traditions

Step Three

Step Nine

12 Characteristics

Step Four

Step Ten

12 Signs of Recovery

Step Five

Step Eleven

12 Promises

Step Six

Step Twelve

7 Blessings

At the half-way point of the meeting...

Will someone please read **THE HOW CONCEPT & TOOLS?**
Read a paragraph or two and pass it on. Thank you.

or How it works

The HOW Concept & Tools

The Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous HOW Concept has been formed to offer the sex & love addict who accepts the twelve steps and twelve traditions as a program of recovery a disciplined and structured approach. The SLAA HOW groups have been formed in the belief that our disease is absolute and therefore only absolute acceptance of the HOW programme will offer any sustained sobriety to those of us whose compulsion has reached a critical level.

Therefore, the HOW defined bottom-line sobriety, the steps, traditions and tools of recovery are not suggested. Rather, we accept them as requirements for our recovery. We commit ourselves to a black & white sobriety so that we may deal with the grey areas of living.

In HOW we have found that if we commit to using the tools of recovery daily our disease of sex and love addiction can be arrested one day at a time. Here are the tools as we work them according to the HOW concept:

1. **BOTTOM-LINE SOBRIETY**

This is our willingness to stop acting out in our own bottom-line addictive behaviour daily. There are no absolutes for sobriety in SLAA, as individual patterns of sex and love addiction vary. Each

sex & love addict works with a sponsor to identify their personal bottom lines. We become sober by daily abstaining from these behaviours. We also believe that negative thinking is a large part of our disease, so we're learning one day at a time to abstain from negative thinking.

2. LITERATURE AND WRITING

We use the *AA Big Book* and the *12 Steps and 12 Traditions* as tools of examination and release. When we substitute the words "sex and love addict" for "alcoholic" and "sex and love" for "alcohol" we feel we identify absolutely. Our writing assignments in HOW are taken from these. In addition, we refer to SLAA-related literature.

3. MEETINGS

We recommend you attend a minimum of three meetings per week. Meetings are dedicated to the concept of remaining **Honest, Open-minded and Willing** to listen... this is the **HOW** of the programme.

4. TELEPHONE CALLS

We make four calls a day – one to our sponsor and three outreach calls to other SLAA members. The phone is like a lifeline: we need the contact. It can be like a mini-meeting. Use the chat function to get numbers.

5. PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Our practice of daily prayer and meditation is to develop a relationship with a power greater than ourselves which can guide and sustain us in recovery. We ensure our continued and

sustained abstinence from sex and love addiction by being forever aware that God is doing for us what we have never been able to do for ourselves.

6. SERVICE

This is freedom from the bondage of self. Service is working the tools of the programme to the best of our ability, giving back what we've been given. Sobriety is a service to ourselves and the group.

7. SPONSORSHIP

A SLAA HOW sponsor is a sex and love addict who, thank God, has 30 days of continuous sobriety working the SLAA HOW concept and has taken the first three steps. In keeping with our second tradition, our leaders are but trusted servants - they do not govern.

A sponsor should not be a person we are in danger of acting out with, or are likely to find intrigue with. A potential sexual partner as sponsor would interfere with the primary purpose of the sponsor relationship, which is recovery through the programme of SLAA. Sometimes this means the sponsor should be of the same sex; sometimes of the opposite sex. Discretion, common sense and our higher power can guide us in our selection.

[Return to beginning flow of meeting](#)

[Return to links page](#)

If there are many people online, open the floor to anyone to share.

- We now have time for **two people** who haven't shared to jump in and share.
- If you have a burning desire to share – the floor is now open for you.

Continue calling on members to share.

[Return to links page](#)

Concluding the meeting

At 10 minutes before the end

That's all we have time for now. If you didn't get the chance to share, please stay online and organise an outreach call to share with another member after the meeting.

A sponsor is needed to work the SLAA HOW program. Will **sponsors** with thirty days sobriety please identify yourself, your sobriety, what kind of sponsor you are and your availability.

Newcomers are encouraged to stay online at the end of the meeting if they have any questions. We encourage newcomers to download the free WELCOME PACK.

Thanks everyone for coming. The Seventh Tradition states that every SLAA group ought to be fully self-supporting. Please give generously at your next face-to-face meeting or donate to Intergroup or _____ account.

Take what you like and leave the rest. Reason things out, talk to each other, let there be no gossip or criticism amongst us. Instead let the peace and love and understanding of the programme grow in you one day at a time.

- Is there any SLAA-related news?
- A group conscience is held after the meeting on the third week of the month. *All are welcome to attend.*

I wish to thank those who shared today. Please remember our cherished tradition of anonymity.

*Whom you see here; what you hear here;
when you leave here: let it stay here.*

- Would someone please read **the 12 Promises**, **the 7 Blessings** or **the 12 Signs of Recovery**

[12 Promises](#)

[12 Signs of Recovery](#)

[7 Blessings](#)

[Return to links page](#)

Conclusion of the meeting

Please make newcomers welcome and answer any questions they may have.

The opinions expressed during the meeting are of those who shared and are not necessarily those of SLAA as a whole.

Thank you for allowing me to chair this meeting.

Please join me, if you wish, in the closing prayer.

Serenity Prayer

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

The Third Step Prayer

TO THE GOD OF MY OWN UNDERSTANDING:

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!

*Thanks for sharing:
Keep coming back.
It works if you work it,
and you're worth it!*

<<< End of the meeting >>>

The 12 Promises

If you have decided to follow the suggestions of this program, a new life will begin to unfold within you. Along with this new life are promises that will guide and sustain you. They are manifesting among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

1. We will regain control of our lives.
2. We will begin to feel dignity and respect for ourselves.
3. The loneliness will subside and we will begin to enjoy being alone.
4. We will no longer be plagued by an unceasing sense of longing.
5. In the company of family and friends, we will be with them in body and mind.
6. We will pursue interests and activities that we desire for ourselves.
7. Love will be a committed, thoughtful decision rather than a feeling by which we are overwhelmed.
8. We will love and accept ourselves.
9. We will relate to others from a state of wholeness.
10. We will extend ourselves to nurture our own spiritual growth and that of others.

11. We will make peace with our past and make amends to those we have harmed.
12. We will be thankful for what has been given us, what has been taken away and what has been left behind.

[Return to Conclusion of the Meeting](#) | [Return to links page](#)

The 7 Blessings

1. We came to find intimacy with ourselves, intimacy with a Higher Power (God) and then intimacy with others.
2. In domestic partnerships we discovered a whole new experience of sexuality as a non-addictive medium.
3. In relationships with others we let go of self-serving power and prestige as driving motives.
4. Careers that had been exploited mainly for material security, at the expense of self-fulfilment, no longer appealed to us.
5. Our usefulness as channels for healing was a direct result of our experiences in sickness, as well as in recovery.
6. We discovered that we could continue to affirm our recovery by working with other sex and love addicts.
7. We discovered that the source of love, which was of a Higher Power (God), had begun to flow from within us.

[Return to Conclusion of the Meeting](#) | [Return to links page](#)

The 12 Signs of Recovery

1. We seek to develop a daily relationship with a Higher Power, knowing that we are not alone in our efforts to heal ourselves from our addiction.
2. We are willing to be vulnerable because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power.
3. We surrender, one day at a time, our whole life strategy of, and our obsession with, the pursuit of romantic and sexual intrigue and emotional dependency.
4. We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.
5. We learn to accept and love ourselves, to take responsibility for our own lives, and to take care of our own needs before involving ourselves with others.
6. We become willing to ask for help, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others.
7. We allow ourselves to work through the pain of our low self-esteem and our fears of abandonment and responsibility. We learn to feel comfortable in solitude.

8. We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects.
9. We begin to substitute honesty for self-destructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings.
10. We become honest in expressing who we are, developing true intimacy in our relationships with ourselves and others.
11. We learn to value sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership.
12. We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery.

[Return to Conclusion of the Meeting](#)

[Return to links page](#)

The First Step

Step 1. We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction—that our lives had become unmanageable.

1. The word “powerless” summons up for us several related ideas. First, it means that whatever power is usually involved in making sound choices in our sexual and emotional behaviour did not reside with us. We were enslaved to sex and love (which we experienced as emotional dependency or romantic intrigue). The fact that we became captives of these things shows that there was something extremely important and powerful in our sexual and emotional patterns which gave us some kind of “payoff” that we thought we needed.
2. Sometimes we were seeking to screen the world, with all its demands and responsibilities, out of our awareness by mesmerizing ourselves with sexual activity. Sometimes we were trying to deaden a load of guilt and frustration by taking romantic or sexual holidays. Sometimes we sought to fill the emptiness within us with another person. Or perhaps we masked the fear of commitment by thinking of ourselves as living out new standards of morality based on “guilt-free sex,” “free love,” or “recreational sex.” But all of us were using our sexual powers and emotional investments to either lessen pain or augment pleasure. These pervasive motives governed our sexual and romantic intentions and actions.

