

## Tales of a Social Addict

Hello, my name is Michealle, and I am a social addict. I will tell you my tale but first I want to explain what I mean by a social addict. Some of you may know that I study the Enneagram and when I move in this world I lead with my Type 8 tendencies. As my studies deepened I learned about the instinctual subtypes called self-preservation, social and one-to-one; these sub-types offered a more nuanced view of my Type 8 tendency by shedding light on my unconscious level of functioning and giving me the ability to have self-awareness.

There is the Self-Preservation instinct which focuses our need for material supplies and security, including food, shelter, warmth and family relations.

Next is the Social instinct which focuses our need for belonging and membership within a larger group and community.

The final instinct is One-to-One which focuses our need for intimate relationships and close friendships.

With this very brief introduction of the instincts, my tale begins in high school. I started my career in high school with a few select friends. As I moved through the years, the number of friends grew. Whenever I saw someone sitting alone or I had intervened when someone was bullied, I would ask them to join our group. By the time I graduated we had a core group of seven but that expanded from time-to time to more than a dozen people.

In college it was harder to make lasting friendships. My friendships lasted for the semester and we would part ways. Besides trying to get my degree I worked 4 jobs, volunteered at the Alviso Wildlife Refuge as well as being a docent at FLOLI. Because I was unable to maintain lasting friendships I became involved in causes. One such cause was to stop shampoo companies from utilizing rabbits in their studies. I was able to obtain over 100,000 signatures that I gave to the organization I was working with to get these appalling practices stopped. Another organization I joined was the Biology Students Association. This was the first formal organization I joined as a freshman and eventually I became president.

Once I entered the work place I joined the entertainment committees. I helped organize softball teams (which I joined), team building activities, small social events as well as company-wide parties. During this time, I also continued volunteering at the wildlife refuge.

The years passed, and I moved to different companies gaining experience and more responsibilities. At each company I would volunteer to be on the entertainment committee and help start the softball teams. At one time was playing on 3 softball teams. I also was on three bowling leagues of which I became the secretary for these teams. The Secretary is the person who collects the money and does the payouts at the end of the league.

During this time, I met my husband Mark. Mark and I met through a dating agency called Successful Singles. I started with this organization in 1989, this was pre-computer dating. My goal was to meet someone, go out with them, and move on. Most of the friends I had collected were married or already partnered with someone. I just wanted to have someone I could invite to come along or to meet for dinner or a movie. This organization would send 2-5 profiles a month and it was up to us to reach out to each applicant. I would diligently write up my notes on these "dates". By the time I met Mark I was receiving 9-15 profiles a month. I know they were sending me so many profiles because I was probably the only one doing full write ups on the candidates. Between playing softball, bowling, "dating" and working at minimum 50 hours a week as well as commuting 3 hours a day, I was busy. Three months before my contract was going to end with Successful Singles I met Mark.

We dated, married, bought a house and had a baby. Once I became a mom, my life changed. I wanted to spend time with my baby and my husband, but I was going stir-crazy. So, I went back to work after six short weeks. I tried to only work 8-hour days, but the time started increasing until I was back to 50-hour weeks and 3-hours/day commute time. Mark became a stay at home dad, so I felt justified, justified to work this many hours. As Melissa got older she started trying organized activities. She tried swimming, gymnastics, soccer, and softball. When she played these sports, I would be the team mom, organizing other parents to bring snacks and arrange carpools. When Melissa chose softball, one of the other parents on the team asked me to join the Board of Fremont Girls Softball

Association. So, I did. This organization had lots of volunteer opportunities I won't list them all, but I was part of all of them. I served on this Board for 15 years taking on more and more responsibilities.

As Melissa was growing up, we started having conversations about her religious up-bringing. Mark heard of an organization called Mission Peak UU Congregation. I was able to avoid joining Mission Peak for 2 years before I finally broke down and joined an organization that would benefit from my addiction to doing. Shortly after I joined, I was canvassed by DeAnna Alm. To this day, I think it was a conspiracy that they sent DeAnna to canvass me. She managed to get out of me that I would be amiable to serving on the Board. By the next church year, I was a Trustee and by the third church year, I was President. Most people would be satisfied with serving on the Board, but I was also co-chair of the Social Justice Committee and I was on the Sunday Service setup team performing Aesthetics. But remember, earlier in my tale I was still on the Board for FGSA, as well as supporting Melissa while she played Softball and I was still working long hours.

