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FIVE LINES TO S.L.A.A. RECOVERY with Worksheet

OPENING LINES

Taking personal inventory with each new step is a major part of recovery. Simple list making is an immediate and effective technique to observe and acknowledge the destructive patterns of the past, to explore real options for achieving sexual and emotional sobriety in the present, and to frame healthy objectives in order to fulfill our potential for the future.

OPEN COMMUNICATION LINES

We believe the best way to write out these lists is to first find a sponsor and/or recovery partner. Find a sponsor who has enough experience in the S.L.A.A. program to be able to guide you through the confusion, fear and denial that can be so common in recovery. The 12-Step program of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is a *support group*; it is necessary to reach out for *the support of the group*. Sex and love addiction thrives in mental and emotional isolation.

The Sponsorship pamphlet will help you find a sponsor. If you live in an area without available sponsors, or are concerned about your anonymity, you may request a long-distance sponsor through the official S.L.A.A. website. (The contact information is listed on the back cover of this booklet.)

Recovery partners are also a valuable resource. Recovery partners are fellow S.L.A.A. members who share honestly over the phone or in private meetings on a regular basis.

We break the pattern of isolation by openly sharing our process of recovery (including the worksheet in this booklet) with fellow members of S.L.A.A. through meetings, outreach calls, recovery partners, and/or sponsor.

THE FIVE LINES

We have found that in order to find lasting recovery from sex and love addiction, it is advisable to complete the following lists:

Bottom Lines

Bottom Lines are the destructive, addictive behaviors that we have to stop. When we set bottom lines, we make a promise to the program and, more importantly, to ourselves to halt these activities.

Caution Lines

Caution Lines are behaviors that may not be addictive or destructive, but still may be harmful in certain circumstances or trigger us to act out and break bottom lines.

Life Lines

Life Lines are tools and resources that we regularly practice to maintain sobriety. For some S.L.A.A. members, these are the crucial strategies that save lives.

Top Lines

Top Lines are the healthy actions that we routinely perform to make better use of our time and energy, restore sanity and integrity, and support us to fulfill our potential.

Goal Lines

Goal Lines are the cherished visions we create for the future. As we show up to do the work required for our gradual recovery from this disease, we will be able to divert energy -- previously expended on sex and love addiction -- toward realizing our true potential.

NEXT: We will discuss each of The Five Lines lists in greater detail with specific instructions for completing this worksheet.

If you are working with a sponsor, we suggest that you read the instructions aloud together, pausing to complete the list for each section after reading that section aloud. Try to spend no more than 10 minutes per list. Trust that whatever comes to your mind in the moment is guided by the Higher Power of your understanding. These lists can be elaborated later. At the end of this booklet we will explore when and how to make future changes to your worksheet.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Completing this worksheet gives you a visual overview of your current condition. As you read these very words, you are literally working a Life Line. In the very center of your worksheet, the Life Lines column embodies the present-day. The past is characterized by the Bottom Lines and Caution Lines columns filled with the unhealthy or questionable behaviors that you have already left behind or are in the process of shedding light on to see what serves you. Top Lines and Goal Lines signify the potential for a future, where you will walk hand in hand with your higher Power. The Five Lines worksheet once completed is a very real map of your recovery.

Now you may come to notice certain through-lines among the five columns. How are your Caution Lines and Bottom Lines compatible with your Goal Lines and Top Lines? Do they conflict or cancel each other out anywhere? If your goal is Financial Solvency, then you'll want to look at costly Caution Lines. If your goal is Health or Integrity, then Caution Lines that permit partying with illegal drugs could compromise your health or even your integrity, which might be defined as telling the truth at all times.

You can think this through by following the lines of your worksheet: How does anonymous sex or stalking a love object lead to intimacy? How does intrigue with someone who already has a committed partner lead to a stable relationship? How do your Caution Lines affect your emotional sobriety, serenity, or similar Goal Lines? You might have the answers now, or you might find the answers over time through working the S.L.A.A. program. Remember, from the very center, to rely on all your Life Lines for sober interpretations and healthy solutions.