3. At some time in our lives our behaviour began to take on the compulsive hallmarks of addiction. The once rare liaisons became monthly, then weekly. They happened when inconvenient, or when they interfered with work or family obligations. The occasional pleasurable daydream grew into a constant obsession that destroyed our ability to concentrate on more ordinary and more important things. One by one such things as satisfaction in our work, friends and social activities dropped away as we found more and more of our time and our thoughts absorbed by one person. The occasional relief of sexual tension with masturbation became a need for which the opportunity had to be created. We had lost control over the rate or frequency (or both) at which we would seek the romantic or sexual “solution” to life’s ills.
4. Some of us were caught up in the hypnotic intensity of sexual and romantic encounters or relationships, merging ourselves into our lovers or spouses. These experiences became overwhelmingly compelling, carrying us along with them, exuberantly at first, and then less and less willingly. Unrelenting, the imperiousness with which our sexual and romantic interludes or absorption in a relationship now forced themselves upon us led to prolonged bondage to our sexual and emotional needs: a real, undeniable craving.

[Return to links page](#)

5. The original quest for distraction from life’s tensions and responsibilities, for relief from past guilt and present frustration, now led us into oblivion. The brave new worlds

of morality where “anything goes” because “nothing matters” boomeranged, leaving us grasping for some residual sense of meaning or reality in life. Obsession and compulsion, now our masters, meant that control over our sexual and emotional lives no longer resided with us, or within us. We had lost control, regardless of whether we admitted it to ourselves or not.

6. From the standpoint of “anything goes, who cares?” loss of control didn’t seem so bad. In fact, the addiction itself often held us spellbound, convinced that it was what we wanted. Many of us were so numbed that only a blast of physical and emotional intensity from a sexual or romantic “hit” could penetrate and animate our progressively deadened, dissipated beings. Like a cattle prod jabbed into someone who is exhausted and dazed, an addictive hit jolted us into a temporary illusion that we were alive and really living. It was as though we had a voice in our heads which said, “If you get more, then everything will fall into place.”
7. If our addiction took the form of dependency on one person, again, loss of control did not always seem so bad. We could tell ourselves that our bondage was really the sign of a “match made in heaven,” that since we would sacrifice anything for this love, we would surely be rewarded for our unselfishness. Alone, life was drab and empty; if we could only become more a part of our lover, become ONE, everything would be alright.
8. Yet a vague but persistent nagging within our deepest self continued to bear witness that all was not well. Despite

all the cultural and rational camouflage behind which our addiction could hide, it was impossible, short of suicide, to kill that innermost voice that whispered to us of life's opportunities for growth and wholeness that we were helplessly letting slip by. The guilt of prior deeds and passions or missed opportunities gave way to the deepest, most pervasive guilt of all: that of having left life un-lived, of having turned our backs on the possibility of fulfilling a meaningful destiny.

[Return to links page](#)

9. These existential pangs were not welcomed into our awareness. Yet they found their way in, whatever we did. The heat of addictive passion was less and less able to blot them out. The addiction itself could no longer deliver that formerly reliable, thoroughly engrossing sexual and emotional return. The utter futility of going on under the sway of our sex and love addiction was finally becoming clear.
10. It mattered little whether our patterns were primarily those of unbridled promiscuity, or excessive emotional dependency on one person, or some combination of these. Each of us, in his or her own time, finally experienced a sense of real desperation. To continue to live out our addictive patterns, or to be controlled by them, brought us in touch with the terror of irrevocably losing sanity, of slipping over the edge of an abyss beyond which any stability and life purpose would be forever out of reach. We found this prospect to be more terrifying even than

the thought of physical death. This loss of one's soul could only be all the more poignant if the body in which it lived continued to exist, unanimated spiritually from within, and monstrosly driven by imperious instinctual drives which would now have become its masters.

11. Yet for a few of us the terror of being further devoured by our sex and love addiction brought us to the point of unconditional surrender. We decided we HAD to stop. Now we began to confront the second aspect of powerlessness: the paradox that surrender to the impossibility of control is the beginning of recovery.
12. Most of us had attempted at various times a wide range of strategies to control our behaviour so that our lives as addicts would somehow blend in with our "other" lives as members of society. We would break up with a particular lover, or find another lover, often in rapid succession. We stopped masturbating—or started masturbating (as a substitute for getting sex from others). We changed gender preference, seeking relationships with those less sexually attractive to us. We moved to another town, made inner resolves, took oaths before friends or loved ones. We married jealous, suspicious lovers, or got divorced so that we would be free to find a more satisfying mate. We had religious conversions, sometimes choosing a monastic life where sex would not be available. We sought deep emotional involvement, trying to balance the intensity of one relationship by starting another somewhere else. And on and on.

13. These strategies, no matter how strong the conviction with which they were adopted, always turned out to be like “going on the wagon.” If we had some initial success in curbing our addictive behaviour, we would quickly take on an air of smug confidence, wholly unwarranted, and conclude that we would now be able to “manage things.” This merely lowered our defences, so that we sank back into the quicksand of our patterns again, sometimes within months or weeks, more often within days or hours.

[Return to links page](#)

14. Our lack of success in managing our addiction, our loss of control, had become an established fact. We had experienced over and over the mind-altering effect which had sapped the strength of our resolve to free ourselves from sex and love addiction. Thus we approached the prospect of surrendering our sex and love addiction with real humility, for we had no way of knowing if such a surrender was even possible.
15. The addiction itself made our willingness to attempt freeing ourselves of the disease highly questionable. But at least we were becoming desperate enough, once again, to try to extricate ourselves. We began to recognize that we were powerless, not merely to change some specific sex partner, lover, or situation. We were powerless over an addictive pattern, of which any current, specific circumstance was just the most recent example.

16. The whole trouble in our previous attempts to manage the addiction was that we had underestimated the desperate seriousness of our condition. In flailing about, trying to be free of a particularly painful situation, we had failed to comprehend the scope of the pattern towards which our current disaster was pointing, and of which it was a result. True surrender of our sex and love addiction meant not only being willing to take ourselves out of the painful situation at hand. It meant, most importantly, being ready to be free of our whole life strategy of obsession with and pursuit of love and sex. The resolve only to be rid of a specific painful situation, without the readiness to break the whole addictive pattern, amounted to “going on the wagon.”
17. In coming to terms with our individual patterns of addiction, we may have felt somewhat buoyed initially by the fact that in SLAA each person defines his or her own particular manifestation of sex and love addiction. This led many of us to the private conclusion that we could “define” our patterns in ways that would let us enjoy our addiction in another form. It would be sufficient, we thought, to label only the obviously troublesome behaviour as addictive, and unnecessary to include other “courses on the menu.”
18. If, for example, we claimed that our “bottom line” addiction was engaging in exhibitionistic behaviour, then in defining our pattern only as this specific practice we might kid ourselves that new, paid-for sexual liaisons actually were not part of our addictive pattern. We would claim that such novelty actually was a step forward, because we were no

longer engaging in purely solitary acts. The opposite was true for those of us who labelled only blatant promiscuous behaviour as addictive. We would engage in such solitary activities as masturbation, voyeurism, or exhibitionism, and claim that they were improvements because we were no longer involving others directly in our disease.

[Return to links page](#)

19. Such attempts were as futile as for an alcoholic to switch from beer to wine, or wine to beer, claiming either as an “improvement” over the other. Those of us who tried to deceive ourselves in the way we defined our sex and love addiction either found ourselves slipping back into the old behaviour, or getting into real trouble with our new “steps forward.”
20. We learned the hard way that there was no such thing as half-surrender. The “freedom” to define our own addictive pattern could not be used in a self-serving way. Our addictions are a reality that persists regardless of any short-sighted, convenient definition. If we were leaving out of our personal definition some behaviour that was addictive, it would certainly pull us back into the pattern again.
21. The certain pain of continuing our sex and love addiction brought us to the admission of Step 1, that “we were powerless over our sex and love addiction” and that we could not manage our lives unless we were free of it. Finally, we reached a point of surrendering unconditionally. The proof that our surrender was indeed unconditional was that

we now refrained, one day at a time, from every form of bottom-line behaviour we saw as part of our own addictive pattern.

22. If our primary addictive problem was obsessive love dependency, we separated from or severed ties with our “partners.” This was not done to punish ourselves or others, but out of a recognition that these were no-win situations. Many of us suspected or realized that we would need an indefinite period alone in which to learn to understand and deal with our disease. Distractions through some form of sex or love relationship could only abort our own recovery. If we had just been jilted by someone we felt was “indispensable,” surrender meant that we accepted our loss, and refused to take revenge or recriminate. It also meant that, perhaps for the first time in our lives, we were not going to relieve our wounded feelings in some new person’s arms!

23. Each of us, regardless of individual circumstances, was now willing to go to any lengths, a day at a time, to stay unhooked. This decision was unilateral. It did not depend on the cooperation or lack of cooperation of our spouses, lovers, or sex objects. We were willing to be available not to the next lover or new sexual fantasy, but to whatever might happen next within ourselves. Paradoxically, this was not willingness that came from strength, but from the certainty of the dire consequences of continuing on in our addiction. As we turned from the old patterns, the painful emotions we had always tried to evade brought us to a series of insights which were the gift of the Second Step.

