

Setting Bottom Lines

Bottom-line behaviours are “self-defined activities which we refrain from in order to experience our physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness.”

Bottom-lines are the boundaries between our addictive lives and “a new life of fulfillment, richness and mystery [that] surely awaits [us] as [we] move into sobriety.”

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

Recovery begins with admitting that following our addictive path is making our lives unmanageable and we are powerless to stop. Each person in SLAA acts out differently. Therefore, our bottom lines are self-defined. It is up to each one of us, with the help of our Higher Power, our sponsor and others to learn to recognize our addictive patterns. We can set bottom-lines, which we refrain from in order to stay sober.

This section offers a plan to set bottom-lines, which help break the destructive cycle of sex and love addiction. It is an aid to SLAA newcomers in identifying their bottom-lines. And a guide to those wishing to adjust their existing bottom-lines. We strongly suggest that you get the help of your sponsor or another trusted SLAA member when using this section and its worksheets.

This section is divided into five separate sections:

- ◇ Destructive Behaviours
- ◇ Addictive Patterns
- ◇ Accessory Behaviours
- ◇ Bottom-line Behaviours
- ◇ Healthy Behaviours

Each section includes examples as well as worksheets for your personal use.

Destructive Behaviours

Many of us came to SLAA after one or more bouts with our destructive sexual or romantic behaviours. Perhaps we had an affair. Perhaps we got arrested for a sex offense. Perhaps we simply saw that our behaviour was creating problems for

ourselves and others. Whatever brought us to SLAA, we can experience sobriety by defining our bottom-lines and abstaining from them.

One way to begin determining our bottom-lines in SLAA is to list our destructive behaviours, which typically involve sex, love, romance, or unhealthy avoidance of these. Identifying the addictive activities we engage in helps us determine what not to do if we want to become sober in SLAA.

Addictive, destructive behaviours render us unable to maintain self-control and incapable of guessing what our actions will be. Indulging in such a temptation, to use an AA analogy, is our “first drink.” Following are some brief examples.

| Behaviour | Consequences (Unmanageability) |
|--|--|
| Having an affair | Harming Someone, Hurting Relationships, Spiritually Harmful |
| Participating in romantic intrigue | Hurting Relationships, Threatening Job, Lowers Self -Esteem, Psychologically Damaging, Spiritually Harmful |
| Not leaving an abusive relationship | Life/Health Threatening, Lowers Self-Esteem, Spiritually Harmful |
| Voyeurism | Harming Someone, Legal Problems |
| Compulsive avoidance of social/sexual activity | Hurting Relationships, Threatening Job, Spiritually Harmful |
| Paying for sex | Financially Damaging, Legal Problems |
| Anonymous sex | Life/Health threatening, Hurting Relationships, Lowers Self-Esteem, Spiritually Harmful, Legal Problems |
| Spending romantic time with someone who is in love with someone else | Hurting Relationships, Lowers Self-Esteem, Psychologically Damaging, Spiritually Harmful |

Destructive Behaviours Worksheet Instructions

In the first box (*Destructive Behaviours*) list your destructive behaviours. In other words, what specifically have you done that has made your life unmanageable and brought you to SLAA? What issues render you unable to maintain self-control? Include sexual, emotional, and avoidant behaviours that you are powerless to stop. In the second box (*Unmanageability Check List*), match the numbers of your destructive behaviours and check the risks that apply. The

“Other” column is for risks you may recognize that are not listed in the other columns.

| Destructive Behaviours |
|--|
| These are the behaviours that I feel powerless over—or I know need to be stopped. These behaviours harm me and/or others. To some degree they make my life unmanageable, and they have consequences. Write down your destructive behaviours. Mark each consequence that applies. |
| 1 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 4 |
| 5 |
| 6 |

| UNMANAGEABILITY CHECK LIST | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| Tick the risks that apply | | | | | | | | | | |
| Destructive Behaviours | Harming Someone | Life/Health Threatening | Hurting Relationships | Financially Damaging | Threatening Job | Lowers Self-Esteem | Psychologically Damaging | Spiritually Harmful | Legal Problems | Other |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | | |

Addictive Patterns

As you review your list of destructive behaviours, keep an eye out for similarities. You may begin to see certain patterns of acting out emerging. Maybe it's the type of activity you pursue. Perhaps it's the type of person you pursue. Possibly it's the way that you create or alter your schedule to make time to act out.

