

Greetings! and thank you for your interest in starting a Love Addicts Anonymous meeting. There is no perfect way to start a meeting. You just need the willingness to start small and build on what you have. Remember that LAA is a 12-Step program and that you have a Higher Power to guide you.

To start, you must select a time and place. The place can be anywhere. Some people start in their living rooms. Some people find a donated space in a church or hospital. Others pay rent. Once you find a time and location, you have to advertise the meeting. World Service can provide you with a sample flyer and the electronic version of any LAA text that you might want to put on it. You can post these flyers all over town. In the first LAA meeting we put flyers in an Oakland Recovery Center, where all kinds of 12-step programs meet, and that is how we got our first members. Our early members also spread the word at other 12-step meetings they attended. Keep your flyers handy and pass them out to everyone you meet, or make up some inexpensive business cards to pass out. You can also send the press release to local newspapers. Some of them may want to do a story on LAA.

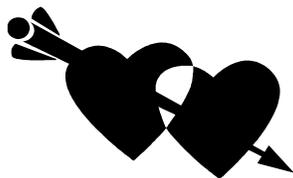
The Suggested Meeting Format has evolved through trial and error. We will provide you with an electronic version if you want. If you are unhappy with this format, you can create your own. We recommend keeping the 10-minute reading. We have found that the discussion following the reading is rich with emotion and insight because of what has been read. Choose any book you want from the Annotated Reading List.

Right now LAA is small and we here at World Service have plenty of time to help you get started. Please contact us for anything you might need. It would also mean a lot if you could keep us posted on how you are doing. We are going to have a page on the website with updates on your progress so others can be encouraged about their own meetings. Remember, all great organizations start out small. Look at Alcoholics Anonymous and how far it has come.

Don't forget to notify World Service that you have started a meeting so we can post the information on the website. Include a contact number.

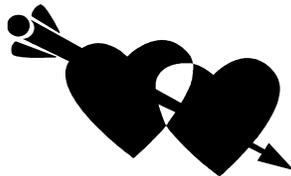
Preamble

Love Addicts Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is to recover from our unhealthy dependency on love as it plays out in our fantasies and relationships. The only requirement for membership in LAA is a desire to work toward recovery. There are no dues or fees; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Our primary purpose is “to offer a safe place to recover from love addiction and to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.”



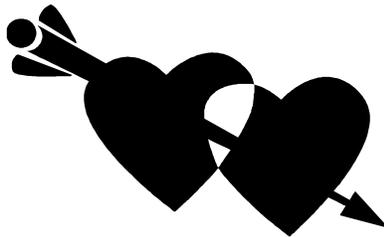
Statement of Purpose

Love Addicts Anonymous was started to provide a safe place where love addicts could come together and recover from love addiction. In LAA we will share our experience, strength and hope with each other. As a group, we will support each other unconditionally. We will also read literature, share ideas, process information and work the 12-steps of LAA as adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. Please be assured that no particular ideology will be forced upon you. You can take what you need and leave the rest. If you are a love addict, or think you might be, join us on our journey toward putting love into perspective and establishing healthy relationships with ourselves and others. Let us do together what we cannot do alone.



Welcome to LAA

Love addiction comes in many forms. Some love addicts carry a torch for unavailable people. Some love addicts obsess when they fall in love. Some love addicts get addicted to the euphoric effects of romance. Others cannot let go of a toxic relationship even if they are unhappy, depressed, lonely, neglected or in danger. Some love addicts are codependent and others are narcissistic. Some love addicts use sex to manage feelings; others are sexually anorexic. What we all have in common is that we are powerless over our distorted thoughts, feelings and behavior when it comes to love, fantasies, and relationships. Still, there is hope. Through self-honesty, open-mindedness, willingness and the 12-steps of LAA, we can recover. We can grow and change in the sunlight of the spirit. Welcome to LAA. Welcome home!



The Twelve Promises

1. I have a new sense of freedom because I am letting go of the past.
2. I am hopeful about my future relationships.
3. I can be attracted to someone without falling in love overnight, and I can fall in love without obsessing.
4. If love does overwhelm me I do not act out in addictive ways.
5. I can tell the difference between fantasies and reality.
6. I do not have to control the ones I love nor let them control me.
7. I experience relationships one at a time and I do not get involved with “unavailable” people.
8. If my basic needs are not being met, I can end my relationship.
9. I can leave anyone who is abusing me either verbally or physically.
10. I do not do for others what they should be doing for themselves.
11. I love myself as much as I love others.
12. I look to my Higher Power for strength, guidance, and the willingness to change.



