

# **THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE**

## **S.L.A.A. H.O.W. PROGRAM**

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## SECTION ONE

### THE S.L.A.A. PREAMBLE<sup>1</sup>

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 S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. S.L.A.A. is supported entirely through the contributions of its membership, and is free to all who need it.

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

1. *Sobriety: Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom line addictive behavior on a daily basis.*
2. *Sponsorship/Meetings. Our capacity to reach out for the supportive fellowship within S.L.A.A.*
3. *Steps. Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sexual and emotional sobriety.*
4. *Service. Our giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely receive.*
5. *Spirituality. Our developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves which can guide and sustain us in recovery.*

As a fellowship, S.L.A.A. is not affiliated with any other organizations, movements or causes, either religious or secular.

We are, however, united in a common focus: dealing with our addictive sexual and emotional behavior. We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We need protect with special care the anonymity of every S.L.A.A. member. Additionally, we try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media.

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## **SECTION TWO**

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION<sup>2</sup>**

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 have 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 sexualize stress, 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 immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions and 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 involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

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## SECTION THREE

### QUESTIONS BEGINNERS ASK

When we first consider coming into recovery we are generally feeling quite vulnerable and maybe a bit beaten up - maybe we've just lost what seems to be the love or our life, maybe we're just about to fall over the edge with internet porn, or maybe we once again ran away for the thousandth time from yet another potentially good relationship to hide alone in our deep despair. So most of us are feeling raw and on edge when we come to our first meeting and then we start to discover this whole new language and all these really strange new ideas and concepts like denial and withdrawal and setting bottom lines and acceptance and, heaven forbid... honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. It's all very new but most of us agree we certainly don't want to go back to what we had. So if we just take a breath and take courage, we might even find this new path of recovery can be very exciting for us and thus... hope returns.

Following are some questions many of us ask at the beginning of this recovery journey.

- ◆ *What on earth is sex and love addiction?*
- ◆ *Do I have this addiction?*
- ◆ *How can I tell if I'm 'acting out' or not?*
- ◆ *Can S.L.A.A. recovery really help me stop acting out?*
- ◆ *I'm terrified - can I really do this?*
- ◆ *How come I feel so terrible?*
- ◆ *Is this withdrawal?*
- ◆ *What is scanning and intriguing?*
- ◆ *What is denial?*
- ◆ *I don't believe in God, is that a problem?*
- ◆ *Will I ever be able to have healthy sexual and loving relationships?*

#### **S.L.A.A. Pamphlets**

There are two excellent S.L.A.A. Pamphlets called *Questions Beginners Ask*<sup>3</sup> and also the *Welcome*<sup>4</sup> pamphlet which give a very good overview of recovery and various terms and ideas and suggestions.

These may be available for purchase from a meeting or the online store.

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## SECTION FOUR

### 40 QUESTIONS FOR SELF DIAGNOSIS <sup>5</sup>

The following questions are designed to be used as guidelines to identifying possible sign-posts of sex and love addiction. They are not intended to provide a sure-fire method of diagnosis, nor can negative answers to these questions provide absolute assurance that the illness is not present. Many sex and love addicts have varying patterns which can result in very different ways of approaching and answering these questions. Despite this fact, we have found that short, to the point questions have often provided as effective a tool for self-diagnosis as have lengthy explanations of what sex and love addiction is.

We appreciate that the diagnosis of sex and love addiction is a matter that needs to be both very serious and very private. We hope that these questions will prove helpful.

#### **The Questions**

1. Have you ever tried to control how much sex to have or how often you would see someone? Y / N
2. Do you find yourself unable to stop seeing a specific person even though you know that seeing this person is destructive to you? Y / N
3. Do you feel that you don't want anyone to know about your sexual or romantic activities? Do you feel you need to hide these activities from others—friends, family, co-workers, counselors, etc.? Y / N
4. Do you get "high" from sex and/or romance? Do you crash? Y / N
5. Have you had sex at inappropriate times, in inappropriate places, and/or with inappropriate people? Y / N
6. Do you make promises to yourself or rules for yourself concerning your sexual or romantic behavior that you find you cannot follow? Y / N
7. Have you had or do you have sex with someone you don't (didn't) want to have sex with? Y / N
8. Do you believe that sex and/ or a relationship will make your life bearable? Y / N
9. Have you ever felt that you had to have sex? Y / N
10. Do you believe that someone can "fix" you? Y / N
11. Do you keep a list, written or otherwise, of the number of partners you've had? Y / N
12. Do you feel desperation or uneasiness when you are away from your lover or sexual partner? Y / N