For example, your list may reveal that you repeatedly become involved with married people, severe workaholics and those who live far away. Therefore *you might* conclude that one of your addictive patterns is **pursuing unavailable people**.

It is important to understand what your part is in the pattern. It may be tempting to say, "I can't stop the affair because they keep calling me." But that is blaming others for your behaviour. What are you doing to stay in these miserable places? How did you get there? How are you setting yourself up? Be willing to be honest with yourself.

Destructive Behaviours

From your list above, jot down some significant destructive behaviours.

Your personal pattern may not be immediately clear to you. Sometimes it takes a while to know yourself — and to become honest about your actions. It may be helpful to ask others you trust in SLAA about their addictive patterns, or to work closely with a sponsor.

Identifying addictive patterns is very important to staying sober. Not only because it helps you stop from relapsing into specific destructive behaviours — it also helps you avoid “new ways” of acting out — such as switching from beer to wine for an alcoholic.

Addictive Patterns

See if you can identify “patterns” in these behaviours.

NOTES:

Accessory Behaviours (warning signs)

You may notice other behaviours that are not destructive by themselves but serve your addiction. It is vital to be aware of the obsessions, rituals, and triggers that have led to acting out. Look for behaviours that you are not sure belong on your bottom-lines or that have minor consequences. These are warning signs that you are in danger of acting out.

“...we found that whenever we engaged in these accessory behaviours, regardless of how innocent or unaware we were of doing so, we had unwittingly set up the potential for sexual and emotional intrigue—just what we were trying so desperately to avoid!” (SLAA Basic Text, 108.)

Here are some examples of accessory behaviours:

- 01 Cruising for sex
- 02 Driving in certain neighbourhoods
- 03 Going for a walk at night in dark clothing
- 04 Going places where you will run into a former unavailable partner
- 05 Exchanging phone numbers
- 06 Screening phone calls
- 07 Maintaining multiple phone numbers
- 08 Having conversations with an erotic subtext
- 09 Contacting former sex partners
- 10 Carrying a condom

- 11 Wearing cologne or perfume
- 12 Dressing provocatively
- 13 Keeping a packed overnight bag
- 14 Having large amounts of cash in your pocket
- 15 Drinking alcohol or using drugs
- 16 Ignoring/overlooking abusive behaviour
- 17 Looking up specific search words on the Internet
- 18 Reading romance novels
- 19 Seeing romantic movies
- 20 Reading personal ads
- 21 Routinely rejecting social invitations
- 22 Obsessing/fantasizing about unavailable people

Accessory Behaviours Worksheet Instructions

Below, list your accessory behaviours. If you're not sure whether a certain activity is an accessory behaviour, list it anyway. Discuss it later with your sponsor or another trusted SLAA member.

Accessory Behaviours (warning signs)

Accessory behaviours include the strategies I have used to obtain partners or materials for acting out. They are warning signs, obsessions and rituals that may precede an episode of acting out. (See page 108 of the SLAA Basic Text.)

Write down your accessory behaviours.

NOTES:

Bottom-Line Behaviours

Bottom-line behaviours are “generally, self-defined activities which we refrain from in order to experience our physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness.”

A “bottom-line” is derived from a pattern—not necessarily any one specific activity. Additionally, a bottom-line needs to be clear enough so that it is obvious when it is crossed. If you’re struggling with finding a pattern, set a specific bottom-line anyway. It will get you started.