The Twelve Steps of LAA

1. We admitted we were powerless over love, romance, fantasies and relationships—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 God as we understood God, 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 others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The 12 Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon LAA unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving Higher Power as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership in LAA is a desire to recover from love addiction.
4. Each group should remain autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or LAA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.
6. An LAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the LAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. A LAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Love Addicts Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. LAA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. LAA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the LAA 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 public level.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

40 Questions To Help You Determine If You Are a Love Addict

If you can answer yes to more than a few of the following questions, you are probably a love addict. Remember that love addiction comes in many forms, so even if you don't answer yes to all of the questions you may still be a love addict.

yes no

1. ___ ___ You are very needy when it comes to relationships.
2. ___ ___ You fall in love very easily and too quickly.
3. ___ ___ When you fall in love, you can't stop fantasizing—even to do important things. You can't help yourself.
4. ___ ___ Sometimes, when you are lonely and looking for companionship, you lower your standards and settle for less than you want or deserve.
5. ___ ___ When you are in a relationship, you tend to smother your partner.
6. ___ ___ More than once, you have gotten involved with someone who is unable to commit—hoping he or she will change.
7. ___ ___ Once you have bonded with someone, you can't let go.
8. ___ ___ When you are attracted to someone, you will ignore all the warning signs that this person is not good for you.
9. ___ ___ Initial attraction is more important to you than anything else when it comes to falling in love and choosing a partner. Falling in love over time does not appeal to you and is not an option.
10. ___ ___ When you are in love, you trust people who are not trustworthy. The rest of the time you have a hard time trusting people.
11. ___ ___ When a relationship ends, you feel your life is over and more than once you have thought about suicide because of a failed relationship.

12. ___ ___ You take on more than your share of responsibility for the survival of a relationship.
13. ___ ___ Love and relationships are the only things that interest you.
14. ___ ___ In some of your relationships you were the only one in love.
15. ___ ___ You are overwhelmed with loneliness when you are not in love or in a relationship.
16. ___ ___ You cannot stand being alone. You do not enjoy your own company.
17. ___ ___ More than once, you have gotten involved with the wrong person to avoid being lonely.
18. ___ ___ You are terrified of never finding someone to love.
19. ___ ___ You feel inadequate if you are not in a relationship.
20. ___ ___ You cannot say no when you are in love or if your partner threatens to leave you.
21. ___ ___ You try very hard to be who your partner wants you to be. You will do anything to please him or her—even abandon yourself (sacrifice what you want, need and value).
22. ___ ___ When you are in love, you only see what you want to see. You distort reality to quell anxiety and feed your fantasies.
23. ___ ___ You have a high tolerance for suffering in relationships. You are willing to suffer neglect, depression, loneliness, dishonesty—even abuse—to avoid the pain of separation anxiety (what you feel when you are not with someone you have bonded with).
24. ___ ___ More than once, you have carried a torch for someone and it was agonizing.
25. ___ ___ You love romance. You have had more than one romantic interest at a time even when it involved dishonesty.
26. ___ ___ You have stayed with an abusive person.
27. ___ ___ Fantasies about someone you love, even if he or she is unavailable, are more important to you than meeting someone who is available.

28. ___ ___ You are terrified of being abandoned. Even the slightest rejection feels like abandonment and it makes you feel horrible.
29. ___ ___ You chase after people who have rejected you and try desperately to change their minds.
30. ___ ___ When you are in love, you are overly possessive and jealous.
31. ___ ___ More than once, you have neglected family or friends because of your relationship.
32. ___ ___ You have no impulse control when you are in love.
33. ___ ___ You feel an overwhelming need to check up on someone you are in love with.
34. ___ ___ More than once, you have spied on someone you are in love with.
35. ___ ___ You pursue someone you are in love with even if he or she is with another person.
36. ___ ___ If you are part of a love triangle (three people), you believe all is fair in love and war. You do not walk away.
37. ___ ___ Love is the most important thing in the world to you.
38. ___ ___ Even if you are not in a relationship, you still fantasize about love all the time—either someone you once loved or the perfect person who is going to come into your life someday.
39. ___ ___ As far back as you can remember, you have been preoccupied with love and romantic fantasies.
- 40 ___ ___ You feel powerless when you fall in love—as if you are in some kind of trance or under a spell. You lose your ability to make wise choices.

