The Problem and the Solution

The Problem

Many of us felt inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid. Our insides never matched what we saw on the outsides of others.

Early on, we came to feel disconnected—from parents, from peers, from ourselves. We tuned out with fantasy and masturbation. We plugged in by drinking in the pictures, the images, and pursuing the objects of our fantasies. We lusted and wanted to be lusted after.

We became true addicts: sex with self, promiscuity, adultery, dependency relationships, and more fantasy. We got it through the eyes; we bought it, we sold it, we traded it, we gave it away. We were addicted to the intrigue, the tease, the forbidden. The only way we knew to be free of it was to do it. "Please connect with me and make me whole!" we cried with outstretched arms. Lusting after the Big Fix, we gave away our power to others.

This produced guilt, self-hatred, remorse, emptiness, and pain, and we were driven ever inward, away from reality, away from love, lost inside ourselves.

Our habit made true intimacy impossible. We could never know real union with another because we were addicted to the *un*real. We went for the "chemistry," the connection that had the magic, *because* it by-passed intimacy and true union. Fantasy corrupted the real; lust killed love. First addicts, then love cripples, we took from others to fill up what was lacking in ourselves. Conning ourselves time and again that the next one would save us, we were really losing our lives.

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The Solution

We saw that our problem was three-fold: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Healing had to come about in all three.

The crucial change in attitude began when we admitted we were powerless, that our habit had us whipped. We came to meetings and withdrew from our habit. For some, this meant no sex with themselves or others, including not getting into relationships. For others it meant "drying out" and not having sex with the spouse for a time to recover from lust.
We discovered that we *could* stop, that not feeding the hunger didn't kill us, that sex was indeed optional! There was hope for freedom, and we began to feel alive. Encouraged to continue, we turned more and more away from our isolating obsession with sex and self and turned to God and others.
All this was scary. We couldn't see the path ahead, except that others had gone that way before. Each new step of surrender felt it would be off the edge into oblivion, but we took it. And instead of killing us, surrender was killing the obsession! We had stepped into the light, into a whole new way of life.

The fellowship gave us monitoring and support to keep us from being overwhelmed, a safe haven where we could finally face ourselves. Instead of covering our feelings with compulsive sex, we began exposing the roots of our spiritual emptiness and hunger. And the healing began.

As we faced our defects, we became willing to change; surrendering them broke the power they had over us. We began to be more comfortable with ourselves and others for the first time without our "drug."

Forgiving all who had injured us, and without injuring others, we tried to right our own wrongs. At each amends more of the dreadful load of guilt dropped from our shoulders, until we could lift our heads, look the world in the eye, and stand free.

We began practicing a positive sobriety, taking the actions of love to improve our relations with others. We were learning how to give; and the measure we gave was the measure we got back. We were finding what none of the substitutes had ever supplied. We were making the real Connection. We were home.

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The Blessings

As we use the Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A. in our recovery, many of us experience higher levels of self-esteem, and receive unexpected blessings we would not have known how to ask for.

- We came to find intimacy with ourselves, intimacy with God, and then intimacy with others.
- In domestic partnerships we discovered a whole new experience of sexuality as a non-addictive medium.
- In relationships with others we let go of self-serving power and prestige as driving motives.
- Careers that had been exploited mainly for material security at the expense of self-fulfillment no longer appealed to us.
- Our usefulness as channels for healing was a direct result of our experience in sickness, as well as in recovery.
- We discovered that we could continue to affirm our recovery by working with other sex and love addicts.
- We discovered that the source of love, which was of God, had begun to flow from within us.

HOW IT WORKS

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with sex and love addiction - cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is to much for us. But there is One who has all power - that One is God. May you find Him now! Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked God's protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

READ THE TWELVE STEPS

Many of us exclaimed," What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down

are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the sex and love addict and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

(a) That we were sex and love addict and could not manage our own lives.

(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our sex and love addiction.

(c) That God could and would if God were sought.

May you find God now.

The 12 Promises

1. If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through.

2. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

3. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

4. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

5. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

6. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

7. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

8. Self-seeking will slip away.

9. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

10. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.

11. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

12. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

Alcoholics Anonymous p83-84