

What is Withdrawal?

Abstinence from acting out is initially followed by a period of withdrawal. This can be uncomfortable for many of us. Our bodies go through unexpected physical changes; our emotions hit highs and lows we never imagined possible. We feel, perhaps for the first time ever, the void which we have sought to fill with our addiction(s).

Abstinence opens us to the vulnerability we have desperately sought to avoid. This vulnerability is experienced differently by each of us. The resulting withdrawal is sometimes recognized first by its symptoms:

- A craving to act out
- Inexplicable aches and pains
- Physical illness or exhaustion
- Switch to a new addiction(s)
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- General self doubt
- Desperation and fear
- Suicidal thoughts
- Desire to isolate
- Obsessive thinking
- Sadness, depression, or despair
- Dreams of acting out
- Emotional highs and lows
- Irritability, anger, or rage
- Preoccupation with fantasy
- Confusion or trouble concentrating
- Questioning of our interest in S.L.A.A. or recovery

If we aren't acting out, then what are we to do?

The following suggestions have proven helpful in getting people through the experience of withdrawal. This list is not meant to be absolute with advice that works for everybody. If you find something is not working for you then feel free to stop doing it and try something else. The important thing is that you don't give in and you don't give up.

1. Don't act out, no matter what.
2. Read chapter five in the Basic SLAA Text ("Withdrawal").
3. Get a sponsor, even if it is only temporary, and keep in touch with them.
4. Make a contact list of safe SLAA members and call them when you need to.
5. Ask safe SLAA members to call you regularly.
6. Spend time with safe friends and family members.
7. Write in a recovery journal.
8. Write down your First Step and go over it with a sponsor or a member you can trust.
9. Take good care of yourself: get plenty of sleep and eat a balanced diet.
10. Connect with your higher power.
11. Clean house: get rid of old love letters, pictures, porn and anything else from your past additive

life.

*We define “safe” as being a person that is not toxic to you staying sober. This is a person who you would not act out with nor be triggered to act out.

Things to avoid:

1. Stay way from old haunts.
2. Don't go back and try to make your last relationship work one more time.
3. Avoid trying to stay friends with your past “drugs of choice”. In a moment of weakness you will get sucked back in.
4. Don't isolate. You have people in program you can reach out to, and they want to be there for you.

Excerpt from the pamphlet "Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy" © 1995.