Total _____ yes
 _____ no

Ambivalent Love Addicts

Ambivalent Love Addicts (ALA's) crave love but also fear it. Because of their ambivalence, they do one or more of the following:

1. They avoid intimacy altogether by only experiencing love through romantic fantasies about unavailable people.
2. They only get involved with people who are emotionally unavailable.
3. They prefer romantic affairs to committed relationships.
4. They sabotage relationships with available people when their fear of intimacy comes up.
5. They initiate relationships with more than one person at the same time in order to avoid moving to a deeper level with any one person.
6. They sexualize relationships to such a degree that emotional intimacy is non-existent.
7. They fall in love but avoid commitment.

ALA's are ambivalent for different reasons and to different degrees. Treatment is the same as that for the love addict—self-awareness, a support network, change, and the 12-Steps of LAA.



Annotated Reading List

Listed in order of publication

- 1975 Stanton Peele, *Love and Addiction*. The first book written about love addiction. Clinical analysis of love addiction.
- 1982 Howard Halpern, *How to Break Your Addiction to a Person*. The relationship between love addiction and childhood attachment hunger. How to end an addictive relationship.
- 1985 Robin Norwood, *Women Who Love Too Much*. The book that changed all of our lives. Great suggestions about recovery.
- 1987 Brenda Schaeffer, *Is It Love or is It Addiction?* Good discussion of love addiction.
- 1988 Susan Peabody, *Addiction to Love: Overcoming Obsession and Dependency in Relationships*. First book written by a non-therapist who herself was addicted to love. Takes an overview of the problem of love addiction.
- 1988 Stephanie Covington, and Liana Beckett, *Leaving the Enchanted Forest: The Path from Relationship Addiction to Intimacy*. Discusses both the problem of love addiction and what constitutes a healthy relationship.
- 1989 Jed Diamond, *Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places: Overcoming Romantic and Sexual Addictions*. Good book for men. Does not really differentiate between sex addiction and love addiction.
- 1990 Anne Schaef, *Escape from Intimacy: Untangling the Love Addictions: Sex, Romance, Relationships*. Discusses sexual, romance & relationship addictions as separate addictions & shows how each is related; explores how each functions as an attempt to escape intimacy.
- 1991 Forward, Susan, *Obsessive Love: When Passion Holds You Prisoner*. Overview of love addiction. Good explanation of “why” love addicts obsess. Chapter for the “target” of the love addict

1992 Pia Mellody, *Facing Love Addiction: Giving Yourself the Power to Change the Way You Love*. Good description of the relationship between the love addict and the avoidance addict (narcissistic love addict).

1992 Stephen Aterburn, *Addicted to Love: Understanding Dependencies of the Heart, Romance, Relationships & Sex*. Examines what love addiction looks like, who it afflicts and what you can do if you suspect that your spouse, friend or family member may be suffering from it; points the way to psychological & spiritual healing. Christian overtones.

1999 Joy Miller, *Addictive Relationships: Reclaiming Your Boundaries*. Guide for those who believe their relationships are destructive. Learn about the characteristics of addictive & healthy relationships; not just centered around spouses or lovers , but also with children, friends, and parents.

Love Addicts Anonymous does not endorse any of these books. This is simply a list of what is available on the market.

www.loveaddicts.org

Celebration of Discipline 12 Steps to a Stronger Spiritual Life

1. Meditation

Get quiet and listen to God through your feelings and intuition.

2. Prayer

Talk to God (out loud or in your head) as if you were talking to a close, personal friend.

3. Humility

God is a higher power. You are a lesser power. You know this. You are humbled by it.

4. Study

Read, write, learn, listen.

5. Simplicity

Slow down. Experience and appreciate the simple things in life—nature, music, friends.

6. Solitude

Take some time to be alone and listen to your own inner music. Putter around your nest.

7. Submission

Surrender everything to God—as you understand God.

8. Service

Reach out to people in need and give of yourself and your resources.

9. Confession

Find someone you can trust and confide your deepest, darkest secrets to them.
Release the shame.

10. Worship

Be in awe of your Higher Power. Bow your head—metaphorically or literally.
Be thankful for the grace that has been freely given to you.

11. Celebration

Be grateful! Raise your hands in joy and celebration. Sing, dance and be merry.

12. Guidance

Work with a mentor who is in constant contact with God.