For example, here are some possible bottom-lines:

- ◇ Having sex with someone who is married
- ◇ Pursuing a new relationship before ending an existing one
- ◇ Having sex outside a committed, monogamous relationship
- ◇ Having sex with a prostitute
- ◇ Following someone home uninvited
- ◇ Doing anything that could reasonably get me arrested
- ◇ Lying to my spouse
- ◇ Masturbating to pornography
- ◇ Having anonymous sex
- ◇ Going to strip clubs and peepshows
- ◇ Having sex on the first date
- ◇ Having unprotected sex
- ◇ Having sex when I don’t want to
- ◇ Contacting a former sex partner
- ◇ Pursuing inappropriate or unavailable people
- ◇ Compulsively avoiding sex in a committed, long-term relationship
- ◇ Not entering or leaving a relationship without consulting my Higher Power and trusted advisors

NOTES:

Bottom-Line Behaviours Worksheet Instructions

Below, list your bottom-line behaviours. If you're not sure whether a certain activity is a bottom-line behaviour, list it anyway. Discuss it later with your sponsor or another trusted SLAA member.

Destructive Behaviours

These are the behaviours I need / desire / am determined to stop. Acting out any of these behaviours is a break or "slip" in my SLAA sobriety.

Write down your bottom-line behaviours. Make your list clear, concrete, and easy to remember. (For more information, see pages 72 and 105 of the SLAA Basic Text.)

Healthy Behaviours

Many member of the fellowship find it helpful to list behaviours that have a positive, personal element — behaviours that fulfil, nurture, bring healthy pleasure, growth and improve quality of life. Committing to do them can fill the time that we used to spend acting out and can help us grow along spiritual lines.

Some examples:

- ◇ Pray and meditate
- ◇ Leave the house today
- ◇ Take care of myself today (for example: brushing teeth...)

- ◇ Talk to my sponsor before turning down an invitation to a social event
- ◇ Show up for my commitments (dates, meetings, etc.)
- ◇ Playing a musical instrument
- ◇ Taking a class
- ◇ Exercising
- ◇ Communing with nature
- ◇ Expressing creativity
- ◇ Asking for help and support from friends
- ◇ Scheduling a time for social interaction, partnership and intimacy
- ◇ Saying affirmations each day
- ◇ Calling as many people as needed to actually talk with someone, not just leaving voicemails
- ◇ Play games or sports with others

A note about bottom-lines over time...

After you have been in SLAA awhile, and have some sobriety, you may discover that your bottom-lines are no longer adequate. You may find your sense of sobriety has changed over time. You could become aware of the need to expand your bottom-lines in keeping with your new values and principles. This awareness is progressive, and your bottom-lines may need to change — more than once — to keep pace with your increased recovery.

For example, if exhibitionism is a destructive behaviour of yours, your initial bottom-line may simply be not to expose yourself. However, you might quickly see that you have a problem with voyeurism as well. You may change your bottom-line so that all illegal sexual activity is outside the bounds of your sobriety. At a later point in your recovery, you may decide that any uninvited sexual activity is “off limits” for you. This refinement of your bottom-line is an example of the progressive nature of recovery from sex and love addiction in SLAA. The less you act out, the healthier you are and the more sober your decisions and boundaries become.

So Now What?

“The people who recover from ex and love addiction are those who define their bottom-line addictive behaviour. They start now and add to it later if necessary.

They don't act out — just for today, this hour, this moment, no matter what. This is their sobriety definition.” (*Questions Beginners Ask*)

We hope this section can be an effective tool for helping you identify your addictive patterns, defining or redefining your bottom-lines, recognizing your accessory behaviours, and using healthy behaviours to begin a new life. Your willingness to stop acting out on your personal addictive bottom-line behaviours is the key to this new life in recovery.

As we grow in recovery we learn to replace addictive patterns with sober healthy activities. With the help of our Higher Power, through the use of the steps, by clearing away the wreckage of the past and by helping others, sanity, dignity and personal wholeness are returned to us one day at a time.