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13. Have you lost count of the number of sexual partners you've had? Y / N
14. Do you feel desperate about your need for a lover, sexual fix, or future mate?  
Y / N
15. Have you or do you have sex regardless of the consequences (e.g. the threat of being caught, the risk of contracting herpes, gonorrhoea, AIDS, etc.)? Y / N
16. Do you find that you have a pattern of repeating bad relationships? Y / N
17. Do you feel that your only (or major) value in a relationship is your ability to perform sexually, or provide an emotional fix? Y / N
18. Do you feel like a lifeless puppet unless there is someone around with whom you can flirt? Do you feel that you're not "really alive" unless you are with your sexual / romantic partner? Y / N
19. Do you feel entitled to sex? Y / N
20. Do you find yourself in a relationship that you cannot leave? Y / N
21. Have you ever threatened your financial stability or standing in the community by pursuing a sexual partner? Y / N
22. Do you believe that the problems in your "love life" result from not having enough of, or the right kind of sex? Or from continuing to remain with the wrong person?  
Y / N
23. Have you ever had a serious relationship threatened or destroyed because of outside sexual activity? Y / N
24. Do you feel that life would have no meaning without a love relationship or without sex? Do you feel that you would have no identity if you were not someone's lover?  
Y / N
25. Do you find yourself flirting or sexualizing with someone even if you do not mean to? Y / N
26. Does your sexual and/or romantic behavior affect your reputation? Y / N
27. Do you have sex and/or "relationships" to try to deal with, or escape from life's problems? Y / N
28. Do you feel uncomfortable about your masturbation because of the frequency with which you masturbate, the fantasies you engage in, the props you use, and or the places in which you do it? Y / N
29. Do you engage in the practices of voyeurism, exhibitionism, etc., in ways that bring discomfort and pain? Y / N
30. Do you find yourself needing greater and greater variety and energy in your sexual or romantic activities just to achieve an "acceptable" level of physical and emotional relief? Y / N
31. Do you need to have sex, or "fall in love" in order to feel like a "real man" or a "real woman"? Y / N

32. Do you feel that your sexual and romantic behavior is about as rewarding as hijacking a revolving door? Are you jaded? Y / N
33. Are you unable to concentrate on other areas of your life because of thoughts or feelings you are having about another person or about sex? Y / N
34. Do you find yourself obsessing about a specific person or sexual act even though these thoughts bring pain, craving or discomfort? Y / N
35. Have you ever wished you could stop or control your sexual and romantic activities for a given period of time? Have you ever wished you could be less emotionally dependent? Y / N
36. Do you find the pain in your life increasing no matter what you do? Are you afraid that deep down you are unacceptable? Y / N
37. Do you feel that you lack dignity and wholeness? Y / N
38. Do you feel that your sexual and/or romantic life affects your spiritual life in a negative way? Y / N
39. Do you feel that your life is unmanageable because of your sexual and/or romantic behavior or your excessive dependency needs? Y / N
40. Have you ever thought that there might be more you could do with your life if you were not so driven by sexual and romantic pursuits? Y / N

## SECTION FIVE

### ANOREXIA: RE-INTIMACY, SEX, FEELINGS

Most of us have an understanding that Anorexia is connected with not eating food.

Anorexia can also be about not nourishing ourselves with the food of love, affection, intimacy, friendship and our own self-esteem.

For many of us, it's a kind of "stuckness" or inertia.

***In S.L.A.A. we define anorexia as the 'compulsive avoidance of giving or receiving social, sexual or emotional nourishment'.***

This avoidance of giving and/or receiving emotional nourishment can be both quite obvious and also very subtle.