CHANGING LINES

These are your lines, and this is your program. You can change any of your Five Lines at any time, but talk about it with someone. Always call your sponsor before you break a Bottom Line. If you insist on changing a destructive Bottom Line to a Caution Line, your sponsor reserves the right to withhold consent. S/he can refuse to sponsor you in that activity. This is reasonable and any discussion of needs and boundaries can be a valuable experience for both of you. Everything is a learning process when you are working in recovery. The point is that this is your program and there is no reason to break a Bottom Line. Change it, don't break it. And then see how that works out for you.

As you change any Bottom Line, you will want to see if and how that affects any other lines on this worksheet. Maybe to change a Bottom Line will oblige you to change a Goal Line too. Taking the extra time to consider the consequences of changing a Bottom Line with your sponsor is time well spent in your recovery. Ultimately, this is your program and, with due consideration, you can decide what works or doesn't work for you. No one might possibly do that but you. No one else may live your life for you.

Know that while you alone are responsible for your life, you are not alone. We in the greater fellowship of S.L.A.A. shall always support you as you grow to discover intimacy with your own personal higher Power, leading to intimacy with your self, leading to intimacy with others.

CLOSING LINES

By reading this booklet you have realized concrete ways to seriously change your life around. The very accomplishment of writing out these Five Lines certainly sets in motion new patterns of behavior and lays the foundation of your sobriety. We wish you well on your own meaningful path of recovery in S.L.A.A.! May you come to experience the gifts of this program and your own personal higher Power deeply within your daily life.

Common Caution Lines for S.L.A.A. members can include: bars and nightclubs, romantic movies, erotic imagery, sex talk, social networking sites, mutual friends of ex-lovers, euphoric recall, drugs and alcohol, travel and vacations, basically anything that brings up feelings of *arousal*. Caution Lines can be *triggering* events too, such as family reunions, controversial subjects, certain anniversaries, financial difficulties, fear, rage, depression, sickness, shame, physical pain, lack of sleep, loneliness and/or unstructured time.

Caution Lines can be more vague than Bottom Lines. Fantasy and intrigue can go on Caution Lines. Intrigue is telepathically sending out signals to prospective lovers or sex partners and scanning for similar cues. There can be emotional intrigue in conversation whether seeking out information about an ex-lover or just stoking the fires of personal obsession with a platonic friend. Sexual intrigue can be as subtle as knowing exactly where an attractive person is in a crowded room at every moment, or it can be as unmistakable as circling around the room solely to check that person out. If you find you're experiencing a lot of intrigue and fantasy, that's a red flag that you might be heading toward acting out on your Bottom Lines.

HOW TO SET BOTTOM LINES

Bottom Lines are the most important list you'll make. This booklet only provides basic information. It is recommended that you read the "Setting Bottom Lines" pamphlet for detailed instruction on how to set Bottom Lines that will keep you sober.

Bottom Lines are self-defined behaviors that we make an agreement to abstain from. When we first set Bottom Lines, this becomes our S.L.A.A. sobriety date. If we break our Bottom Lines by acting out the behavior, it is a "slip". Members set Bottom Lines, usually with the help of a sponsor or recovery partner. We let these people know when we've slipped. Then we set a new sobriety date. We can add new Bottom Lines, or remove Bottom Lines at any time. We run any changes by our sponsor first. Many S.L.A.A. members memorize their Bottom Lines, which is recommended. Alternately, you can write them on a card and read them daily.

Bottom lines are quantifiable. Flirting is not a quantifiable bottom line, because how do you *always* know exactly when it's happening? Unlike taking a drink, which is a quantifiable fact, flirting is subjective. So if you feel you need to include flirting, sexualizing, fantasy, intrigue, seduction, obsession, or manipulation on your personal Bottom Lines, we can list them using the '3-second rule.' As soon as the thought dawns that you're engaging in any of these particular behaviors, you have 3-seconds to think and do something else. With the 1st second you notice the behavior, with the 2nd second you *turn away* and *stop* the behavior acknowledging to yourself that you are a sex and love addict, and with the 3rd second you pray for the person's well-being and remind yourself that you don't have permission to objectify this person.

