Please Read This First

The Most Personal Addiction was published in 2002. Its purpose was to teach people how to overcome sex addiction without relying on an expert counselor. You could call The Most Personal Addiction a book that didn’t achieve the author’s goal, but still helped many people. I offered all the buyers a full refund when I realized it could not replace excellent counseling. Not a single purchaser took advantage of the offer. Years after it was published people still relied on it to help them, even though by my standards it had not met its goal.

These first 48 chapters will:

- Help you understand the problems confronting a sexually addicted person.
- Help your partner understand the difficulties you are struggling with.
- Help you understand what you’re partner is going through.
- Help both of you set realistic goals.
- Point out the errors people make when they try to overcome an addiction.
- Show you how to correct those errors.
- Explain the personal issues you will encounter in dealing with a sex addiction.
- Show you and your partner how to deal with them. A special section is devoted to how to save a relationship struggling with sex addiction. There are also special sections for people who are not in a relationship, or have never been in one.

I believe they will be worth your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Joe Zychik
Dear Reader,

I overcame sex addiction in 1982. Since then I’ve helped many others overcome it with the same techniques you'll discover in this book.

Anyone can overcome sex addiction.

Here's what it takes:

1. Honesty
2. Hard work
3. Excellent advice

If you're willing to be honest about your addiction and work hard at overcoming it, this book will give you the excellent advice you need to reach your goal.

Sincerely,

Joe Zychik

Dedicated to all the people who entrusted me with their hopes and allowed me to successfully guide them.
Dear Joe,

For over 20 years, I lied to myself that my addiction was normal and that there must be thousands like me out there who silently acted upon their addictions as normally as I did.

I secretly spent hours pouring over magazines and pictures on the Internet. I had convinced myself that my sexual addiction had no bearing whatsoever on my professional life, nor had it any bearing on my marriage.

I was impressed with the way I was handling my addiction. It was my secret. It wasn’t hurting anyone close to me, especially my wife.

It is with great joy that I announce my assertions were completely incorrect. My obsession with pornography was a link to a fantasy that I would dive into when the world did me wrong. Why deal with the real world when pornography is so much easier and convenient? The only person that I had fooled that I was not acting sexually addictive was myself.

I was always angry at those close to me for some inexplicable reason. The stronger my obsession became, the angrier I got. I was living a lie, and it was taking over my life.

I had previously tried to quit my sexual addiction cold turkey at least ten times. Ten attempts, and ten solid failures. At least I was consistent.

I felt doomed that there was no way out. I am thankful that my wife had the patience, wisdom, and insight to see that I had a problem that required professional help. I was not a bad person, I had just lived this lie long enough not knowing how to get out.

At the outset of your counseling, I was looking for the magic pill, the in-and-out express cure. I am thankful to you, Joe, that you had the patience to teach me the tools with which I could begin the process of overcoming addiction. The process was dependent ON ME and my understanding of how to apply the tools that you taught me.

As a sexually addicted person who overcame his addiction with your
help, and as an addict, I know that I will never be “cured.” I know that the future will hold ups and downs. I also know that I have been given the tools to deal with these ups and downs.

My marriage is blossoming. I do not fear truth; I embrace it, and I can feel the anger being left behind.

Thank you, Joe, for showing me freedom, the importance of reality, and the healing power of honesty.

“Carlos”

(Real Name Withheld)
Abbreviated Table of Contents

Section 1: The Interviews
Section 2: How To Get Started Correctly
Section 3: The Unique Nature of Sex Addiction
Section 4: The Sexually Addicted Mind
Section 5: How To Save Your Relationship

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Although all events described in the book are factual, the actual characters described herein are composites of actual clients of the author. The composite character has been created and designed to protect the actual client's identity. Any similarity to a single individual, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

The statements made in the testimonials set forth in the book are made by individuals who have received personal counseling from the author and are based on the results of that counseling. The individuals were not compensated in any manner for the statements. The author does not know the individual identities of the persons writing the testimonials as they chose to keep their identity private. Clients were sent a link to submit an encrypted testimonial if they so wished.

The original testimonials are in the possession of the publisher.

The Most Personal Addiction is intended as a guide to understanding sexual addiction and to suggest a method of overcoming it. The advice rendered by the author in this book is based solely on his experiences in over 27 years of personal counseling. The author does not guarantee any certain result to the reader of this book. The author and the publisher shall not be responsible to the reader or any third party for any action or inaction by an individual who attempts to apply the methods set out in the book.
Dear Joe,

Before talking with you, I was using alcohol, prescription medication, and, of course, sex (porn, masturbation, staring, cheating with men and women) to escape from life.

The sad thing was how ridiculously lost I was in my escapism, to the point of not knowing how truly lost I was. The end result was a life filled with lies. I lied to everyone, including myself, my wife, and even you. I was a mess.

You and I took that mess and started figuring things out, started putting together the puzzle of what I was escaping from.

You helped me to identify my most basic fears: fear of failure, and fear of rejection. You also helped me see the rewards that real life offers, and is there for the choosing.

These rewards include: 1) an intimate relationship with my wife, filled with honesty, respect, and true love; and 2) the potential for success and love (the opposite from failure and rejection) in all aspects of life.

I am such a better person. A happier person. Life is now something to enjoy, rather than tolerate.

Thank you. Thank you!

“Bruce”
(Real name withheld)

This is the first of three interviews for anyone concerned about sex addiction. This interview consists of nine questions with responses and an FAQ.

1. Do you spend time with pornography and/or masturbation that could be spent with your partner? Yes No Sometimes

Here's a common scenario that might describe your situation: Mr. Jones's partner tells him she wants more time together. He doesn't make the time for them to be together.
After a while she stops asking. He thinks it means everything is OK. He's wrong. When the partner stops asking for more time together, it means:

She is resigning herself to an unhappy relationship, which means an unhappy one for him too. Or it's the first sign she is about to end the relationship.

2. Do you think that masturbation and/or porn has any effect on the sex life between you and your partner? 

   Yes No Sometimes

   Many sexually addicted people think that masturbation/pornography has no effect on the sex between themselves and their partner. Others think that masturbation and/or porn releases excess sexual energy. Both of these ideas are mistaken.

   Fact: the more you get into masturbation/pornography, the less interested you become in your partner.

   Masturbation and/or porn does not release pent-up sexual energy. It creates an addictive sexual energy, not a healthy, loving sexual energy. In later chapters you'll find out more about the difference between addictive sexual energy and healthy, loving sexual energy.

   For now, I suggest you keep your mind open to the possibility that your relationship suffers because of masturbation/pornography addiction. So might your sex life.

3. Do you think that masturbation and/or pornography helps you stay in the relationship?

   Yes No Sometimes

   Masturbation/porn creates an illusion that competes with your relationship. It does not help you stay in the relationship. The belief that masturbation/porn helps you stay in a relationship is an example of how some people fool themselves about their addictions.

   Here's another one: Alcoholics who get blind drunk and then insist on driving home because, "I drive better when I've had a few drinks in me."

   If you're into masturbation/pornography and there are serious problems in your relationship, your addiction is making your relationship worse.

4. If you have sex with other people besides your partner, do you think it has any effect on your relationship? 

   Yes No Sometimes

   When you're in a relationship, whatever you do sexually impacts your partner, even if she doesn't know what you're up to.

   Let's take one issue: the guilt of living a double life. That alone hurts your
relationship.

If you're cheating on your partner, don't take it lightly. It's hurting you and her more than you realize. Later on you will be able to take a special interview for the person who is unfaithful in his relationship. It will help you understand how serious infidelity is.

5. Do you sneak your masturbation/pornography? Yes No Sometimes

Despite the politically correct crowd's claim that masturbation/pornography is not a problem, here's a simple fact of life: A good relationship is based on honesty.

When you sneak part of your sex life, your relationship suffers because of dishonesty.

And if you're not addicted, then why are you sneaking it?

Answer: You sneak it because you don't want to admit your addiction to yourself and/or your partner.

6. Have there been arguments between you and your partner about your masturbation and/or use of pornography? Yes No Sometimes

Here's what happens in relationships if there are bitter fights over masturbation/porn and the addictive behavior is not overcome:

Your partner ends the relationship. Or if there are children involved, your partner waits until they get older, then divorces you. Or your partner becomes resigned to a bitter, unhappy marriage and secretly resents you.

7. Have there been arguments between you and your partner about staring? Yes No Sometimes

If you and your partner fight over staring, you're addicted.

Talk to your partner about it and she will tell you she doesn't expect you to walk around like you're blind to beauty. Her point is that you don't just notice an attractive woman. You stare.

You probably think your partner's overdoing it. Don't bet on it. You're the one who's overdoing it. That's why there's fighting between the two of you about it.

8. Do you wish the sex life between you and your partner was better? Yes No Sometimes

From a sex addiction point of view, relationships suffer sexually because:

The sexually addicted person treats his partner as a sex object. As a result, the partner is turned off to having sex with him.
Because of the sexually addictive behavior, other conflicts in the relationship are not resolved. That results in loss of closeness, trust, and warmth.

The sexually addicted person puts emotions and sexual energy into his addiction, ignores the partner, and then complains that the partner’s not interested in him.

The sexually addicted person might also use his partner as a sex addiction substitute. Eventually the partner realizes it and the sex life is ruined for both of them.

