

HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS I'm a Catholic man who belongs to a fellowship called *Sexaholics Anonymous*, which is based on the 12 Steps of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. I never dreamed it would come to this! After all, what's a little masturbation 2 or 3 times a week! Most (if not all) men do it! I just need a little relief from all the stress! And what's wrong with looking at a few pretty girls now and then! After all, they're part of God's beautiful creation!

I used to think all those things – until I saw my first internet porn photo. I knew in that moment that I was addicted. I've since learned that internet porn is often called the "crack cocaine" of sexual addiction. And I learned first-hand why: I experienced an adrenaline rush in those first few seconds unlike anything I had ever experienced. I started down a path of daily downloading of images for HOURS at a time, accompanied by many episodes of masturbation.

This went on every day for many, many months. I stepped up my visits to the confessional: first monthly, then bi-monthly, then weekly. The habit persisted. I began speaking with various therapists –Catholic and otherwise– hoping for a "cure". There was none to be had. Then, in confession, I said to the priest, "I think I must be a sex addict – if there is such a thing." I had never heard *that* phrase before. He hadn't either! But I went online and found out about S.A. and have been experiencing "progressive victory" over lust ever since.

I was desperate. I wanted to stop this insanity. I was ready to do whatever it takes to be free of the obsession of lust. If you are in the same boat as I was, go to the end of this pamphlet for important information.

BUT I'M NOT THAT FAR GONE The rest of this pamphlet is designed to help those of you who haven't crossed that line of desperation, and yet feel trapped in an endless cycle

of desire, craving, sin, guilt and remorse. What I have outlined here are some things I have learned in the past ten years in recovery. This is what works **for me**. If you find something here that works for you, use it; discard the rest.

MY DAILY MORNING ROUTINE Before I do anything else, I get on my knees and admit to God that I am powerless over lust. That *admission* is the first step. My prayer goes something like this:

Father, I offer myself to you this day. Please build with me; do whatever you want with me. Free me from the bondage to lust and the bondage to self. I want to do your will today, and want to be used by you in bringing hope to those who still suffer. May your victory in me allow others to experience your power, your love and mercy, and your way of life, today and forever.

Each phrase in that prayer is important. The main reason I am in this predicament in the first place is because I have always done whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted. I must learn to do God's will, not my own. Ironically, it is the use of my "freedom" [to do whatever I want] that has led me to this "slavery" [to sin]. Thus, I must give up [surrender] my freedom, to become truly free..

SURRENDER "Surrender" is the key to "victory". (Isn't that ironic!) "Surrender" means, among other things, acknowledging that lust is more powerful than I am, and only God can deliver me from its effects. But this act of surrender must take place **before** the time of temptation. When I am attracted to some person of beauty, I must **surrender** my "right" to lust. If not, the lust will lead to fantasy and eventually to masturbation, which.. brings me back to that cycle of sin, remorse and shame.

But if my attitude is, "God, may I find in **you** what my lust is looking for in that person" then I will gain victory over lust **in that instant**. Then I follow up that prayer with a second: "God, please bless this person and make her a source of blessing for others." (I even raise my hand in blessing, as a priest would, but in a discrete manner.)

This second prayer is crucial. For what is lust? Is it not a "taking from others to fill up what is lacking in ourselves"? Lust is a selfish **taking** of something that does not belong to us. But this second prayer is **giving** to that person something of great worth. And when we **give** to another, we, in turn, are also blessed.

THREE-FOLD RECOVERY Since the human person is "body, mind, and soul", our recovery must include all three. Let's look at each.

BODY We must stop feeding our mind with all the junk that is making us crazy. We get rid of the pictures, the images, the videos, the phone numbers. While there are no really good porn blockers, there is a software application called *Covenant Eyes* that will send emails to your significant other *each time* you visit a porn site. That accountability has changed the habits of many a man! Make sure your computer is not in an isolated area; the screen should be visible to anyone walking into the room.

Relief from stress is crucial. Regular exercise is most important. In my own faith journey, I walk 20 minutes every morning while praying the Rosary. I can't believe how some-thing so simple can make such a **huge** difference in my attitude and ability to cope with "life on life's terms".

MIND If you are like me, you love to isolate. I must go against my nature to win victory in the emotional area. For me, it means making phone calls to those in the program and others, going to meetings, and intentionally doing

things that I am not comfortable doing. I must make a connection with a real human being, or else I will settle for the fantasy, the illusion, the mis-connection. And then that cycle of sin begins again.

SOUL There is no "3 second rule". Lust has nothing to do with duration, and everything to do with intent. What is the intent of your heart? Jesus said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God, then all these things will be given to you."

As mentioned above, start your day in prayer, then in each temptation, pray. At the end of each day, thank God for EVERY blessing you received that day. This "attitude of gratitude" is very important.

FIVE SMOOTH STONES is all that David took with him in order to kill the giant Goliath. "Lust" is a "spiritual stronghold". And the 5 smooth stones we will need to slay that giant are: daily Prayer and Scripture reading, weekly Fasting and Eucharist, and monthly Confession.

GOING DEEPER While I have not masturbated in many months, I have been tempted recently to arouse myself – just for the simple pleasure of it. Who did I think I was kidding! In prayer one morning, it occurred to me that Jesus was asking me to look at him hanging on the cross **for me** and was asking me to offer up this "pleasure" in gratitude for what he had done for me. It became easy after that.

THE PROMISES I have experienced in my life a peace and contentment I never knew. If I slip tomorrow even once, I will likely lose everything. Addictions are like that. "One drink is too many, and a thousand is not enough." The cycle of sin will begin again if I entertain lust, even for a moment.

I am not (and will never be) "cured".

There is no "silver bullet". What I do have is a "daily reprieve" provided I maintain my spiritual condition. Today, I choose not to lust – by the grace of God.

BUT I'VE DONE ALL THAT! Now what? If you have done all of the above and still have no victory in your life, or if you have crossed the fantasy/masturbation line and engaged in sex with another person, you must face yourself honestly. If your life has become unmanageable because of lust, you should consider the possibility that you (like me) are a *sexaholic*. There is a self-assessed 20-question quiz you can take to determine if you "qualify". Your priest may have a copy of this. If not, go to www.sa.org/test.php and answer the questions honestly.

THE NEXT STEP If you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it, you are ready to experience a new life and a new freedom. For more info, contact the Windsor area hotline (519) 900-9473 and leave your phone number and first name. A contact person will phone you back and will discuss with you your situation and will offer you times and locations of S.A. meetings.

- Or email sa.windsor@yahoo.com for a list of meetings in Windsor.
- Or phone S.A. central office for a live conversation (866) 424-8777 (toll free)

God bless you on your journey!

Hope for the Hopeless

*for those men struggling
with "men's issues"*