You can do the 'monthly lease plan' on Bottom Lines that are seriously challenging. This means, you commit to the Bottom Line for only one month to be renewed the next month until you're ready to make a more permanent decision. We suggest every S.L.A.A. member seriously consider a 1-3 month period of total celibacy at least once in your recovery, regardless of the circumstances that brought you into the program. This can include sobriety from all sexual activity (including masturbation) and any mind-altering substances such as alcohol and marijuana (not including prescription medications.) You can think of this as a palate cleanser, others refer to it as 'sober fasting.' The purpose of this is to see clearly what comes up for you and what kind of anxiety or emotions you're dealing with that you have been trying to numb through sex and love addiction. Of course, we can't be strong enough in urging the regular use of strong Life Lines to help you cope with the feelings of withdrawal. (For more on withdrawal, read "The Withdrawal Experience" chapter in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text.)

HOW TO SET LIFE LINES

What S.L.A.A. program tools and resources will you commit to practice regularly starting today? What other tools and resources work for you when you're feeling triggered? Life Lines are the actions that keep us sober. Attending 12-Step meetings, reading S.L.A.A. Literature, surrendering to a higher Power, making outreach calls, finding a sponsor – these are all time-tested strategies that work *when you work them*.

Start with writing your S.L.A.A. program tools. What meetings can you commit to? Write down the day and time of your home group meeting. The worldwide S.L.A.A. website is www.slaafws.org where you can find local meetings anytime you travel. There are online and telephone meetings available if you can't get to a local meeting. Find the necessary information *before* you need it, and list it in your Life Lines.

Do you have a sponsor? Write down his/her phone number. If not, finding a sponsor is an essential Life Line. Outreach calls make a good Life Line; you can include phone numbers of trusted S.L.A.A. members here. One of the best ways to get out of our heads is to 'call newcomers.' You can list step work, S.L.A.A. service positions, a 90n90 (90 meetings in 90 days,) and if you've worked the Second Step and Third Step, this would be a good place to list your higher Power. You might join a Conference Committee at the worldwide level of service in S.L.A.A. and work side-by-side with old-timers who walk the walk. Outside resources to list under Life Lines *sometimes* include sponsors in other 12-Step programs, professional help, and/or a spiritual practice.

Different people have different sensory stimuli that can provide momentary relief and regulation when triggered, at least enough time to be able to turn to Life Lines instead of acting out. Do you respond more to sight, smell, sound, taste, or touch? A soothing bath works for some, and in an emergency: splashing one's face with water. A solid meal works for others, and in an emergency: a healthy snack. You might walk around the block, sing a song, breathe deeply, recite a spiritual text, smell a certain scent, or savor a favorite taste. Write at least one key sensory tool down in your Life Lines to make it easier to recall in an emergency.

We have multiple Life Lines in case one tool doesn't work so well at any moment. One of the most important reasons to regularly work with these tools and resources is that when we experience setbacks or tragedy, or sometimes even unfamiliar success, our first response is to reach out for the phone to call a program friend rather than to relapse. Working a sober program becomes a healthy habit.

HOW TO SET CAUTION LINES

Caution Lines are also known sometimes as Red Flags, Warning Signs or Accessory Behaviors. These are activities that may lead to unhealthy behavior or acting out with sex and love addiction, but which we feel might be too restrictive or even impossible for us to have as Bottom Lines at the moment. If we realize a Caution Line should be listed as a Bottom Line, we can move it to that list at any time. It's important that we not create an impossible situation where we are always breaking our Bottom Lines. They need to be realistic, and if we cannot commit to abstaining from a harmful activity as a Bottom Line, definitely it should be listed as a Caution Line. As addicts though, we have to be careful not to delude ourselves by keeping the addiction alive in our Caution Lines. The inner addict is ever at the ready for us to relapse. We get a daily reprieve.