9. Does porn turn you on more than your partner does? Yes No Sometimes

If your answer is Yes or Sometimes, you're comparing your partner to an addictive fantasy. The sooner you break away from fantasy and masturbation/porn, the better for both of you.

Let's use an FAQ to discuss other issues that might be on your mind:

Q: What if I think I'm sexually addicted?

If you want to overcome your addiction, you start by identifying the mistakes people make when they attempt to stop sexually addictive behavior. Section 2 (How To Get Started Correctly) will help you do that.

Sections 3 and 4 will help you analyze the nature of your particular sex addiction problem and which sex addictions apply to you.

Before you make any attempt to stop sexually addictive behavior, you need to make sure your relationship is going really well. That's what Section 5 is designed to help you do.

Q: I've been trying to overcome sex addiction for years. Will this book really help me?

Yes. This book will teach you how to correctly stop your addictive behavior and how to successfully make that choice throughout the rest of your life.

Anyone can overcome sex addiction.

Q: Can my partner and I read the book together?

It's written for both of you.

Q: What if don't want to tell her about my addiction?

In most situations attempting to overcome the addiction without telling your partner will most likely fail.

Q: Is the main emphasis for men who are sexually addicted?

Most of my clients are men. I have successfully helped women overcome sexual
addiction; they can use the book also. Most of my work has been with straight couples; I have been successful helping gay couples as well.

Q: What if I don't think I'm sexually addicted?

Maybe you aren't. Maybe you are and you don't want to admit it.

Before you make your decision, read through the interviews in Section 4, The Sexually Addicted Mind. Deciding whether or not you are sexually addicted is probably the most important decision you will make in your life. Those interviews will help you make that decision.

Also, Section 5, How To Save Your Relationship, is an excellent chapter on how any couple can improve their relationship.

Q: What if I want more help besides using a book? What if I want counseling?

Chapter 10 provides a guide on how to find a competent counselor. Also, if you use the book while you're working with a competent counselor, you'll save a lot of time and money in the counseling process.

Q: I've tried to overcome sex addiction so many times, I'm beginning to feel like I'm a lost cause.

The Most Personal Addiction is written for people who've been trying to overcome sex addiction and haven't been able to. That's why the subtitle is, "How I overcame sex addiction and how anyone can overcome it."
Chapter 2
Have You Lost A Good Relationship Or Never Had One?

Dear Joe,

Today is the 6-month anniversary of my girlfriend and I living together. That may seem like no more than a happy occurrence; however, to me it is an incredible event I once thought impossible.

I started masturbating in my early teens, as most kids do, exploring their changing bodies. In no time I was masturbating up to 15 times a day, maybe more.

Along with that, I rapidly developed a sexually-charged fantasy life, enhanced by porn. I continued with this behavior through my teens and I enhanced it with one-night stands with women and men.

I had no life, no real friends, no relationship beyond a few days. I just had my addictions and the sexual feeling that accompanied them.

The irony is that for a long while, I viewed my sexual behaviors as my only comfort in a cold and lonely world. In reality, they were the things that made my world a desolate place, but I was so deeply addicted I could not see it.

Now I am at a point in my life where I have overcome my addictions and I am in love with a wonderful woman who loves me in return. All my relationships are greatly improved.

Though I always hoped for this, many times I believed it would just not happen for me. If it were not for you and the incredible work you have done, I would not have this today. It's a horrible thing to want to get help but not have a place to turn. You provided me with that place.

You made it clear from the start that there were no easy answers, that it was hard work, but if I did the work you would guide me. You did not let me down.

I have truly gone from nothing to everything, thanks to your work and our collaboration. Any addict with a shred of honesty knows the
desolation and pain in their life. I am able to take pleasure now in really feeling things, instead of numbing myself to them. I can enjoy people instead of fear them. I could go on and on.

The words "Thank You" don't seem like enough for what I've gotten from you. The proper words don't exist. Just know that you have made a profound difference in my life, and you will be my friend forever.

Timothy
(Real name withheld)

This interview will help you identify the destructive wall of fantasy that sex addiction builds between you and a good relationship. It consists of 8 questions with responses and an FAQ.

1. Did your partner complain of being neglected? Yes No Sometimes
   Maybe you thought s/he was too needy, too dependent, not emotionally mature. Maybe to some degree you were right. But not completely.
   If you were acting sexually addictive, it definitely caused you to neglect her.

2. Do you avoid people? Yes No Sometimes
   Sex addiction is easy. You can turn on the fantasy, get sexual satisfaction and stay in the house.
   Some people never have a good relationship because they expect reality to be like fantasy. Be thankful it isn't. Because fantasy ends with a humiliating, degrading, depressing crash.
   The real long-term, truly loving joys are with a real person in an honest, loving, committed relationship.
   Chapter 30 has a special FAQ you'll want to go through carefully.

3. Were you using pornography and/or masturbating during the relationship? Yes No Sometimes
   The interviews in Chapters 23-24 and 27-28 will help you decide if your masturbation and/or porn use was addictive.
   When you lost that good relationship did you ever feel, "If I just had one more chance, maybe I could have saved it"? 
Addictive masturbation/pornography deprived you of that extra chance because the energy you put into your addictions took you away from building a good relationship.

4. Were there sexual problems in the relationship? Yes No Sometimes
Did you have a minimal sexual interest in your partner? Did s/he have little interest in you? Sex addiction plays a major role in these issues.

The pornography and masturbation interviews in Chapters 23-24 and 27-28 will give you a detailed explanation of why

5. Did your partner say she didn't trust you? Yes No Sometimes
You probably lied to your partner about your sexually addictive behavior. That alone can cost you a good relationship. And it can keep you from ever having a good relationship.

6. Do you feel that relationships are too much trouble? Yes No Sometimes
The interview in Chapter 29 might help you change your life for the better.

7. Were you having sex with other people while you were in the relationship? Yes No Sometimes
It doesn't matter if your partner knew you were cheating or didn't know. Your cheating hurt the relationship and probably destroyed it.

8. Were you more turned on to porn than you were to your partner? Yes No Sometimes
This is covered in the Relationship and Sex Addiction Interview, in Chapter 1. As you will see, the same issues that hurt a relationship can eventually destroy it.

The FAQ
Q: I don't want to lose another good relationship. What can I do?
Learn about building good relationships and overcoming sex addiction.
Sections 2, 3, and 4 discuss the different aspects of sex addiction. Section 5, How To Save Your Relationship, will show you how to get your next relationship started on the right foot.
Sections 6 and 7 take you through the process of managing a sex addiction and then finally overcoming it.

Q: I've never had a good relationship and I desperately want one. What do I do?
Sections 3 and 4 talk about sex addiction and the sexually addicted mind. They will
help you understand yourself and help you get started in the direction of developing a good relationship. Section 5 will guide you through building a good relationship.

Q: I’ve tried to overcome sex addiction, I feel like it's impossible.
It's not impossible. Anyone can overcome sex addiction.

Q: To be honest, my primary sexual relationship right now is with masturbation/pornography. Is there any hope for me?
Of course there is. The chapters on masturbation and pornography will open your mind to what's really going on. Then use Section 5 to guide yourself on how to build a really great relationship.

Throughout the sections you'll read about people you can identify with who have successfully overcome their addictions. You can do it too.

Q: My sex life has been almost exclusively with prostitutes. Can I ever have a good relationship?
Yes, you can. Section 4, The Sexually Addicted Mind, will help you understand yourself and show you how to begin the process of overcoming your addiction to prostitutes. Then use Section 5 as a guide to building a good relationship.

Q: What if I've never had sex with anyone?
You can have a wonderful, loving sex life with a real person in a real relationship. The Most Personal Addiction can help you get started in that direction.

Q: Chapters 1 and 3 are addressed to people in relationships. Can they help me too?
Yes! They will show you what not to do and they will help you understand what the partner of a sexually addicted person goes through.

Q: I've never met anyone more pessimistic than I am. I just can't believe I could overcome sex addiction.
Your pessimism is unfounded. Anyone can overcome sex addiction.
Chapter 3

Is Your Partner Sexually Addicted?

Dear Joe,

The last time I talked to you, I didn't realize it would be THE last time. You truly changed our lives and the lives of [three children's names omitted]. Our friends marvel and want to know about you. You should see the look on their face when I say I've never met you face-to-face!!

When I think of where we were a year ago, I can't believe it. I told "Greg" (real name withheld) the other day, I feel like I'm the one living in the fantasy world because everything is going so well, and we're closer than we've ever been. I now know Greg is truly committed to this relationship. He has thanked me many times over for staying with him.

I think the honesty in the relationship is incredible.

Another incredible thing is that Greg just doesn't get angry over much, if anything, any more. He was making an electrical repair the other day which turned out to be challenging. I was holding the flashlight, but the minute he didn't need me, I was out of there still fearing he might explode. It didn't happen, and a few hours later, we had a good laugh about my "panic exit".

Needless to say, our sex life is as wonderful as you promised it would turn out to be.

I'll always remember getting your live voice the first time I called in desperation. With tears in my eyes and all the gratitude in my heart, I thank you for finding that perfect mix of caring and toughness that we needed.

Best to you always,

"Florence"

(Real name withheld)

Throughout The Most Personal Addiction you'll read about couples whose troubles
will probably sound familiar. They succeeded in building the relationship they've always wanted. You can do it, too. Let's get started.