Some obvious forms of anorexia we have experienced are:

- ◆ *refusing sex; preferring porn or quick casual sex to intimate relationships;*
- ◆ *feeling overwhelming fear or stage fright whenever we are asked to give our opinion in public;*
- ◆ *being an obviously loving and giving person but unable to genuinely receive love ourselves;*
- ◆ *being the easy going partner or 'peace-maker' who never rocks the boat in a family or a relationship;*
- ◆ *carefully avoiding promotions at work;*
- ◆ *a persistent, yet hidden, sense that something is just not quite right somehow and that we're kind of stuck or spinning our wheels or not making progress at all for some reason that we can't put our finger on.*

Below are some simple questions which might draw out a sense of whether or not anorexia is perhaps an important issue for you:

#### **Ten Anorexia Questions:**

1. Do you tend to choose unavailable people to have affairs/relationships with?  
Y / N
2. Have you noticed that you stay in a relationship which you know is not good for you?    Y / N
3. Are you or have you been in a relationship in which there is no sexual intimacy?  
Y / N
4. Do you notice that you are mostly alone?    Y / N
5. Do you prefer to masturbate rather than have sex?    Y / N
6. Do you yearn to achieve some dream or career but find that somehow you never quite seem ready to pursue it?    Y / N
7. Do you seem to have acquaintances rather than close friendships?    Y / N

8. Are you always 'busy' doing something (usually alone)? Y / N
9. Do you have an obvious history of being alone and not in a significant relationship?  
Y / N
10. Do you tend to avoid celebrating your own birthday? Y / N

How do you feel now? If you answered 'Yes' to more than one or two of them then you may want to read more about this area in the S.L.A.A. Anorexia pamphlet (see below) and also attend a S.L.A.A.-H.O.W. Anorexia focus meeting to see if it is for you.

### **S.L.A.A. Pamphlet**

The S.L.A.A. Pamphlet called *Anorexia: Sexual, Social, Emotional*<sup>6</sup> gives both an excellent description of sexual and emotional anorexia along with 50 Questions which further help to define this form of sex and love addiction.

This Anorexia pamphlet covers such topics as:

- ◆ *What is Anorexia?*
- ◆ *Some Varieties of Anorexia*
- ◆ *Anorexia May Be Difficult to Recognize*
- ◆ *50 Questions of Anorexia (i.e., Yes/No answers)*
- ◆ *What to do now?*

The S.L.A.A. *Anorexia* pamphlet may be available for purchase from a meeting or the online store.

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## SECTION SIX

### THE TWELVE STEPS OF S.L.A.A.<sup>7</sup>

1. We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sex and love addicts, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

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#### *THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS*

*1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — 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 Him. 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 Him 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 God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His 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 alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

## SECTION SEVEN

### SIGNS OF RECOVERY<sup>8</sup>

Individual patterns of sex and love addiction vary. Patterns of recovery also vary. Generally, recovery from our bottom-line behavior means the return of choice, sanity and personal dignity through working the S.L.A.A. program of recovery. As we work the Steps and use the tools of the program—including meetings, our sponsor, S.L.A.A. literature, telephone contacts, and giving service—we begin to notice some of the following signposts on our road to recovery:

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ We are willing to be vulnerable because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.
- ◆ We learn to accept and love ourselves, to take responsibility for our own lives, and to take care of our needs before involving ourselves with others.
- ◆ We become willing to ask for help, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects.
- ◆ We begin to substitute honesty for self-destructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings.
- ◆ We become honest in expressing who we are, developing true intimacy in our relationships with ourselves and others.
- ◆ We learn to value sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership.
- ◆ We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery.

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## SECTION EIGHT

### GETTING STARTED: TIPS FOR NEWCOMERS

#### **S.L.A.A. Pamphlet**

There is a S.L.A.A. Pamphlet called *Welcome* that includes a list of things most of us found beneficial for our program, especially in the early days (see *Questions Beginners Ask* section above).

This pamphlet covers such topics as:

- ◆ *attending meetings*
- ◆ *getting a sponsor*
- ◆ *keeping a journal*
- ◆ *sharing your feelings*
- ◆ *doing service*

You may also want to check the list of suggestions at the very end of this H.O.W. Beginner's Guide in the *What To Do Now* section.

#### **Sponsorship**

##### **What is a sponsor & how do I find one?**

In H.O.W., a sponsor is someone who helps guide us on the H.O.W. program and on the 12 Steps of Recovery.

