

1 June 2013

Dear CLC Members and Friends,

The Conference Literature Committee would like feedback on a draft for a new piece of S.L.A.A. literature called “Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A. in Simplified English”. The intent is to simplify the language used in Chapter 4 of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text so that it can be understood by people with poor reading skills.

Please give feedback on the content only, not the formatting. Feel free to suggest changes, keeping in mind that the purpose of the document is to explain the Steps in simplified language. Please ask questions when something seems unclear or incomplete. Your feedback will help us improve this draft and its usefulness to members of S.L.A.A.

You may share this with other members of S.L.A.A. who have an interest.

This draft may not be posted on any web site open to the public.

Send comments, suggestions and questions by October 31, 2014 to [simple.language.steps.slaa@gmail.com](mailto:simple.language.steps.slaa@gmail.com). You can contact someone on this project by telephone at +1 (747) 226-4762.

Include the date of the draft version you are responding to (June 1, 2013). If you are unable to submit electronically, you can mail comments to Fellowship-Wide Services, 1550 NE Loop 410, Ste 118, San Antonio, TX 78209. Include instructions to forward your comments to the Conference Literature Committee.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

The S.L.A.A. Conference Literature Committee

Draft (Conference Prison Outreach Committee) - not Conference approved.

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THE TWELVE STEPS  
OF SEX AND LOVE  
ADDICTS  
ANONYMOUS  
IN SIMPLIFIED  
ENGLISH

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**STEP 1: We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction. We admitted that our lives had become unmanageable.**

We say we were powerless over sex and love addiction. What does "powerless" mean? It means we didn't have sex, sex had us. It made slaves of us. We were using sex like a drug to numb our pain. Sometimes we had pain because people at home or at work or out on the street made demands on us. We worried about those demands, and the worry hurt. Sometimes we felt guilty. Sometimes we felt angry. Sometimes we felt empty inside. Sometimes we thought, what the hell, everybody does it; sex makes you feel good when your life feels bad. And pretty soon sex went out of control. We had to have it even if it damaged our family and/or our job.

At first we went out and got sex once in a while, and then we did it on a more routine basis. And then we had to be doing it all the time. At first we daydreamed about sex now and then, after a while we did it more often, and then it bugged our mind most of the time. First we masturbated now and then, and then we spent a lot of time planning how to get to do it. We didn't have sex; sex had us.

Most of us had lost control and had been swallowed by our sexual partners to the point we couldn't feel or think about anything other than our sexual urges. We couldn't stop the thoughts and feelings and we became slaves to our craving. Often times we couldn't see the problem even though everything we did seemed to revolve around these cravings, we would still say to ourselves, "I can stop whenever I want to."

Does it matter that we had lost control? Everyone loves sex anyhow; it's great so it's what everyone wants! Every time we got that "blast" from a hit of sex, whatever problems we may have had we now feel we can overcome. These thoughts are those of an addict, and when we start thinking in this way sex becomes just as powerful as any drug or alcohol.

Some of us became slaves to another person and felt that if we had lost control of ourselves it was great! We would feel that would prove "real love", and if we gave up everything for this love it would show that we weren't selfish. However, giving up everything for this love is just as selfish as giving up everything for ourselves because in reality the love that we're giving up everything for satisfies us more than it does the other person; therefore there isn't much of a difference at all.

We tried to paint our addiction in beautiful colors and kept telling ourselves everything was fine. Within us there was a voice saying, "life is passing you by, you could have a life that means something; but you're throwing it away!" That voice would never shut up no matter how satisfying the sex and/or romance may have become.

Finally we surrendered, we realized that we HAD to stop and find a new life because we knew we couldn't control the addiction. We were facing a living death, like we were going to slip over a cliff and never stop falling. We admitted that we were powerless over sex and love addiction, and that our lives had become unmanageable. Once we were able to admit that, we began to recover.

We had tried everything; tried looking like "normal people", tried breaking up with one lover to find a new one, stopped masturbating or started masturbating more rather than having sex with

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someone else. We tried switching from straight to gay or gay to straight, trying to develop a relationship with someone we weren't sexually attracted to. We tried moving, we made promises to ourselves and those who loved us, we concentrated more on our spirituality, we tried exercising, and we tried this, that and everything in between.

At first doing these things seemed to help control our addiction, we figured we'd be able to manage things now and began to feel good about ourselves. However, these things were only temporary and oftentimes helped us drop our defenses; in a month, a week and sometimes "within hours we were back sunk in our addiction.

We began to realize that we were powerless over our addiction and that there was a pattern to it. All of our dodging and "new beginnings" couldn't conceal that fact! If we were really going to give up our sex and love addiction, we had to give up the whole life we had built around obsessing about sex and running after love all the time.

Now in S.L.A.A. we each define our "bottom line behaviors", which are the things we have to stay away from to remain "sober". We tried fooling ourselves by saying that if flashing and exhibitionism was our "bottom line behavior", if we didn't do that for a while; but paid for prostitutes or were dangerously promiscuous, then we weren't breaking our "bottom line". Or if our "bottom line behavior" was being dangerously promiscuous, picking up people or making out with strangers, and if we didn't do that for a while, but turned to compulsive porn and/or masturbation, then we weren't breaking our "bottom line".

We've learned that there is no "half-surrender", we can't define one form of addiction as a "bottom line" and then find another form of the same addiction. We had to surrender unconditionally, we had to stay away from every form of "bottom line behavior" that we saw as a part of our addictive pattern, one day at a time. If our main addictive pattern was obsessive love dependency, we separated from our partner. If they jilted us, we accepted our loss. We didn't look to punish them or run into the arms of somebody new.

Each of us was now willing to do anything, a day at a time, to stay unhooked. That was our decision. No matter what anybody else --- wife, lover, partner, boss, or the big nasty world would do. We were now willing to make ourselves available to whatever might happen next inside ourselves. We didn't do this because we were strong. We did it because we were sure that if we went on in our addiction, it would do us in.

As we turned from our old ways, our feelings hurt. We had tried to dodge pain by doing our addiction. Now that we stopped acting out, we felt the pain. And that honest pain brought to realize some new things.

Those things were the gift of the Second Step.