1. Do you feel emotionally neglected by your partner? Yes No Sometimes

Here are some realistic signs of emotional neglect to help you with your answer.

Your partner doesn't take an interest in your life. If you don't volunteer what's going on, he doesn't ask. Or if you talk about yourself, he doesn't listen or doesn't seem to care.

He doesn't involve you in his life. He doesn't share important thoughts or feelings with you.

Emotionally, you're in a roommate situation. Your partner knows you're there. Your partner’s polite. Your partner’s considerate. And that's about it.

He tells you facts only, without emotional comment. You can share deeper feelings with a friend than you can with your partner. -.

2. Do you experience sexual neglect? Yes No Sometimes

Signs of sexual neglect are:

- Very infrequent sex.
- No sex at all for long periods of time.
- Impersonal sex. It's just something he goes through with you and gets it over as soon as possible.
- You need to initiate the sex. If you don't initiate it, it doesn't happen.

3. Do you occasionally find porn in the house or on the computer? Yes No

When you found the porn did he tell you:

- It wasn't his. A friend must have left it.
- He doesn't know how it got there.
- It's not his porn; it's your son's porn.
- The plumber left it.
- He admitted he bought the porn magazine or video and said it was only out of curiosity.
- He doesn't know how to use the computer and he wishes he knew how to stop the porn from popping up.
- It's spam and everyone gets porn spam.
- A friend of his planted the porn as a bad joke.
- Yes, he did go to a porn site, but it was by accident.

The answers you just read are not necessarily lies. They describe actual incidents that happened to clients of mine who did not use porn. However, these cases are extremely rare - most of the time you're being lied to - except for porn spam; it's virtually unavoidable.

When you find porn in the house or on the computer, you've stumbled across evidence of pornography addiction. The rest of the porn is probably well hidden. Or it is used outside the house and then thrown away, or deleted from the computer.

4. Have you walked in on your partner masturbating? Yes No

   If there is any addiction that is misunderstood, it's masturbation addiction. Chapters 22 through 24 will give you insights into masturbation addiction that every woman needs to know.

   Every once in a while, a female client will tell me, "I don't care if he masturbates, I just don't want him using porn to do it." That is a recipe for disaster.

   Some men and women are under the impression that a married guy needs to masturbate to release extra sexual tension. Let me give you another interpretation. Most men get sexually addicted. So they have two drives:
   - a natural, loving sex drive
   - and an addictive one.

   When you walked in on him masturbating, you probably walked in on an addictive activity.

5. Does your partner stare at other men or women? Yes No Sometimes

   The Relationship and Sex Addiction Interview in Chapter 1 discusses this issue - and many others you'll want to find about.

6. Is your partner eager for you to leave the house? Yes No Sometimes

   Most sexually addicted people in a relationship act out only when they get the opportunity. The less you're home, the more opportunity he has to sneak in his sex addiction. A few signs of sneaking in sexually addictive behavior are:
   - He gets up in the middle of the night to do work, but his boss complains because he never gets his work in on time. He might be getting up in the middle of the night to
engage in addictive activity.

He seems to get nervous just before you leave the house.
When you come home you feel as if you walked in on something.

7. Does he spend long hours at the office? Yes No Sometimes

Some people are workaholics. In many cases, workaholism and sex addiction go together. It might be neither. He might have responsibilities that require him to spend long hours at the office and there's no hidden agenda.

Here's why it might be sex addiction:
- He doesn't have the opportunity to masturbate or use porn at home, so he uses the office.
- He's having sex with someone else and is using the "Sorry, honey, I have to work late tonight" excuse.
- He likes to stay in the office and get into masturbation/pornography because he doesn't want to deal with issues at home.

If he spends long hours at the office and he's emotionally distant when he comes home, it's a strong indicator of sex addiction.

8. Do you feel like you've become an Internet widow? Yes No Sometimes

You've most likely been widowed by sex addiction.

9. Has he lied to you about his masturbation or use of pornography? Yes No Sometimes

If he's lied to you, assume he's addicted. The addiction didn't cause him to lie. He lied because he deliberately chose his addiction over having an honest relationship with you.

10. Does he keep the finances secret from you?

I talk to many men who cheat on their wives and/or hide a porn addiction. The wife has no idea and will most likely never find out. Some men brag about how well they hide it. How do they get away with it? Answer: The wife does not know what's going on with the finances.

If you suspect infidelity or a porn addiction, demand to see all the credit card statements, all the checks, all the bank statements. Also, question the cash withdrawals. And don't forget to check the phone bills - including his cell phone - for strange calls.

If he refuses to be open with you about the finances or the phone bill, he's probably
hiding something from you.

11. Does he refuse to tell you where he's been?

An open, honest, loving partner has nothing to hide. He's more than glad to tell you where he's been and what he was up to. If he's secretive, assume he's hiding something important from you. Don't stop asking until you find out what it is.

12. If you turn him down for sex, will he take no for an answer?

A sign of addiction is the inability to accept an unsatisfied desire. If your partner nags, hounds, complains or whines until you have sex with him, he's sexually addicted. The person who is not sexually addicted is completely capable of accepting "Sorry, I'm tired tonight."

13. Does he pressure you to do things you find degrading? Yes No Sometimes

One of the worst mistakes you can make is trying to please your partner by degrading yourself. Do not do anything sexual you don't want to. Sex is supposed to be loving. A good relationship is characterized by mutual respect. Humiliation is not love. Degradation is not respect.

14. Do you feel that something is missing in the relationship, and you don't know what it is?

A sexually addicted person creates an emotional distance between themselves and their partner. In most cases, the partner is aware something is missing. For instance:

- You feel that maybe he's having an affair, but you haven't found any signs of it.
- You feel there's something he doesn't like about you, but he won't tell you what it is and you can't figure it out.
- The two of you are friends but not lovers.
- The friendship is gone and the only thing left is occasional sex.
- You used to be able to talk to each other about important things. Now your conversations don't go beyond the mundane.
- Some people will tell you that as a marriage ages, it's natural to lose interest in each other. That's nonsense. Talk to people who have really great marriages and they'll tell you that they grow closer every day.

If you feel something's missing, there's a good chance sex addiction is filling the void. Now let's discuss some questions that might be on your mind.
Q: If I think my partner is sexually addicted, how do I get him/her to stop?

Here's how:

A: Section 2 (How To Get Started Correctly) identifies the most common mistakes people make when they attempt to overcome sex addiction. You'll want to familiarize yourself with it.

Section 3 (The Unique Nature Of Sex Addiction) explains issues that pertain to all sexually addicted people. It'll help you understand what your partner is going through and what you can do to help him. It will also help you decide if you want to stay with him while he strives to overcome his addiction, or if you'd rather cut your losses and end the relationship.

Section 4 (The Sexually Addicted Mind) will help you understand how serious the problem is and how to determine what sex addictions apply to your situation. They'll also help you identify what demands to make if you decide to stay in the relationship.

Section 5 (How To Save Your Relationship) can help any couple improve the quality of their relationship. It goes way beyond sex addiction, as you will see.

Sections 6 and 7 (How To Manage The Addiction, How To Overcome The Addiction) take you through a step-by-step process of how you and your partner can improve your relationship until the sex addiction is overcome - and how the addiction is overcome, step-by-step.

Q: What if my partner doesn't want to admit he's sexually addicted?

A: The interviews in these first two chapters will get through to just about any sexually addicted person. If they don't do the trick, the interviews in Section 4 (The Sexually Addicted Mind) most likely will.

But let's assume you can't even get him to read the interviews. Chapter 14 will give you some excellent advice. Also read Section 5, How To Save Your Relationship. It will give you other approaches you can use to get through to him.

Don't give up hope. Remember, you've been trying to get through to him without the advice that's contained in this book. This book is written by someone who overcame sex addiction and has been helping people overcome it for decades.

Let me be blunt: I know how to talk to your partner in ways that you don't. Every interview, every chapter is written with the assumption that the addicted person reading it
is determined to resist every word.

Bottom line: If he loves you, he'll admit he's sexually addicted. If he doesn't admit it, then at least you'll have a much better idea of how he really feels about you.

I think you're going to find that he really does love you. But he doesn't know how to overcome his sex addiction. This book can help both of you.

Q: What if I think we need more than a book? What if I think we need counseling?

A: Chapter 10 provides a guide on how to find a competent counselor. Also, if you use the book while you're working with a competent counselor, you'll save a lot of time and money in the counseling process.

Q: What if my partner has made promise after promise to stop and he's never kept his promise? Is there any hope?