They are fellow recovering Sex and Love addicts, just like us. They are 'guides'. They are not therapists, mother/father figures, nor love interests, nor do they need to be perfect.

After attending several meetings we begin to get a sense of those who have been around a bit longer than us and of those who are clearly working the H.O.W. program. Thus, in the H.O.W. program we look for a sponsor who is sober on their bottom lines and is working the S.L.A.A.-H.O.W. program.

In H.O.W., at the end of most meetings potential sponsors stand up and announce their availability and to what level of the Program they are able to guide us. It is then up to us to approach a suitable sponsor and ask them if they will take us through the First Seven questions to set bottom lines and the First Thirty Questions

With the guidance of a sponsor and the first Seven Bottom Line Questions, we are then able to set our Bottom Lines. This usually brings a very welcome sense of relief. For some of us it is the first time in our lives anyone has actually helped us set normal, healthy boundaries for ourselves.

Then our Sponsor guides us through the First Thirty Questions (see following sections re H.O.W. Program) which takes us through the first three steps.

These first three Steps are:

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.*

After this, we will have been in the program for several weeks and we are most likely feeling a bit more stable and ready to continue working the Steps as a sense of "Awakening" and our new life takes shape.

### **S.L.A.A. Pamphlet**

The S.L.A.A. Pamphlet called *Sponsorship - A Return from Isolation*<sup>9</sup> gives a more detailed description of what a sponsor is, and is not.

This sponsorship pamphlet covers such topics as:

- ◆ *What is a sponsor?*
- ◆ *The beginning of the sponsor/sponsee relationship*
- ◆ *How is a sponsor selected*
- ◆ *What does a sponsor gain from sponsorship?*
- ◆ *Long distance sponsorship*

The S.L.A.A. *Sponsorship* pamphlet may be available for purchase from a meeting or the online store.

### **Bottom Lines**

Recovery begins with saying "I'm beaten... I've had enough... I can't take any more... there must be something better than this crazy life I've been living!"

And there is! It's called *Recovery*.

We maintain the good health and joy of our Recovery by creating guidelines for our new life. That means we create boundaries around the unhealthy behaviors which have made us so unhappy in the past, and we don't go back to them.

We call these boundaries 'no go' areas or bottom lines. Bottom-line behaviors are self-defined activities from which we refrain in order to experience our physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness.

Bottom lines might seem hard to stick with in the beginning and we often feel we simply can't survive without those unhealthy behaviors or without that world shattering love-of-our-life relationship, even though that is what drove us to despair and perhaps even to thoughts of suicide.

In spite of our reservations and fears that we will not be able to stay with our bottom lines, we find we can maintain these bottom lines with the help of a sponsor, our peers in recovery and our program of recovery. Without those unhealthy patterns in our lives, we can remain safe from now on and go on to lead normal, happy and healthy lives.

In the S.L.A.A. H.O.W. Program we take setting bottom lines and maintaining them, to be of the utmost importance. These bottom lines create a safe space for us to get some distance from our recent past and begin healing.

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However, each person must identify and set bottom lines as an individual, with the help of a sponsor, because there are so many possible patterns that an individual's addiction can take. If bottom lines are too detailed they may be impossible to keep, but if they are too general, the addiction is likely to continue to sap our spiritual strength, preventing a new life, free of the pain of addiction, from emerging.

Once we have begun attending meetings regularly, and have found a S.L.A.A. H.O.W. sponsor, we begin the seven bottom line questions, answering one a day for seven days. As our trust in the relationship with our sponsor develops, we identify the behaviors that keep us from getting our authentic needs from being met. With those bottom lines agreed upon with our sponsor, we begin thirty days with one question a day, which lead us through a thorough understanding, and genuine acceptance, of the first three steps. The daily calls to our sponsor, the outreach calls, the questions and the meetings, surround us with the strength and the tools to keep the addictive patterns out of our lives, one day at a time, and so recovery has begun.