[End of Step 1]

[Return to links page](#)

The Second Step

Step 2: We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

1. We endured the early phases of withdrawal, sometimes achingly putting one twenty-four stretch together after another. As this continued, we faced a real dilemma concerning our personal identity. While actively involved in sex and love addiction we had found it impossible (if we had thought about it at all) to assess just how great an investment we had been making in our addiction throughout the course of it.
2. We began to recognize that our disease, far from being just a way to stop the clock with pleasure and intensity, had moulded our personalities in ways that would maximize our ability to get the addictive returns! Our physical appearance, our mannerisms, the way we went about our careers or other activities, many of the traits we thought of as our identifying trademarks, as who we were, had been designed to serve our sex and love addiction. Even if we seemed to possess some positive traits, such as authentic concern for others, we could see that these had been perverted by our addiction, leaving us full of conflict and working at cross-purposes. The line between compassion and passion had never been clear to us.
3. Indeed, our sex and love addiction, dictating who and what we had striven to be in the world, had supplied our principal source of identity, our entire self-concept. We had

felt so self-assured, surveying a crowded room, advertising or broadcasting our availability. We knew we would be met with similar energy from others, a never-ending source of “rainchecks.”

4. What security we had derived, knowing we could foster insecurity in others, making them all the more needy and dependent on us, thus insuring our own sense of well-being. We enjoyed the power our sex appeal gave us in enforcing our dominance over others by hinting that they could be replaced. We felt safe in knowing that physically, emotionally, and mentally we could continue to attract new people to us, or further bind those already in our web.
5. Yet, whether we were aware of it or not, our entire being had been moulded by our failure, or refusal, to solve from within the problems of our real lives: insecurity, loneliness, and lack of any abiding sense of personal worth and dignity. Through sex, charm, emotional appeal, or persuasive intellect, we had used other people as “drugs,” to avoid facing our own personal inadequacy. Once we saw this, we realized that in surrendering our addictive behaviour we would inevitably have to question the whole foundation of our self-image, our personal identity.

[Return to links page](#)

6. This task was staggering, implying as it did that our former selves would have to die, or at least risk dying, so that a new self, free of the addiction, could live. Nor could we get much relief from this dilemma by bravely making

declarations of some set values we were NOW prepared to live by! We came to realize that this disease of sex and love addiction so subtly and thoroughly permeated our best-intentioned and most fervid plans to reform ourselves, that even our ability to think clearly was undermined.

7. There could be no such thing as a self-powered cure. Too many of us had tried this and had failed repeatedly. It was not that our logic, motives or intents were wrong. Rather, our very ability to see the problem clearly, and our wishes to change ourselves, were themselves systematically distorted by the addiction.

That part of our mind which at least intermittently recognised our sickness was itself not immune, and could not be solely relied upon to guide us to health.

8. As we came to appreciate the magnitude and mind-altering nature of sex and love addiction, and the extent to which it had perverted our value system, we had to admit that we could not reshape our whole identity unaided. In the stark recognition of our profound frailty, we experienced the need to find a Power greater than ourselves—something that would be at least one step ahead of our diseased intentions, and give us the consistent guidance we could not provide for ourselves. The possibility of finding some form of faith, based not on any specific conception of “God” but rather on a need to find such a faith, was the beginning of spiritual healing.

[Return to links page](#)

9. Nevertheless, the fact that we needed faith in some Power, since we could not trust ourselves to be consistent in either behaviour or motive, left some of us feeling even more shaken. Where would we find even the rudiments of a faith that could carry us through this dissolving and reconstruction of our whole personality? If there WAS no Power greater than ourselves, it would be impossible!
10. The most elementary solution to this problem of faith was found through contact with sober people at our regular SLAA meetings who had surmounted the need-for-faith barrier themselves. As we listened to their stories of sickness and recovery, we could identify at depth with their patterns of addiction and diseased values. And we could clearly see that they were now leading more positive and healthy lives.
11. As living examples, [sober people] offered us the hope that whatever sources of spiritual aid they credited as helping them might be available to us as well. We could not question the insanity of their past addictive histories which they shared with us. It was so apparent. Nor, when we contrasted the quality of the lives these people were now living with our own addiction-rooted struggles and dilemmas, could we really doubt that they had been delivered over into a form of redemption.
12. Contact with those already recovering from sex and love addiction was also a source of practical help in sustaining our day-to-day sobriety. Suggestions on how to avoid addictive situations were given, and the simple act of

explaining a current temptation or situation to someone else who understood seemed to help us stay honest with ourselves. As we realized how helpful this network of support was, we sensed that a belief in any specific God or divinity was unnecessary. Our need for faith could be answered with an affirming hope, a sense of the possibility for spiritual guidance that was already apparent in the experience of the SLAA members who preceded us.

13. This shift in our attitude from need to hope brought us to another fundamental milestone in our recovery. We had laid the first foundation stone for the acquisition of faith. We had seen that it was possible for us to live through the pain of withdrawal without returning to our old patterns, and we sensed that the Power to do this was coming from outside ourselves. Now we were ready to consider just how we might turn this faith into a practical, working asset. We began to examine the implications for our lives of the Third Step.

[End of Step 2]

[Return to links page](#)

The Third Step

Step 3: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

1. The situation was roughly this: if our sex and love addiction was such a fundamental part of our personality—if it had developed long ago and had shaped or deformed many of our other personality traits, our relationships, and our value system—then we had to ask whether all our prior ideas about who and what we were might be incorrect or ill-founded. This is not to say that on a practical level everything we thought we knew about ourselves was wrong. But if we really wanted to change ourselves and lead new and sane lives, we had to at least pose the question, if only on the abstract level. We had to admit to the possibility that anything, if not everything, we believed could be faulty.
2. To use the Biblical expression of the “cup that runneth over,” we were like cups that had run over with obsession—with neediness, lust, and intrigue. Step 3, as a spiritual exercise, suggested that we could choose to tip our own cup over and let the sickness run out of it. We knew that having done this, we could not refill the cup through our unaided will, because we had become convinced that any solitary attempt to do so would inevitably take on the obsessive/compulsive character of our personalities. We could not outwit our own addictive natures. The enemy was US.

3. We could see that if we were ever to be as cups running over with redeemed, non-addictive lives, then some Power greater than ourselves, the need for which we had already affirmed, would have to do the refilling. Such a Power (He, She, It, or They) would do that in Its own time, according to Its scheme of things, not our own.
4. What would our lives be like, we wondered, if we were really to empty our chalice of disease and refrain from refilling it again ourselves, and instead let it be filled eventually through God's grace? We simply could not know. There were no guarantees. All we knew was that we did not want to go back into our active sex and love addiction again.
5. The certain hopelessness of that condition, were we to go back, compelled us to move forward into the unknown. With no guarantees, and with much apprehension, but with at least the rudiments of faith, we came to understand that if we were unable to prescribe our own treatment for sex and love addiction, then we would be better off turning "our will and our lives over" to the God of our understanding, even if we did not know what might happen as a result. We made the decision to do this, however abstract the idea seemed.

[Return to links page](#)

6. Having made this decision, how could we now commence our new relationship with God? The answer, like all good answers, was simple. We had already been staying clear of addictive entanglements and episodes day by day for some

time. What we added to this outward change in behaviour was prayer. We now began each day in communion with the God of our understanding by asking for help that day in staying free of addictive behaviour.

7. We asked also that God help us in the immense undertaking on which we had embarked, that of undergoing the death of our former, addiction-riddled self, and the rebirth of a redeemed, affirming person. And if we were successful in not acting out addictively by day's end, we thanked God, whatever we understood God to be, for having helped us live another twenty-four hours free from bottom-line sex and love addiction.
8. The time-honoured *Serenity Prayer* became a part of our daily repertoire for handling challenging and potentially dangerous situations:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done.

9. As we looked at the remaining steps, we saw that they were structured on the principle of Step 3. Our cup of diseased behaviour would be emptied out, and we would cleanse it as best we could, making it ready for God's Grace to refill it, in accordance with God's plan, not our own.
10. The "decision" had been made, and we were now trying to open our lives to God's influence through the use of daily prayer. Yet much of what was to come still seemed like wishful thinking, and very far-fetched indeed. We were still plagued by sometimes prolonged bouts of obsessive

thinking or emotional yearning for intrigue and romance, for sexual oblivion.

11. These could be set off by accidental encounters with our former addictive lovers, which seemed almost fiendishly psychic in the uncanny way they happened just when we were most vulnerable. At other times we would fantasize about all the people in the world who, we fancied, were blissfully unaware of anything called “sex and love addiction,” and who were, we imagined, indulging themselves with great exuberance. Or we would remember with longing the “good times” in a past marriage or addictive relationship, forgetting all the awful experiences.
12. Such musings would leave us in a very foul frame of mind, indeed! How deprived we were! When these clouds descended on us, any vision of the process in which we were engaged was obscured. Disregarding how much better off we really were now, we yearned for our former ignorance. And yet we found that the door to awareness, once opened, could not be closed. We had seen—we had even felt—occasional hints of what a healthy existence could be like. We knew it was open-ended: there was no apparent upper limit to the spiritual, emotional and mental well-being toward which we were now moving, even though sometimes grudgingly.

[Return to links page](#)

13. What would often serve to break a spell of bad weather was getting a new insight into ourselves, through sharing at a

SLAA meeting, or during a time of reflective solitude, or perhaps in a dream. These insights seemed to stem directly from the fact that we had not squandered our energy in addictive acting out, in spite of severe temptations to do so. They put us in touch with deeper levels of our inner nature, bit by bit. Sometimes these “delivering” insights seemed to be a kind of reward for not having abandoned our sobriety, and from the vantage point of these oases, we felt grateful that we had not acted out again.