A: Plenty. The Most Personal Addiction is written for the kind of person you just described.
Chapter 4
The Key To Mental Health

You can overcome any addiction.
How long you've been acting addictively doesn't matter. I've helped people in their 70's overcome addiction.
Your occupation won't get in the way. Mark was a truck driver and sexually addicted; Renaldo, considered a genius by the people in his medical practice, was hooked on cocaine; Dorothy, an overeater, was a stay-at-home mom. They all overcame their addictions with the approach in this book.
Wealth, popularity, or a powerful position is not required. Most of my clients are not wealthy and have no connection to the power structure.
Where you were born, your ethnic background, gender, or sexual orientation is not the issue. Gay, straight, Asian, Black, Hispanic - it just doesn't matter.
When it comes to overcoming addiction, you start by identifying the key to mental health.
The key to mental health can be summed up in one word: honesty.
I define honesty as:
The attempt to make accurate identifications and communicate them to others.
In other words, it's:
- the intention to figure out what's going on and
- sincerely trying to tell other people what you are aware of.
Honesty is the heartbeat of mental health because:
1. The mind longs to know and experience itself.
   Look at your own life and you will see that every time you were honest with yourself
   - even if you didn't like what you found - you felt relief. That relief was the mind rewarding you for being honest.
   One of the major reasons many people do not succeed in overcoming addiction - or other hindrances in life - is that they don't accurately identify the problem. For instance:
   - A sexually addicted person might fool himself by saying, "I don't have a problem with addictive masturbation and pornography. Everyone does it."
- An alcoholic might delude himself with, "I take a drink every now and then to relax. What's wrong with that?"

- A person hooked on prescription medication might claim, "My doctor recommended it. I'm not a drug addict; I'm a patient."

2. In a romantic relationship, honesty is far more important than:

- Financial net worth
- Looks Popularity, or Sexual prowess.

But if:

- Your goal is to appear as others expect you to
- You believe the more money you have the better person you are
- You think sex is the essence of a relationship
- You manipulate people
- You try to get power over people
- You will say anything to avoid a conflict

You're in for a life of unhappy romantic relationships because a loving, committed relationship demands honesty.

3. Sex addiction is a symptom of an unhealthy approach toward relationships. The first step toward a healthy relationship is honesty.

When you are honest with someone you show him or her you care about them. In effect you say, "I love you so much I want you to know about me. I want you to see the good in me so that you can enjoy it and share in it. I won't hide my flaws because if I deceive you now, you will be hurt even worse later by my bad side.

"If I tell you the truth, whatever problems we have, we can probably work out. I'd rather have an honest relationship with you built through hard work than one hastily thrown together on lies and illusions that will not stand the test of time."

True love is not built on candlelight dinners, expensive gifts, or winning the sexual olympics. Ask any happy couple and they will tell you, "I trust my partner." Talk to any unhappy couple and you will eventually hear one or both people say, "I don't trust my partner."

Honesty is where good relationships begin. Dishonesty is where bad ones end.

4. All healthy personal change begins with personal knowledge.
Honesty is the key to mental health because it enables you to gain knowledge of yourself and it allows the people you value to know you.

To overcome sex addiction, I needed to first become a better person. At the core of every improvement I made was rigorous honesty with myself and the people I valued. Look closely at yourself and you'll discover that honesty opens the door to overcoming addiction.
Chapter 5
You Have What It Takes

Think about:
- The people you love
- The activities you enjoy
- The work you do
- The possessions you prize.

None of them came to you overnight.
If you have solid relationships, you worked hard for them.
If you have a hobby, you worked hard to achieve your skill level.
You couldn't have developed a career without hard work.
You saved and worked hard to buy many of your most important possessions. From these experiences you've learned that the best things in life are not given to you. You earn them through hard work. Overcoming addiction, or any other personal problem, is not given to you either. It's achieved through hard work.

There are no shortcuts to self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence.

Read biographies of outstanding people and you will see one common trait: they persisted. They didn't expect it to be easy; they didn't expect anyone to do it for them; they knew that to achieve an important goal, you work hard and fail many times along the way.

Nature shows us that the stairway to success is built by the failures you learn from. Notice how an infant learns to walk. The child fails many times, yet nature drives the infant to get up and try again, and again, and again.

As adults, nature does not think for anyone. Each person need must think for him or herself. Nature demonstrates that by learning from every mistake, by keeping one’s eyes on the goal, and one’s mind directed toward achievement, anyone can succeed.

Everything you accomplished in life required going through the learning curve of setback and persistence.

Here's what to expect in the ups and downs of overcoming addiction.

Confusion: The concepts you'll learn are not easy to grasp. You will make mistakes
applying them and need to learn from your mistakes.

Despair: Feeling hopeless is not uncommon when dealing with addiction. Don't beat yourself up about it. Instead, remember that you do have choices and you can make your life better, even if you are still acting addictively.

Fear: You feel afraid that you won't make it. That's fine. It's expected. You're better off admitting your fears and learning from them.

I've overcome four addictions. None of them were easy to overcome and I was worried every step of the way. I'm still afraid of the destruction I can bring on myself and my loved ones if I start to believe "I've got it whipped."

I overcame them correctly; so, I don't live in fear of them. What I live in fear of is my own potential stupidity. I feel sorry for anyone who doesn't.

Emotional exhaustion: Sex addiction is the most personal addiction. In order to deal with it, you need to face your feelings, work through them, learn from them and then make new choices and take your life in a new, healthy direction. It's exhausting - and worth every second of it.

Don't expect yourself to be a Happy Face about it. You're going to feel drained and tired. That's fine. It's part of overcoming sex addiction.

Learn from every failure. Keep your mind on your goal. Don't expect it to be easy. Remember how hard you worked for everything else in your life and apply that same effort to overcoming sexual addiction.

Through honesty, persistence and advice that works, your chances of success are excellent.
Chapter 6
Here And Now, Naturally

The three most popular approaches to overcoming addiction are:
Twelve Step Programs
Conventional Licensed Therapy
Religion

I call my approach Volitional Honesty (because it's based on free will and honesty).
The first reason it can help you is:

*The answers to any personal problem - not only addiction, but depression, anxiety, guilt, phobias, hallucinations, suicidal feelings, anger, etc. - are in the here and now.*

Let's find out why:

**Practicality:** Let's assume that you could correctly analyze everything that happened to you from the time you were born until you were eighteen. Besides the fact that it would take you years to do it, there is one big problem as obvious as today's date:

You are not the same person you were as a toddler or a teenager. You are an adult with adult problems and adult aspirations.

You did one of two things with any problem you developed in your childhood:

1. You overcame the problem and it is no longer an issue in your life.

   *There is no need to go into the past and relive a painful problem you corrected, just as it would be ridiculous to constantly recall the pain of a broken back you overcame years ago.*

2. You did not overcome the problem and it is still with you today.

   Since it's still with you today, *the facts you need to focus on are in the present.* Why go back and live through an agonizing childhood again? Unnecessary suffering makes it harder to overcome sex addiction or any other problem.

   From the point of view of sheer practicality, look to the present for your answers because:

   -If your wife is threatening divorce because of your sexually addictive behavior, she's not angry at you because of your childhood. She's considering divorce because of what you're doing in the present. Telling her that Mommy didn't hug you enough will not save
your marriage.

-An uncaring father you haven't lived with in 20 years cannot cause you to use pornography.
-An overly critical mother cannot cause you to go on masturbation binges decades after she died.

Focusing on the past is about as practical as walking back 10 miles to figure out where you picked up the nail that caused your flat tire. Why waste time going over old ground?

It's wise to fix a problem in the least painful manner and quickly move on to better things.

Accuracy: Do you remember what you said in the last disagreement you had with your partner? I'll bet your partner remembers it differently.

Memories are notoriously biased.

We all use selective memory. If you want to remember pain, that's what you will find. If you want to remember the good times, you'll find them.

If you tried to recall everything you experienced as a child, you still wouldn't know if your memory was accurate because there are as many sides to every story as there are people in it.

If your father is dead, how will you get his side? If your mother doesn't agree with your version of events, who's right?

Will you interview your friends, siblings, neighbors and teachers? How much credibility will you give their side of the story?

Analyzing the here and now is more reliable because:

- You have access to the people involved.
- The data is recent, so you're less likely to forget important facts.
- The data is relevant because it describes you as the person you are today, not the person you were 20, 30, or 40 years ago.

Because of the widespread acceptance of conventional, licensed therapy many people believe, "The way my parents raised me caused me to become a sex addict." This kind of thinking creates victim psychology, anger and depression.

So let's look at these facts:

Many people whose childhoods were as bad or worse than yours did not become
sexually addicted.

Many people who became sexually addicted had childhoods better than yours. Consider the following questions and answers about your childhood. Even though you and I have never spoken, my answers are correct.

Did you do everything your parents told you? Of course not.
Did you disobey everything they said? No.
Did you choose what to follow and what to rebel against? Yes.
Were there kids who had it tougher than you and came out better than you?
Definitely.

Were there kids who had it better than you and came out worse? Of course.

You are the result of your own decisions. I am the result of mine. Every human being is a result of his or her own free will choices. We are not victims.

Blaming your parents or society makes your problems worse.

A good example of how bad it can get is Ira. During his initial interview he seemed overly shy. I told him, "I'd like to help you build confidence." He replied, "Yeah, then I'd have the guts to kill some people." He wasn't kidding.

His rage was directed primarily at his co-workers.
I was not the first person he had contacted for help.
His first therapist had focused on his childhood. As a result, Ira's rage issues worsened and so did his sexually addictive behavior.

The next therapist dropped Ira as soon as he started talking about killing people.
The next therapist prescribed medication. Ira stopped that therapy because the medications had caused him either to lose his sex drive or indulge in imaginary killing sprees.

Ira's intended victims reminded him of some supposedly bad person in his childhood. For instance, he felt that Maurice, a co-worker, had struck him in the face. I asked Ira: "How hard did Maurice hit you?" "Did you get a bruise?" "Why did he hit you?" Most of my work is done over the phone. I never saw Ira; that's why I asked him about bruises, etc.

