

# The Gift of No Contact

Sex and Love Addicts  
Anonymous



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CONFERENCE-APPROVED LITERATURE

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When we begin our journey in the S.L.A.A. program, we hear many terms that are unfamiliar. People in meetings speak of “qualifiers”, “top lines”, “bottom lines”, and “triggers”. We don’t understand these terms, but when we hear the phrase “no contact”, we suspect we know what it means, and we are often frightened to consider it. After all, if we were able to refrain from contact with the people with whom we have painful and destructive relationships, we wouldn’t need this program! This pamphlet will explain the concept of “no contact” and why it is so valuable by answering the following questions:

### **The Gift of “No Contact”**

- What is the definition of “no contact” and who is involved?
- Do I strive for progress and not perfection?
- How do I overcome my strong resistance and objections?
- How do I enforce “no contact” and stay accountable?
- How will I benefit from “no contact”?

### **Defining “No Contact”**

Some view sex and love addiction as a process addiction, which means our activities and behaviors create a mood-altering change in our brain chemistry. Sex and love addiction causes self-defeating behaviors which often lead to negative consequences. Our addiction is fed by the fantasy that this time things will be different.

We have found “no contact” to be a great resource in our recovery journeys. In S.L.A.A., “no contact” refers to a personal commitment to refrain from interaction with an

individual with whom we have had a toxic relationship. This person is sometimes called a “qualifier”, though we understand that we qualify for this program because of our own attitudes and actions. “No contact” means we do not take calls, emails or texts, or have face-to-face interactions with a qualifier. We have no communication through third parties. We do not follow them, their friends, or love interests on social media. Furthermore, we do not pore over old texts, emails or photos, drive by their home or workplace, or contact their friends or relatives. These activities can trigger our addictive behaviors. In short, we refrain completely from acts of obsession, romantic or otherwise.

We also abstain from romantic intrigue with others, such as flirting, taking “rain checks”, or contacting previous partners. We have discovered that many of these interactions can be “hits”, like an alcoholic taking a sip of a drink. These hits may seem harmless at first. Over time, they can lead to a slip or full relapse, keeping us stuck in our sex and love addiction. So, like an alcoholic avoiding the first drink, we avoid going back to mood-altering activities with a qualifier or others.

### **Examples of Guidelines for “No Contact”**

The suggestions in this pamphlet come from the experience, strength, and hope of many S.L.A.A. members. It is important to look at our individual situation in order to establish what is right for us. Many of us feel that establishing “no contact” is one of the most challenging tools we have in our program. Below are some practical guidelines regarding initiating “no contact” with a qualifier.

- Work with a sponsor or another sober S.L.A.A. member on setting up a “no-contact” plan.
- Define “contact”—in our addiction, we look for loopholes, and we find it helpful to have a clear definition. Typically, this means physical or electronic contact (phone, text, or social media, to name a few), but letters or other forms of contact could also be relevant.
- Consider taking a break from social media during this time.
- Define if contact with a qualifier is a bottom line. (See the S.L.A.A. pamphlet, *“Setting Bottom Lines - A Pamphlet with Worksheets”*)
- Define a set duration for this period of “no contact” or choose to make it indefinite.
- Do not ask mutual friends or acquaintances how a qualifier is doing.
- Ask our Higher Power for help every day. Use the Third Step to turn over the obsession and compulsion to interact with a qualifier.
- Pray for willingness to commit to “no contact”.
- Call a sponsor or another sober S.L.A.A. member instead of reaching out to a qualifier.

### **Tools to Initiate and Maintain “No Contact”**

We have used many different methods to put “no contact” in place. The tools listed should be discussed with a sponsor or another sober member of S.L.A.A. to develop a specific plan.