14. In this phase of recovery we found that much of the emotional energy which had been spent on our addiction was now surfacing as feelings and memories that were charged with meaning. More and more of our past pattern of sex and love addiction was being revealed or becoming clearer to us. Some of us kept journals, or a dream log, or entered into counselling or psychotherapy. We found that, almost in spite of ourselves, we were becoming formally engaged in the spirit of the Fourth Step.

[End of Step 3]

[Return to links page](#)

The Fourth Step

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

1. When we first saw the words “moral inventory,” we had recoiled in alarm. Surely such a task would be too massive or too unnerving! However, to our surprise we found that there came a point when we approached this task without fear, because we had come to terms with Step 3. As we surrendered to the God of our understanding, we found ourselves having “intuitions”: stay away from here, call this friend, go here instead of there, and so on. We came to trust the guidance that was helping us navigate away from the old addictive patterns. If God was helping us manage our external lives, it was easier to become open to clearing out the inner debris, to trust God’s guidance for the inward journey.
2. But how were we to accomplish this inventory? Our shared experiences showed us that no two people would do it exactly alike; there was no one, single “right way” to go about it. What we were really after was not just the relief of confession, of having completed a specific checklist or narrative of our lives. What we needed was to achieve some real understanding about ourselves, as much as possible without fear, pride, or reservations. We needed to find some bedrock from which to assay, without illusion, who and what we had been in the world, what we had held ourselves up to be to others and to ourselves. Furthermore, we needed to see the motives behind the roles we played

and the image we presented, to understand the payoffs we had derived from our addiction.

3. Most of us found that writing down our inventory was very helpful. Looking at what we had done in black and white was a valuable aid to honesty and objectivity. The very qualities that helped us to build the addiction—pride, resentment, and self-justification (among others)—were the things that could prevent us from seeing it for what it was. As we read our own version of what had happened, we could often see through our excuses and our need to blame others; we clearly saw the progression of our spiritual malady, and how “convenient” our memories could be in seeking to minimize our roles in our more painful debacles. (What was “between the lines” of our written inventory was often more important than the lines themselves.)
4. As we looked at our current lives and at our past, we saw that virtually everything we did and everyone we knew was exploited to satisfy our addictive needs. We may have started our inventory with the relationships that were particularly troublesome in our lives. But we soon began to see the patterns: we gave away our lives to blondes, or to successful people; we sought out people we could rescue, or who would rescue us; we dressed to attract the kind of person we said we did not want; we seduced those who had some power over us through work or friendship; we drove away our families with verbal or emotional abuse when we really needed them the most, and on and on.

[Return to links page](#)

5. The process was something akin to peeling an onion. We could only do it one layer at a time, and there were often many bitter tears at the cutting of each layer. As we looked deeper, we found that many aspects of our relationships that we had labelled as “healthy” or at least “harmless” were in fact less obvious expressions of our addiction. Thus, as we looked at our non-sexual relationships with friends, family, co-workers, and so on, we often found the same motives and character defects driving us there as well.
6. At first we saw only the events and the patterns that repeated themselves. Then we began to identify the emotions and motives that flowed underneath in a vile current. We now saw how dishonesty had prevented us from really seeing the progression of our disease. We had not let ourselves think about the money we had wasted on sex, about the risks of disease to others and ourselves, about the signs of powerlessness over being sexually driven, about the many lies we had told to cover up our activities. Self-centeredness and pride seemed to be at the root of our difficulties. We had dressed and acted seductively, craving attention and more than our share of sexual intrigue. We spent money to impress people, and verbally abused those who did not give us the attention we thought we deserved, or tried to hurt those who would not give us our own way. We proved our power by seducing our friends’ lovers or spouses, and responded with anger when the satiation of our self-centred needs was thwarted.
7. As this exhaustive inventory of ourselves continued, we came to understand why we were sex and love addicts.

This was not abstract psychological theorizing about whatever influences might have “made” us this way. It was an honest look at some of the payoffs we had derived from our addiction: the comfort of self-pity, the luxury of self-justifying resentment, the apparent insulation from having to take authentic emotional risks and assume real responsibility to others. The shoddy misdeeds and happenstances of our past lives were revealed as manifestations of our persistent dis-ease. We were not merely people who had done “bad” things; we were what we had done.

8. Yet even as we realized how dishonest and self-centred we were, and had been, we also saw that we ourselves had often been done in. We had not consciously chosen to be sex and love addicts. Often our normal, right-sized human needs had somehow never been met during the formative period of our lives. We realized that there was a basic loneliness which had made us afraid to be alone. So we had made lovers feel guilty over leaving us, or we had slept with strangers.

[Return to links page](#)

9. The fear that we were not or could not be deserving of real love led us to make excessive sacrifices to parents or lovers, to flirt with everyone to prove we were attractive, and to lie to impress others. Our fear of facing pain or making commitments drove us into relationships with people we did not like, or to stay in destructive or empty relationships.
10. Through the Fourth Step process, we realized that pride and wilfulness had hidden the yearning of a lonely and fearful child, an emptiness that cried out to be filled. We did not cause it, and we could not control it. In this realization was the beginning of compassion, our first glimpse of self-forgiveness.
We began to feel the inner pressure to release, rather than to sexualize away, what we had learned about ourselves. We found ourselves ready for the Fifth Step.

[End of Step 4]

[Return to links page](#)

The Fifth Step

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

1. Many of us recognized that a characteristic of our sex and love addiction was that our lives were divided into carefully segregated compartments, underscored by secrecy and confidentiality. This was so, regardless of whether we had been promiscuous, or had maintained addictive romantic or emotional ties with more than one person at a time, or had been hooked into dependency on one person.
2. Indeed, we even took pride in our ability to keep a secret, to keep our stories straight, to keep our feelings hidden, to go it alone. This brave, solitary strategy had an important payoff. If we were able to manage the maze of intrigue without discovery, or could keep the one we were dependent on from knowing our true feelings, then we apparently never had to deal with the consequences of our actions. We could even deny to ourselves that there were such things as “consequences.” What a tremendous incentive this was to stay closed and not reveal our true selves to anyone!
3. But in continuing to “go it alone” we were suffering from emotional and spiritual constipation, unable to make constructive use of our experiences and emotions. Our inner condition resembled a trash compactor rather than a recycler. We were mired in our own sludge.

4. Step 5 was the way in which we began to allow our lives to become open. It had been difficult enough, through the lengthy process of Step 4, to become open to ourselves. Nevertheless, if we did not go further and share with another person what we had discovered about ourselves, our sobriety was in real danger. It was of no use to identify our powerlessness to manage our own lives without a return to addictive patterns, if we were now to attempt a solitary reconstruction. The loneliness and isolation, which was both the root of the disease and a consequence of it, would not be eased until we began reconciliation with God and with other human beings.

[Return to links page](#)

5. Here, as everywhere else on this road to wholeness, we had to be willing to take a risk. In the steps that had already become a part of our lives we had learned to trust God at least a little. We were now quite aware that the God of our understanding had known all along what we were doing, and seemed to care about us regardless. Now we had to risk revealing these terrible truths about ourselves to another human being, to face the exact nature of the difficulties that now filled us with such shame, guilt, and remorse. While this prospect seemed quite terrifying, we had to do this if we were to make a sincere commitment to turn away, at depth, from our past pattern of addictive behaviour and the underlying motives which drove it.

6. How were we to choose the person with whom to take this step? While some people felt they would be more

comfortable sharing bits and pieces with several people, most of us felt we needed to find one person with whom to be totally honest for this first inventory. Too many of us had addictive patterns that included being only partially honest with different people. Forging a link of total honesty with one human being was an important step in humility. More importantly, in finally telling all, we could break the terrible, lonely isolation that had kept us from getting what we craved all along—unconditional love and acceptance for what and who we really were, both good and bad.

7. This confidant was sometimes an experienced member of SLAA. Or sometimes we chose to talk with a therapist or member of the clergy. It was most important that whoever we chose would keep our disclosures completely confidential, and understand that we were not seeking penance or moral judgement. This person needed to have a good understanding of human nature, and a good sense of balance and control in his/her own sexual and romantic life.
8. Two cautions were in order. Confessions build intimacy, and healthy intimacy is one important step toward wholeness. However, we needed always to be on our guard against emotional intrigue. We needed to choose someone for whom we had no problematic sexual attraction, which meant s/he could not be a former or potential lover or mate. Also, while it was tempting to seek forgiveness from those we had hurt by making them wholesale recipients of our “Fifth Step,” the goal of making amends was not an

immediate objective of this step, and could not be a hidden agenda in taking it.

[Return to links page](#)

9. The second caution was not to confuse the Fifth Step with an “X-rated” tale of every sordid event in our lives, nor with the object of much therapy which seeks the “cause” of our disturbances. While we could not hesitate to disclose any details that were relevant, it was the motives within ourselves, the payoffs which we extracted, which really had to be revealed. While it was not wholly appropriate to blame either our early experiences or ourselves for our behaviour as sex and love addicts, we had to accept some personal responsibility for it. We needed not to hide our true motives behind cosmetic rationalization or blame.
10. Our lives had been rigorously closed for years, and this initial experience of sharing ourselves in full honesty with another sometimes took a physical toll. The migraine-prone suffered headaches. Others suffered real physical exhaustion or nausea from the effort. This whole exercise of revealing ourselves to another was just so uncharacteristic! For a few of us the positive effects, which we all experienced eventually, came almost immediately. For these few the first unbundling of their self-constructed straight-jackets resulted not only in a feeling of relief, but of emotional release as well. But no matter what our reactions were to this first thorough sharing of ourselves with another human being, all of us found over time that we had turned another corner in recovery. We could belong

to the human race, and our shared vulnerability was our membership card to unconditional acceptance by others. We would never have to live closed or divided lives again.

