What is *no contact*? Why do the members of S.L.A.A. recommend no contact with qualifiers, and how does itrelate to withdrawal? How do we create bottom lines and how does no contact protect us from breaking our bottom lines? How do we become willing to have no contact? How do we practice no contact; i.e., holding ourselves accountable?

**Let Us Begin!**

* What is a typical definition of no contact and who is involved?
* How do I overcome my strong resistance and objections?
* How do I become willing? What have others gone through before they became willing?
* How do I enforce no contact and stay accountable?
* How will I benefit from no contact?

**Defining No Contact**

We have found the gift of no contact to be a great resource in our recovery journeys. In S.L.A.A. “no contact” refers to having no interaction with a qualifier, romantic intrigue, or purposefully engaging with known triggers. This means we do not take calls, emails, texts or have face-to-face interactions with our qualifiers

We abstain from romantic intrigue that is or can become triggering. We have discovered many of these interactions can be “hits” like an alcoholic taking a sip of a drink. Many times, these “hits” may seem harmless at first. Over time, the “hits” can lead to a slip or full relapse, keeping us stuck in our sex and love addiction.

Sex and love addiction is a process addiction. This means our activities and behaviors create the mood-altering change in our brain chemistry. So instead of not picking up the first drink, we do not go back to mood-altering activities with our qualifier. Therefore, sex and love addiction involves self-defeating behaviors despite the negative consequences. This addiction depends on the fantasy that this time things will be different.

Examples are varying over time and many. The following include some of the triggers we may want to avoid or limit.

* Face-to-face contact
* Phone calls
* Text messages
* Email or handwritten notes
* Drive-by, visiting location or route
* Cruising a social media profile or app
* Picture or another document
* Gift or another reminder
* Going to their place of business
* Continuous or purposeful recall of a past interaction, conversation, or event
* Asking another to “checkup” on them
* Contact because of a special occasion
* Going to a pornographic website
* Viewing other questionable content
* Boundary violations

This list is not exhaustive. We may identify with some or all these examples. It is important to discuss with a sponsor or another sober member of S.L.A.A. to establish what is best for each situation.

**Tools for No Contact**

We have used many different methods to continue to keep no contact in place. These tools should be discussed with a sponsor or another sober member of S.L.A.A. to develop a specific plan. The following are some tools we have used.

* 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 the action all the way through to the end or associating intrusive thoughts with consequences of our addiction
* Replacing items associated with painful memories or euphoric recall
* Rearranging furniture to make things look different
* Setting a no contact boundary for a specified amount of time
* Setting a boundary of abbreviated or brief time frame for any contact
* Praying for the willingness and strength to continue
* Making outreach calls
* Attending meetings, reading recovery literature and doing step work
* Fellowship with healthy friends
* Starting or restarting old hobbies
* Putting parameters or blocks on computers or phones to restrict certain things online
* Deleting specific apps on phones
* Avoiding movies or books with excessive romantic or sexual contact that may be triggering
* Avoid listening to triggering music, opting for something uplifting
* Reading S.L.A.A. pamphlets on Withdrawal, Sponsorship, and Healthy Relationships
* Exercising and maintaining physical health

These are some of the many ways to help us keep no contact and can change with time and situations. However, before changing any part of the plan, speak with a sponsor or other sober member of S.L.A.A.

**Bringing in Our Higher Power**

Staying connected with our Higher Power can provide the strength to endure rationalizations we may create to contact a qualifier. Relying on a power greater than ourselves could mean the difference between a day of no contact or one filled with anticipation and a “hit” once contact is made. By contacting, we often face the inevitable feelings of sadness, let-down and grief that follows 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. We see what is fueling our “fantasy engine” if we do. No contact can be a vital step in creating a healthy relationship with ourselves and our Higher Power.

With a new working outlook on recovery, no contact empowers our resolve to do the next right thing and reduces our obsession and distortion 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 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,” as stated in the *S.L.A.A Basic Text*, page 107.

A response often heard is no contact is “mean.” We do not want to hurt anyone's feelings. An objection may be more about concern of a qualifier’s feelings than our recovery. This “stinking thinking” seems to be saying 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 become 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 and expectations of reconciliation. To clarify, no contact is not:

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

**Questions Often Asked About No Contact**

We, sometimes begrudgingly, acknowledged that some relationships cannot be repaired. This is especially true for controlling and abusive relationships. Often our qualifiers were family members, friends, co-workers, roommates, or 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 situations, what constituted no contact and when/if we could make contact again.

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

* *‘“How do I know whether I need to enter into no contact or not?”*

If we identify with what has been said so far or even if 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 4, “If you have read this far, however reluctantly, come to the conclusion that sex and love addiction is the problem you are facing, you are probably feeling 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. … Despite efforts to deny the truth … [you] know that it tolls for you.” The result we seek is the same: an end to the addiction cycle.

* *“I won’t call the qualifier but if they call me, why can’t I answer the call, text, email, or facetime from him/her if they initiated contacting me first?”*

No contact works both ways, meaning we do not initiate contact or accept contact initiated by a qualifier.

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

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

* *“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 S.L.A.A addiction and towards recovery.