Typical Kinds of Love Addicts

Obsessed Love Addicts: OLAs cannot let go, even if their partners are:

- P Unavailable emotionally or sexually
- P Afraid to commit
- P Unable to communicate
- P Unloving
- P Distant
- P Abusive
- P Controlling and dictatorial
- P Ego-centric
- P Selfish
- P Addicted to something outside the relationship (hobbies, drugs, alcohol, sex, someone else, gambling, shopping etc.)

Codependent Love Addicts: CLAs are the most widely recognized. They fit a pretty standard profile. Most of them suffer from low self-esteem and have a certain predictable way of thinking, feeling and behaving. This means that from a place of insecurity and low self-esteem, they try desperately to hold on to the people they are addicted to using codependent behavior. This includes enabling, rescuing, caretaking, passive-aggressive controlling, and accepting neglect or abuse. In general, CLAs will do anything to “take care” of their partners in the hope that they will not leave—or that someday they will reciprocate.

Relationship Addicts: RAs, unlike other love addicts, are no longer in love with their partners but still cannot let go. Usually, they are so unhappy that the relationship affects their health, spirit and emotional well being. Even if their partner batters them, and they are in danger, they cannot let go. They are afraid of being alone. They are afraid of change. They do not want to hurt or abandon their partners. This can be summed up as “I hate you don’t leave me.”

Narcissistic Love Addicts: NLAs use dominance, seduction and withholding to control their partners. Unlike codependents, who accept a lot of discomfort, narcissists won’t put up with anything that interferes with their happiness. They are self-absorbed and their low self-esteem is masked by their grandiosity. Furthermore, rather than seeming to obsess about the relationship, NLAs appear aloof and unconcerned. They do not appear to be addicted at all. Rarely do you even know that NLAs are hooked until you try to leave them. Then they will no longer be aloof and uncaring. They will panic and use anything at their disposal to hold on to the relationship—including violence. Many professionals have rejected the idea that narcissists can be love addicts. This may be because they rarely come in for treatment. However, if you have ever seen how some narcissists react to perceived or real abandonment, you will see that they are indeed “hooked.”

Ambivalent Love Addicts: ALAs suffer from avoidant personality disorder. They don’t have a hard time letting go, they have a hard time moving forward. They desperately crave love, but at the same time they are terrified of intimacy. This combination is agonizing. ALAs also come in different forms, listed below.

Torch Bearers are ALAs who obsess about someone who is unavailable. This can be done without acting out (suffering in silence) or by pursuing the person they are in love with. Some Torch Bearers are more addicted than others. This kind of addiction feeds on fantasies and illusions. It is also known as unrequited love.

Saboteurs are ALAs who destroy relationships when they start to get serious or at whatever point their fear of intimacy comes up. This can be anytime—before the first date, after the first date, after sex, after the subject of commitment comes up—whenever.

Seductive Withholders are ALAs who always come on to you when they want sex or companionship. When they become frightened, or feel unsafe, they begin withholding companionship, sex, affection—anything that makes them feel anxious. If they leave the relationship when they become frightened, they are just Saboteurs. If they keep repeating the pattern of being available/unavailable, they are seductive withholders.

Romance Addicts are ALAs who are addicted to multiple partners. Romance addicts are often confused with sex addicts. However, unlike sex addicts, who are trying to avoid bonding altogether, romance addicts bond with each of their partners—to one degree or another—even if the romantic liaisons are short-lived or happening simultaneously. By “romance” I mean sexual passion and pseudo-emotional intimacy. Please note that while romance addicts bond with each of their partners to a degree, their goal (besides getting high off of romance and drama) is to avoid commitment or bonding on a deeper level with one partner.

A Note about ALAs: Not all avoidants are love addicts. If you accept your fear of intimacy and social situations, and do not get hooked on unavailable people, or just keep your social circle small and unthreatening you are not necessarily an ALA. But if you eat your heart out over some unavailable person year after year, or sabotage one relationship after another, or have serial romantic affairs, or only feel close when you are with another avoidant, you may be an Ambivalent Love Addict.

Combinations: You may find that you have more than one type of love addiction. Many of these types overlap and combine with other behavioral problems. For instance, you may be a codependent, alcoholic love addict. Or a love/relationship addict. The important thing is to identify your own personal profile so you know what you are dealing with.