Ira had not been hit. He had associated Maurice with a kid who had hit him 25 years ago.
I asked Ira, "Do you like feeling that people are hitting you?"
In a surprised tone Ira replied, "No, I don't."
I told him, "Then focus on the present and you won't feel that way."
Teaching someone to overcome a neurotic obsession with the past is much more
difficult than just saying, "Focus on the present." It takes months of hard work and it's more than worth it.
Ira was obsessed with the past because he believed that his problems had been caused by his parents and society.
Fortunately there was still some sense of humanity and ethics left in Ira when counseling began, otherwise I would not have been able to help him stop blaming his parents and society for his problems. Once he overcame his victim psychology, his rage was easy to overcome.
Today Ira does not hear his mother in the room scolding him. He does not feel the blows of his father's fists. His fits of anger are over. His relationship with his wife is healed. His sexual addiction is overcome.
None of this would have been possible had Ira continued to focus on the past and treated himself as a victim.
Whatever your problem, whether it's sexual addiction, alcohol, depression, anxiety, phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anger, etc., you overcome it by focusing on the present and holding yourself responsible for your actions.
You don't need medication to overcome sex addiction or any other personal problem.
Let's talk about three different people you're probably familiar with. From them we can learn that:
- Your mind creates its own natural chemicals.
- You direct the production of those chemicals.
- You can create a happy, joyous life, naturally.
Let's start with Mr. X: When he encounters depression, he goes into a room, shuts the lights, crawls under the covers, and listens to the most gruesome music he can. He thinks of every terrible thing that ever happened to him and every terrible thing he ever did.
He begins to feel suicidal.
Now for Mr. Y: Maybe he is depressed because he has money problems. Maybe his
daughter is dating a guy he doesn't like. Whatever his problems are, even if it's facing the
loss of a loved one, he does not hide from them.

He understands that he might not be able to stop his daughter from dating the guy she
likes; he might not get the raise he wants; he might not come up with the money he
needs; he might never get over his personal loss.

It might take him hours, days or even months to work through his depression, until it
lifts. From it, he learns that even if his worst fears come true, he can face them and still
find reward in life.

Finally, we come to Mr. A. He goes through something you've probably experienced.
I've gone through it and still do at times.

He starts out creating gloom and doom like Mr. X did.

Then he realizes where it will lead him and he changes his perspective. He looks for
answers. He finds solutions. He is willing to accept whatever life throws at him. His
depression eventually lifts and life becomes rewarding again.

Mr. X crawled into bed and created a dark, horrible world for himself. His suicidal
feelings were not caused by a so-called "chemical imbalance." They were a logical,
chemical response to his decisions. Had he made better decisions, he'd have experienced
healthier and happier chemical responses.

When Mr. Y and Mr. A decided to find solutions to their problems, the mind logically
produced feelings of relief and confidence.

Each of these three men caused their own chemical reactions, just as you cause yours
and I cause mine.

The mind creates natural chemicals that are far more powerful, rewarding, and longer
lasting than anything the pharmaceutical companies can produce.

Through decades of counseling I have helped people who:
    - Suffered the death of a child
    - Experienced devastating financial setbacks
    - Were struck by life-threatening disease or experienced painful, life-long injuries
      And countless other tragedies.

We never relied on psychological medication. At times the pain was awful and the
grief seemed unending, but ultimately the client prevailed because s/he made choices to
face the problems and go on with his/her life.

The illusionary appeal of psychological medication is that it smothers feelings. You don't overcome sex addiction by medically smothering feelings. Let me give you a real-life example:

Homer called me for help with sex addiction. His wife, Teresa, had discovered his sex addiction about five years earlier. After five years of lies and broken promises, she had reached the end of her rope. They genuinely loved each other. Neither of them wanted a divorce, but the marriage would end if he did not overcome his sex addiction.

Every attempt I made to get through to Homer failed because he was confused about his feelings. The marriage was sinking fast because Teresa had gone years without any sex between them.

I knew Homer was suffering from sexual performance anxiety. It is not an uncommon problem for a sexually addicted person. But every time I discussed it with him, he insisted that was not his problem.

Then, just by chance, I discovered that Homer had been using a popular medication to combat the symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

The medication had removed the OCD symptoms, but it had also smothered his other feelings. I asked Teresa if she had noticed changes in him after he began the medication. She said, "I didn't know what to do. The OCD was ruining him and the medication was ruining us."

Homer allowed me to help him break free of the medication. Then I was able to get him in touch with his feelings of sexual performance anxiety and the feelings that drove his OCD.

Then, with the techniques discussed in this book, he stopped the OCD and overcame his sexual addiction.

Teresa and Homer finally enjoyed the loving sex life they had always wanted.

No pill can be as effective at overcoming your problems as you can, naturally.
Chapter 7
Rely On Yourself

Allan had spent three years in the Twelve Step Program. He felt that he had learned a lot and made a lot of new friends. But he was still going to prostitutes, using pornography, and masturbating at work.

About six months before he called me he met Louise. He kept his Twelve Step meetings secret from her because he did not want her to know about his past. He cared for her so much that he stopped all his sexually addictive behavior for the first three months of their relationship. Then he slowly returned to masturbation and pornography.

One night he picked up a prostitute. At the last minute he told her he didn't want to go through with it. He knew that if he did not get help, the next time he would go all the way.

A friend suggested he call me.

Because of his love for Louise, I was able to give him enough insights during our initial session to keep him from going back to the prostitute.

It was the first time in years he felt he actually had a chance of overcoming his addiction and building a good relationship with someone he cared for.

There was still a long way to go. Some of the ideas Allan had picked up from the Twelve Step program were:

*Mistake: Public confession is required to overcome your addiction:* Allan had spent years confessing his sexually addictive behavior at open meetings anyone could attend.

*Mistake: You are not supposed to face your problem on your own:* Allan believed that without a support group available to him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, he was helpless.

He would spend hours on the phone talking to other Twelve Steppers about his problems. Sometimes it would help. Other times, after he finished the call, he would go on a sexually addictive binge.

"Group think" is cool: Twelve Steppers do not refer to themselves as individuals. Read the Twelve Steps for yourself. The word "I" is not used. Allan would make comments like, "Our addiction makes us do things we regret."

I would reply, "No, Allan, you choose to do things you regret."
If you want to overcome sex addiction, don't expect a group to save you. You overcome sex addiction or any other problem through your own, independent, self-reliant choices.

The Twelve Step approach was started in the 30's by two alcoholics. The Twelve Step sex addiction program is actually an alcohol program. Compare the 12 steps for alcohol and the 12 steps for sex. You'll see that the only difference is that the sex addiction program substitutes the word "sex" for the word "alcohol."

You can go through life without alcohol. If you attempt to do the same with sex, you will be fighting nature. It is a fight you will lose. Or winning will bring you suffering.

Because the Twelve Step approach is actually an alcohol program, it considers celibacy a success. You can attend Twelve Step meetings and hear Twelve Steppers brag about not having sex for years. Newcomers are encouraged to avoid all sex, as one would avoid all alcohol. Allan had considered himself a success if he had no sex. But it put him in a troubling conflict when he met Louise because he sexually desired her.

Life is meant to be enjoyed.

Sex is one of life's most profound pleasures.

Not only is it a pleasure, it's good for you. Celibacy is unhealthy. It represents a complete flight from the healthy demands of an intimate relationship.

In our second session I said to Allan, "I suggest that you and Louise have as much genuine loving sex as you possibly can." It was advice Allan and Louise happily applied.

In the Twelve Step Program, married people are advised to refrain from all sexual relations for months. As far as I'm concerned, that advice increases the tension between the husband and wife and encourages the sexually addicted person to flee further into fantasy and sex addiction.

Instead of celibacy:

- Seek intimacy.
- Set a goal of achieving genuine loving sex with your partner.
- Seek total emotional and sexual commitment. In a good relationship you don't have one without the other. You need both to overcome sexual addiction.

More importantly, you need both to enjoy life.

Some people claim that sex addiction, or any other addiction, is a disease, like cancer.
Treating sex addiction as a disease will not help you. Here's why:

You won't be able to rely on yourself: Let's assume you are struck with a curable form of cancer. You would rely on a surgeon or medication to save you. In the Twelve Step Program and conventional, licensed therapy, sex addiction is considered a disease that just happened to strike you. Supposedly, you must rely on a Higher Power or medication to overcome the disease for you. Allan truly believed that he could not overcome sex addiction on his own because he was convinced he had a disease.

But, as you've seen, sex addiction is the result of your choices. Only you can change you.

Allan's addiction did not begin with a disease. A Higher Power or medication did not overcome it. It began with Allan. Allan's own correct choices overcame it.

If you were struck by cancer and your spouse said to you, "If you don't overcome your disease, I'm divorcing you," your spouse would be totally heartless.

Allan expected people to treat him as if he had been struck by cancer - and to accept whatever his "disease" supposedly forced him to do. His favorite line was, "The disease makes us lie." Allan didn't have a chance of overcoming sex addiction until he admitted that he was fully responsible for his actions - and his lying by choice.