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

We got into withdrawal, and it hurt. We ached and put in an hour at a time not doing it, and then; one day at a time. We felt pain, the pain we had used sex and love to drug away. And we began to notice something about ourselves. Our whole being was built around getting sex payoffs. We were real sex hounds! The way we looked. The way we dressed. The way we went into a room and looked around, casing out the women or men, making eye contact. Going and starting up a conversation. Coming on cool, coming on warm, we were always on the hunt, always on the payoff trail.

Even when we were nice, kind and sympathetic, most of that was an act which was aimed at getting sex. We'd enter the room and broadcast with our looks, "Well, here I am!" And if not tonight, baby, then I'll catch you later. We knew how to make women or men feel needy and dependent on us; "hey, you know you can be replaced?" We felt secure because we could still "bag them" and that power felt good!

What were we without the sex game? Without it we felt lonely, ashamed, shaky and worthless. With our sexual charm, our emotional appeal and our sex sales talk, we used other people as drugs so that we wouldn't have to face up to how bad it felt to be us! Once we saw that, it hit us...if we gave up the "sex hound" life, what would be left of us? Who would we be? We saw that we couldn't think our way out of things because we had the brain of a "sex hound" and as the saying goes, "my best thinking got me here."

As we came to see how sex and romance had twisted our whole life, the way we dealt with ourselves as well as others, we had to admit that we couldn't get out of this all on our own. We needed help; we needed a Higher Power, something greater than ourselves that could guide and sustain us because we did such a bad job of guiding and sustaining ourselves. That's scary; what if there isn't power greater than us? We surely couldn't remake our lives; we were too out of control for that!

Our first answer to the need for faith we found in our first S.L.A.A. meeting, with sober people who had found the Higher Power they needed. We listened to their stories; they had been lost in the addiction just like us. We could see how they changed; they were in recovery; they were living examples for us. We could see and sense the peace in their recovery, they offered us the hope that if they could do it, then we could, too!

Being around these people in recovery was a practical help to us in keeping our day-to-day sobriety. We heard some good ideas about how to avoid "slippery places" and how to get back on our feet if or when we do slip. As we find the courage to be honest and tell what we had done; how we felt; how we were struggling and how much it hurt; when we told other people it helped us stay honest with ourselves. We got out of our denial and the "poor me/it's not my fault" mentality

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It didn't matter what specific God or Higher Power we believed in. we knew we needed faith. And the answer to that need was the hope we found in the living examples of the S.L.A.A. members who had gone before us.

Our attitude moved from need to hope. With that, we had the beginnings of faith. By now we saw that even if withdrawal hurt, we could live through it. We didn't need to go back to acting out. And we felt that the Power to stop acting out was coming from outside ourselves. Now we were ready to turn this faith into a practical help. We began to think about what the THIRD STEP means.

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

So this is where we are now. We realized our sex and love addiction is a big part of what we are. It had started long ago. It twisted our ideas of what was right and wrong and how we treated people. It probably gave us wrong ideas about a lot of things.

We are like cups full of craving, lust and scheming. Step three is saying we could tip the cup over and let the sickness spill out. But if we try all by ourselves to fill it up with a good life, we are sure to get into the same mess again.

We know we need help. So some Power greater than ourselves; smarter, stronger, wiser and more loving, would have to fill up our cup with a new life. What will our lives be like then? What if we stop filling them up with disease, and let God, as we understood God, fill us up with life? Well, we couldn't tell. No guarantees. We just knew we couldn't go back into active sex and love addiction again. We had hit bottom with that. We knew that was hopeless. So we had to go forward, and let God, as we understood God, take care of us. We would turn our will and our lives over to that God. Even if we had no idea what would happen then.

We had not already turned our will and our lives over to God, as we understood God. But we had made a decision to do that, no matter what it took and whatever would happen.

So where to start? The answer was simple. We had been keeping away from addictive sex, one day at a time. We had stopped, one day at a time, luring and lying and intriguing people. What we now added was prayer. We now began each day turning to the presence of God, as we understood God. We asked for help to stay out of addictive behavior, for that day. Sometimes within that day, we had to pray for an hour at a time, or even a moment

We asked God to help us in our Big Project. Our big project was to let our old, miserable, addictive self just die, and be reborn as a changed, positive person. And if we had gone all day without acting out, we thanked whoever and whatever he, she, or it was, for another day of life not acting out in our addiction.

Whenever we ran into a situation during the day that might put us in danger, we held on to 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. Thy will, not mine, be done.

The rest of the Steps are built on the foundation of Step 3. Our cup of disease would be emptied out. We would clean it up the best we could. And we would wait, expecting God's grace to fill it with new life. And God would do that in God's own way. God knew what we needed much better than we did, and loved us more than we loved ourselves.

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## The Fourth Step

Going toward the Fourth Step we had made our decision in Step Three to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God. We were praying every day, so as to let God work on us.

At this stage sometimes the sex bug still bit us. We sometimes had long strong sex daydreams. Or we wanted the sex drug romance with a partner. Sometimes we ran into people we had addictive sex with. We seemed to run into them right when we felt the weakest. Or we'd get to thinking about all the people in the world who had never heard of "sex and love addiction," and were sure to be going at it happy, hard and heavy. Or we'd get lost in memories of the great times we had with that one, or this one, and forgot about the terrible times with this one or that one.

When we got to thinking like that, we really felt rotten. Look at all we had lost! It was like clouds came down on us, so we lost sight of our journey. We wished we were still ignorant. We could forget how much better off we were now than we had been before.

And yet we had opened our eyes, and we couldn't shut them again. We had seen what a healthy life could be. We had even felt it. We knew there was no limit to how much better off we, our feeling, our mind, and our spiritual life could be. And we were moving toward that life, even if we sometimes dragged our feet.

What would cheer us up was getting a new insight about ourselves. Maybe that came when we shared at an S.L.A.A. meeting, or when someone else did. Or when we were alone, thinking things over, or in a dream. These surprising new blessings came when we had managed not to act out. When we did not give up our sobriety, we got our reward. Doors opened into our inner selves.

When we had been acting out; that used up our feeling and thinking. Now in this recovery stage, our memories and feelings rose up in us, full of meaning. We could see more and more of our whole picture of past love and sex addiction. Some of us kept a journal, a notebook where we wrote down thoughts that came. Some of us wrote down our dreams. Some of us got into therapy. We found that we were already getting into the Fourth Step.