- Changing phone numbers and email addresses
- Blocking phone numbers

- Getting off social media
- Driving alternate routes
- Deleting old texts and emails
- Getting rid of photos and gifts
- Thinking an action all the way through to the end
- Associating intrusive thoughts with the negative consequences of our addiction
- Removing or replacing objects associated with painful memories or euphoric recall
- Rearranging furniture to make things look different
- Setting a boundary of an abbreviated or brief time frame for any necessary contact
- Putting parameters or blocks on computers or phones to restrict certain things online
- Deleting specific apps on phones
- Avoiding movies or books with triggering romantic or sexual content
- Avoiding listening to triggering music, opting for something uplifting
- Surrendering and trusting our Higher Power

**Top Line Behaviors (positive actions to reinforce “no contact”)**

- Praying for the willingness and strength to continue
- Making outreach calls
- Attending meetings, reading recovery literature, and doing step work
- Fellowship with sober program friends
- Starting or restarting hobbies
- Reading S.L.A.A. pamphlets on Withdrawal, Sponsorship, and Healthy Relationships
- Exercising and maintaining physical health

These are some of the many ways we maintain “no contact”, which can change with time as our recovery progresses. However, before changing any part of the plan, speak with a sponsor or another sober member of S.L.A.A.

### **Bringing in Our Higher Power**

Staying connected with our Higher Power can provide the strength we need to endure our cravings and combat the rationalizations we use to contact a qualifier. Relying on a power greater than ourselves could mean the difference between a successful day of “no contact”, or a day filled with anxiety, an addictive hit once contact is made, and the inevitable feelings of sadness, shame, and grief that follow the contact.

With the support of our Higher Power, we can let go of our unhealthy notions of what could be gained by contacting a qualifier. “No contact” can be a vital step in creating a healthy relationship with ourselves and our Higher Power.

With a new outlook on recovery, “no contact” empowers our resolve to do the next right thing and reduces our obsession and delusion about a qualifier. By living in the present with a grasp on reality, we find hope.

### **Overcoming Objections and Breaking Through Denial**

“No contact” may be necessary to complete our withdrawal process. Every conversation, text, email, or face to face

exposure with a qualifier could trigger our sex and love addiction and put our recovery in danger.

“[Our] sobriety did not really begin until the last reservation had been let go, and we gave up the right, for one day (or one hour) at a time, to have ‘one more’ liaison with our addiction” (*S.L.A.A. Basic Text*, page 107).

A complaint often heard is that “no contact” is “mean”—we do not want to hurt anyone’s feelings. This objection is more about concern for a qualifier’s feelings than for our own recovery. This “stinking thinking” implies that setting boundaries to protect ourselves is not as important as the feelings of our qualifier. Healing in S.L.A.A. means letting our old thinking go and becoming open to taking care of our recovery and innermost selves before others.

Some critics of “no contact” believe it to be a manipulative mind game, played by those scorned. Some of us may have started “no contact” with a false sense of hope, or an expectation of reconciliation. To clarify, “no contact” is not:

- A game
- About punishment or revenge
- About getting your qualifier back
- About making your qualifier jealous

Some of us wonder if we can live through “no contact”. How can we possibly stand to feel so alone, to have no communication with the object of our addiction? But we

have found that contact with other sex and love addicts in recovery is a healing balm that gives us the strength to persevere during the difficult withdrawal period.

## **Staying Accountable**

The following list includes some strategies for maintaining “no contact” and staying accountable to yourself, to others, and to God:

- Attend more meetings
- Focus on self care, dates with self, and God dates
- Continue to avoid face-to-face contact, phone calls, text messages, emails or handwritten notes
- Make outreach calls to sober S.L.A.A. members when the desire to make contact is strong
- Make regular contact with sponsor to discuss feelings regarding “no contact”
- Continue to avoid driving by their home or place of business, or visiting memorable locations
- Continue to resist following a social media profile or app and information-seeking on social media
- Understand the need to interrupt continuous or purposeful recall of a past interaction, conversation, or event and replace it with top line behaviors
- Be mindful of situations that could lead to information about the qualifier from a third party
- Understand that guilt and remorse do not justify contact

We may use some or all of these techniques. It is important to discuss your particular circumstances and each situation with a sponsor or another sober member of



S.L.A.A. Fellows in S.L.A.A. are a source of accountability and strength.

