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THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING OUTREACH CALLS

Why they are important and
suggestions for making
and receiving them

**Sex and Love Addicts
Anonymous**



*This pamphlet is S.L.A.A.
Conference-approved Literature*

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Together with meetings, sponsorship, reliance on our Higher Power, and providing service, outreach calls are a fundamental tool for successfully working the S.L.A.A. Twelve-Step program. Many of us have found that making outreach calls to fellow members in the program helps us break our isolation, relieve our feelings of loneliness, and create or maintain a solid foundation of sobriety. We are of service to the other member when we call them. Some experienced members in recovery recommend that all members, especially newcomers, make two to three outreach calls a day.

By making and taking outreach calls we learn a variety of lessons and skills that are critical to establishing long-term sobriety:

- How to ask for help.
- That we are not alone.
- How to uncover, acknowledge, honor, and communicate our feelings.
- How to become aware of our need for boundaries—how to set them, how to keep them, and how to honor and respect the boundaries set by others.
- How to actively listen—being present to what the person speaking is saying and avoiding distractions.
- That sometimes all we need is to be heard, not judged or given advice.

Outreach calls to fellow members are important for both the caller and the person receiving the call. Please do not fear you are bothering someone by phoning them. Other members can set their own boundaries when receiving calls. They can choose not to answer a call or to interrupt a call if necessary. It is common to call several members before reaching someone on the phone, so please do not be discouraged; just keep calling. It is helpful to text someone who doesn't know you before phoning them, so they can identify your number and take your call or arrange another time to speak. Setting up an appointment for outreach is a good way to practice commitment. Outreach calls are an excellent way of doing service and they usually help both the caller and the receiver.

It is also important for newcomers to understand that



outreach calls are not the same as calls to family and friends, where oftentimes we do not practice vulnerability and honesty about our sex-and-love patterns and behaviors. The purpose of outreach calls is to give us the opportunity to connect with ourselves, another person, and our Higher Power, rather than an opportunity to “visit” or “catch up.” This difference is what makes them fundamental to our recovery.

Outreach calls are also different from calls to a sponsor. A sponsor is a spiritual guide who helps a member work through the Steps. Any fellow member can receive a call or initiate a call, whether they are a newcomer or someone who has been working the Steps for a while. This document provides suggested guidelines specifically for member-to-member calls, not sponsor- sponsee calls.

Text messages do not replace outreach calls. However, if the circumstances do not allow for speaking out loud, text messaging is encouraged as a way to reach out and stay connected to the program and fellow members.

At some meetings, fellow members are asked whether they are willing to take outreach calls from newcomers. Trust that, if they have raised their hand, they will return your call as promptly as possible, if they are unable to initially accept it. Sometimes you will have to call a member more than once. Some members may not be available or ever reply. Do not take this personally; embrace it as an opportunity for growth. We recommend gravitating toward members who are available, and who do reply. Don't be afraid to continue to ask for help. If there is someone you have been particularly inspired by at a meeting, you can approach them directly and ask if it's okay to call them.

Outreach calls can be made directly to members in the program or requested in the numerous group chats created by S.L.A.A. members. Ask your sponsor or other members about group chats to which you can be added, which will increase the likelihood of speaking to someone.

Outreach calls are:

- An opportunity to connect with fellow members and practice building healthy relationships.
- An opportunity to support each other through recovery, especially during withdrawal and other



situations where we feel triggered—having an impulse to act out.

- An opportunity to learn how to work the program from someone with more sobriety, if both people wish to share.
- An opportunity to share the progress we have made and our signs of recovery.
- An opportunity to build accountability as we work the program.
- A reminder that we are not alone.
- An opportunity to be of service.

Outreach calls are not:

- A one-way monologue or an excuse for dumping. Dumping is toxic for both the person making the call and the person receiving it. Both people need to share when possible.
- A therapy session. It is not our job to “fix” or rescue anyone.
- A replacement for going to meetings or calling a sponsor.
- Necessarily lengthy; five to ten minutes is acceptable.

As the initiator of the call, it is important to ask if we are phoning at a good time and what their time availability is. Outreach calls do not need to take a significant amount of time to be effective.

As the recipient, here are some sample dialogue suggestions:

- “I have about ten minutes; maybe you can share for five and I can share for five. Will that work for you?” (Identify the amount of time you have.)
- “I only have a few minutes now, but I can talk more at...” (Specify the time.)
- “I only have a few minutes. How can I best support you now with the time I have?”
- “Would you like feedback or would you like for me to just listen?”

During an outreach call we are not responsible for:



- Finding solutions to another person's problems.
- Finding answers to their questions if we don't have the answer.
- Giving more time or energy than we have available.

For both the initiator and the recipient of an outreach call, here are some ways we can be of service, whether or not we have a lot of experience in the program or in working the Twelve Steps:

- **Listening:** Listening is as important as talking. We each need to be heard. If we don't have much time or we are unable to give feedback for whatever reason (for instance, we may be in a loud place, or we may not have the desire to talk but are able to listen), we can ask the caller if we can provide service by listening. Listening is not only an opportunity to learn something new or to be reminded of our own journey in the program—by listening, we are supporting our own and another person's recovery.
- **Mirroring:** Mirroring is restating what we have heard. Here is where active listening becomes a vital tool. It may seem simple but, as addicts, we are not often used to active listening. By mirroring, we learn to stay present and listen in order to mirror what we have heard. Mirroring can be an eye-opener to the one who receives it, helping us understand our thought patterns and the extent of our addiction.
- **Relating:** Relating feedback is providing examples of how we relate to what we have heard. It doesn't have to be an exact parallel to the story we have heard. If a caller is describing a relationship with a son, we can relate to it by describing a relationship to a brother or a friend, if we believe it's appropriate to the share. In relating we must be cautious not to hijack the focus of the share onto us and our story.
- **Suggestions:** Unless it's asked for, do not give suggestions or advice before asking permission. We do this by asking, "Do you want feedback?" or "May I make a suggestion?" Suggestions may be given by providing program tools to help the caller face



the situation. Examples include working the Steps, prayer and meditation, more outreach calls, more meetings, consulting one's sponsor, surrendering to one's Higher Power, and so on.

Interrupting may also be an important and healthy part of making and taking outreach calls. It is acceptable to interrupt someone to let them know when our time is up and we need to go. It is helpful to wait for an appropriate pause, but that may not always occur.

Therefore, it is important to interrupt as respectfully and politely as possible.

Interrupting may also be important and healthy when a fellow member seems to be stuck in their story or the problem and cannot see, or are not willing to see, the nature of the problem or the solution.

Finally, interrupting may also be important when something the other fellow member has said is triggering to our sobriety and recovery, such as overly detailed descriptions of sexual acts.

S.L.A.A. is a solution-focused program. We are not a self-help, therapy, or support group. We focus on working the Twelve Steps in order to achieve sobriety from our sex and love addiction. We have learned not to take it personally when someone doesn't have much time to talk, doesn't take our call, or doesn't call us back. We just keep phoning other members, going to meetings, and working the program. We have found this strengthens our recovery and has led to the peace, serenity, and joy we sought. **We are not alone anymore..**

If you are considering harming yourself or others, please call a reputable suicide prevention organization and/or go to the nearest emergency room or psychiatric intake center for care.



CHARACTERISTICS OF SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION

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1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.
3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.
4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
6. We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support.
7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.
8. We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.
9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.
10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.
11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.



Twelve 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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S.L.A.A. SIGNS OF RECOVERY

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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



Twelve 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 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 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 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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