### **STEP 4 – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**

When we first saw the words "a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves" we were anything but fearless; we were scared! Taking a moral inventory was a frightening job. To our surprise there came a time when we could go ahead and do it because we were living Step 3. As we surrendered to whatever or whomever we understood as God, we found that we were getting intuitions; "call this friend," "go here instead of there." We came to trust these intuitions. God was helping us steer away from our old addictive ways and if God was helping us run our daily lives it was easier to trust our Higher Power to help us travel our inward journey.

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How were we going to make a moral inventory of ourselves? When we talked it over we found that everyone did it in their own way. An inventory was a confession, and it would be a relief to write down a story of our lives. However, we needed more than a confession, what we needed to do was to understand ourselves and hold nothing back. We needed to stand on solid ground, get through the illusions and really see what we had become, as well as what we tried to make others think we were. We needed to see what we got out of the act we put on and the "acting out" we did.

Most of us found that writing down our inventory was a big help to us because when we had the story in writing it helped us to be honest and fair; then we could see our addiction for what it really was. Before this inventory, pride, resentment and excuses kept us from seeing our addiction, but when we read our own words we could see through the excuses and stop blaming others. We could see how our addiction had gotten worse and worse, and we could see just how many excuses we were making and how much we really were blaming others. When we looked at our lives we could see that just about everything we did and everyone we knew was put there to serve our addiction and we began to see the pattern.

We gave our lives away to blondes, people with money or people we hoped would rescue us; but there was no one who could because we never would admit that we needed to be helped. We dressed for success; success in seduction. We seduced all kinds of people, from those who had power over us in work, our friendships and/or standing in society, to others who may be "inferior" to us in some way. We would use that as a reason to help make them feel better by being with us, when all along our primary objective was to satisfy our addiction by any means necessary.

We abused our families and loved ones, verbally emotional and/or physically and drove them away when we needed them the most. We learned that writing this inventory was like peeling an onion; we had to do it one layer at a time, and each layer brought us to tears. As we got down into the onion we found that even some of the things we thought were healthy or harmless in how we treated people were actually a part of our addiction, also. When we looked at the nonsexual areas regarding how we treated friends, family or people we worked with, we found that the same urges and character defects were there also.

At first all we could see were the things we kept doing over and over, and then we began to see feelings and motives. We started to see how we had been dishonest with ourselves, so we wouldn't see our disease steadily getting worse. We kept ourselves from thinking about how much money we were wasting on sex. Even if we weren't giving the money directly to the person we were sexually involved with, like what's done with prostitutes. Money is still being wasted indirectly on gas and other unnecessary activities when we're being involved with several sexual partners. We risked contracting or spreading STDs, having illegitimate children and other compromising

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things that might have had dangerous effects on our lives. We didn't want to admit how powerless we were and how our addiction to sex had us in its grip. We tried not to remember how many lies we told to cover up what we were doing; we began to see how the rest of our trouble was a life built around me. Me. Me!

We dressed flamboyantly to get attention and look cool, we spend money to impress people, we ran down those who didn't give us the attention we thought we deserved and we hurt the ones who wouldn't give us our way. We proved how terrific we were by seducing the lovers, or wives/husbands of our friends, and how upset we got whenever our cravings weren't met. As we went on peeling the onion and writing it all down, we understood why we were sex and love addicts. We took an honest look at the "payoffs" we got from our addiction; the comfort of self-pity and the self-justification by resentment...that "cotton wrapping" let us hide from taking real emotional risks or really being responsible toward others. We were not just people who had done some bad things; we also were the result of what we had done.

At the same time though, we saw what had been done to us, as well. We hadn't set out to be sex and love addicts; when we were children and/or young people things may have happened to us which may have accelerated our emotion and/or sexual process, or those same things may have stunted the process until we got to a certain point and everything exploded all at once. As a result of that we realized that with some of us, there was a built-in sense of loneliness that made us afraid to be alone, and with others there was a compulsive need for "action"; be it with the same person or with a new person constantly, but the feeling wasn't healthy; it had become a dangerous infatuation. We went out and had sex with strangers and sometimes didn't even know their names. We were afraid that we didn't deserve to be loved so we gave up too much to our parents and lovers. We flirted with everyone to prove we were attractive; we lied to impress people or ourselves that we were attractive; we lied to impress people or ourselves, we were afraid to work out problems with others, and we got stuck in empty and destructive relationships.

Doing the 4<sup>th</sup> Step was teaching us that when we had been proud, stubborn and abusive; what we did came from the longing of a lonely and fearful child part in us crying out to be loved and be held safely. We didn't cause our addiction and we could not control it all by ourselves, even though finding recovery was completely up to us. Therefore we began to feel love and mercy for ourselves and began to forgive ourselves. In Step 4 we took a long, hard look at our sexual addiction. In thinking it over, we could have gotten lost in sexual pictures and feelings; instead we wanted to share what we learned and release it.

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

One thing we noticed about our life in addiction was that we divided it up into separate, secret boxes. We didn't want what and who was in one box to be seen and/or known by people in the other boxes. Some of us went from one bed to another. Some of us kept romantic emotional stories going with several people at a time. Some of us were hooked into total dependence on person. But we all lived double, triple, and multiple, different lives at once. We were proud of how we could keep a secret, keep our stories straight and hide our feelings. We knew how to go it alone. We got a tremendous thrill from that. If we could juggle half a dozen stories at once, or keep the ones we were dependent on from knowing how we really felt -- then it looked as if we never had to face the results of what we did. We could even kid ourselves into believing there weren't any bad results. That was a big reason to stay closed up, and not become vulnerable.

Trouble was, if we kept on going it alone, we -became spiritually and emotionally constipated. Experience kept coming, and got stuck in our gut. We couldn't get away from it. We were stuck in our own mess.

Step 5 was the way we opened up our lives. It was hard enough, in Step 4, we opened up to ourselves. However, if we didn't go on to the next step and share with somebody else what we had learned about ourselves, our sobriety was in danger. We knew that alone we were powerless to manage our own lives, and stay away from addiction, so we couldn't rebuild our lives all by ourselves either. We had been lonely and cut off from other people. That loneliness was one of the causes of our disease, and then our disease made us lonely as a result. We would -continue to be lonely and diseased until we got together with God and other people.