### **Questions Often Asked About “No Contact”**

Sometimes begrudgingly, we acknowledged that some relationships could not be repaired. This is especially true for controlling and abusive relationships. Often, our qualifiers were family members, friends, bosses, co-workers, or roommates; people we must continue to see for various reasons. We may even have had qualifiers who were sponsors or sponsees. We had many questions about these complex situations. What constituted “no contact”? When, if ever, could we make contact again?

Listed below are some of these questions along with answers that we found worked for us. In each case, we should talk to our sponsor or another sober member of S.L.A.A.

*Q: “How do I know whether I need to enter into ‘no contact’?”*

*A: We would benefit from a period of “no contact” if contact with a particular person causes us pain, grief, rage, or upset consistently, if we do things we do not want to do without being able to stop, or if we suspect we are in danger in any way. If we identify with what has been said so far or even if we feel *this is not for me*, a “no contact” boundary may need to be set. As the *S.L.A.A. Basic Text* states within Chapter Five,*

“If you have read this far, and have, however reluctantly, come to the conclusion that sex and love addiction is the problem you are facing, you are probably feeling very scared and apprehensive. Perhaps you are still trying to shake off the awareness of sex and love addiction even as we have been sharing our experiences with you. ...Yet some of you, despite efforts to deny the truth of what we have been laboring to share, can hear the bell tolling, and know that it tolls for you.”

The result we seek is the same: an end to the addiction cycle.

Q: *“I won’t call the qualifier but if they call me, why can’t I answer the call, text, email, or video chat request from him/her if they initiated contact?”*

A: “No contact” works both ways, meaning we do not initiate contact or accept contact initiated by a qualifier. This limit is the only way we can free ourselves from the addiction, and begin the process of recovery and a return to sanity.

Q: *“When can I reconnect with my qualifier?”*

A: Discussion with a sponsor and working the steps may be helpful in making this decision. If we consider the person a qualifier, we have seen that keeping “no contact” until we feel indifferent to that person has helped. Some of us have felt no need to reach out after we have completed our step work.

Q: *“What if this person wants to be ‘heard out’, to ‘talk things over’, or to ‘work things out’?”*

The person with these wants may be baiting us, both in subtle and obvious ways to engage further and break our commitment to “no contact”. Playing on our relationship patterns and using selective recall can trigger our emotions and create the vulnerability to return to old patterns. By taking the contrary action of maintaining this boundary, we actively break the pattern. We are changing our path away from our addiction and towards recovery.

Q: *“Am I in denial, minimizing or rationalizing when I want to reach out?”*

A: Wanting to reach out is a natural desire after a breakup and while going through withdrawal. Doing so would be a symptom of our sex and love addiction.

“Many of us had the feeling of ‘needing to be needed’ that left us clinging to the [qualifier], certain that if we made ourselves necessary, [available] or ‘indispensable’ to [our qualifier], we would be ‘safe’. We, too, have sacrificed our personal dignity and hidden behind self-deception in order to make the relationship work, no matter what the cost.” From the *S.L.A.A. Basic Text*, page 63-64

Q: *“What about special occasions, holidays, birthdays, or anniversaries?”*

A: Special and meaningful dates may trigger us to want to make contact. When we have a desire to reach out, we can talk with a sponsor or sober member of S.L.A.A., and examine what our reasoning and motivations are. We ask if this would hurt ourselves or the other person. What would the result be? Would this start the withdrawal process again?

Q: *“What if I hear they are ill or in the hospital?”*

A: While maintaining our “no contact” boundary, one suggestion would be to pray for that person and turn them over to the loving care of their Higher Power, while asking for our obsession for contact to be removed.

Q: *“Someone in the S.L.A.A. Program said that by contacting my qualifier, I am ‘numbing out’. Can this be true?”*

A: Yes, this may be true. “Numbing out” can feel like a mental fog where we are incapable of action or feel emotionally indifferent. We may numb out by running to our qualifier, just as an alcoholic “numbs out” by taking a drink. We are addicts; we do relapse on occasion. It is, for us, the natural thing to do. But to stay sober, we avoid all contact.