For instance, Robert was a love addict, relationship addict, romance addict and sex addict. He was married but did not want to divorce his wife of twenty years even though he was not in love with her (relationship addiction) His hobby was masturbating to pornography when his wife was not home (sex addiction). He had affairs with several other women simultaneously without his wife finding out. He really cared about each of these women (romance addict). One day he met Jennifer and fell in love with her. It did not take long before he was obsessed with her. She did not want to be with him because he was married, so he began stalking and harassing her (love addict). Robert finally got into recovery, divorced his wife, gave up the pornography and affairs and married the woman he was obsessed with. At first his jealousy was out of control, but after a few years of therapy and 12-Step meetings he began to trust his new wife. Because she was mature, well-grounded and had high self esteem, the relationship began to normalize. Today, all of Robert’s addictions are in remission.

Narcissists and Codependents: It is very common for love addicts to end up in relationships with other love addicts. The most common kind of love-addicted couple is, as you might have guessed, the codependent and the narcissist. In the beginning, narcissists are often seductive. After they have

hooked their codependent partners, however, they change. Here is an example of a narcissist/codependent relationship.

Nancy and James met at a bar and were instantly attracted to one another. Within days, Nancy (the codependent) had fallen madly in love with James (the narcissist). From the beginning, she was helpful, nurturing, attentive and went out of her way to make him happy. James, on the other hand, appeared to be able to take or leave the relationship after they made love. He canceled dates, neglected to return phone calls, saw other women, became very domineering and for the most part seemed aloof and detached. Still, six months later, Nancy married James because she was in love with him and secretly hoped that he would change.

After Nancy and James were married, the pattern of neglect continued—especially his affairs with other women. When Nancy objected, James bullied her until she stopped nagging him about it. This went on for years. Nancy tried to save her marriage by placating James in every way she could think of, but he continued to do what he wanted. Eventually, Nancy stopped loving James and thought about leaving him, but she just couldn't bring herself to face the loneliness of being single again. This was better than nothing she thought. So she continued her codependent behavior, always trying to keep James happy and comfortable even if it meant sacrificing her own happiness in the process. Eventually, Nancy sought counseling and within a year she felt strong enough to leave James. He had other ideas. The first time Nancy brought up the subject of divorce he laughed at her. Then he threatened her verbally. The day she presented him with divorce papers, he beat her so badly she had to go to the hospital. It seems that despite his lack of love and respect for Nancy, James was addicted to her and the relationship they shared. He also felt that if he couldn't have her, nobody else could.

Eventually, Nancy got away from James even though he stalked her for months—threatening to kill her if she didn't come back. Thankfully, he eventually let go. However, you have only to read the newspapers to realize that such a volatile combination of codependency and narcissism can lead to homicide.

Switch-hitting: Many love addicts switch-hit because they have more than one underlying personality disorder. For instance, a relationship addict may play the role of a codependent for years, then finally get out of the relationship and fall in love with someone who is unavailable. Suddenly, our relationship addict is an obsessed love addict or a torchbearer. Even narcissists switch-hit, believe it or not. For years they can be in one relationship after another, playing the role of the dominant, uncaring partner. However, if they ever fall hard, they can easily turn into a torchbearer or obsessed love addict. If they fall in love with another narcissist then they have no choice but to become the codependent love addict in the relationship because the narcissist will not stand for anything else. Even ambivalent love addicts will start obsessing instead of running away when they are addicted.

Love addicts switch-hit because of separation anxiety. If another form of behavior is necessary to placate a partner and to hold on to him or her, the love addict will adopt that behavior. Is it an act? Sometimes . . . but if the love addict has weak personality boundaries, they may actually become the other person while under the spell of the addiction. The point here is not to identify all the kinds of switch-hitting going on, or even to explain it, but to point it out and learn from it.

Conclusion

The Importance of All This: If all this seems complicated, it is. And, to be honest, the only reason it is important is because it makes a difference when it comes to treatment. Codependent love addicts, for instance, need a boost in self-esteem and self-acceptance. They must learn to think better of themselves. Narcissistic love addicts, on the other hand, use grandiosity to bolster their low self-esteem and need to come down to earth. They need to learn some humility and how to become

unselfish. Ambivalent Love Addicts need to find a healthy relationship and stay engaged in it even when their fear threatens to overwhelm them. Most of all, understanding as much as you can about love addiction will form the basis of your Fourth Step Inventory in a 12-Step Program or give you a head start if you opt for psychotherapy.