The mind is a wonderfully precise and powerfully logical instrument; it also dispenses a justice of its own. As Allan accepted responsibility for his actions, his mind rewarded him with confidence to face his problems. He also learned that his mind sent him a pain signal when he attempted to escape the responsibility for his actions.

Test it for yourself. The next time you act sexually addictive, tell yourself, "I'm diseased. There is nothing I can do about my actions. Someone has to come along and cure me." At best, you might feel a temporary relief of guilt. But your mind will know that you are responsible for what you did. The guilt will return. And it will be more intense because you refused to accept responsibility for your actions.

Now try this: Tell yourself, "I got myself into this mess, and it's up to me to get myself out. I'll observe my actions, my thoughts, my feelings and then I'll look for a solution. I'll seek advice if necessary, but I know it's not up to the advisor to overcome my addiction; it's up to me."

Although that approach alone will not overcome your addiction, you will retain the
dignity of being responsible for your actions. Without that dignity, your chances of overcoming sex addiction are just about zero.

You don't choose to get cancer or any other disease. If you tell your mind, "I have a disease," your mind will not know if it should approach your addictive behavior as something you have a choice about, or something you don't have a choice about.

I helped Allan clear up his confusion by getting him to understand that his addiction was a result of choices that he made - and those choices could be changed only by him.

The disease approach can be a big financial mistake: Many medical professionals and conventional, licensed therapists will offer you an expensive hospital program to "cure" your supposed addiction disease. Allan knew quite a few people who had spent many thousands of dollars on hospital programs to overcome sexual addiction. He had never met one who had achieved long-term success.

Your addiction is not a disease because:
- It began with choices you made.
- It continued on because of your choices.
- Only your choices can overcome it.

Make sure you are treated as a unique individual.

Anyone can attend Twelve Step meetings. The person sitting next to you might be a child molester, a stalker, or whatever. Allan was well aware of this, but would not tell it to new people he was trying to get to join the program. He also knew, as did I, that there are people who go to Twelve Step meetings to get a sexual high from listening to the confessions. Others go to find new sex partners.

Most people attending the meetings sincerely want to overcome their addiction, just as Allan did, but even they don't know everyone who's there. You are a unique individual with unique individual needs. The Twelve Step Program uses the term "We" instead of "I" because it does not consider you a unique individual. It considers you a helpless, diseased member of a group who must turn him or herself over to a Higher Power.

You need an individual approach because:
- If your only addictions are masturbation and pornography, you do not have the same problems a child molester does.
- If you are faithful to your partner, you do not have the same conflict as someone
who cheats on theirs.

- If you have a history of long-term relationships, you do not have the same difficulties as someone who prefers short flings.
- If your pattern is short-term failed relationships or one-night stands, you don't want to be treated like someone who has been married for 20 years.

Now let's take a sobering look at the group therapy meetings run by the conventional, licensed therapy establishment. In these meetings:

- You can end up in a room with at least one person who wants to dominate the sessions.
- The other people in the group have no professional or legal requirement to keep anything you say private.
- The person next to you has not overcome their addiction; that's why they are in the group. But they are more than willing give you their advice.

Would you go to a financial planner who can't afford to make his mortgage payments? Would you hire a handyman who doesn't know the difference between a hammer and a drill?

You've heard the old saying, "the blind leading the blind." Group therapy is based on the assumption that the more blind people you get into the room, the better their eyesight becomes.

You overcome sex addiction by relying on your own unique way of thinking and feeling. If you want advice, make sure it's from someone who overcame sex addiction.
Chapter 8

Work With The Mind, Not Against It

For two years George did not experience any sexually addictive desires. During that time he stopped all his sexually addictive behavior. Then, one afternoon he went on a sex addiction binge at a massage parlor.

Malcolm did not act sexually addictive for a month; the few sexually addictive desires he experienced he pushed out of his mind, easily. He told his wife his problem was over. A week later he watched three porn videos.

Steve forced sexually addictive desires out of his mind by following his therapist's advice. He was so happy he told everybody at his group therapy meetings to follow the doctor's orders. But then Steve stopped going to group because he had returned to his sex addiction.

If you ask people who act addictively about their past attempts to stop, they'll tell you that when they stopped:

- they had no desire, or
- the desire was easy to get rid of, or
- it was difficult to get rid of.

Then ask them, "If you didn't have an addictive desire, or you were able to get rid of it, why did you go back to your addiction?"

Sometimes you will hear an answer similar to what George told me: "I went along fine for months, no desire, no urge, not even thinking of it. Then, one day out of nowhere, it just hit me. I had to do it."

Others will convey Malcolm's experience: "I fought it when it happened and it seemed easy. Then it got worse and worse. I couldn't take it any more. The desire was too strong."

Some people will remind you of Steve: "I felt good about myself. The desire would come and I would make it go away. It was mind over matter. But I got weak. I couldn't get the desire out of my mind."

Look closely and you'll observe three progressive phases in people's failed attempts to stop addictive behavior:
1. The person gets rid of the addictive desire.
2. The desire returns days or even years later.
3. He resists the returning desire until he can't fight it any longer. Then, since he has no way of coping with the desire, he returns to addictive behavior.

   This three-phase experience illustrates repression.

   It is the most common reason most people don't overcome any addiction, especially sex addiction.

   If you've ever attempted to stop any addictive behavior, you'll probably find some of these symptoms familiar:

   - Living in fear of experiencing an addictive desire you can't get rid of.
   - Resorting to other addictive behaviors, including overeating, drinking, drug use, smoking, workaholism, compulsive exercise, or obsessive sexual activity.
   - Excruciating pain when you try to push the desire out of your mind.
   - Feeling as if a ticking time bomb of addictive desire in your subconscious will explode any minute.
   - Anxiety, depression or anger when you experience a strong, long-lasting addictive desire.
   - Feeling afraid to go outside, turn on the TV, read a book, listen to the radio, or even answer the phone because your addictive desire might be "triggered."
   - When the desire strengthens, you feel you are bad or weak. When it subsides, you're afraid it will strengthen again.
   - Every day feels like a never-ending losing battle to control a swarm of uncontrollable urges.

   In my attempts to stop smoking, I went through just about every one of these grueling symptoms. I kept going through them until I developed an approach that did not rely on repression.

   I wasn't sure what the results of my new approach would be, I just knew that repression had failed me too many times.

   When I applied my method I was amazed to discover that I could experience my addictive desires without climbing the walls. That was a first for me.

   The second welcome change was that - on my own - I could choose whether or not to
smoke. I didn't have to rely on behavior modification gimmicks, support groups, a Higher Power, prayer or self-condemnation.

I overcame my addiction by doing something you've done many times in other areas of your life. It's something you know from your own experience works; you just haven't known how to apply it to your addiction.

What I did was to teach myself how to face my addictive desire head-on - I didn't have to bury it or hide from it - then I taught myself how to choose whether or not to act on it.

Look at the accomplishments in your life.
- When you tried to hide from a problem, you made it worse.
- If you didn't have a correct method of making a decision, your chances of making the wrong one were very high.

You achieved a goal when you faced the problem honestly and decided in a correct manner what to do about it.

I took these simple principles and applied them to overcoming addiction.

I knew I had discovered something so important, it could change my life and the lives of millions of addicted people. But getting that message out took another 25 years. So let me share with you what I have observed since 1975 about repression and how addiction is successfully overcome.

I define repression as:

an attempt to consistently exclude from consciousness a thought or feeling you decide is threatening.

If you conclude that a thought or feeling is not good for you, that it is bad, that it is a threat, your first reaction will be an attempt to consistently keep it out of your conscious mind. The attempt to continuously keep it out is repression.

Repression occurs two ways:

1. You consciously try to drive the desire out of your mind, and/or
2. Your subconscious automatically keeps it out.

The most common form of repression is subconscious. The symptom of subconscious repression is:

At the beginning of the attempt to stop, the desire seems to have gone away or lost most of its power. If you ever attempted to overcome addiction and failed, you probably
went through a phase in which you truly felt like the addictive desire had left you or had lost most of its power. Although you sincerely believed you had triumphed over your addiction, what you were experiencing was subconscious repression. You did not know it and no one told you.

If you were in conventional, licensed therapy, a Twelve Step Program or a religious approach, you were probably congratulated for driving the desire out of your mind. I doubt anyone said, "You're walking around with a repressive time bomb that can explode without warning. When it explodes, you will most likely return to addictive behavior."

Let's take a closer look at repression to understand how this happens. The mind abhors repression because:

1. The mind relies on "emotional accounting":

   If you compulsively watch TV, your mind needs to be able to identify that you spend too much time in front of the tube. If you are enthusiastic about photography, your mind needs to figure out if your hobby is an emotional asset or an obsessive liability. If you love your family but spend your evenings watching TV and digitizing photos, your mind is designed to tell you, "Hey, you're putting too much time and effort into TV and photography and not enough into the people you love. The return on investment of your time, effort, and emotional energy is lousy. You need more emotional profit in your life."

   When you repress, you distort the mind's emotional accounting process. To let you know that the emotional calculations are being distorted, the mind sends out a pain signal. The pain is the mind's way of telling you, "You're trying to misrepresent the emotional balance sheet. I'm going to send you pain until you honestly acknowledge your emotional inventory."

   Think back to your last failed attempt at overcoming addiction. For most people there is a phase when the desire becomes so painful they can't cope with it. That pain is not from the addictive desire. It's from repressing.