Here on this way, we had to be willing to take a risk. In the first four Steps we had already learned to trust God a little. We now realized that the God of our understanding had known all along what we were doing. We had no secrets from God. God seemed to care about us all the same. Now we had to risk telling the terrible truth about ourselves to another person. We had to tell the exact story of the things we did, and were, and that now filled us with shame, guilt, and remorse. That seemed really scary, but we had to do it; we had to tell somebody. That was the only way to turn away from the addictive things we had done, and from the urges that drove us to do those things.

The most difficult decision of all yet may be to decide who to confide in with such sensitive and vulnerable information. Some of us felt more comfortable telling bits and pieces to different people. But most of us felt we had to find one person to tell the whole thing to. Too often we had been half honest with different people-but being totally honest with one person was an important step in humility. And the most important thing was that if we finally told it all to one listener, we could break out of the terrible loneliness and find what we had wanted so much all along; to be loved and accepted for what we really were the good, the bad and the ugly, not what we pretended to be.

Sometimes we picked an experienced member of S.L.A.A. to confide in-or we talked to a therapist, or a priest, rabbi, or pastor. The important thing was that whoever we picked would Draft (Conference Prison Outreach Committee) - not Conference approved.

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keep what we said totally confidential and understand that we were not after penance, or moral judgment. This person had to have a good understanding of human nature-and also had to have a good sense of balance or control in their own sexual or romantic life.

Obviously, the choice came with cautions; first, confessions build intimacy, and healthy intimacy is a good step toward becoming whole. But we had to guard against the wrong kind of emotional involvement. We needed to choose somebody –we would not be attracted to sexually, and that wasn't a former or future person of interest. It might be tempting to seek forgiveness from those we had hurt by dumping our Fifth Step on them, but forgiveness belonged later on, not here in Step Five.

The second caution: Step Five was not supposed to be an X-rated story of every sexual stunt we'd pulled. It was not, as therapy sometimes is, a search for what caused our addiction. Yes, we had to tell all the important detail but, the most important thing to tell was what drove us to what we did and what thrills we were getting as a result of these things. Although, we weren't born sex and love addicts, something had made us insane, and we had come to believe that our Higher Power could restore our sanity. Now, we had to be responsible for doing what had to be done to get healed and we had to know we were responsible for what we had done. We needed to stop making excuses, stop saying we didn't do what we had done., We needed to stop making excuses, disputing what we had done, minimizing what we had done and/or blaming everything on others.

Our lives had been closed up for years. Sometimes fully and honestly sharing ourselves for the first time with someone else made our bodies hurt in many ways. Some of us experienced physical pain, emotional pain, spiritual pain or even financial pain or some combination of them all.

Eventually we all experienced positive effects; for some, these came right away and for others it took some time. Undoing the strait-jacket we had put around our feelings led to relief and release to say the least. But no matter how we reacted to our first thorough sharing of ourselves with another person, as time went on, we all found we had turned another corner in our recovery. We had shared our painful secrets, and that's how we got a membership card to being accepted unconditionally by others. We would never have to live closed or divided lives again.

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## The Sixth Step

We had now come a long way along our new path. Once we stopped acting out our addictive behavior, we found the start of faith. Under the shelter of our new faith, we had taken a hard look at ourselves. We found out some of the basic patterns we had acted out without knowing we were doing it. We were excited about our new discoveries. And we shared our story with another person. We took another risk, and came out okay.

We had stopped acting out. We had a new view of ourselves. We had decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God. Now we ran into another problem. Apart from the addiction itself, we noticed that in other areas of our lives, we were still living in self-destructive and self-defeating ways. Sometimes these were the same loser ways we had spotted in our inventories. There was a big gap between what we knew was the way that we needed to live, and how we were actually living.

Maybe we thought that all our troubles and character defects would go away because we had pinned them down and shared them with another person. Now it turned out some our "old friends" were still with us. We felt discouraged and annoyed that looking our defects in the face was not the same as having them taken away. We needed another step -- the Sixth Step.

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

Back in Steps Two and Three we had decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God. But deciding and doing were two different things. Now we were going to have to carry out the decision. Becoming willing to let go of all the defects of character we had uncovered in Step Four was easier to think than to do. What was blocking the willingness?

One problem was that we were starting to feel "deprived" again. We had stopped all forms of bottom-line addictive behavior. Wasn't that enough? Wasn't that the whole point of the program? Wasn't our real problem the addiction? Now we were sober, didn't we have the right to relax and be human, and go about life guilt-free? Weren't we better off than most people we saw around us? Did we have to be perfect? Who wanted to be a saint, anyway?

These sure sounded like good arguments. But in fact, we were at a critical point in our recovery. In the first five steps we were walking away from the active disease. Now, we needed to take the first step toward the real payoff of the 12 Step program --rebuilding our lives. Maybe not every single part of us needed rebuilding. But it was also true that we could not trust ourselves to take sole charge of

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responsibility for the rebuilding. Our twisted motives could easily turn things that were all right for others into an addictive game for us.

Therefore, we had to find humility again. We had to see that it would have been wrong to blame all our troubles on our addiction. Our character defects fouled up other aspects of our lives, as well. This was no time to relax. We needed to keep watch against sexual and romantic temptations, as well as the illusion of the "perfect romance." In getting ready to let go of our character defects, we were going to give up our skills at putting on a con, attracting lovers, and manipulating others. If we gave up these defects, we would lose the addictive hooks we used for manipulation. We would have nothing to show to friends and potential partners -- but ourselves, as we really were. As addicts, we were people riddled with insecurity and feelings of inferiority. We were afraid that if we gave up our tools of manipulation people would look down on us, and we'd never find anyone to love us again.

Another problem was that as addicts we had gotten used to pain. Most of the time pain was at the heart of our romantic adventures and often there was pain in the kind of sex we had. For some of us, pain was so close to love that if we couldn't have love we'd be comforted by pain. Here in the sober life, after surrender, withdrawal, and inventory, what did we have left of ourselves? Couldn't we at least be left with our pain? If our pain came from our character defects, and we turned those loose what would we have left? Didn't we have any choice about what we would be? Would we still be us at all? That was the kind of diseased thinking we thought.

We got payoffs from our old emotional habits and that made it hard to let go of them. Many of us had been hurt, and mistreated and abandoned in our early life and learned to use anger, hatred, and resentment to shield ourselves from hurt and fear. Now we learned that we had crippled ourselves by distrust and isolation toward everybody, those who were bad to us as well as to those who were good to us. It went so far that we couldn't trust or care for anyone, even people who saw we were recovering, and wanted to trust us and work toward partnership.