11. We had now come a long way along our new path. Ceasing the addictive behaviour had led us to the tentative acquisition of faith. Under the protective mantle of our new faith we had taken a hard look at ourselves, unearthing in the process some basic patterns we had unwittingly lived out. We had been carried along by the excitement of self-discovery to share what we had uncovered with another person, another risk ventured and survived.
12. Now another problem gradually revealed itself. We discovered that while we had gained perspective on ourselves and espoused God's guidance in our lives, we were nevertheless continuing to live in self-destructive or self-defeating ways in many areas of our lives, often in the very same areas our inventories had flagged as being problematical. There was no doubt about it: a big discrepancy existed between what we had come to realize was beneficial for our lives, and how we were actually still going about living them.

[Return to links page](#)

13. We had been hopeful, of course, that all our troubles and character defects would dissipate as a by-product of the labours we had taken in doing an inventory and sharing it with another. But as evidence accumulated that some of our “old friends” were still with us, in spite of our best efforts to take stock of them, discouragement mounted. It was frustrating to have to acknowledge that becoming aware of our defects was not the same thing as having them removed. This dilemma brought us into contact with the Sixth Step.

[End of Step 5]

[Return to links page](#)

The Sixth Step

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

1. The idea of surrendering our entire identity to whatever process of change was necessary was only an abstract concept in Steps 2 and 3. Now we were facing the reality of what that meant. Summoning the willingness to let go of every defect we had uncovered in Step 4 was much easier to think about than to accomplish. What was it that was blocking this willingness?
2. One problem was that it was easy to find ourselves feeling “deprived” once again. Hadn’t we given up enough when we stopped all forms of bottom-line addictive behaviour? Wasn’t our real problem the active addiction itself, and now that we were sober, didn’t we have the right to relax and “be human,” to go through life guilt-free? Weren’t we at least better off than most people we saw around us? Did we have to be perfect to be acceptable? Besides, who wanted to be a saint!
3. This attitude was easy enough to justify to ourselves; however, we were actually at a very critical point in our sobriety. In the first five steps we were walking away from the active disease; now we needed to make that first real step toward rebuilding. While it might be true that not every part of us needed wholesale remodelling, it *was* true that we could not trust ourselves to direct the project solely on the basis of our unaided will. Our twisted motives, often

hidden, could far too easily turn qualities that were quite harmless, in others, into a source of addictive return for us.

4. Once again, we had to grapple with humility. It would have been a serious error to attribute all of our troubles to the addiction alone, for our character defects affected all other areas of our lives as well. This was not time to relax, for we needed to continue our vigilance against the constant sexual and romantic temptations and the illusion of “the perfect romance.” In becoming ready to give up our character defects, we were deciding to give up that part of ourselves which was capable of “putting on a con,” the devices we used to attract lovers or deceive others.

[Return to links page](#)

5. Giving up these defects meant not only that we would be stripped of our addictive hooks for others, but that we would have only ourselves to present to friends and potential partners. Addicts that we were, most of us were riddled with insecurity and feelings of inferiority. We were terrified that if we gave up the “con,” and the defects which gave rise to and supported it, we would be viewed with contempt and would never find anyone to “love” us again.
6. Another problem was that as addicts we had become accustomed to pain. More often than not, pain was a central characteristic of our romantic involvements and even many of our sexual pursuits. Some of us even equated pain with love, so that in the absence of love we would at least be comforted by the presence of pain. But in sobriety, having

gone through surrender, withdrawal, and an inventory, what did we still have of ourselves? Couldn't we at least be left with our pain? If we let go of all of our character defects (the source of our pain), what would be left of us? Did we have no choice about what we would be at all? Such was our diseased thinking.

7. The old emotional habits which were still so much a part of us had subtle payoffs which made them difficult to surrender. Many of us, ourselves victims of emotional deprivation in our early years, had learned to survive by cultivating hatred, anger, and resentment as motivating forces, seeking to insulate ourselves from hurt and fear. Now we discovered that we had crippled ourselves by using this monotonous strategy of distrust and isolation in all relationships, whether they were inherently hostile or not. In the extreme, we had become incapable of trust and authentic intimacy with anyone, even people who now seemed in our recovery to be more willing to trust us and to work towards partnership.
8. But we still seemed unable to respond in kind, often coming up against our own inner blocks, which kept experiences of genuine trust and caring at arm's length. These blocks were painful to recognize, especially since we now knew that we wanted to trust and take risks in sharing ourselves with others. This was all the more painful because we could see that the barriers were within us, and we didn't see how they could be dismantled. The end result of being weighed down by these internal blocks seemed to be the fear of being

emotionally steam-rolled by anyone else we let get close to us, or of winding up in inescapable isolation.

[Return to links page](#)

9. As we continued to have to live with ourselves, however, we found the consequences of indulging in our character defects increasingly uncomfortable to endure. Anger could seize us unexpectedly and fill us with murderous rage, or emotional binges would leave us despairing and suicidal, or depression would sap our will to go on, our hope for any future at all. We began to see the fallacy of that logic which said we could be guilt-free since everything we had done was caused by our sex and love addiction. We saw the spiritual bankruptcy behind the cosmetic humility of not wanting to be perfect. It became apparent that it would not work for us to specify just exactly what God could and could not do with us.

10. Our attitude towards our defects and underlying problems began to change. With new eyes we could see the serious consequences in the lives of others when they could not voluntarily surrender these difficulties. With growing maturity we realized that healthy relationships could only exist if we were human rather than superhuman. We came to understand that sex and love addiction appears to be a disease of actions when viewed from without, but is really a perversion of moral and ethical values *as experienced from within*. The spiritual dimensions of our dis-ease were now clear.

11. We now moved from a limited surrender of a specific addiction toward surrender to a life-long process which would refine the qualities we carried within and contributed to life. Underlying this whole shift in our attitude was increasing reliance on the God of our understanding. Indeed, it seemed that we were being given still another invitation to deepen our partnership with God. It was enough that we be willing to do the leg work, and be open-minded about what the result would be. God's grace would give us freedom from the burden of our old self. In humility, we understood that we were only being asked to get out of God's way, so that, with our cooperation, God's work could be done in our lives.

[End of Step 6]

[Return to links page](#)

The Seventh Step

Step 7: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

1. The nature of humility—which had once been so elusive, complicated, or undesirable to us—was now clearly apparent. We no longer confused it with humiliation, being forced to swallow unpalatable truths. We had come to see that our struggle with character defects and underlying conflicts was a crucible in which our relationship with God was being further refined. A lot of what we thought we were, and thought we couldn't live without, was being boiled away. As this became clearer to us, our attitudes changed profoundly. We felt a deep desire to experience God's will in all areas of our lives *for its own sake*, rather than for some limited, self-defined objective. We were becoming vessels more suited to God's purpose. Our capacity to experience fulfillment in our own lives was directly tied to being more available to God's will for us.
2. Although we had come a long way in our recovery, we were, however, still unable, by our unaided will, to shape our lives in a consistently positive manner. The reality of this estimation of ourselves was a truth we could now accept, if not gratefully, at least without struggle. This acceptance of truth, and willingness to allow a Power outside ourselves to continue to do what we could not do for ourselves, WAS humility.
3. When we continued to ask God daily to remove the shortcomings that were all too apparent in every area of our

lives, we began exercising spiritual muscles that had been very flabby indeed. It was easier to accept God's help with the defects that had already caused us to suffer extreme consequences. It was far more difficult to come to terms with patterns which were still giving us short-term payoffs, even though they might be costing us longer-term peace of mind.

4. As our consciousness of these things continued to sharpen, we sometimes resented God. After all, we had already achieved what had, at an earlier time, seemed utterly impossible—freedom from acting out on our sex and love addiction—yet despite our success, we still seemed to be left on the hook with our unresolved conflicts and frailties. However, even if we held a grudge against God, we realized that this Power was still the only force we could rely on, overall, to be on our side. Even in the midst of deep discouragement, disillusionment, and pessimism, we knew that there was really no other game in town with odds as favourable for a positive outcome. No matter how many failures we had each day in the intention NOT to act on a particular defect, there was no way to go but forward. Like it or not, we belonged to God by default.

[Return to links page](#)

5. With time, we began to take a wider view of our predicament. We had been expecting God to remove these defects of character by skirting them out a side exit so that we would not really have to confront them! We had hoped they were surface blemishes, and as easily and painlessly

removable. Now we began to feel that God was indeed a great “allower.” Rather than taking us off the hook with minimal effort on our part, our higher Power seemed to require our active participation.