2. The mind needs to give you accurate data to help you make decisions:

   Your ability to make decisions is a life-or-death matter. To make sure you survive and emotionally prosper, when the mind encounters repression it sends a pain signal to let you know that your decision-making process is dysfunctional.

   The mind is trying to tell you, "How can I help you make decisions if you won't let me
give you all the data? Stop trying to lie to yourself. Your survival is at stake. If you die, I die!"

Review your failed attempts to stop acting sexually addictive and you'll probably notice that returning to your addiction may have felt like you could live your life again. You may have even felt calm and comfortable even though you knew the addiction was a major cause of stress in your life. The reason you felt calm and comfortable was that by returning to your addictive behavior, you relieved the stress of repression.

In summary:

*Repression is an attempt to distort awareness by consistently excluding from consciousness a thought or feeling you decide is a threat.*

To protect itself from distortion, the mind sends out pain signals when it encounters repression.

The pain of repression can be greater than the pain of acting addictively. To relieve the pain of repression, you return to the addiction.
Chapter 9
How To Be In Control

Conventional, licensed therapy, The Twelve Step approach, and religion offer their own versions of repression.

1. The Twelve Step approach relies on conscious, deliberate repression by asking a Higher Power to remove the addictive desire.

Whatever your beliefs, asking a Higher Power to remove your desire is the same as asking a Higher Power to repress the desire for you.

2. Religion's attempt to deliberately repress is similar to Twelve Step's because the addicted person asks the deity he believes in to rid him of his addictive desire. But religion goes one step further. It tends to morally condemn you if you experience a "wrong" desire.

3. The most popular form of conscious, deliberate repression is promoted by conventional, licensed therapists. Only they don't call it repression. They call it behavior modification.

The idea behind behavior modification is to eliminate temptation. It's based on the notion that certain "triggers" cause you to act addictively. By modifying your behavior to avoid temptation, you supposedly avoid the "triggers." Karl’s story exemplifies the myth of triggers and behavior modification.

When Karl felt lonely he would spend hours masturbating with pornography and engaging in phone sex and online sex chats. His conventional, licensed therapist decided that Karl's "triggers" were: a) feelings of loneliness, b) the Internet, and c) the telephone.

Karl was told to: a) schedule social activities for his free time so that he would not have the opportunity to feel lonely, b) get rid of his Internet connection, and c) put call blocking on his phone.

Karl did not want to lose his friends on the Internet who shared his interest in sports. So the therapist agreed that Karl could keep the Internet connection if he used porn-blocking software; a friend Karl trusted was given the password.

Karl scheduled time with volunteer organizations. He also went to singles parties, friends' houses, sporting events, and he joined a dating service.
His schedule was so filled with new activities, it felt like he had a second job. That was fine with him. He wasn't acting sexually addictive; he was meeting new people and he was too busy to feel lonely.

Karl's experience is similar to that of most people who try behavior modification. In the beginning it can work because the excitement of doing new activities can repress old addictive feelings. Then things begin to change.

- After months of keeping a schedule the equivalent of two full-time jobs, Karl was exhausted.
- He was getting bored with the dating service.
- The volunteer organizations were disorganized and there was too much bickering at the meetings.
- He saw the same old people at the singles events.
- He still felt lonely.
- He felt resentful toward his friend who had the password to the porn-blocking software. He also developed a strange attraction to public phone booths.

His therapist told him that his resentment and loneliness were related to traumas in the past that Karl had not yet uncovered. He was told that the public phone booths were "triggers" and that he should avoid places that had too many of them.

Karl dug further into his childhood. He became more depressed and lonely. Then, on a rainy Friday afternoon, as Karl described it, "something snapped." Karl didn't know it then, but what snapped was the repression.

He grabbed his credit card, went into a public phone booth and ignited a phone sex binge. Then he went home, called up his friend and demanded the password. His friend gave it to him. Karl spent the weekend masturbating, surfing porn sites, and joining online sex chats.

Karl went through what I call "the repression-binge cycle." He repressed for as long as he could. Then he went on a binge to make up for all the repression he suffered.

When Karl told his therapist what he had done, his therapist told Karl to find a Twelve Step group to assist in the therapy. While researching the Twelve Step program, Karl found my website.

Today Karl's addiction is overcome and he is happily married.
You are not a laboratory rat that gets "triggered." You can face any temptation and overcome your addiction.

Because my clients don't rely on behavior modification - they use the Volitional Honesty approach you're learning - they can deal with any tempting situation. A few examples:

1. Lewis had carried on a hot affair with a co-worker. On his first day attempting to stop his addictive behavior, the co-worker made a pass at him. He felt turned on. He wanted to remain faithful to his wife, but he was very, very sexually attracted to the other woman. He didn't repress his sexual attraction. He didn't call for help. He didn't run out of the office. He didn't treat the woman abusively. He politely turned her down and felt wonderful doing it.

2. Boris opened his e-mail. Suddenly, he was faced with porn spam and he became sexually excited. He didn't beat himself up for feeling excited. He didn't turn off his computer and leave the room. He didn't get down on his knees and pray. He didn't pop a pill. He let himself experience the addictive desire fully and completely and chose not to act on it. The desire subsided on its own.

3. Ted used sexually addictive fantasies to get himself aroused so that he could make love with his wife. Using the approach in this ebook, he didn't attempt to repress the fantasies. Now he makes love with his wife free of addictive fantasies and both of them enjoy their sex life even more.

4. Chris tried to avoid anything that "triggered" his pedophilic desires. He went to Twelve Step meetings twice a week and he saw a conventional, licensed therapist once a week. Nothing helped.

Then he found my website. He printed out everything on it and read it closely before he called me. In our first discussion he said, "You mean I don't have to push the thoughts out of my mind?" I told him, "Your attempt to push them out makes it impossible for you face them. The mind needs to experience its own emotions so that they can be coped with."

He dropped his Twelve Step meeting and his conventional, licensed therapist.

I taught him how to experience an addictive desire fully and completely. Then I taught him how to choose whether or not to act on it. Every step of the way he told me, "This is
the exact opposite of everything I was told."

Chris no longer lives in terror of acting on pedophilic desires.
He does not repress pedophilic feelings. He does not pray that they be removed. He is not dependent on prescription medication. He does not avoid the Internet.

Walking down the street and seeing an attractive child will occasionally bring on a pedophilic desire. He is not afraid of it. He is in complete control of his actions and feels better letting the desire go unsatisfied.

He is in control and he has the ability to keep that control for the rest of his life.

Before you attempt to overcome sex addiction, you need to identify every possible avoidance and substitution you might resort to. The most common ones for sexually addicted people are:

- Increased sex with your partner as a substitute for addictive sex.
- Increased activities and projects to keep your mind off sexually addictive desires.
- Going to sleep early to avoid late-night sexually addictive desires.
- Staying home to avoid being exposed to tempting situations.
- Going out to avoid temptation at home.
- Eating more food to smother addictive feelings.
- Drinking to forget; using drugs to forget.

Later on we'll discuss how to experience an addictive desire fully and completely and how to choose whether or not to act on it.

First, we need to spend a few minutes talking about how to find a competent advisor for those of you who will want help.
Chapter 10
How To Find A Competent Advisor

In order to get the knowledge you need to overcome sex addiction, you will either:
Figure it on your own, using this book as your guide. Or ask someone to help you.
Since you have a better chance of success by finding qualified help, let's discuss what
to look for in an advisor. But first let me warn you: If you don't find an advisor who
meets the requirements, you're better off going it alone.

Here's what happens when you rely on an unqualified advisor:
- Your probability of failure is just about certain.
- You will probably give up all hope of overcoming your addiction because the
  experience of failure will be so painful.
- If you and your partner are trying to save your relationship, it will probably
  worsen.
- You will probably leave the counseling thinking there is something very
  wrong with you, when in fact you were being advised by an incompetent.

To help you in your search for a good advisor, I've prepared a nine-question common-
sense guide. Call as many potential advisors as you think necessary. Then bring the
questions with you. Or fax or e-mail them over before your first appointment.

If you decide to use my approach, your best options are:
Rely only on qualified help as described below.
Or do it on your own.

Here are the questions to ask:
1. *Have you overcome a sexual addiction?*
   This is the first and most obvious question. If the counselor does not say "Yes,"
   assume he or she is unqualified.

2. *Do you think I am sexually addicted?*
   The conventional, licensed therapist that Felix and Sofia went to said that Felix's
   masturbation/pornography use was normal. The therapist also said that Sofia wasn't open-
   minded enough.
   So, Felix continued on with his addictive behavior and treated Sofia as if she was the
problem. Sofia finally told him, "I don't care what the therapist says. If you don't stop the pornography, I'm divorcing you."

Helping them save their marriage was extremely difficult. Things would not have been as stressful if Felix had been correctly advised in the first place.

3. Do you provide marriage/couple counseling?

Since I'm a sex addiction counselor, you might think I spend most of my day talking about sex. I don't. I spend most of my time helping my clients build a genuine, loving, intimate relationship. In order to overcome sex addiction, you need to deal with your relationship and reality issues first. Don't waste your time or money with any potential advisor who does not successfully deal with marriage/couple issues.