Think back to when you first joined Mission Peak. For me as a social addict it was like I had come home. Not only did I find like minded people but for once I found an organization that had the words I have lived my whole life. And I found a group of people who needed me. I found so many ways to feed my addiction. Serving on the Board, chairing committees, teaching classes, getting training, learning to teach human sexuality and much, much more. I even served on the Search Committee when we found Reverend Jeremy. But many things conspired against me, because I kept doing, I forgot to just be.

Luckily here at Mission Peak I had many opportunities for learning more about myself, learning ways to just be and I could have others on the journey with me. As I was writing this sermon, I was able to work through the chronology of my own awareness of my addiction. The tools were there if I only picked them up and used them. Rev. Chris Schriener gave a series of lectures called "Letting Go", Paul Davis as the Adult RE Chair, coordinated the Adult RE program. We have had many wonderful people share their interests. I found many opportunities to learn what it means to practice spirituality. I learned to make a meditation chain, where I could

learn to quiet my mind. I took a guided meditation/collage course that tried to help me see inside. I am not an introspective person, at times I really struggled with the practice of finding spirituality, but I kept at it. One day Barbara Meyers sent out a call for people who wanted to participate in spiritual direction. I thought about it and called her, but she already had someone she was working with, she gave me the name of another Spiritual Director, Susie Idzik. After meeting her my journey truly began.

After the Search Committee introduced Rev. Jeremy to the congregation, I served as President on the Board for his first year with us. This first year was a stressful year for a few of the members of our congregation. During this time, we had several board members leave the board. The members who remained brought the district representative in to help us work to heal the rift. I was saddened by all parties that were hurt and wanted to remain in leadership to try and help ease the hurt for all involved. It was also during this stressful time that I found out my body was fallible. I was finally forced to take a step back. It was hard because I was involved in many activities and ended up letting several congregation members down. The only way for me to learn to stop doing- was to stop doing. I was not aware of my addiction until I finally slowed down. As I was trying to learn to slow down, three women in this congregation helped me to obtain understanding. I am going to acknowledge these women as I near the end of my conversation with you. These women saved my life, they are Karen McVey, Beckett Gladney and Calista Ames.

I used my slow time to explore my spirituality. I did try to meditate but created lists in my head or fell asleep and woke up with drool on my face. I found by attending Enneagram retreats here and in Arizona, I deepened my awareness of the spiritual aspects of the Enneagram and thus my awareness of my addiction. During these retreats we explored the instincts, these powerful urges I mentioned at the beginning of this discussion. The best way for me to gain further understanding is to teach the concepts I learned. I taught a class that focused only on the instincts of each type, these discussions we shared help me to further understand my own motivations. Once the class was completed, Karen, Beckett and Calista wanted to meet to form a small group to continue the discussion. One other amazing woman joined us, Yvonne Hughes.

We met once a month, though they let me lead the group, they were the best teachers I could have to deepen my awareness of self. They taught me to laugh and cry and to learn to be vulnerable in a safe environment. These monthly meetings healed me. I let go of needing to do too much and trying to be the strong one in all situations. They helped me regain my strength and equilibrium, to learn to relax and breathe.

I decided to try out my new awareness to set boundaries by joining the Board last year as President-elect. These practices were easy because Melissa Holmes was in charge. I could work behind the scenes to assist her and still maintain my awareness of my tendency to do too much. I was not counting on the DRE leaving and our Minister giving his notice. I was concerned about sitting as President of the Board, but I went into the new church year with optimism. By the end of September, it became obvious I was going to be challenged to continue maintaining my awareness of my energy. By December, I was ready to step down as President. Just being in the presence of the minister was becoming too toxic for me. I had to work hard to maintain the balance between not taking on too much and working to keep the leadership from leaving the congregation. So, I stayed on as President and limited my time with the minister. This was a hard time, but the people who served on the Board were my saviors. Though they may not realize it they helped me maintain my distance and not feed my addiction.

I wanted to tell this tale, not to gain sympathy, but as a way to put into words that I am not weak, that I have not let anyone down by taking care of myself, that I will still be loved if I allow myself to do less.

Thank-you