Something in us blocked the way to trust. That hurt, because we wanted to trust, but because the blocks were in us we couldn't see how to remove them. We were afraid of the strong feelings we might get if we let anybody get close to us, and we were afraid of ending up lonely. As we went on living with ourselves we felt more and more tormented by our character defects. We could blow up in murderous rage. We'd get so carried away with emotions that we thought life was worthless, and we wanted to commit suicide. We could get so depressed that we had no hope, and didn't want to go on. If we had thought that the only thing we needed to change was to stop acting out our addiction, we could now see that wasn't nearly enough. We saw how fake-humble we

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had been when asked ourselves, "Who wants to be a saint?" We had been trying to tell God just what he could do and could not do with us, and that didn't work.

Our attitude toward our defects started to change and we could see what a mess other people's lives were when they wouldn't give up their favorite defects. We realized we needed to be human, not superhuman. We found out that sex and love addiction is about what we did, as seen by others, but on the inside of us, it was a disease of the spirit. So we moved from the limited hangout where we just gave up sex and love addiction, to a lifelong surrender. In this total surrender we would let all of us be refined and drawn toward life and peace.

Under this whole shift in our attitude we were coming to rely more on the God of our understanding. We were invited to deepen our relationship with God, but It was up to us to do the legwork, and be open-minded about what would happen. God's blessing would take off us the burden of our old self. Being humble just meant facing the facts. We were being asked to get out of the way, so that, with our cooperation, God could work in our lives.

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### **Step 7: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.**

Now we could see what humility is; we used to think it was humiliation; having to swallow nasty truths. We could see that working on our character defects was like being in a pot where God was refining our relationship with Him. A lot of what we thought we were, and thought we couldn't live without, was boiling away which changed how we felt. We now wanted strongly to experience God's will in all parts of our lives, not just so we could have what we wanted, but because it was God's will. We were more and more what God wanted us to be. Our lives would blossom as we became more open for God to work in us.

By this time we had come a long way in recovery. But if we just relied on our own will power, we couldn't always live up to our potential. We could accept that. We weren't too excited about it; we didn't fight it either. That was the humility, facing the facts, and letting a Higher Power do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

When we kept on asking God every day to take away the shortcomings in all parts of our lives, we began to exercise spiritual muscles that we didn't even know we had. It was easy to accept God's help with defects that had caused us lots of trouble. It was harder to let go of habits that gave us quick payoffs, even if they ended up hurting us.

As all this became clearer to us, we sometimes resented God. After all, we now had what had once seemed impossible; we had stopped acting out in our sex and love addiction and that was a victory! However, we were still stuck in our conflicts and weaknesses. Even if we were mad at God, we realized this was the only Power that would consistently be on our side. Even angry, disgruntled, and discouraged, working with God was surely our best chance! No matter how many failures we had each day in our determination not to act out some defect of ours, the only way to go was forward. Like it or not, we belonged to God, and for good reason.

We hoped that God would sweep our defects out the back door so that we wouldn't have to face them, but that wasn't what was best, nor was that the manner in which God operates. We hoped our defects were just like surface dirt that a detergent would just magically erase but now we began to feel that God was a great Allower. However, our Higher Power wouldn't do the whole job; we had to join in actively.

It looked like God wasn't interested in treating us like helpless children that kept getting into trouble. God seemed to want to be partners with us. It seemed we were supposed to develop all our human abilities, including sharing and cooperation. We weren't just supposed to turn ourselves over to God as a big protective mother or a punishing father- like dictator. Talking with God about our shortcomings was not going to be our old-style hypocritical bargaining: God you do this for me, and I'll do that for you or our old desperate demands and begging. God didn't owe us anything: He was not going to let us tell him what we needed. He already knew what we needed so our job was to wait and watch and listen, and eventually we would find out. Draft (Conference Prison Outreach Committee) - not Conference approved.

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This new partnership with God, where it was God who was telling us what part of our spiritual being needed exercise, had amazing results. We might ask God to take away our shortcoming of impatience; then we found out we didn't need to be patient. Instead, we needed to get honest about how selfish and demanding we were. As we practiced being thoughtful of other people, really giving without expecting to be paid back, we would suddenly notice that our impatience had slipped away. We asked God to remove our quick temper. If we held off the rage for a moment, we could see the fear beneath the rage and we could find the courage to act on faith, not fear.

We asked God to take away our longing for somebody, or a particular sexual cruising ground, and then we noticed we had a choice. When we chose to just stay away from those people and those places, the longing went away. We asked God to take away how inferior and insecure we felt. When we shared our feelings in meetings and heard similar sharing from other people, we felt comforted.

We could even find spiritual food in what looked like a failure to get rid of some character defects. Two character defects many of us had were perfectionism and pride. Day after day we might not control selfishness or procrastination; we were less than perfect, and we were learning to accept progress, not perfection. We might not always be proud of our results, but we could respect ourselves for working the program.

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### The Eighth Step

As we continued to stay in touch with God, we discovered that we needed more housecleaning. We had admitted that we were powerless over our addiction and also over the rest of our lives. We began to know ourselves as we really were. We had become partners with a Higher Power which could free us from our addiction and lead us to a new life. We had begun to develop spiritual abilities which we didn't have or ones which we had but didn't use. With God as our partner it was time to begin making our peace with other people in our lives.

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

In Step 8 we once more looked ourselves over, and started house-cleaning again, as we had in Step 4. This time the cleanup was harder; it was about what we had done to other people. Many of us made really long lists. We discovered that our defects had affected almost everyone we had ever known, all the way back to childhood.

Like many others we had been victims in different ways. Some of us could remember being emotionally, physically or sexually abused. It didn't matter whether or not we could remember every detail. What mattered was that we had become very bitter towards our abusers for the things which they had done to us. Often times that bitterness turned to hatred of that person. We tried to determine how we had been so bad that we deserved the treatment which we had received. Because of this we learned to hate ourselves and turn the responsibility for our hurts back on ourselves. How could we owe them any amends; we were the ones who had been hurt? In our sex and love life, we often had a hard time casting ourselves as the bad guy. We tried to claim that they had power over us and we were the victims because they came on to us. It was their suggestion and idea; they lured me in and I was weak enough to fall for it. They took my money, used me and hurt me.