6. Apparently God was not interested in relating to us as a parent might to some helpless child who was always getting into scrapes. God seemed to want to form some kind of partnership. Perhaps we were supposed to develop our full human capacities, including those involving sharing and cooperation, instead of passively turning ourselves over to God as a wholesale protector or a punitive, omnipotent dictator. This new and open communication with God about our shortcomings was not to be the kind of hypocritical bargaining, or desperate pleas and demands, that we were prone to during our active addiction. God did not owe us anything, and was not going to take instruction about what we required.
7. This new partnership with God, in which we accepted direction about just what part of our spiritual being needed exercise, had amazing results. We might have asked to have the shortcoming of impatience removed, only to find that we did not need to practice patience. Instead, we had to get honest about our self-centred wilfulness. As we practiced thoughtfulness towards others, really giving without holding onto the expectation of reward, impatience slipped away.
8. The quick temper we asked God to remove was checked momentarily; we could suddenly feel the defensive fear

that was hidden behind the anger, and find the courage to act on faith, rather than fear. We asked to have our longing for a person or a particular sexual hunting ground removed, and found ourselves given a choice. When we voluntarily chose to avoid those places and those people, the longing eased. The feelings of inferiority and insecurity, which we petitioned God to replace with confidence, were openly admitted, and as we accepted the support or the confessions of similar insecurity from others, we felt comforted.

[Return to links page](#)

9. Even our failures to make noticeable headway on some troublesome defects could be used for spiritual nourishment. For instance, two prevailing character defects which many of us experienced were perfectionism and pride. Even as we failed to control our petty selfishness or chronic procrastination day after day—were less than “perfect”—we saw that we were learning how to accept progress, rather than perfection! If we could not always be proud of the results of our efforts to change, at least we had earned the right to respect ourselves for the efforts themselves.

10. As we continued to experience this evolving relationship with God, it came as no surprise that more housecleaning was needed. From the surrender to our powerlessness over sex and love addiction and then over ourselves, we had come to know ourselves more as we really were, and had entered into partnership with a Power that could free us from the addiction and lead us into a new life. We had begun to develop spiritual qualities which we had never had, or had allowed to go unused during our active addiction. Working hand in hand with our new partner, God, it was time to begin making our peace with other human beings.

[End of Step 7]

[Return to links page](#)

The Eighth Step

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

1. In Step 8, we returned to a process of self-examination and house-cleaning similar to that in Step 4. This time we were dealing with the more difficult and emotionally charged problems of our relationships with others. The list we made was often a long one, since we now realized that our defects had affected virtually every relationship we had ever had. Each one was examined carefully, even those going back into childhood.
2. Like other people, we had been life's victims in many respects. Many of us had memories of emotional deprivation or of being physically or even sexually abused. It mattered little whether this abuse was objectively true in every detail or merely perceived as such. The point was that our *feelings* about these events had hardened into a great bitterness which we held for those people who had mistreated us. We had also turned this hatred inward, redirecting it against ourselves, using our self-loathing to justify our unworthiness to be loved by others, letting *them* off the hook! As we examined these old relationships, we could not see why we owed *them* amends. Surely *we* were the ones who had been harmed in those relationships.
3. In many other relationships we also had difficulty in seeing ourselves as wrong-doers. Much of our experience seemed to say that the real power in our addictive relationships

was with those others: “They preyed upon me in bars. They sought *me* ... I tried to get out of the relationship, but s/he begged me to stay... S/he used me, took my money, hurt me.”

4. But the Steps we had already taken had brought about an important change in attitude. The inventory had helped us see that the root of our problems was in our own self-centred motives and uncontrolled passions. Whether we were victims or victimizers (and most of us were both), we had used the disturbed relationships about us for our own purposes, for obtaining the addictive payoff. Regardless of what others had done or failed to do, our own part in these relationships was riddled with dishonesty and manipulation of others, with wilfulness and pride.

[Return to links page](#)

5. We realized that we needed to forgive others for essentially the same qualities and deeds for which we ourselves were also seeking forgiveness. For our own sake, we had to extend to those we thought we hated the compassionate understanding we needed in order to experience forgiveness ourselves. We could not make our forgiveness of others conditional on their having redeemed themselves, or righted their wrongs. We had to forgive them because, like us, they were sick and afflicted, and presumably had not set out in life to be so.
6. The problem now was that we had to examine the nature of the harm *we* had done to others, and see if there was

a way to make it right. It was not a simple willingness to apologize we needed, but the capacity to see exactly how we had harmed others and how we could set the record straight. The prospect of going to those at whose hands we had experienced humiliation, or admitting our own wrongdoings to those who had suffered as a result of them, was intimidating, to say the least.

7. But even if we could not see how we could find the courage to carry out these amends, the willingness to try to do so was vital to our progress. If fear and pride kept us from addressing this important step in our spiritual journey, we might go through life still trying to avoid the host of those with whom we had been involved in mutually destructive relationships. We sensed that there could be little freedom of choice for us in future relationships if we were not willing to take full responsibility for the part we had played in the destructiveness of past relationships.
8. We stopped looking only at the harm that had been done to us. While it was human to want justice and equity—to be “even” with the world, neither a ravisher nor a victim—in practice we had generally concentrated on what we felt was owed to us rather than on what we owed to others. It was important now to get out of the emotional accounting business, to stop trying to “balance the books,” or “even the score.” Regardless of the damage done to us, we could not change another person; it was only our own contribution to a problem that was within our power to control. The Serenity Prayer took on great significance as we asked over and over again for the serenity to accept those people and

events which we could not change, and for the courage to change what we could—with Grace and luck, ourselves.

[Return to links page](#)

9. As we considered our wrongdoings towards others, closing the books on the side of the ledger that said “owed to us,” we saw that we owed a great deal to others in the amends department. Even as victims we had done much harm, cluttering the lives of those around us with our own sickness, sometimes crowding out the possibility of their finding more honest relationships elsewhere. We saw that we had made something trivial of “love,” with our long lists of those whose names we didn’t even know, cheating them and ourselves of anything authentic or genuine. We saw especially how our dishonesty and deception had led everyone in our lives to expect from us what we could not or would not deliver. We had been masters of false advertising.
10. Now it was becoming easier to forgive others for the harm done us, as we saw ourselves in need of forgiveness for the harm we had done to them and others. We felt new depths of humility, as we saw how much damage had been done, and how much of it could never be undone. As we concentrated on our own part in this, we came to a new understanding of our motives, so often a poignant mix of normal human needs for love and a meaningful life, twisted by the addiction into something ugly and harmful to ourselves and others.

11. Humbly, we turned to God. “I am not responsible for the conditions which created me, but I am willing to try to be responsible for myself,” we prayed. “Help me to be willing to make right what I have done to each and every person in my life.” We had closed “their” side of the books, and audited ours unsparingly. In the god-consciousness called love, we found compassion for ourselves and a new awareness of our responsibility to others as sober people. During our active addiction, we had been the embodiment of sickness, tainting reality for all those who came in contact with us. Our spiritual, emotional, mental, and sometimes physical disease had contaminated even those relationships which could otherwise have been healthy.
12. Our commitment to recovery had now moved beyond the self-interest of survival. We wanted to act on the humble knowledge of the suffering that others had experienced at our hands, and make amends to those we had harmed.

[End of Step 8]

[Return to links page](#)

The Ninth Step

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

1. The practical application of our willingness to make amends, as in other steps of our recovery where action was necessary, had some inherent pitfalls. It was our experience that we had to be very cautious when it came to making amends. When we were new to SLAA and first learning about the Steps, some of us were quite anxious to “make amends,” especially to former addictive lovers. We imagined ourselves beating our breasts with dramatic confessions and soulful remorse, seeking both relief from painful guilt and the chance to start with a clean slate.
2. This wish to clean up the messy, incomplete feelings which were so common in our addictive relationships, however, could only result in “falling under the ether” of our addiction once again. Of course, it was often necessary to break off some relationships, or otherwise set some situations involving others right, early in sobriety. In such cases we found that writing a simple letter to these people was safest.
3. However that messy, “incomplete” feeling which was so often a part of the aftermath of an addictive relationship had to be faced in the new context of withdrawal, and not evaded through the inappropriate use of this Step. Amends-

making, as we experienced it in Step 9, was quite a different thing from the early desire to “fix” damaged relationships.

4. The solid foundation built with the preceding eight steps was vital to insure that we could make amends with the right spiritual intent. If we had not yet put our lives and will into the hands of a Power beyond ourselves, worked diligently on our personal inventories, and allowed God to work with us in removing our shortcomings, then we could not reliably distinguish compassion from passion. Without this kind of clarity, it could only be best to stay clear of those who were a part of our past addictive lives.

[Return to links page](#)

5. In Step 8, we had examined all of our relationships and, closing the books on whatever wrongs had been done to us, we had faced the many wrongs we had done others. It was not hard to see just how we should go about making direct amends in some cases. We could burn the letters from ex-lovers that could be used as blackmail, return their family heirlooms and possessions. We could write letters to those we had kept on the hook, uncertain when and if romance might be renewed. Sometimes we shared these letters with another SLAA member before sending them. This helped us censor any subtle or overt sexual or romantic innuendos, and to keep the hint of accusation out. Without a return address, these letters could serve to free others, once and for all, from bonds of uncertainty and expectation.

