

# The H.O.W. Concept & Tools

The Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous HOW Concept has been formed to offer the sex & love addict a disciplined and structured approach. There are no absolutes for sobriety in SLAA, as individual patterns of sex and love addiction vary. The SLAA HOW groups have been formed in the belief that our disease is absolute and therefore only strict acceptance of the HOW programme will offer any sustained sobriety to those of us whose compulsion has reached a critical level.

Therefore we accept our HOW-defined bottom-line sobriety; our Step Questions and Maintenance Questions; our Outreach Calls; the Twelve Steps and Traditions; and our other tools 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 of sobriety:

## **1 BOTTOM-LINE SOBRIETY**

Each sex & love addict works with a sponsor to identify their personal bottom lines. We become sober by daily abstaining from these behaviours.

## **2 LITERATURE AND WRITING**

We use SLAA literature as well as the AA Big Book and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions as tools of examination and release. Our writing assignments are taken from these.

## **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 H.O.W. of the programme.

## **4 TELEPHONE CALLS**

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.

## **5 PRAYER AND MEDITATION**

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

## **6 SERVICE**

Service is freedom from the bondage of self, giving back what we've freely and lovingly received. It's helping out at meetings – for example, setting up the room, welcoming newcomers and cleaning-up. Sobriety is a service to ourselves and the group.

## **7 SPONSORSHIP**

A SLAA HOW sponsor is a sex and love addict who, by the grace of God, has 30 days of continuous sobriety working the SLAA HOW concept and has taken at least the first three steps. In keeping with our second tradition, sponsors are but trusted servants - they do not govern. Discretion, common sense and our higher power can guide us in our selection.

Available Sponsors will identify at the end of the meeting.



# 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.

## The 12 steps of SLAA

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.



# 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.



# 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.



# 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.



# The Serenity Prayer

*To the God of my understanding*

*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.

## **REMEMBER**

Whom you see here;  
What you hear here;  
When you leave here:  
Let it stay here.



# The Third Step Prayer

*To the God of my 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!*



# The Third Step Prayer

*To the God of my understanding*

God, I offer myself to Thee,  
to build with me  
and to do with me  
as Thou wilt.

Relieve me of the bondage of self,  
that I may better do Thy will.

Take away my difficulties,  
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May I do Thy will always!

*Thanks for sharing:  
Keep coming back.  
It works if you work it,  
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# 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.



# 12 Steps of SLAA

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.



# 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 an 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.





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

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.

*Serenity Prayer*



# SLAA Meeting format

*Begin on time*

Welcome to the [meeting name] SLAA HOW concept meeting.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a Sex and Love Addict. I am the leader for tonight's meeting.

We recognise all addicts who still suffer and all who join in this recovery journey.

We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of our country and respect and honour all elders past and present.

Let's begin with 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.

We are 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 orientation or gender identity irrelevant.

We need to protect with special care the anonymity of every SLAA member.

This is a closed meeting of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, so only those with a desire to stop acting out a pattern of sex and love addiction may attend. 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.

- ◁ Will someone please read HOW IT WORKS? Thank you.
- ◁ Is there anyone celebrating a significant milestone of sobriety? (30 days? 60 days? 90 days? 6 months? 1 year? ...)
- ◁ 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.]*

- ◁ We welcome anyone who may be in their first six meetings.
- ◁ Is there anyone at this meeting for the first time? **[Welcome! Please give us your first name only, so that we may get to know you.]**

I will now call speakers to share for **[3 mins]** with **[1 min]** left to wind up.

Please focus on our experience, strength and hope and how we use the tools of the program.

This group has no sobriety requirement for sharing. It is okay to share on other matters to do with our sex and love addiction.

Please do not refer to other speakers, apps, venues, non-SLAA literature or therapists by name. We do not interrupt another person or cross talk by referencing another's share.



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

*Call on members by name to share, beginning with those who did not share last week. Include both online and room participants...*

\_\_\_\_\_ would you like to share?

### At the half-way point

◁ Will someone please read THE HOW CONCEPT & TOOLS? Thank you.

*Invite two people 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.*

*Finish with a person with strong recovery.*

### Conclusion

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

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

*[Newcomers are encouraged to approach a sponsor at the end of the meeting if they have any questions. We encourage newcomers to take or download a free WELCOME PACK and purchase literature rather than contribute.]*

Thanks everyone for coming. The Seventh Tradition states that every SLAA group ought to be fully self-supporting. Money collected goes to rent for this venue and other expenses. Please give generously to the baskets in the middle.

A group conscience is held after the meeting on the \_\_\_\_ Wednesday. All are welcome to attend.

◁ Are there any SLAA-related announcements?

◁ Does anyone need a lift after the meeting?

I wish to thank those who shared today. Please remember our cherished tradition of anonymity (say together on the yellow cards):

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 12 Signs of Recovery**. Your choice.

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

The opinions expressed here tonight are of those who shared and are not necessarily those of SLAA. Thank you to those who served and for allowing me to be your leader for this meeting.

Please help with the cleaning and pack-up of the room.

To close, please stand and join in the closing THIRD STEP PRAYER.  
*[Holding hands is optional.]*

◁ *To the god of my 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!

