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Healthy Relationships:

Romantic and Committed Partnership

Sex and Love Addicts
Anonymous



*This pamphlet is S.L.A.A.
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The 12 Steps of S.L.A.A.

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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What to Expect from the Pamphlet?

Many members ask themselves what is the outcome of sexual and emotional sobriety: is it life with a partner or living alone? This pamphlet is to be used as a compass on one's recovery journey and does not suggest that one is better than the other.

This material is a blueprint of our experience, strength and hope, as well as summaries and interpretations from Chapter 8 of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text. It is not just an inquiry into how our early family dynamics shape our adult patterns of love, why our partners often drive us mad, or how to handle this inescapable fallibility of the human heart with gentleness and compassion. This piece of literature is about looking at the stages of what can constitute a healthy relationship which can be a rallying point of clarity, presence, and balance with ourselves and another.

Healthy relationships can bring challenges and can also be frontiers of exploration along the recovery journey. "It is very hard to achieve a healthy relationship if you keep the emergency brake on, and the emergency brake is the fear of abandonment," as stated by a seasoned S.L.A.A. member. There is hope for those seeking a healthy relationship.

An Unconscious, Familiar Relationship Pattern?

Often, we believe we are seeking happiness in love, but we confuse sex with love and what we are really after is familiarity. We are looking to recreate, within an adult relationship, the very feelings we knew so well in childhood and which were rarely limited to just tenderness and care. The love most of us have experienced early on came entwined with other, more destructive dynamics. For example, we may have a habit of wanting to help an out-of-control adult to the detriment of our own needs. Or we may have an uncomfortable fear of rejection due to our inability to navigate intimacy.



How logical, then, that we should, as adults, find ourselves rejecting certain “love candidates” not because they are wrong but because they are a little too right — in the sense of seeming somehow excessively balanced, mature, understanding, and reliable — given that, in our hearts, such rightness feels foreign and unearned. Often, we chase after more exciting people, acting out with multiple partners. We may stay “committed” to the right kind of partner, while attempting to battle the urge to act out, resulting in a sense of entitlement, resentment and displaced anger. These patterns grow, not in the belief that life with them will be more harmonious, but out of an unconscious sense that it will be reassuringly familiar in its patterns of frustration. We believed in excitement rather than in reality. We long for love as a feeling by which we were overwhelmed, instead of a committed thoughtful decision.

Living Alone or in a Healthy Partnership?

Many of us who have journeyed on this often long and sometimes painful road towards sexual and emotional sobriety are seeking to learn how to have a healthy relationship with ourselves and a partner. This recovery choice to experience a healthy partnership or to live alone is personal.

As we come through and out of the withdrawal phase of recovery, we are confronted with the possibility of changes in our life circumstances. For many of us, the most challenging and potentially fulfilling changes are in the area of rebuilding and reconciling a relationship, starting a relationship with another, or living a life in solitude.

Am I Ready?

After our battle with withdrawal is over and we are feeling better about our ability to invest in a healthy committed relationship, how do we know we are ready? Since many of us have never experienced a healthy, romantic partnership, there is fear of ending up in a similar situation like the one that got us into S.L.A.A. Some of us found it helpful to ask ourselves the following questions:



- Am I done with withdrawal and available?
- Have I completed the Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.?
- Do I have a relationship with my Higher Power?
- Do I have a healthy, intimate connection with myself?
- Am I still actively attending meetings in S.L.A.A. and doing service?
- Do I have the blessings of my sponsor to begin dating?
- Do I have a written dating plan in place?
- Do I have bottom lines for my behaviors?
- Do I have deal breakers (unacceptable characteristics or red flags in the process of getting to know possible romantic partners) in my dating plan?
- Do I check in with my sponsor and recovery partners when I see red flags?
- Can I support myself by disconnecting from someone when I feel uncomfortable?
- Do I have a support system in place so that when I get triggered I can get healthy, honest feedback?
- Do I practice top line behaviors on a daily basis?
- Am I comfortable with being alone?

Entering a Healthy Partnership

If we have found someone to share the experience of being in a romantic partnership, how do we soberly navigate this new territory in a safe, healthy way? How do we keep a balance with our S.L.A.A. program with our new romantic endeavors?