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Sample Meeting Format



1. Welcome to the _____ meeting of Love Addicts Anonymous. My name is _____ and your secretary for this evening. After a few moments of silence, to remind ourselves why we are here, please join me in 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.*

2. We ask that you refrain from speaking during the readings and shares so that all may listen without distraction.
3. Will the person who has the Welcome please read it.
4. Will the person who has the Preamble please read it.
5. Will the person who has the Statement of Purpose please read it.
6. Now is the time to shut off all cell phones, pagers and beepers so that the meeting can remain a safe place.
7. This is a literature/discussion meeting. We will read from the literature for 10 minutes and then open up for shares.

Tonight we are reading from _____. Please read a paragraph or two and then pass the book on. Timekeeper: Please notify us when ten minutes is up.

8. Now is the time for the 7th Tradition. We have no dues or fees, but we do have rent to pay for use of this room.

9. Now is the time for general sharing. During this time, we avoid all crosstalk, dialogue or debate. As members of LAA, it is important to say what is in our hearts and minds. If someone's share is offensive to anyone in the room, please take care of yourself in an appropriate way.
10. Five minutes before closing the meeting:
 - P Thank you! That is all the time we have for sharing today.
 - P If you did not get a chance to share, please feel free to stay afterwards and talk with someone.
 - P We are responsible for restoring the room to its original order.
11. As we bring this meeting to a close, I would like to remind you that LAA is an anonymous program. We ask that you respect the anonymity and confidentiality of each person in this meeting—that what you see here, and what is said here, stays here when you leave here.
12. Are there any announcements from the floor?
13. Will the person who has the 12-Promises of LAA please read them.
14. We will now end the meeting. Will all who care to: join in a circle for the Unity Prayer.

Press Release

Since Alcoholics Anonymous first appeared in 1935, 12-Step programs have been helping people in trouble turn their lives around. Professionals marvel at how effective these programs are in treating addicts of all sorts. Even the most sophisticated treatment centers send their patients to 12-step meetings to supplement the work they do and to introduce them to an on-going source of support once they leave the program. Very few deny the effectiveness of 12-step meetings programs.

With this in mind, a new 12-step program was started in the San Francisco Bay Area for one of the fastest-growing populations of addicts—love addicts. This new program is unceremoniously called Love Addicts Anonymous—LAA for short. Those of us who attend LAA want to get the word out. We want others to find help for a very painful and dangerous disorder.

How do you know if you are a love addict and would benefit from LAA? Ask yourself: Do you get totally swept away when you fall in love? Are you needy, afraid of loneliness, get crushes on unavailable people, or let fantasies take the place of real relationships? Do you get stuck in relationships that aren't going anywhere? Do you panic at the thought of losing your partner? Will you *say* anything, *do* anything, *suffer* anything to hold on to someone because it is so painful to let go? Do you crave love but also run away from it. If so, you may be a love addict.

Right now there are two LAA meetings in the San Francisco Bay Area—Oakland and Walnut Creek. Others are starting up in Minneapolis, Houston, Dallas, San Luis Obispo and Southern California. For more information about LAA and love addiction, please see our website www.loveaddicts.org. or send a letter to Susan P. at 2019 7th St, Apt A, Berkeley, CA 94710 and we will send you an informational packet. For those new to the concept of 12-step programs here is our Preamble and Statement of Purpose.

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Service

A well-known spiritual axiom says to “keep it we must give it away.” And we don't need to have very much in order to pass it on. In LAA, as in most 12-Step programs, service and carrying the message is the spiritual foundation of our program. Even newcomers have something to offer others. Still, since many love addicts are also codependent, we cannot ignore the fact that in early recovery there may be a fear of service. Will it be draining? Didn't I do too much in my last relationship? Shouldn't I just be taking care of myself right now? These are all valid questions. Moreover LAA cannot survive without service, and if you do it in moderation it not only feels good, it is good for your self-esteem. Most psychologists agree that altruism is linked to feelings of self-worth. Just remember . . . “moderation in all things.” So if you are a member of LAA, we encourage you to share your “experience, strength and hope” with others even if you don't think you have anything to offer, and even if you think you have already done enough good deeds to last a life time. You will not regret it.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others . . .” *Step 12*

“Each group has but one primary purpose—to offer a safe place to recover from love addiction and to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.”
Tradition 5

“No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear . . .”
Page 84, *Alcoholics Anonymous*



Crosstalk

It is suggested that we do not crosstalk in LAA meetings. Crosstalk can be defined as giving advice, asking questions, referring to another person by name, directing comments to a specific individual, or commenting on what another person has shared. All of these things make it difficult for some of us to express our true feelings. Furthermore, please maintain the quiet of the room by not making inappropriate or overt responses to what others are saying. Non-verbal acknowledgments, such as nodding your head, is acceptable. Even laughter can be misinterpreted so be cautious. Finally, do not whisper in side conversations. Thank you!