But the Steps had already wised us up a bit. Our inventory helped us see that the root of our problems was our own passions and me-me-me approach to life. Most of us were victims, and also victimizers. And we had used our damaged relationships for an addictive payoff. Sure, other people had done bad things to us. But on our side of the game was shot through with dishonesty, manipulation, stubbornness, and arrogance. We realized that we needed to forgive others for the same things we needed to be forgiven for. We had to understand and forgive those we thought we hated, if we were to be forgiven ourselves. We had to forgive even those who had not righted their wrongs, and went on being as bad as ever. We had to forgive them because they were sick like us and hadn't started out life intending to be that way.

Now we had to look at the hurt we had done to others and see if there was a way to make it right. We needed to apologize. But more than that, we needed to see exactly how we had harmed other people, and how we could make it right. That was a scary thought, going to those who had humiliated us, or admitting the wrong we had done to the ones we had done it to. We couldn't see how to do it. But we had to be willing to do it, if we wanted to get on with our recovery. Unless we made amends, we could spend the rest of our lives dodging the people we had hurt and who had hurt us. We decided that if we didn't take responsibility for our past damages, we couldn't avoid future ones.

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We stopped concentrating on the harm other people did to us. We gave up wanting to get even; we were never going to get even anyway. The Serenity Prayer was our guide. We asked over and over for the courage to change what, with God's help and good luck, we could change; namely, ourselves, and the serenity to accept what we couldn't change; namely, all those people who hurt us and who owed us; and the wisdom to tell the difference between what we could and could not change.

We shut the books on the side that said: What they Owe Me. We forgave them their debts. We looked at the other side of the books; what I owe them; even when we were victims, we spread a lot of damage around. We cluttered up other people's lives, sometimes crowding out their chance to have a good relationship with someone. We had made something trivial out of love, racking up a list of scores with people we didn't even know; cheating them and us of anything genuine. We saw how we were so dishonest that we led people to expect what we could not or would not deliver. We had been master fraudulent advertisers.

Once we saw how many debts we needed to have forgiven, it was easier to forgive others their debts to us. We felt a new depth of humility as we saw how much damage we had done, and how much of it could never be undone. As we thought this over we understood how our normal human needs for love and a life that meant something, had gotten twisted into something ugly and harmful to us and to others.

Humbly, we turned to God. "I am not responsible for what made me the way I am," we prayed, "but I am willing to be responsible for myself. Help me be willing to make right what I have done to all the people in my life." We closed the side of the books which listed what others owe us, and audited the side of what I owe with a sharp pen. In that love that comes to us when we feel ourselves in the presence of God, we found compassion for ourselves. We found that as sober people, we had a responsibility to others. During our active addiction, we were sick people who twisted reality for all those we touched. Our spiritual, emotional, mental, and hormonal disease had poisoned even those relationships that could otherwise have been healthy.

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### The Ninth Step

Our commitment to recovery had now moved beyond our own survival. We wanted to act on the humbling knowledge that we had hurt other people. We wanted to make amends to those we had harmed.

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

As in other steps that called for action, actually going out and making the amends was tricky. We found out the hard way that we had to make amends cautiously. When we were new to S.L.A.A. and just learning about the steps, some of us were quite anxious to "make amends", especially to former addictive lovers. We could see ourselves beating our chests with confession and remorse, seeking relief and a new start. This way of trying to clean up the messy feelings that were so common in our addictive relationships could only result in falling back into the swamp. Of course, we often had to break off some relationships early in sobriety or set some situations right at once. In such cases, we found that writing these people a simple letter was the safest way. Even if we didn't send the letter, just writing it down was enough for our part. The messy, incomplete feeling that was so often left over from an addictive relationship had to be faced in withdrawal, not dodged with a misuse of the Amends Step.

Amends-making, as we experienced it in Step 9, was quite different from our earlier wish to "fix" damaged relationships. The solid foundation of the first eight steps had to be there to insure that we could make amends with the right spiritual intent. If we hadn't put our lives and wills into the hands of a Higher Power, worked hard on our inventories and let God work to help us remove our shortcomings, we weren't able to tell the difference between the compassion of Step 9 and the passion of our addiction. Until we could tell the difference, we stayed away from those from our past addictive lives.

In Step 8, we had looked over the people we had related to, canceled whatever debts they owed us, and faced the many wrongs we had done to them. Sometimes we could see just how to make direct amends. We could burn letters from ex-lovers, so we couldn't use them for blackmail. We could return their possessions. We could write letters to people we had kept in our "stash," leaving them hanging on the hope that the relationship might be revived.

Sometimes we checked our letters out with another S.L.A.A member before sending them. That helped us cut out sexual or romantic hints, and avoid any tone of accusation. Sent without a return address, our letters of amends could free somebody from the bonds of expectation.

But the most important amends were the ones we needed to make face to face. That took a lot of courage, humility and preparation. We had to be responsible not just for the wrongs that made the amends necessary, but also for the effect that making the amends might have. Especially in cases where making the amends could do harm to others we found it was wise to consult with other sober members of S.L.A.A. about exactly what kinds of amends to make,

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when to make them, and how. More than one of us went off with good intent, only to find ourselves in seductive solitude, being solicited by a person who seemed determined to misunderstand our purpose, or rekindling that old addictive relationship.

We came to expect that in amends-making, as in all areas of our lives, God would give us the willingness and the intuition to know what words to say, and when and how and where to say them. But it was also true that in these matters, God often spoke most clearly through the very human voices of experienced SLAA members! Now we understood that we needed help from our own conscience, and also the experience of others to do in order to do this step.

As we looked at what we had done, we could see we needed to do more than just apologize. We could see that many of the people on our list had gone on with their lives damaged by what we had done when we were with them. Our amends would give us a chance to try to right the mistakes of the past by taking responsibility for our wrongs. When we honestly told them what we had seen about ourselves, they might stop blaming themselves. Or they might be relieved of a load of unresolved feelings. We realized it would be up to them to draw their own conclusions from what we told them. All we could do was admit our own faults and wrongs as we now saw them.

We had to carefully think over whether we should again enter into somebody's life after what was often a long absence. We had to be just as careful with what we were going to say. We didn't want to come intruding with information that might hurt their peace of mind or damage their relationships in their present life. We couldn't build our progress on somebody else's wounds.