Consider these questions to determine your part in participating in a healthy, romantic and committed partnership:

- Do I practice direct communication?
- Can I pause and reflect when angry, hurt, sad or scared?
- Do I have a habit of checking in with recovery partners and my sponsor?
- Are both partners evenly invested in the relationship? Are contact and commitment reciprocal from both?
- Can I apply the spiritual principles of the Steps and the Traditions in all my relationships?



Now, more than ever, our connection with recovery and our Higher Power needs to be front and foremost in our lives. The following is a checklist of qualities of an unhealthy relationship versus a healthy relationship:

	Unhealthy Relationship		Healthy Relationship
1	We have feelings of clinging and neediness. We think we will die if we don't have this person.	1	We feel comfortable when we are apart from our partner. We feel secure in the connection.
2	We do not match efforts with our partners. We give too much or too little to the relationship.	2	We match our partner's efforts. Our connection is fluid and reciprocal.
3	We stuff and withhold feelings of anger, fear, and sadness and then lash out with destructive behaviors such as raging, brooding, silent treatment, etc.	3	We feel our feelings of anger, fear, and sadness as they arise. If helpful to the relationship, we communicate these feelings to our partner in a direct, loving, emotionally sober way.
4	We act out feelings of anger, fear, and sadness in an attempt to manipulate our partner.	4	We take regular inventory of our words and actions and make amends when we have caused harm to our partner.
5	We act willfully and do not align our will with God's will.	5	We recognize our willfulness and refrain from acting on it. We turn the situation over to our Higher Power.



	Unhealthy Relationship		Healthy Relationship
6	We give in order to get and/or to manipulate our partner.	6	We freely give and receive gifts of time, service, and resources.
7	We are crushed when we do not get our partner's approval.	7	We derive feelings of worth from our Higher Power and within ourselves, participating in hobbies, nurturing our friendships and working our program.
8	We see a decline in self-care and participation in our own activities. We experience a loss of self.	8	We maintain self-care and stay engaged in our own lives. Our sense of self is intact.
9	We blame our partner for their inadequacies and focus on their side of the street.	9	We keep the focus on ourselves.
10	We expect our partners to make us happy.	10	We take responsibility for our own happiness and share it with our partner.
11	We feel lonely and isolated in the presence of our partner.	11	We experience feelings of warmth and intimacy with our partner.
12	We obsess over our partner and the relationship. We harp on problems and arguments and push issues with circular no-win disagreements.	12	We ask for a time out when discussion turns destructive. We learn to let go and let God.



Maintaining a Healthy Partnership

As mentioned in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text (p. 159), “Those of us who have persisted along the partnership road can only add that we have emerged from the coping period onto a new plane of human experience, which we had never previously known. This experience is, we suspect, the experience of authentic living, and loving.” To this end we ask ourselves questions in three areas of our lives, as listed below.

Maintaining an intimate relationship with a Power Greater Than Ourselves:

- Am I willing and able to live in reality and surrender fantasy and obsession to my Higher Power?
- Do I have a regular practice of prayer and meditation that helps me seek a Higher Power’s will for me?
- During conflicting moments with my partner, do I ask, “Where is Higher Power in this?” or “What is the God of my understanding’s will in this conflict?”
- Am I coming from a place of compassion and acceptance for what is?

Maintaining an intimate relationship with self by continuing to work all aspects of my program and practice regular self-care:

- Am I maintaining a recovery-based relationship with myself and using my tools?
- Do I regularly practice the 10th Step, especially when issues arise in my relationship?
- Do I continue to practice my S.L.A.A. Program by participating in meetings, giving service and sharing my experience, strength, and hope with other members?
- Do I carry the message by sponsoring others in S.L.A.A.?

Maintaining a loving, supportive, romantic, and committed partnership, while employing our whole new relationship strategy:

- Do I use what I have learned in Step Twelve and apply it to the situations that arise in my relationship?
- Do I continue to work my Twelve Steps as they



relate to the day-to-day maintenance of my interactions with my partner?