Am I Recovering?

From *Addiction to Love* by Susan Peabody

You should be able to answer *yes* to most of these questions.

1. I know I am lovable despite my shortcomings.
2. I have self-discipline.
3. I am honest.
4. I am true to my values.
5. I am responsible.
6. I know myself) what my values are and what I want.
7. I can talk about my feelings.
8. I do not feel needy.
9. I am not afraid of being single.
10. When I am alone I do not feel lonely.
11. I have an active, full life.
12. When I am in an intimate relationship I still have other interests.
13. I do nice things for myself as well as others.
14. I can receive as well as give.
15. I do creative things.
16. I do not compare myself to others.
17. I can stand up for myself.
18. I can say "no" when it is appropriate.

19. I am growing and making progress in my life.
20. I am contributing to the world.
21. I have surrounded myself with healthy people.
22. I feel connected to myself and the world.
23. I feel loved by many people.
24. I feel like a whole person.
25. I do not like rejection, but I can handle it.
26. I do not over-react to criticism by attacking or getting defensive.
27. I have processed most of my feelings about my dysfunctional childhood.
28. I am not angry all of the time about my past.
29. I do not feel guilty all the time about the mistakes I have made.
30. I can handle adversity without falling apart.
31. I can end an unhealthy relationship.
32. I can stick with a healthy relationship.
33. I do not feel suicidal when relationships end.
34. I have some stress-management techniques.
35. I feel good about myself.
36. I have balance in my life. I know how to find the middle ground.
37. I know what I want, but I am not addicted to getting it.
38. I have structure, but I am also flexible.
39. I have trustworthy people in my life.
40. I do not have to control everything and everybody in my life.
41. I have worked through my sexual hangups. I know what healthy sex is.
42. I can argue with someone without attacking them or give them the silent treatment.

Love Addicts Anonymous

Fourth Step Inventory Guide

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Draft

The point of the 4th step inventory is to take a hard look at yourself and decide what you want to keep and what you want to get rid of. This step is necessary if you want to change. *Change* is the most important element in recovery. You cannot change what you cannot accept responsibility for and to do this you must (1) identify your shortcomings, (2) acknowledge them, and (3) understand them. Therefore, the more details you put on your inventory the better.

Part I **What You Want to Discard or Change**

1. What are your resentments? *Start* with your childhood.

How do your resentments affect you today?

For example do you carry around stress-related emotions like anger or depression?
Do you transfer this to those around you? If so, how?
Is your self-esteem affected by your resentments?
Is your outlook on life affected by your resentments? Are you a cynic?

2. Write about each of the following shortcomings that apply to you. Discuss *how each has affected your life*.
 - ♥ You are very needy when it comes to relationships.
 - ♥ You fall in love very easily and too quickly.
 - ♥ When you fall in love, you can't stop fantasizing—even to do important things. You can't help yourself.
 - ♥ Sometimes, when you are lonely and looking for companionship, you lower your standards and settle for less than you want or deserve.
 - ♥ When you are in a relationship, you tend to smother your partner.
 - ♥ More than once, you have gotten involved with someone who is unable to commit—hoping he or she will change.

- ♥ Once you have bonded with someone, you can't let go.
- ♥ When you are attracted to someone, you will ignore all the warning signs that this person is not good for you.
- ♥ Initial attraction is more important to you than anything else when it comes to falling in love and choosing a partner. Falling in love over time does not appeal to you and is not an option.
- ♥ When you are in love, you trust people who are not trustworthy. The rest of the time you have a hard time trusting people.
- ♥ When a relationship ends, you feel your life is over and more than once you have thought about suicide because of a failed relationship.
- ♥ You take on more than your share of responsibility for the survival of a relationship.
- ♥ Love and relationships are the only things that interest you.
- ♥ In some of your relationships you were the only one in love.
- ♥ You are overwhelmed with loneliness when you are not in love or in a relationship.
- ♥ You cannot stand being alone. You do not enjoy your own company.
- ♥ More than once, you have gotten involved with the wrong person to avoid being lonely.
- ♥ You are terrified of never finding someone to love.
- ♥ You feel inadequate if you are not in a relationship.
- ♥ You cannot say no when you are in love or if your partner threatens to leave you.
- ♥ You try very hard to be who your partner wants you to be. You will do anything to please him or her—even abandon yourself (sacrifice what you want, need and value).
- ♥ When you are in love, you only see what you want to see. You distort reality to quell anxiety and feed your fantasies.
- ♥ You have a high tolerance for suffering in relationships. You are willing to suffer neglect, depression, loneliness, dishonesty—even abuse—to avoid the pain of separation anxiety (what you feel when you are not with someone you have bonded with).
- ♥ More than once, you have carried a torch for someone and it was agonizing.
- ♥ You love romance. You have had more than one romantic interest at a time even when it involved dishonesty.
- ♥ You have stayed with an abusive person.

