

Step Zero – Introduction:

Sexaholism: Disease or Bad Habit?

Understanding my problem. While SA has always considered *sexaholism* a disease, controversy still simmers over its definition. In the past, *sexaholism* has been considered a sin, a sickness, weak morals, or just a very bad habit. More recently, there has been a suggestion that some of us might not be *sexaholics* at all and can very possibly bring their *lusting* and *acting out* behaviors under control.

This controversy will undoubtedly continue, but it is important that recovering people understand the nature of *sexaholism*. It is deadly, it is compulsive, it is relentless, it is cunning, and it is progressive. While there are occasional reports of *sexaholics* who claim to be able to control their *lusting*, few of us have any firsthand evidence of such changes. Much more often, we hear stories of *sexaholics* who try to control and enjoy it again, only to find themselves headed down a rocky road.

It is not necessary that we define *sexaholism* perfectly or precisely. What's more important is that we remember we're powerless over *lust* and cannot safely entertain *lust*. No definition will change that reality for a *sexaholic* who has had an unmanageable life.

We can consider ourselves fortunate SA gave us an understanding of our problem that we can live with---one that will help us continue living. Perhaps even living Happy, Joyous, and Free. Others can worry about defining *sexaholism*. Let us focus on staying sober. *Walk In Dry Places*

The Doctor's Opinion – adapted for SA meeting:

The doctor writes:

The subject presented in this book seems to me to be of paramount importance to those afflicted with *sexaholic* addiction.

We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of *lust* on these chronic *sexaholics* is a manifestation of an allergy; that the **phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate person**. These allergic types can never safely indulge *lust* in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.

Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffice. The message which can interest and hold these *sexaholics* must have depth and weight. In nearly all cases, their ideals must

Step Zero:

be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives.

Men and women *lust* and act out essentially because they like the effects produced. The sensation is so elusive and powerful that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. In other words, they have lost the whole context of what is right or wrong. To them, their *sexaholic* life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable, and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by indulging their *lust* filled fantasy leading to acting out which they are convinced is natural and that others are doing with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to act out again.

Remember a time when after a spree you were determined to never to act out again. (Jot it down here to share)

This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.

What is another name for a "psychic change?" _____

On the other hand—and strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself able to surrender their *lustful* thoughts and desires, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.

Men have cried out to me in sincere and despairing appeal: "Doctor, I cannot go on like this! I have everything to live for! I must stop, but I cannot! You must help me!"

Faced with this problem, if a doctor/therapist is honest with himself, he must sometimes feel his own inadequacy. Although he gives all that is in him, it often is not enough. **One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change.** Though the aggregate of recoveries resulting from psychiatric effort is considerable, we physicians must admit we have made little impression upon the problem as a whole. Many types do not respond to the ordinary psychological approach.

I do not hold with those who believe that *sexaholism* is entirely a problem of mental control or the inability to make the right choice. I have had many men who had,

for example, been *lust* free for a number of months but for whatever reason decided it was ok to entertain *lust* just a little and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that work, wives and family obligations were not met. These men were not acting out to escape; they were acting out to overcome a craving beyond their mental control. (*Think about what this sentence is saying*)

There are many situations which arise out of the phenomenon of craving which cause men to make the supreme sacrifice rather than continue to fight.

The classification of *sexaholics* seems most difficult, and in much detail is outside the scope of this writing. All these types can appear entirely normal in every respect except in the effect *lust* has upon them. They are often able, intelligent, friendly people. There is the type of man who is unwilling to admit that he cannot entertain *lust*. He plans various ways of indulging. He acts out only when he is out of town, or he claims that he was the pursued not the pursuer, he justifies his needs by rationalizations and justifications, or convincing himself that just looking at a little porn never really hurt anyone. There are those who are convinced a change of scenery will fix everything. There are those who confess all (dump) and earnestly promise their wife or loved one that this will never happen again. There are, of course, the psychopaths who are emotionally unstable. We are all familiar with this type through horrific news stories or sometimes our own memories. There are those who are convinced that it is all the fault of someone else or some experience out of their past and therefore not really their fault. There is the type who always believes that after being entirely free from *lusting* for a period he can entertain *lust* again without danger. All of these addicts are always "going to quit for keeps." We can be over-remorseful and make many resolutions, make many decisions but never take the necessary action.

All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: **they cannot indulge *lust* without developing the phenomenon of craving.** This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence from *lust*.

This immediately precipitates us into a seething caldron of debate. Much has been written pro and con, but among physicians, the general opinion seems to be that most chronic *sexaholics* are doomed.

What is the solution? Acceptance of the plan outlined in the AA Big Book – The 12 Steps of Recovery.

Step Zero:

Step "Zero"

There is an unwritten step underlying all twelve. Call it Step Zero: "We participated in the fellowship of the program." No one seems able to stay sober and progress in recovery without it, though some try. For most of us, without associating in some way with other recovering individuals, there is no lasting sobriety and none of the fringe benefits of recovery, growth, freedom, and joy.

We begin by meeting regularly with other members. Fellowship is that crucial to our recovery. We cannot do it alone. We pray to be led to another *sexaholic* who will want to hear our story, then we follow all leads that come to our attention.

Commit yourself to your group, whether it is being formed or is operating but still small. Attend every meeting on time. This ensures maximum benefit to you and the group, which cannot have continuity without regular participants. The measure of such commitment will be the measure of your recovery.

We cannot put this strongly enough: Experience has shown us that we must be part of others or we cannot maintain effective surrender, see ourselves rightly, or work the Steps. Without regular participation in the fellowship, there seems to be no recovery.

We Stop

We stop practicing our compulsion in all its forms. We cannot be "sober" in one area while acting out in another. There can be no relief from the obsession of *lust* while still practicing the acts of *lust* in any form.

"I can be masturbating to the image of a blank wall, and I'm still resorting to my drug."

- We stop feeding *lust*.
- We get rid of all the materials and other triggers under our control.
- We stop feeding *lust* through the eyes, the fantasy, and the memory.
- We stop relishing the language of *lust*, resentment, and rage.
- We stop living only and always inside our own heads.

One of the fringe benefits of going to a lot of meetings is that it gets us out of ourselves.

As we become aware of other addictions that are part of our lives, we pray for willingness to surrender each one.

There can be no true recovery from addiction if we allow it to persist in any area, whether in our thinking or in our acting out.

What we are really saying when we start meeting with others is, "I have to stop; please help me."

Step Zero:

But we need some demonstration of trust, and hearing the stories of other members, we begin to let our guard down. Before we know it, we have crossed that line of doubt, mistrust, and fear, and have put down our drug.

The program doesn't tell us how to stop—we had done that a thousand and one times—it shows us how to keep from starting again. We had it backwards; before, we always wanted the therapist, spouse, or God to do the stopping for us—to fix us. Now, we stop; and then, in our surrender, the power of God becomes effective in us.

I earnestly advise every *sexaholic* to read this book through, and though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray. In other words, it means giving up trying to make the program work for me and to start working the program.