HOW TO SET GOAL LINES

Where do you want to go in your life? Many S.L.A.A. members experience sobriety from individual patterns of sex and love addiction. As stated in our Traditions, this goal is the only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership. Our shared goal for sexual and/or relational sobriety is enough. Some members testify that recovery from sex and love addiction can also result in renewed relationships with friends and family, healthy love relationships, healthy sex lives, honest and fulfilling careers, and more. Goal Lines are personally achievable, long-term goals to which we aspire.

There is a difference between a goal and a fantasy. A goal is personally achievable; a fantasy relies on outside intervention. If you want to 'win an award', this is actually a fantasy. You might as well write that you want to be liked by others or for others to vote for you, both are attempts at dictating *others'* actions. A more personally achievable goal might include 'being worthy of winning an award.' Keep it real. You *probably* won't get superpowers, and you *definitely* can't make anyone else love you. You can become emotionally available for a healthy relationship. Through your own sole effort, you cannot "be forgiven," but you can "become worthy of forgiveness."

If acting out cost you a job, then one Goal Line might be "soberly showing up for work." What are other realistic life goals? Write yours down now. Sex and love addiction almost always sidetracks us from meaningful achievement. If you've already achieved major goals in your life, maybe there are deeper personal goals you've ignored. Or maybe your goals need to be more specific, such as not just owning a home, but feeling at peace in your home. Qualities like serenity, integrity and emotional sobriety ARE achievable in the S.L.A.A. program.

Keep in mind that this is a process. As we grow, our goals will become better defined. For today, trust in the process and commit to your truth. Keep it simple. Select your most heartfelt goals and really let them shine in your life. Allow your goals to guide your actions.

HOW TO SET TOP LINES

Top Lines are actions that improve your life and constructively fill the extra time away from your compulsive behaviors and addictive thought patterns. Reading, Exercise, Cleaning, Classes, Meditation, Prayer, Social Activities are all possible Top Lines. Smiling can be a top line. Top Lines are doable actions that you can achieve now, *and that you will do*. If you're not ready to do it now, move it to Goal Lines.

For some members, Top Lines can bring up a lot of feelings of inadequacy and shame. Like our past experiences with sex and love relationships, we may have had good intentions but we were often powerless in our ability to solely focus and follow through on good intentions. This powerlessness can create a great deal of guilt for not living up to our own potential that we are able to recognize, to say nothing of our potential that goes unrecognized by others and ourselves. There is a saying that Higher Power's plan for me is better than the best plan I could ever conceive for myself. Much of our work in recovery is to accept and align ourselves with our Higher Power's plan for us. Acceptance is key. One of the most essential Top Lines is to always love yourself regardless of the results, and to practice self-empathy as you work toward your recovery.

Writing out Top Lines might be very different for a sexual anorexic who "acts in" than for a sex addict who "acts out." A sexual anorexic might list 'making eye contact with others' or 'masturbation' as Top Lines, whereas for a sex addict these could just as easily be Caution Lines or Bottom Lines. Greater S.L.A.A. service and participating in S.L.A.A. fellowship can be both a Top Line and a Life Line. As you'll see, the difference is whether you are doing the activity for self-improvement (Top Line) or to save your life (Life Line.)

FIVE LINES TO S.L.A.A. RECI

BOTTOM LINES

CAUTION LINES

LIFE LINES

12-Step Resources:

TOP LINES

GOAL LINES

Handwriting practice lines for the 'Five Lines to S.L.A.A. Recipe' form. The page contains multiple horizontal lines for writing, organized into five columns: Bottom Lines, Caution Lines, Life Lines, Top Lines, and Goal Lines. A box labeled 'Sobriety Date:' is located at the bottom left. The text 'Other Resources:' is printed in the middle of the Life Lines column.

Sobriety Date:

Other Resources:

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