If we still burned inside with a feeling of guilt or unfinished business, we relied on our newfound relationship with God and turned these feelings over to our Higher Power. They do not belong to us anymore. We could gain some release by sharing these situations with others in S.L.A.A. Sometimes, the impossible amend was useful to keep us humble in the process of sincerely making amends we must do our best to repair the damaged relationships. Ultimately, the outcome of our amends is up to God. In addition to making amends for harms we have done to others, it is important that we also make amends to ourselves. The process of completing this Step is a way for us to begin to let go of our guilt about our past actions, even if only a little at a time.

In some cases we stayed vulnerable to some people for a long time. We felt ready to leave the pain behind. But often we had to keep going back, doing the earlier steps over and over. We could not find freedom or dignity in making amends to some particular person, until we were truly ready to do it. We needed prayer all the time, especially for people who had been part of our addictive life, and were still around during our sobriety. Every day we asked God to help us do with each person what God would have us do. We prayed to be free from the bondage of self, so that we could honestly do whatever we could to free each person in our lives from whatever pain we had caused. We kept watch on ourselves, so we would not cause further grief to others.

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In working Step 9 as best we could, we completed the cleanup of our past so far as we presently understood how to do it. We could never do a perfect job, and we were not supposed to. As our sobriety grew longer, we would now and then realize new things, find new actions to take, new or better amends to make.

In going through the first nine steps, we gave up the illusion that our own will could control our sex and love addiction. We found the start of faith. We explored ourselves, and shared what we found with somebody else. We did our honest best to recognize our character defects, and allow God to remove them. We made whatever amends we could to people we had harmed.

We couldn't rush, because we found that at any moment we could not be more honest with ourselves than we were ready to be. Often we wanted to do more than we were ready to do. Trying to push and rush brought us smack up against the limits of our ability to heal ourselves. That was part of the path of our recovery. However we wandered, we were still on the path of recovery so long as we did not act out in our bottom line addictive behavior.

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### The Tenth Step

Now we were feeling a deep release from the past. We had a lot less guilt over what we had done and less shame for having fallen short of our standards. Sometimes it turned out that what we thought were our standards, were those of someone else. So, we shed those ideas to let the seeds of our own personal wholeness take root and grow.

We were now living new, positive, unfolding lives. Whether we had a partner or lived alone, we had been given a spiritual release from our sex and love addiction. We still had to keep watch. But the choices were now easier to make. We felt growing confidence in our partnership with God. We were active in S.L.A.A. We enjoyed times alone. We were not afraid to be open and honest with other people. We understood what living in dignity meant.

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

We now felt surprisingly free from guilt and cravings. But we knew that from now on we need to become open and loving to ourselves and to other people. To do that, we learned how to live actively and not just let life happen to us. The blocks that had kept our poisoned past buried inside us were now cleared away. We needed to stay current with our emotions and needs. If we didn't, the same poison would build up again.

We still had some troublesome feelings about people we ran into and things that happened to us. We could suddenly get mad at people for what they said or did. It even looked like they did it just to set us off. Or passing contacts with people would seem to give us a sexual or romantic come-on, and we'd be left off-balance. Sometimes in a group, or even an S.L.A.A. meeting, we'd suddenly be tongue-tied; unable to say what we wanted to say.

We'd be troubled by what somebody said or did or what we were afraid they would say or do. Then we had to take a quick look at our own spiritual condition. That would help us see ourselves and the other person more clearly.

One way to do that was to ask: "If I were doing to somebody else what I think this person is doing to me, would that be a sign of my addiction?" Or the other question: "If others reacted to this person the way I am reacting, would that be a sign of their addiction? Sometimes the answer to one or both of these questions was "Yes". What we saw in other people was like a mirror reflecting our own addiction. If somebody came onto us sexually, as if they wanted to make us act out, that was like a reflection of our own inner cravings. So sometimes we felt entitled to be treated in a certain way and tried to force other people to treat us that way. If someone sexually triggered us, we felt like victims; poor us.

The fact was, when our spiritual condition was shaky, everybody around us seemed to be sick just like us! It was silly to get upset over the come-ons or put-downs other people hit us with; especially when we hoped they would be gentle with our own slips when we were dishonest or manipulative.

When we felt ourselves getting tangled up, we tried hard to see our own problem, label it, understand it, and forgive ourselves for having it. It was important not to try to "look good" by  
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keeping secret our day to day struggles. It was hard to keep being open and honest about how we felt, and what we expected from other people. We could be disappointed, hurt, scared, or angry at somebody, and cover it up, acting as if everything was fine. We would keep silent about the mild fantasies we had over somebody we kept meeting; telling ourselves inside that of course we'd never do anything about it.

We found out that it wasn't enough just to not want to do wrong. We had to keep doing the same things we had done in making our inventories and in making amends. We had to stop now and then during the day, check out what we had been doing and feeling, and make things right as they happened.

We had found some defects in our character. Then we noticed they could come out in milder forms. Or we found new defects. We had known we were too dependent on others, and now we found the selfishness underneath that. We had been too absorbed in doing things alone, or we couldn't settle down, and now we found that was because we were afraid of getting too close to people.

We found we needed to set aside a time in the day or the week to be alone and quietly think life over. These times gave us a chance to check out how far we had come, and notice where we stood in our spiritual development. We went and found people who could help us keep track of ourselves and our progress - friends in S.L.A.A, spiritual advisors, or therapists. At S.L.A.A. meetings there were times for "getting current," when we could talk and share what was troubling us in our daily lives or threatening our sobriety. Sharing these things helped us gain control over them.

We also needed to set aside some "getting current" time with people we had committed relationships with: husbands, wives, lovers, family, close friends, or others. We couldn't reach active partnership with anyone by our own solitary work! We had to learn how to answer other people's needs without being afraid that we'd lose our dignity. It took practice to be open and honest without defending ourselves too much, or being destructive to the other person.

In all this, we concentrated on changing our own attitudes and actions. That was the only part of our life we stood any chance of changing. We had always been, were now, and forever would be, powerless over the actions and intentions of other people.

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## The Eleventh Step

As we started to live in the present, we began to think about our relationship with God. Our journey to spiritual healing had already begun; it started when we admitted our need for a Higher Power. We didn't even know if there would be anything left of us if we gave up the sex and love addict part of our lives.