- Do I practice the traditions and concepts, respecting my partner when communicating with them?
- During a conflict, am I able to ask for a time out, giving myself time to pause when agitated?
- Am I able to establish boundaries or agreements when needed?
- Do I avoid dramatic exits or behaviors, by attempting to solve issues if I am hungry, angry, lonely or tired (“H.A.L.T.”)?
- Am I upholding the notion that we are allies on the same team?
- Do I express my feelings, using “I” statements, instead of remaining silent, or abandoning my feelings and needs?
- Do I use program tools, like simple responses, to employ a new strategy when I disagree with my partner? Here are some response examples:
 - I hear what you’re saying; let me think about that.
 - I understand that it probably seems that way to you.
 - I should look into that.
 - You have a right to your opinion.
 - That’s a good point.
 - Let me understand what you said [repeat what you heard word for word].
 - Wait a second; I’m not sure I’m comfortable with that. Let me get back to you.
 - I need to think about this.

We hope this pamphlet gives you insight and support while on your recovery journey. Please take what you like and leave the rest. To keep the program simple, no matter what your circumstances, we suggest using the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, the Serenity Prayer, the slogans, our bi-monthly publication - the Journal, and service work to continue your recovery. There is a spiritual principle behind each of our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Signs of Recovery. To better understand the program’s spiritual principles, see the table at the end



of this document. As expressed in S.L.A.A.'s Twelfth Step, "... we practice these principles in all areas of our lives."

As this quote found in "My Continuing Sobriety" from the Journal July-August 1995 puts it so eloquently: "The next relationship, whatever it is, will surely happen with some kind of healing."

We suggest applying this pamphlet to your recovery journey in combination with the S.L.A.A Basic Text, especially Chapter 8 "Building Partnerships." The last two paragraphs of Chapter 8 are quoted below.

"The truth is, we feel we are 'on to' something big. We don't know where it will lead us. We just don't know what the upper limits of healthy human functioning are. In any event, our hunch is that we are but newcomers to this larger experience of living, this wider arena of life. If all we are capable of doing here is to convey to you our sense of hope, and our conviction that a new life of fulfillment, richness and mystery surely awaits you as you move into sobriety, then we are meeting our task.

"May each of you, as you embark on this adventure, discover your share of the golden braid: that unfolding wonder of which we are all a part. We are with you. We are all joint travelers on destiny's path, and we all have much to learn from each other."



Signs of Recovery

1. We seek to develop a daily relationship with a Higher Power, knowing that we are not alone in our efforts to heal ourselves from our addiction.
2. We are willing to be vulnerable because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power.
3. We surrender, one day at a time, our whole life strategy of, and our obsession with, the pursuit of romantic and sexual intrigue and emotional dependency.
4. We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.
5. We learn to accept and love ourselves, to take responsibility for our own lives, and to take care of our own needs before involving ourselves with others.
6. We become willing to ask for help, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others.
7. We allow ourselves to work through the pain of our low self-esteem and our fears of abandonment and responsibility. We learn to feel comfortable in solitude.
8. We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects.
9. We begin to substitute honesty for self-destructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings.
10. We become honest in expressing who we are, developing true intimacy in our relationships with ourselves and others.
11. We learn to value sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership.
12. We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery.



The table below is a list of commonly accepted spiritual principles behind S.L.A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and Signs of Recovery as applied to a healthy, romantic, and committed relationship. Please use your Higher Power's guidance for interpretation of these principles.

	Twelve Steps	Twelve Traditions	Signs of Recovery
1	Honesty	Unity	Healing
2	Hope	Trust	Vulnerability
3	Faith	Identity	Surrender
4	Courage	Autonomy	Choice
5	Integrity	Purpose	Acceptance
6	Willingness	Solidarity	Readiness
7	Humility	Responsibility	Solitude
8	Self-Discipline	Fellowship	Perfect Imperfection
9	Love	Structure	Honesty
10	Perseverance	Trust and Commitment	Intimacy
11	Awareness	Anonymity	Partnership
12	Service	Humility	Normality



The 12 Traditions of S.L.A.A.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as this Power may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. Any two or more persons gathered together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction may call themselves an S.L.A.A. group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers.
6. An S.L.A.A. group or S.L.A.A. as a whole ought never to endorse, finance, or lend the S.L.A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every S.L.A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. S.L.A.A. should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. S.L.A.A. as such ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the S.L.A.A. name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow S.L.A.A. members.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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