### **S.L.A.A. Pamphlet**

The *Setting Bottom Lines*<sup>10</sup> pamphlet offers a plan to set bottom lines, which help break the destructive cycles of sex and love addiction. It is divided into five sections:

- ◆ *Destructive Behaviors*
- ◆ *Addictive Patterns*
- ◆ *Accessory Behaviors*
- ◆ *Bottom-line Behaviors*
- ◆ *Healthy Behaviors*

We strongly suggest that you get the help of your sponsor or another trusted S.L.A.A. member when using this pamphlet and its worksheets. You may need to purchase it from a meeting or the online store.

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## SECTION NINE

### WITHDRAWAL

Between the unhappy, out of control circumstances that brought us to S.L.A.A. and the recovery miracles we hear people share about, is a challenging stage called 'withdrawal'.

This period can definitely be difficult and painful.

Suddenly we are no longer using our old devices of sex and love addiction to get by in life. It's quite a shock and in fact many members describe this early period of 'withdrawing' from our past lives of sex and love addiction as exactly that: a state of shock.

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

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

Sometimes we have a sense of feeling downright strange, maybe panicky and possibly even a little unreal. We lose sleep and often feel very uncomfortable in our bodies. Some of us have thoughts of suicide. However, in our experience all of us who are willing and sincere get through this period with the help of the Program and each other.

#### **Common Aspects of Withdrawal**

- ◆ *Intense feelings of sadness and excitement*
- ◆ *Sleep disturbances*
- ◆ *Craving past partners*
- ◆ *Craving past activities*
- ◆ *Loneliness and Isolation*
- ◆ *Anger and frustration*
- ◆ *Headaches*
- ◆ *Tears*

#### **Withdrawal in H.O.W.**

The S.L.A.A. H.O.W. Program is clearly designed to surround us with a very strong Program of tools, including sponsorship, partnership with a Higher Power, and fellowship, so that we have a safe space to help us move through this withdrawal stage of our recovery.

This is one of the reasons it is highly recommended to make four outreach calls a day. It is also why the H.O.W. program places such emphasis upon bottom lines, answering written questions, attendance at meetings and maintaining contact with our sponsor.

Many of us found all these HOW demands somewhat tiresome at first however, once into Withdrawal, the overwhelming opinion from our fellow H.O.W. peers is that these strong suggestions are what pulled them through the often harrowing period of withdrawal.

Most of us begin to love the H.O.W. Program and agree that the more willingly we adopt the strong supports and structures of the H.O.W. program, the more gracefully we may fall apart and re-build our lives anew.

With the help of a sponsor, other S.L.A.A. members, and a Higher Power, we identify the compulsive and destructive activities from which we must abstain in order to find a sense of emotional, physical, and spiritual wholeness. It is through withdrawal that we meet ourselves as we are, because it is only behind the fear that we can find the seeds of our own personal wholeness.

Here are some other suggestions to help with withdrawal:

- ◆ Keep up making outreach calls
- ◆ Keep answering our HOW questions one per day
- ◆ Maintain contact with your sponsor
- ◆ Keep going to meetings
- ◆ Talk to people
- ◆ Go for coffee
- ◆ Pray
- ◆ Take a Service position
- ◆ Be kind to yourself
- ◆ Forgive yourself
- ◆ Love yourself
- ◆ So see a movie
- ◆ Buy an ice-cream
- ◆ Read Steps One, Two, Three
- ◆ Take courage and have faith

### **S.L.A.A. Pamphlet**

The S.L.A.A. pamphlet *Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy*<sup>11</sup> is an invaluable source of suggestions for entering, coping with, and emerging from withdrawal.

Another excellent description of this stage of recovery can be found in *Withdrawal*, chapter five of the *S.L.A.A. Basic Text*<sup>12</sup>. It deals more fully with the experiences members have had in this process, and more about the tools they have used to survive the process without relapsing into the addictive patterns.

Many S.L.A.A. members describe the *Withdrawal* chapter as one of the most beautiful and moving pieces of Recovery literature they have ever read. Both are available from meetings or the online store.

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## SECTION TEN

### THE H.O.W. PROGRAM

If you've read this booklet, answered the questions, perhaps read other S.L.A.A. literature, attended some H.O.W. meetings and maybe talked to some other members, then you may have a sense this program is for you and that the H.O.W. approach is a suitable way for you to proceed.