6. However, the most important amends were those which we needed to make face to face, requiring considerable courage, humility and preparation. It was important to be accountable for the effect our amends could create, as well as for the wrongs which made them necessary. Especially in these cases we found that it was wise to consult with other sober members of SLAA about exactly when and what kinds of amends would be made, and under what conditions.
7. More than one of us went off with good intent, only to find ourselves in situations of seductive solitude, being solicited once again by a person who seemed determined to misunderstand our purpose. We came to expect that in amends-making, as in all areas of our lives, God would give us willingness and the intuition to know what settings and words would be appropriate for our purpose. But it was also true that, in these matters, God often spoke most clearly through the very human voices of experienced SLAA members!
8. Now we understood that guidance from both conscience and the experience of others would help us find the appropriate circumstances for this Step. But it was clear that much more was needed than eloquent apologies. As we looked at what we had done, it seemed clear that many of those persons on our list had continued on in their lives with their reality persistently distorted by their past interactions with us when we were actively sick people. Our amends were thus to provide them with the reality-checks which could set the record straight.

9. The full admission of our contribution to these destructive relationships, and honesty about how we had been living as sex and love addicts, could justify—make just—for others much of what they had assumed had been their fault. Perhaps, too, we could offer enough perspective to others that they might release themselves from their load of unresolved feelings concerning their past history with us. We realized that it would be up to them to draw their own conclusions from what we presented. All we could do was try to be helpful by setting the record straight, admitting *our* faults and wrongs in the light of our addictive illness.
10. Obviously, we had to consider carefully whether we were justified at all in gaining entrance to other people’s lives after what was sometimes a long absence. We had to weigh the nature of our disclosures just as carefully. We could not put others at risk by revealing information to them that might jeopardize their peace of mind or their current circumstances. Our own progress could not be built on the new wounds of another. We had to keep in mind that very important difference between levelling *with* someone and simply “levelling” someone!
11. If we still burned inside with guilt, or a sense of unfinished business we could not resolve because there was a possibility of inflicting some fresh injury on another person, we just had to live with it. We could gain release as best we could by sharing these predicaments with others in SLAA Sometimes these situations in which amends could

not be made were actually of benefit, because they kept us humble. We could not easily assume a condescending attitude toward others in and out of SLAA on the grounds of just how spotless our own lives and consciences were, if we knew that in our darkest past there were things for which we could never make amends. In certain respects we would forever remain about as “pure as the driven ash.”

12. In some cases our sense of vulnerability to certain people continued for a long time. While we certainly felt ready to be freed from the pain our past relationships had caused us, in practice we often had to return to the preceding steps over and over. There was no freedom or dignity to be gained from attempting amends to any particular person until we were truly ready.

[Return to links page](#)

13. We found that prayer was a vital part of the process, especially in coping with relationships that had been part of our lives during the addiction, and were still with us in our sobriety. We asked daily for God’s help in making our contribution to each relationship what God would have it be. We prayed to be freed from the bondage of self, so that we could honestly and without reservation do whatever was possible to free each person in our lives from whatever pain and deception we had caused. We tried above all to be scrupulous in monitoring ourselves, while causing others no further grief.

14. In working Step 9 as best we could, we completed the clean-up of our past at our current level of understanding. We could never do an absolutely perfect job, nor was this expected of us. As our sobriety became longer and our awareness continued to expand, we would periodically find more things to do, new or better amends to make. In going through the first nine steps, we surrendered our illusion of power over our sex and love addiction, acquired at least the rudiments of faith, decided to live a day at a time on the basis of this faith, explored ourselves, and fully shared what we found with another. We did our honest best to recognize our character defects and allow God to remove them, and we made what amends we could to people we had harmed.
15. We could not rush the process, because we found that at any given moment we could not be more honest with ourselves than we were ready to be. Our willingness often ran ahead of our readiness. Wilful efforts to speed up recovery sometimes brought us into painful contact with our own limitations in being able to heal ourselves, and this itself was part of our recovery and growth. However we meandered, we were still on the path of recovery as long as we did not act out in bottom-line behaviour.
16. Now we were truly feeling some sense of deep release from the past! We were free of much guilt for our misdeeds, from the shame of having fallen short of our inner values. In many instances the values we had thought were ours had turned out to be someone else's, and we had shed or changed these to allow the seeds of our own personal wholeness to take root and grow.

17. We were indeed living new, positive, unfolding lives. Whether in partnership with others or in solitude, we had truly been granted a spiritual release from our sex and love addiction. While vigilance was still important, the choices we had to make now seemed easier. We felt increasing confidence in our developing partnership with God, and were full participants in the Fellowship of SLAA. We enjoyed solitude and were unafraid of honesty and openness with others. We could comprehend what it means to have dignity of self.

[End of Step 9]

[Return to links page](#)

The Tenth Step

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

1. We found that we now felt remarkably free of the burdens of guilt and longings for the past. However, if we were to continue the lifetime process of reconciliation and intimacy with ourselves and others, we would need to learn how to process life as it was happening, day by day. The blockage which had kept the poison of our undigested past buried within had been cleared, but we needed to stay current with our emotions and needs, or the same poisonous stagnation would soon build up again.
2. We still had many troublesome feelings and reactions to people or circumstances in our lives. Sudden anger could still sweep through us, triggered by something someone said or did, and it often seemed to us that others were even trying to cause this response. Or people with whom we had casual contact sometimes seemed to be offering subtle or not-so-subtle signals of romantic or sexual interest which could leave us feeling quite off-balance. In groups of people, or even at SLAA meetings, we occasionally could be struck suddenly tongue-tied, unable to communicate on even the most basic level.
3. Whenever we were troubled by things other people said or did, or by what we *feared* they might say or do, we needed to make a quick assessment of our own spiritual condition in order to gain perspective on ourselves and the

other person. We found that one easy way to do this was to ask ourselves, “If I were doing to someone else what I think is being done to me, would it be a symptom of *my own* illness?” and “If I saw someone else reacting to this situation as *I* am, would I take it a sign of *his* or *her* illness?”

4. Whether or not the answer was “yes” to either of these questions (and it was often “yes” to both), we found that what we saw in others was generally a reflection of our own vulnerability. The emotional demands others made on us, their apparent interest in causing our downfall, and their insensitivity to our needs were like echoes of our own demands and neediness. To our further discomfort, we often found ourselves feeling entitled to being treated in a particular way, and trying to coerce others to meet our own exalted standards. Or we were aroused by what seemed to be the machinations of others, feeling that we were being victimized.

[Return to links page](#)

5. The simple truth was that when our own spiritual condition was less than solid, everyone around us seemed to be “sick” with a malaise which, upon reflection, was remarkably like our own! Regardless, we had to conclude that it was silly and futile to let ourselves be upset at what we saw as diseased actions by others, especially if we hoped that others would continue to be tolerant of our own frequent lapses into dishonesty or manipulative behaviour. When we found ourselves getting bound up, we strove hard to flag our *own* frailty, to label it, understand it, and forgive

ourselves for having it. And it was important not to entertain the idea that we could save face with others by keeping our knowledge of these day-to-day struggles going on within ourselves a secret.

6. One area in which we often experienced difficulty was in continuing to be open and forthright about our feelings and motives, and our expectations of others. We would hide disappointment, hurt, fear, or anger under a facade of acceptance. We would keep silent about the mild fantasies that came to mind over some person with whom we had repeated contact, assuring ourselves privately that of course we would do nothing about it. We found that it was not enough to have the intention to avoid wrongs. We had to put into action on a continuous basis the principles we had used in our inventories and amends-making. We had to concentrate on making frequent appraisals throughout the day of our own intentions and short-comings, and to do as much as we could to make these right as they happened.
7. Then, too, we continued to learn about how the defects we had already identified could emerge in milder but still troublesome forms. Sometimes a new defect in our character was discovered, such as selfishness that had been lurking under dependence, or the fear of intimacy that hid behind absorption in solitary activity and geographical restlessness.
8. Many of us found that both daily and on a periodic basis we needed to set aside times for solitude and reflection. These times of self-overhaul provided an opportunity to touch

base with ourselves and our progress, and keep perspective on our spiritual development. We often sought out people who could help us with this perspective: friends in SLAA, or perhaps spiritual advisors or therapists.

[Return to links page](#)

9. The portion of SLAA meetings set aside for “getting current” was another place where we could process our emotional reactions to situations in our lives and our relationships as they occurred. Setting aside time to “get current” with those individuals with whom we had committed relationships was also needed, whether these were spouses, close friends, or others. We could not achieve partnership with anyone by our own solitary efforts! It took practice and cooperation to learn how to respond to the needs of others without fearing sacrifice of our own dignity, and to be open and honest without defensiveness or destructiveness.
10. In all of this we concentrated on our own faults and failures. We were coming to know that our own attitudes and actions were the only aspects of our lives which we stood any real chance of influencing. We had always been, were now, and forever would be, powerless over the deeds and motives of others.
11. As we continued on in our new way of life, growing more accustomed to living in the present with real emotional consistency, we found ourselves pondering our relationship with God. Our journey into the realm of spiritual healing

had begun long before. It had started with a provisional concept of reliance on God as a Power greater than ourselves, in the absence of any assurance that there would be anything left of us, or worth living for, if we withdrew from the grasp of sex and love addiction and surrendered the personal identity we had derived from it.

12. Yet even with our painful surrender and withdrawal behind us, we had found that desire for power and prestige could still motivate us into striving for goals that turned out to be very inappropriate. Deep-seated fear still lurked behind the scenes, prodding us into making unreasonable demands and attempts to extract absolute security from our personal relationships and endeavours. Only slowly and sometimes grudgingly had our provisional use of a Power greater than ourselves given way to a more regular reliance on this Power for guidance.