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

From the *S.L.A.A. Basic Text*, page 63, “Many of us had the feeling of ‘needing to be needed’ that left us clinging to the addict, certain that if we made ourselves necessary, [available,] or ‘indispensable’ to [our qualifier,] we would be ‘safe.’ We, too, have sacrificed our dignity and hidden behind self-deception to make the relationship work, no matter what the cost. We became skilled at rationalizing away each new infidelity, wanting to believe in the denials or the apparent remorse of our addict-partners.”

Wanting to reach out is a natural desire after a breakup and going through withdrawal. But not thinking it through would be a symptom of our sex and love addiction.

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

When we think about special and meaningful dates, we may be triggered and 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 look at what our reasoning and motivation are. We ask if this would hurt ourselves or the other person? What would the result be? Would this start the withdrawal process again?

* *“What if I heard they are ill or in the hospital?”*

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

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

We may not know what “numbing out” means or be in a state of mental fog where we are incapable of action or feeling emotion. Alternatively, we maybe feel melancholic or emotionally indifferent. If so, you are not alone.

“From the standpoint of -anything goes, who cares?’ loss of control did not seem so bad. In fact, the addiction itself often held us spellbound, convinced that it was what we wanted. Many of us were so numbed that only a blast of physical and emotional intensity from a sexual or romantic ‘hit’ could penetrate and animate our progressively deadened, dissipated beings,” from the *S.L.A.A. Basic Text*, pages 69-70. “If our addiction took the form of dependency on one person, again, loss of control did not always seem so bad. We could tell ourselves that our bondage was the sign of a ‘match made in heaven,’ that since we would sacrifice anything for this love, we would surely be rewarded for our unselfishness.”

Contacting a qualifier can be staying in our sex and love addiction. Numbing out may a symptom of our sex and love addiction.

* *“When do I know if someone is in no contact with me?”*

Initiating and maintaining no contact is not about another person, it is about us. Practicing respect for others is essential to our recovery. To reach out and ask would not be beneficial. We continue healing by honoring the boundaries that others have placed upon us.

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

This question is best handled on an individual basis with guidance from a sponsor or sober S.L.A.A. member. It is essential to identify 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. Asking for their experience, strength and hope regarding breaking our no contact plan and honestly sum up their responses. Most likely, the score is unanimous—stop and do not engage with a qualifier. The choice, and the pain, ultimately is our own.

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

Those of us that may have a toxic or unhealthy relationship with another 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 and others at work.

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

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. Setting bottom lines, creating a communication plan, setting boundaries, and defining what no contact means is very important.

* *“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*?”

We may have a qualifier with whom 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 amount of contact as possible, refraining from specific interaction and behaviors or not 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. There have been 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 of No Contact**

 *“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, 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 not contact is 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 fall again, I would go to meetings, write, call my sponsor. Until 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 thing repeatedly. I decided to let go and established no contact.*

*“For a couple of days, I was a little sad, but as time went on, I realized that I was feeling much better about myself. I recovered my sense of dignity and now had more strength to pick up 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, you find yourself as mentioned in our S.L.A.A Basic Text.”*

 *“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 OK 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 house phone and cell phone. Taking this action was when I started my day count over and I have not had to break a bottom line since.*

*“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 found my original qualifier to numb out 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 boundaries are enforced for my protection.”*

 *“In May of 2015, my then girlfriend had just left me after discovering that I had been acting out during our relationship. I was ridden 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/listen to any texts, emails or voicemails I received from her, and my sponsor offered to screen any communications from her for me 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 period.*

*“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 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 as in reflection, it was one of those ‘If it’s 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 the 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 self-interest, and without the help of my sponsor and guidelines around no contact, I would have continued to put making her feel OK 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 that 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.”*

**What Does No Contact Mean to Me?**

The suggestions in this pamphlet come from the experience, strength, and hope of many S.L.A.A. members, however, it is important we look at our own individual situations to establish what is right for us. Below are a few questions to help get started.

* What is my definition of no contact and who is involved?
* How do I overcome my strong resistance and objections?
* How do I become willing?
* How do I enforce no contact and stay accountable?
* What challenges may I face?
* What tools can I use to help me?
* How will I benefit from no contact?

**Examples of Guidelines for No Contact**

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 sober S.L.A.A member on setting up a no contact plan.
* Define “contact” – our addict looks for loopholes, and we find it helpful to have a clear definition. Typically, this means physical contact or electronic contact (phone, text, 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.
* Define a set time frame or chooser to make it indefinite
* Do not ask about how they are doing through mutual friends or acquaintances.
* Ask 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 sober S.L.A.A. member instead of reaching out to a qualifier.

**Healing Effects from No Contact**

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

* Our thinking becomes clearer
* We live in the present
* We 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 respect have increased
* Our relationships with friends and family improved
* We develop new or resume old hobbies
* We have freedom from fantasy and obsession
* We are of service to others struggling with no contact
* We are honest with ourselves and others
* We can acknowledge and sit with our feelings
* We are continuing to learn how to have healthy relationships
* We are learning the importance of boundaries and how to establish healthy ones
* We have improved self-care

As we begin to experience the S.L.A.A. *Signs of Recovery* © 1990, we will see a new life that can guide and sustain us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. No contact empowers us to find hope: the hope of a better future and as a better person. No Contact can bring us hope and serenity.