- ♥ Fantasies about someone you love, even if he or she is unavailable, are more important to you than meeting someone who is available.
- ♥ You are terrified of being abandoned. Even the slightest rejection feels like abandonment and it makes you feel horrible.
- ♥ You chase after people who have rejected you and try desperately to change their minds.
- ♥ When you are in love, you are overly possessive and jealous.
- ♥ More than once, you have neglected family or friends because of your relationship.
- ♥ You have no impulse control when you are in love.
- ♥ You feel an overwhelming need to check up on someone you are in love with.
- ♥ More than once, you have spied on someone you are in love with.
- ♥ You pursue someone you are in love with even if he or she is with another person.
- ♥ If you are part of a love triangle (three people), you believe all is fair in love and war. You do not walk away.
- ♥ Love is the most important thing in the world to you.
- ♥ Even if you are not in a relationship, you still fantasize about love all the time—either someone you once loved or the perfect person who is going to come into your life someday.
- ♥ As far back as you can remember, you have been preoccupied with love and romantic fantasies.
- ♥ You feel powerless when you fall in love—as if you are in some kind of trance or under a spell. You lose your ability to make wise choices.
- ♥ You like to create drama and excitement.
- ♥ You have weak personality boundaries. You let people abuse you or take advantage of you. You do not know where you leave off and someone else begins. You do not know who you are or what you want.
- ♥ You have low self esteem.
- ♥ You feel the compelling need to control using one or more of the following.
 - Image Management
 - Nagging
 - Being Helpless
 - Projecting Guilt
 - Stimulating Jealousy
 - Flattery

The Silent Treatment
Sex
Caretaking (doing for someone what they should be doing for themselves)
Hysteria or rage
Excessive phone calls or emails
Driving by someone's home

♥ You fear intimacy or commitment in *healthy* relationships

3. Other General Defects You Might Consider Writing About:

SELF-PITY: You feel sorry for yourself *all the time*. You wallow in your sorrows. You magnify your troubles. You think that you are different. You blame your problems on others. You withdraw from the world. You feel that no one understands or loves you. You feel things are hopeless and that you are a victim of circumstances.

SELF-WILL: You are in collision with something or somebody (even with good motives). You are into yourself totally regardless of the consequences.

DISHONESTY: You are not being honest with yourself or other people. You are lying. You are cheating and depriving others of not only their worldly goods but their emotional security and peace of mind. You are justifying your behavior—using alibis and stealing trust.

SELF-DESTRUCTION: You are harming and sabotaging yourself, or anything good that comes into your life.

SLOTH: You procrastinate and are lazy. You continually put off things that need to be done now. You are complacent.

GLUTTONY: You engage in excessive eating, drinking, shopping, gambling. You are taking your comfort to the extreme. You have a compulsion to overindulge.

RATIONALIZATION: You imagine that you have good motives and reasons when you really don't.

PERFECTIONISM: You are unwilling to accept human mistakes—yours and those of others. You set unrealistic standards for yourself and others, then become frustrated and resentful if they are not met, believing your standards are the only right ones.

IMPATIENCE: You want what you want, and you want it now. You are not living in the here and now. You have the inability to delay gratification.

Feel free to add shortcomings that will complete your fourth step inventory.

4. Discuss the people you have harmed. When you do the 8th step you will need this information.

Part II
Your Assets.
What You Want to Keep and Improve
What You Like About Yourself

♥ Personality traits—*I am . . .*

Patient
Kind
Intelligent
Insightful
Creative
Compassionate
Optimistic

♥ Helping Others: What do you do for others?

♥ Strength and Perseverance: Are you a survivor?

Please add to this list as things come to you.



The Unity Prayer

I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness; no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady will power. We are all together now, reaching out our hands, for a power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.