[Return to links page](#)

13. As our recovery progressed, we had begun to feel less and less sure that our old values, even some of our former life-goals that seemed far removed from our activities as sex and love addicts, were really worth pursuing. Some of us were able to bring a new spirit and fresh energy to an otherwise satisfying career or relationship which our addictive behaviour had only marred or temporarily suspended. But for others, the advantages which many a particular career or life-strategy had seemed to promise were turning out to be illusory, or not worth the price we had to pay for them.

14. As our game plan continued to fall short on delivering either worldly security or inner peace of mind, we were inevitably led to ask ourselves just what could be worth living for. In the absence of any workable, purely self-determined value system or strategy for living, we found that we had to examine our lives more or less continuously in the light of God's plan. What were the implications of our relationship with God? This question brought us to the Eleventh Step.

[End of Step 10]

[Return to links page](#)

The Eleventh Step

Step 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.

1. Our personal conceptions of God had changed radically. From someone or something to bail us out of scrapes or to pray to only amidst crisis, we had progressed beyond an overseeing caretaker or parent-like God to the sense of being in conscious partnership with this Power. We had been apprehensive about this. Some of us suspected that God had been the architect of many a painful, growth-fostering situation we had encountered along the course of our sobriety, or at least had allowed these to occur.
2. Only gradually did we see that in God's scheme of things, these difficulties might have been permitted in order to spur our awareness of our own finite nature, thereby rendering us more ready to further our relationship with God. This relationship appeared to be structured more along the lines of a conscious adult partnership centred on mutual sharing and cooperation. It seemed that through our pain and growth, we might come to participate as conscious partners with God in living out our new lives—as conscious partners in God's creation.
3. We could no longer separate our worldly security from the feelings we had inside. We knew that feeling right with ourselves was a direct result of participating in this

relationship with God, and of accepting this Power's grace and guidance. This kind of "security" was not necessarily based on having specific goals in the world, nor did it necessarily mean renouncing all that we had aspired to be or do. It was, rather, a matter of priorities. Spiritual reliance on God as the prerequisite for having relationships with other individuals, and for committing ourselves to careers and other endeavours in the world, had to underlie our attempts to accomplish personal, social, or professional goals.

4. We found ourselves increasingly praying for God's guidance in all matters, both major and minor, spiritual and mundane. As we did so on a daily basis, we made a number of discoveries. The first was that God's grace was, indeed, available to us in all matters, whether critically important or trivially commonplace. Apparently we could experience a sense of being connected with God even in such detailed, routine matters as planning our day, carrying out daily chores and responsibilities, or taking part in our everyday dealings with others.

[Return to links page](#)

5. This discovery of God's presence at these seemingly insignificant levels of our existence led to a second discovery. We found that our efforts in meditation and prayer were resulting in greater emotional evenness as we proceeded in our lives, day in, day out. It did not seem to matter if our prayers were very informal, or taken from the inspiring words of great writers. Meditation could be a

formal time set aside for that purpose, or simply a moment of quiet listening, stilling our own thoughts to allow God's ideas to slip into awareness. The style or amount of time devoted to this was unimportant, as long as it was frequent enough to be a regular part of our day.

6. Our growing relationship with God was like a stabilizing keel beneath us. No matter how stormy the winds above the surface of life's waters, or how much sail we sometimes hoisted into the gale in the form of commitments beyond the scope of our limited strength and energy, we found that the keel beneath us, meditation and prayer, guaranteed that we *would not capsizes*. We would retain our buoyancy on the ocean of life. We could survive whatever life might throw at us.
7. Another discovery was a gradual awareness that our relationship with God was indeed a personal one. It did not need to be consistent with the definition of any religious institution or the experience of any other person. In fact, we didn't have to define our higher Power even for ourselves. For many of us, awakening to an omnipresent God-sense led us to explore other spiritual avenues, such as the practice or study of meditation or theology, formal or informal.
8. We began to see that our partnership with God was an open-ended relationship, a rich tapestry which had barely begun to be woven. It offered that ultimate possibility for self-transcendence which so many of us had sought through the addictive experiences of our past And miracle

of miracles, here we were now, experiencing the mystery of spiritual reality as a fruit of participating in “everyday” reality, rather than as a prize for escaping it.

[Return to links page](#)

9. One other discovery which arose from regular use of meditation and prayer was a dawning sense that a basic need in our lives was being filled. Especially for us as sex and love addicts, the need for love had seemed insatiable. The active addiction hadn’t really touched it, and the support network that we built for ourselves in sobriety, while life-sustaining, didn’t quite touch that intense need either.
10. We might say that, during the addictive period, it was as though we were trying to quench a terrible thirst by drinking salt water. The more we drank, the more dehydrated we got, until our very lives were threatened. In new sobriety we tried to alleviate our thirst by busying ourselves with SLAA and with emotional nourishment, something like eating oranges. But in order for our real thirst to be satisfied fully, eventually we would need pure water.
11. We found that this thirst—the need for love—was a spiritual thirst, and the water was the God of our understanding. Although some of us did not believe in or had turned away from God when we came into SLAA, we came to find a way of life that involved a loving partnership with that Power. As we developed that closeness with God,

we found that our need for love was mysteriously satisfied. It *had* been love we needed all along. And love was of God. Most wonderful of all, when we walked through each day with the sense of being hand in hand with God, as a spring of love seemed to flow from within, available to help us quench the thirst for love of ourselves and others. Thus we came to find intimacy with ourselves, intimacy with God, and the intimacy with others.

12. We had sought full partnership with God, and knowledge of God's purpose for us. By seeking to live with honesty and integrity, and to be of service to others, we had discovered that the source of love, which was of God, had begun to flow from within us. We had lived our way into step 12.

[End of Step 11]

[Return to links page](#)

The Twelfth Step

Step 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.

1. As we read over this Step, we recognized its experientially based wisdom: the effectiveness of our efforts to help others would be directly related to the level of our own “spiritual awakening” which preceded these efforts. This spiritual awakening was itself the product of having hit bottom and surrendered, having acquired a faith, having accomplished a practical examination of our past and our character, having developed a deepening relationship with God, having accepted responsibility for the impact our sex and love addiction had on others, becoming aware of problem areas in our lives and resolving to deal with these constructively, making amends, and reaching into the spiritual domain through regular prayer and meditation to place ourselves in closer communion with the source of guidance and grace.
2. We discovered that we could continue to affirm our recovery by working with other sex and love addicts. Minus the guilt, our experiences in addiction had been transformed into lessons for living of profound depth and durability. We shared our experiences freely and openly with others, establishing a healing bond through that language of the heart which could move others to recognize their own straits, and point them towards the

source for their own healing. No experience in living was more meaningful for us than letting ourselves become channels through which healing and redeeming grace could flow. The paradox was that our usefulness as channels for healing was a direct result of our experiences in sickness, as well as in recovery.

3. We discovered that we needed to continue to live out the values which emerged in us through our recovery in SLAA in all areas of our lives. We had learned to work toward a high standard of honesty, openness, sharing, and responsibility, and to treasure the feeling of purpose and sense of belonging which accompanied these values. We found that personal or professional situations in which we could not affirm these spiritual values were expendable. These values were not just “window dressing.” Careers that had been exploited mainly for material security at the expense of self-fulfilment no longer appealed to us. We either changed our way of going about them or let them go.
4. In relationships with others we let go of self-serving power and prestige as driving motives. This left us open to the discovery of just what it is that makes *any* relationship between people, whether professional, personal, or social, worthwhile. We found that in relationships with others we had only as much to gain as we had to share.

[Return to links page](#)

5. In domestic partnerships we discovered a whole new experience of sexuality as a non-addictive medium. We discovered that sexuality could not be considered unto itself. Its realization was actually a by-product of sharing and cooperation. In our addiction we had leaned on sexuality and romantic or dependency strategies to yield nearly all of what we considered to be our identity. Now, however, in full possession of our own personal sense of dignity, and living our way into intimate partnership with another, we found that we no longer needed to rely solely on sexual expression to provide our sense of security and identity.

6. Our growing ability to trust, to share, and to live openly in a partnership was already helping to provide these things. Freed from this burden, our sexuality was becoming more like a barometer—*an expression of what was, already, in the partnership*. It could be no more, or less, than this. Discovering new freedom and joy in the experience of sexuality, however, was a potential which was realized only gradually. We had held so many illusions about the relationship between sex and “love,” that we had to do much living in sobriety before these illusions became truly tempered. Gaining sober perspectives in the areas of trust, sex and intimacy was difficult. True intimacy, we found, cannot exist independent of commitment.

7. We know, as we continue to live out our recoveries in SLAA, that we are indeed engaged in the great adventure of discovering true freedom of the human spirit. We have received, and continue to receive, many blessings we would not have known how to ask for. Life is open-ended, and wonderful. New chapters in well-being await us.

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[End of Step 12]

[Return to links page](#)

12 Steps of Sex & Love Addiction

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.

[Return to links page](#)

12 Traditions of SLAA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SLAA 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 SLAA 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 a SLAA group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SLAA 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. A SLAA group or SLAA as a whole ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SLAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SLAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. SLAA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. SLAA as such ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. SLAA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SLAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow SLAA members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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[Return to links page](#)