Q: *“The person I am in ‘no contact’ with has some of my stuff. How do I get my personal items back?”*

A: It is essential to identify our motives and take into consideration the value of our possessions compared to the effects on our recovery. If we decide to contact

our qualifier, we should first reach out to a sponsor or sober S.L.A.A. member. We ask for their experience, strength, and hope regarding breaking our “no contact” plan and honestly consider their responses. Most likely, the score will be unanimous—stop and do not engage with a qualifier. The choice, and the pain, ultimately is our own.

*Q: “Is ‘no contact’ just with my qualifier? Can I use ‘no contact’ with a member of my family?”*

A: Those of us who have a toxic or unhealthy relationship with any other person can make use of the “no contact” tool. Some members of S.L.A.A. have used this tool successfully with their family of origin or with a toxic work or home relationship.

*Q: “Are there options other than going into complete ‘no contact’ with my qualifier?”*

A: In most cases, the answer is no. There are exceptional circumstances which may take additional discussion with a sponsor or sober S.L.A.A. member. It is important to set bottom lines, create a communication plan, set boundaries, and define what “no contact” means.

*Q: “How do I maintain ‘no contact’ if my qualifier is my partner, has joint custody of children, is a roommate, co-worker, or a family member?”*

A: We may have a qualifier who we must see and/or communicate with for reasons outside our control. This should be discussed with a sponsor or

sober S.L.A.A. member. We look to see if there are alternative ways to communicate what is necessary without having to make direct contact. If some sort of contact must be made, we can still maintain a “no contact” plan. We establish, agree to, and firmly maintain strong boundaries. The goal may be to have as little contact as possible, refraining from specific interactions and behaviors, and avoiding being alone together. A plan may also include specific things to say or do ahead of time or how to handle different situations that may arise. At times we have had to change living arrangements or jobs altogether. However, many of us have been successful with these kinds of “no contact”.

### **Some Experience, Strength, and Hope regarding “No Contact”**

#### Member 1:

*“For me, it was about changing my way of thinking about the ‘qualifier’. I wanted to change him to make ME happy. If he could only listen and make sense of what I was saying to him. Nothing worked, and it would leave me more frustrated and feeling very unmanageable.”*

*“It took me a while to understand that establishing ‘no contact’ was the way to go if I wanted to change and be happy. The only person I can change is myself. It was painful—I would be in ‘no contact’ for a couple of months and would fail again; I would go to meetings, write, call my sponsor. Finally one day, my qualifier contacted me again and I knew that even though it was very tempting to reply to his contact, I would go back*

*to the same cycle repeatedly. I decided to let go and established 'no contact' successfully."*

*"For a couple of days, I was sad, but as time went on, I realized that I was feeling much better about myself. I recovered my sense of dignity and had more strength to identify red flags and to know when to say no. I am more in touch with my feelings and know how to take care of myself. It is challenging, but in the end, I found myself"*

Member 2:

*"When I first joined S.L.A.A., I was told not to contact my most recent qualifier. I committed to not reaching out to him because after all, I still wanted to play hard-to-get. Even though the relationship had reached an obvious level of dysfunction, I still thought it would be okay to take a call if he initiated it. I would argue with women that had years of experience, strength, and hope. I was looking for a loophole in this 'no contact' business. My qualifier did me a favor by not making contact, which triggered my love addiction. It became so painful that after a month of 'no contact' I called him. Nothing had changed, and I finally had enough. I blocked his number on my home phone and cell phone. After taking this action I started my day count over, and I have not broken a bottom line since."*

Member 3:

*"After a year in S.L.A.A., my ex-husband began contacting me again, and it brought up all the hurt and sadness I had been healing from in the program. I had*

*not been in S.L.A.A. when we broke up, so I hadn't set up 'no contact' rules for him or myself. I blocked him and feel much better ever since doing so. Now, I wonder if I hadn't used my original qualifier to numb out from grieving my 17-year relationship with my ex. I continue my dedication to S.L.A.A., my sponsor, and my Higher Power a day at a time. I use the gift of 'no contact' as a life preserver, knowing that these boundaries are initiated and enforced for my protection."*

Member 4:

*"In May of 2015, my then-girlfriend had just left me after discovering that I had been acting out during our relationship. I was riddled with guilt and felt that I had to 'fix' the situation at whatever cost. I sent her money to cover the cost of her moving out of our apartment, I answered any questions she had about the acting-out behaviors and spent hours on the phone with her—again, to fix the situation and make her feel better. My sponsor recommended a 30-day 'no contact' period with her, which entailed no phone calls, texts, or emails—no form of contact whatsoever. I was instructed not to read or listen to any texts, emails or voicemails I received from her, and my sponsor offered to screen any communications from her in case any of them were truly urgent. They were not. This structure around 'no contact' was a bottom line for me during the 30-day period. I was also going to a meeting every day during this time.*

*I broke this bottom line about a week into it when I answered one of her phone calls. I felt that I 'had to' answer it, and rationalized it as necessary because there*



*were some logistical things that 'had to' be taken care of as part of her moving out. However, the phone call sent me spinning out, and in reflection, it was one of those 'If it feels urgent, it can wait' situations. I restarted my 30 days of 'no contact', blocked her number on my phone, and imperfectly steered my attention towards meetings and step work. Looking back on this experience, I was coming from such a place of guilt and shame and obligation that I had no ability to act in my own best interest. Without the help of my sponsor, and guidelines around 'no contact', I would have continued to put making her feel okay over my own needs and recovery. The 'no-contact' period helped me understand that, although I made mistakes, I was not responsible for her state of being and it was okay to take time for myself. While I really wanted to send her an amends right away, the 'no-contact' period also helped me realize that I was not able to offer one until I was further along in my step work and recovery."*

## **Healing Effects From "No Contact"**

Many of us view "no contact" as a healthy strategy to help us achieve the positive benefits of recovery, both short- and long-term. Examples of some benefits are listed below.

- Our thinking becomes clearer
- We learn to live in the present
- We learn to live life on life's terms
- We have more time and energy
- We have a deeper relationship with our Higher Power
- Our self-worth and self-respect increase
- Our relationships with friends and family improve

## The Gift of No Contact

- We develop new hobbies or resume old ones
- We have a greater degree of freedom from fantasy and obsession
- We can be of service to others struggling with “no contact”
- We are more honest with ourselves and others
- We can acknowledge and sit with our feelings
- We continue to learn how to have healthy relationships
- We learn the importance of boundaries and how to establish healthy ones
- We have improved self-care

As we begin to experience the results of “no contact”—of creating and maintaining healthy boundaries—we experience a new way of living. Our recovery expands. We open the door to loving ourselves, and experience a sense of ease and self-acceptance that we have never felt before. “No contact” frees us. We find a relationship with the world—a relationship with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others.

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

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## The 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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## The 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 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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## The Twelve Concepts for World Service of S.L.A.A.\*

1. Ultimate responsibility and authority for S.L.A.A. world services always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The Annual Business Conference, by delegation, is the voice and conscience for our world services and of S.L.A.A. as a whole.
3. To insure effective leadership, each element of S.L.A.A. - the Conference, the Board of Trustees, staff, and committees - all possess the "Right of Decision."
4. The "Right of Participation" is maintained by allowing members the opportunity to cast one vote up to the level at which they are trusted servants.
5. The "Right of Appeal" prevails so that minority opinion is heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the Board of Trustees.
7. The Articles of Incorporation and the By-Laws of the Fellowship are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. Although the Conference Charter is a legal document; it also relies on tradition and the power of the S.L.A.A. purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, including their ability to hire staff.

## The Gift of No Contact

9. Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership must be assumed by the Board of Trustees.
10. Every service responsibility is matched by equal service authority – the scope of this authority is always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and by-laws.
11. The trustees need the best possible committees, staff, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, systems of rotation, and rights and duties are always matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference observes the spirit of S.L.A.A. Tradition,
  - a. taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power;
  - b. that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle;
  - c. that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others;
  - d. that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity;
  - e. that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy;
  - f. that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Fellowship it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

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## BOOKS

***Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous: Basic Text***  
***A State of Grace: Daily Meditations***

## PAMPHLETS & BOOKLETS

*An Introduction to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous*  
*Sex and Love Addiction: 40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis*

*Suggestions for Newcomers*

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*Sponsorship: A Return from Isolation*

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