The H.O.W. approach to working the Twelve Steps is a thorough, well-structured approach that supports and protects us as we take a much needed and cleansing look at ourselves, our behavior, our relationships (or lack of them) and ourselves, including our 'love' or lack of unconditional love for ourselves.

As outlined above in the *Bottom Line* section, you might begin to answer the first seven bottom line questions and see if the H.O.W. approach suits you. These seven bottom line questions are answered one a day to a sponsor whom you have approached at meetings to guide you through this process. We generally ring our sponsor at the same time every day and read our answer out to them over the phone. This disciplined approach, for many of us, offers a welcome safety net and sense of security and purpose to our recovery and our new lives. It can seem difficult at times, however, in general most of us greatly value this H.O.W. structure.

By the end of these seven bottom line questions (guided by your own answers and perhaps by your new 'friend/sponsor' in recovery) you may be clearer on what activities and actions you need to avoid in order to give yourself a chance to heal from an often exhausting, debilitating dis-ease that has possibly made your life unbearable and 'unmanageable'.

After these seven bottom line questions we then go on to answer each of the first thirty questions, one per day for the next thirty days.

For further actions see the chapter, *What Now*, in the last section of this *Beginner's Guide*.

#### **The H.O.W. Concept**

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

Therefore we accept our H.O.W. 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 H.O.W. we've found that, if we commit to using the tools of recovery on a daily basis, our disease of sex and love addiction can be arrested one day at a time.

## **The H.O.W. Tools**

Here are the tools as we work them according to the S.L.A.A. H.O.W. concept of sobriety:

1. In H.O.W. each sex & love addict works with a sponsor to identify his or her personal bottom lines. We become sober by abstaining from these bottom-line behaviors on a daily basis.
2. We use S.L.A.A. literature as well as the AA Big Book and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions as tools of examination and release. Our writing assignments in H.O.W. are taken from these.
3. 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 program.
4. We make four phone calls a day - one to our sponsor and three outreach calls to other S.L.A.A. members. The phone is like a lifeline: we need the contact. It can be like a mini meeting.
5. 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 is freedom from the bondage of self, giving back what we've freely and lovingly received. It's helping out at meetings, setting up chairs, making coffee and welcoming newcomers etc. Sobriety is a service to ourselves and the group.
7. A S.L.A.A. H.O.W. sponsor is a sex and love addict who, by the grace of God, has 30 days of continuous sobriety working the S.L.A.A. H.O.W. concept and has taken the first three steps. In keeping with our second tradition, our leaders are but trusted servants - they do not govern. Discretion, common sense and our higher power can guide us in our selection.

## **SECTION ELEVEN**

### **WHAT NOW**

Some suggestions:

- ◆ Attend six S.L.A.A. H.O.W. meetings.
- ◆ Talk to other members.
- ◆ Ask for phone numbers.
- ◆ Ring people daily (i.e. outreach).
- ◆ Purchase a copy of the *S.L.A.A. Basic Text*.
- ◆ Get a sponsor.
- ◆ Work the steps.
- ◆ Attend an anorexia meeting.
- ◆ Be of service (stack chairs, chair a meeting, call newcomers)
- ◆ Practice being Honest, Open-minded and Willing.
- ◆ Get involved, don't sit on the sidelines.
- ◆ Begin the seven bottom line questions with your sponsor.
- ◆ Go for coffee/fellowship with other members.
- ◆ Get ready for a whole new life!
- ◆ Keep coming back, it works if you work it!

## **SECTION TWELVE**

### **FURTHER READING:**

The following Pamphlets and S.L.A.A. Basic Text are generally available from meetings and/or may be downloaded or ordered from the S.L.A.A. worldwide website [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org).

- ◆ *S.L.A.A. Basic Text*
- ◆ *Questions Beginners Ask*
- ◆ *Sex and Love Addiction 40 Questions for Self Diagnosis*
- ◆ *Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy*
- ◆ *An Introduction to Sex And Love Addicts Anonymous*
- ◆ *Addiction and Recovery*
- ◆ *Anorexia Sexual, Social, Emotional*
- ◆ *Sponsorship*
- ◆ *Setting Bottom Lines*
- ◆ *Renewal of Sobriety*
- ◆ *The Seven Core Documents of S.L.A.A.*