We had gone through withdrawal, but still wanted some of the things which were junk, like power and prestige. We still did not accept that we had to give control to our Higher Power. A little at a time we started to use our Higher Power for things which were not emergencies, but for guidance in the present. We began to wonder if some of the things for which we had struggled had any value. We began to find a new energy in our work or relationships. Others looked for a new way of living and thinking. We had to look at our lives and wonder what good surprises God had in mind for us. We had to wait, watch, and listen for when God would reveal his plan. This brings us to 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.**

Our idea of God had changed tremendously. God had been the one we called on to get us out of trouble. We only prayed when things got really bad. We had thought that God was too demanding, but now we moved into a conscious partnership with God.

We didn't want to get too close because we blamed God for some of our painful experiences. But, we came to see that these experiences let us know that we had to rely on more than ourselves and became willing to turn to God. This relationship became an adult partnership, which involved sharing and cooperation on our part. Even through our pain, we began to grow and become partners with God.

We couldn't feel safe in the world separated from our inner feelings. We knew that to feel right within ourselves, we had to have a partnership with God and accept our Higher Power's gifts and guidance. This didn't mean that we had to have specific goals or give up everything we had gained. It was a matter of putting first things first. We placed God first and then added relationships with others. From that reliance on God, we decided to find a job which would allow us to reach our smaller sized goals

We began to ask God for guidance in everything we did, large or small, spiritual or ordinary. By doing this, we made some discoveries. First, we realized that God's good surprises were there for us in everything, whether critically important or commonplace. We could feel God's guidance in our daily chores, planning our day and dealing with others. With that first discovery, we made another important discovery. We found that prayer and meditation kept us steady and upright. It didn't matter whether our prayers were informal or whether we recited the Lord's Prayer, the Serenity Prayer, or other prayers we had learned. We could set aside a formal time for this meditation or we could do it in our quiet moments, just sitting still and quieting our thoughts to allow God to speak through our mind's ear and eye.

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Another discovery was that our relationship with God was our own personal relationship. It did not have to fit the definitions of any church or the experience of anybody else. We didn't even have to define our Higher Power to anybody, or even to ourselves. For many of us, awakening to the sense that God was always present for us, led us to study theology or meditation. We began to see that our relationship with God was growing and changing. We found that with God's help we could rise above the walls we had built around ourselves and our addiction. We were now present in everyday reality and not trying to escape from.

We found that a basic need in our lives was being fulfilled in prayer and meditation. As sex and love addicts, the need for love felt like a bottomless pit which we could never fill. Even our network of sober friends didn't completely fill that need; we needed more.

When we were active addicts, it was like having a terrible thirst and drinking salt water. The more we drank, the dryer we got, until our lives were threatened. In S.L.A.A. we found emotional nourishment, like eating oranges. But to fully satisfy our thirst, we needed pure water.

This thirst, the need for love, was a spiritual thirst, and the water was the God of our understanding. Some of us had not believed in God, or had turned away from God. But when we came into S.L.A.A., we found a way of life that involved a loving partnership with that Power. As we developed our personal understanding and relationship with God, we found 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, a spring of love seemed to flow from inside us, to feed the thirst for love in ourselves, and in others. So we came to find intimacy with ourselves, intimacy with God, and then intimacy with others.

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## The Twelfth Step

We had set out for full partnership with God. We asked sought to know God's purpose for us. We tried to live with honesty and to be of service to others. Soon we discovered that the source of love, which was of God, had begun to flow from inside us. We had lived our way into Step 12.

### **Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a 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.**

As we read over this Step, we recognized its wisdom; wisdom that came from experience. How much we could help others depended on how spiritually awake we were when we were doing the helping.

This spiritual awakening came as we hit bottom and surrendered, received faith, examined our past and our character and developed a deepening relationship with God, accepted responsibility for the effect our sex and love addiction had on other people and realized the problem areas in our lives and resolved to tackle them. We made amends, and reached into the spiritual world through regular prayer and meditation to put ourselves in closer touch with the source of guidance and good gifts.

We discovered that we could continue to affirm our recovery by working with other sex and love addicts. Our addiction experiences had been transformed into lifelong lessons for living. We shared our experiences freely and openly with others and established a healing bond through the language of the heart. That language could move others to recognize their addiction and character defects and move them toward healing.

For us it was just the greatest experience to allow God's healing gifts to flow through us. We were useful as channels of healing just because of our experiences in addiction as well as in our recovery. As one of the AA 12-Step "Promises" says: "No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see that our experiences can benefit others." (*Alcoholics Anonymous third edition, page 84 ©1976 Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., New York, NY*)

We discovered that in all areas of our lives, we needed to keep living out what we discovered in our recovery. We had learned to work toward a high standard of honesty, openness, sharing and responsibility. We had learned to treasure the sense of purpose and the feeling of belonging that came with these standards. We found that personal or professional situations where we could not affirm these standards were something we could do without. These standards were not just window dressing. Work that had gotten us material security at the cost of self-fulfillment didn't appeal to us anymore. We either changed the way we did the work, or we got out of that work.

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In relating to other people, we stopped being driven by a need for power and prestige. That let us find out what makes any relationship worthwhile; whether professional, personal or social. We found that in relating to people, we had only as much to gain as we had to share. In our partnerships we discovered a whole new experience of sexuality as a non-addictive experience. We discovered that sexuality wasn't a thing by itself, but it came out of sharing and cooperation.

In our addiction we had leaned on sexual and romantic hits to give us nearly all of what we thought we were and what we wanted. But now, holding a sense of our own dignity, and living our way into an intimate partnership with another human being, we found we no longer needed to get all our security and identity from sex. Trusting, sharing, and telling the truth in our relationship was already helping give us security and tell us who we were. Sexuality was becoming like a barometer, which gave us a reading on what was already in our partnership. It could be no more or less than that.

It took us a while to come to experience new freedom and joy in sex. We had held so many illusions about sex and so-called "love" that we had to do a lot of living in sobriety before the illusions faded and reality arrived. Getting a firm sober experience of trust, sex, and intimacy was hard for us. and true intimacy calls for commitment.

As we continue to live out our recoveries in S.L.A.A., we know we have set out on the great adventure of discovering the true freedom of the human spirit. We have received, and continue to receive, many blessings beyond anything we could imagine. Life is open-ended and wonderful. New chapters in wellbeing await us.

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