4. Do you successfully help people overcome other addictions?

Many sexually addicted people are multiply addicted. A sex addiction advisor should be able to help you successfully deal with other addictions as well, so that they don't get in your way of overcoming sex addiction.

5. Do you recommend that I also attend Twelve Step meetings?

If a potential advisor even hints at sending you to Twelve Step meetings, I suggest you look for a different advisor. Becoming dependent on a group or expecting a Higher Power to solve your problems for you is not the way to deal with sex addiction.

6. Do you recommend psychological medications?

A conventional, licensed therapist who advises psychological medication is basically telling you, "I'm not qualified to work with the mind in its natural state. So I want you to chemically alter yours. Don't worry. This little pill will give you self-respect, confidence, happiness, self-control, and take all your problems away."

7. Do you spend years analyzing the childhood?

Your problems occur in the here and now. Counselors who focus on the past are not equipped to help you deal with the present.

8. Do you have an excellent long-term romantic relationship?

Some people might think this question is biased. It's not. It's common sense. Sex addiction is a symptom of problems with intimacy. A good sex addiction counselor should have his or her own long-term, monogamous, honest, romantic relationship.

Let me put it to you this way: If a sex addiction counselor is not in a wonderful
relationship, ask yourself this question: What does the counselor do for sex? One night stands? Masturbation and pornography? Is s/he celibate? Does the counselor go from one failed relationship to another?

When you seek help for a sexual problem, you are entrusting your most personal feelings to that advisor. Make sure they themselves have achieved what you're striving for. Nothing less will do.

9. Do you use pornography or engage in any form of sexually addictive behavior?

There are sex addiction counselors who use porn on a regular basis. They do not believe that they have a problem. Hopefully you realize these people are fooling themselves. Don't let them fool you. Make sure you ask this question.

These questions are not easy. They're not supposed to be. They're designed to protect you. A good sex addiction counselor will welcome them.

Overcoming sex addiction begins with honesty. If you honestly believe these questions make sense and will help you, then it's in your best interest to ask them. To save you time and me from being swamped with faxes, I will give you my answers to the nine questions.

1. Have you overcome a sexual addiction?
   Yes, in 1982, with the same approach I teach all my clients.

2. Do you think I am sexually addicted?
   The interviews in the Table of Contents will enable you to come to that decision yourself.

3. Do you provide marriage/couple counseling?
   Dear Joe,

   I was at the end of my rope struggling between a man that I loved dearly and his addiction that I didn't understand, but more importantly could not help him with.

   I thought the only way out was divorce, as he had tried many times to control it but just couldn't, even though he had tried medical professionals, support groups, and the 12-step program.

   One night, after a binge, he discovered your web-site. He placed a call to you and we began to get our lives back together. I must say that I was
skeptical at first but had no other alternatives that I could offer. So we began our journey.

Less than one year later we are closer than ever and have you to thank. I feel that I now have my husband for the first time since we were married 12 years ago.

We will forever be in debt to you and words can not express how grateful we are for your help.

Sue
(Real name withheld)

Helping people take a troubled relationship and turn it into a healthy, loving marriage is one of the greatest pleasures of my work.

4. Do you successfully help people overcome other addictions?

Dear Joe,

Your counseling saved my life. As you well know, when I first started working with you, my life was a shambles. I was depressed and suicidal. My fiancee had left me because of my multiple addictions and my inability to cope with my feelings, especially my anger. I was also close to financial ruin and on the verge of losing my job.

You patiently and methodically helped me to put my broken life back together, piece by piece. I got out of thousands of dollars of credit card debt. I was able to hang onto my job and even win a modest increase in salary. More importantly, I successfully overcame my out-of-control spending, marijuana, nicotine and junk-food addictions.

And I am now happy to report that I am taking steps to pursue a healthy romantic relationship.

Joe, I can't thank you enough for all your help.

Walter
(Real name withheld)

Yes. I started out helping people overcome smoking, alcohol, drugs, and overeating. I have also helped people stop gambling, compulsive spending, and overworking.
5. Do you recommend that I also attend Twelve Step meetings?
No. I believe the best way to overcome addiction is by relying on yourself.

6. Do you recommend psychological medications?
I will help you work with your mind in its natural state. Chemically altering your mind through medication smothers feelings and can turn you into a legalized drug addict. Addiction is overcome by facing feelings, not smothering them.

7. Do you spend years analyzing the childhood?
The problem is in the here and now. The goal is to help you overcome addiction today, not figure out your past.

8. Do you have an excellent long-term romantic relationship?
My wife, Mary, and I have been together since 1977. We have a wonderful marriage. When I discovered I was sexually addicted, I told her. She didn't have to ask. As soon as I knew, she knew. I asked her to stay with me until I could overcome it.

   One reason I have been able to help so many people is that I came out of my struggle successfully and happily.

9. Do you use pornography or engage in any form of sexually addictive behavior?
No way. Being in control and having the joys of monogamous, committed, loving sex are much too important to me.

Now let's talk about why people become addicted.
Chapter 11
Why People Become Addicted

Brian engaged in three sexually addictive behaviors: 1) compulsive masturbation, 2) addictive use of pornography, and 3) frequenting massage parlors. He was also an alcoholic. Through my counseling he learned that it did not matter whether he drank beer, wine or hard liquor, whether he drank at home, out in public, on the weekend, or during lunch. He needed to treat all drinking behaviors the same.

Unlike alcohol - all sexually addictive behaviors are not equal.

Most people approach sex addiction as if it were alcohol because the Twelve Step Program is so popular. Fortunately, you now have a better approach. Let's refine it further and come up with a definition of addiction that can be applied to alcohol abuse and sex addiction, as well as any other addiction:

An addiction is an activity or a substance a person uses to avoid dealing with uncomfortable thoughts or feelings that need to be faced.

Brian became addicted to alcohol because:

- Rather than deal with a tense social situation, he drank to relieve anxiety. His genes didn't make him do it. Neither did his parents, society, or a chemical imbalance. Brian chose to do it.
- Rather than look for answers to his bouts of depression, he forgot them by choosing to drink.
- When he felt a lack of confidence in a new situation, he used alcohol to temporarily remove his self-doubts. No one put a gun to his head; he did it all by himself.

He got addicted to sex the same way. Failure, anger, guilt, loneliness - any uncomfortable feeling - could be removed through fantasy and sex. He chose to use sex as a drug. Sex is not a disease and neither is sex addiction. Choice is not a disease either. It is a decision between two or more options. Brian chose to get high on sex rather than face life.

No one gets genuine, long-term pleasure from addiction. They get what Brian got: a temporary, illusionary relief from uncomfortable feelings. There's a three-stage process in
becoming addicted:

1. In the early stage, the person genuinely believes that his/her addiction causes pleasure.

2. In the middle stage, the person questions whether or not the addiction is pleasurable.

3. In the final stage, the person realizes the addiction creates more pain than pleasure, yet he or she continues acting addictively because the person has lost the ability to stop.

Beverly, Brian's wife, asked me, "Brian knows he should have never started his addictions. Why does he keep on doing them? Why doesn't he stop?"

If you're addicted, I'm sure you've asked yourself that question many times. The answer is:

If overcoming addiction is not approached correctly, you will probably act addictively for the rest of your life, even though you know the addictive behavior is disastrous.

People don't feel hopeless about overcoming addiction until they fail at stopping. If you're feeling hopeless, let's use your failures as an opportunity to learn.

Look at your past experiences and you'll see that you failed at overcoming addiction because your approach relied on repression. Most people don't even realize they're repressing, and I'm sure you didn't realize it either.

If you're not addicted, and you doubt your partner's sincerity about wanting to stop, ask him or her the following questions:

1. "If you found a positive, realistic way to stop acting addictively, would you use it?"

2. "If you were required to work very hard, and then it got easier and easier to stay free of your addiction, would you work at it?"

If your partner answers "yes" to both questions, don't give up.

If you have ever tried to stop acting addictively, or you're close to someone who has not overcome their addiction, read through the list below carefully. It will identify the major reasons people do not overcome addiction.

You'll see it's not because of stupidity, laziness, or self-destructive tendencies. It's the ineffective ideas that have been presented by the conventional, licensed therapists and the Twelve Step Program.

Mistake: Trying to stop by repressing addictive desires. When the repressed desires exploded, the addicted person had no way of dealing with the explosion.
Mistake: Relying on some form of behavior modification that resulted in a temporary solution but did not address the underlying addictive feelings.

Mistake: Using medication that caused side effects worse than the addiction and/or repressed the addictive desire.

Mistake: Allowing yourself to be pushed into stopping, then feeling angry at whoever pressured you into stopping.

Mistake: Becoming depressed about stopping because of poorly developed motivation.

Mistake: Wasting precious time and energy analyzing the childhood rather than dealing with the addiction in the here and now.

Mistake: Plunging into other addictions and then going back to the old addiction to escape the new addictions.

Mistake: Accepting the nonsense that addiction is a disease, and thus believing that an addicted person is not responsible for his or her actions.

Mistake: Expecting a Higher Power to do the work. Whatever your beliefs, I know there's one belief that applies to all religions: "God helps those who help themselves." The Twelve Step Program does not apply it. The program insists that you are not capable of handling an addiction on your own. Read their literature and you will see it for yourself. (Later on I will explain how the program generates its relatively few successes.)

Brian and Beverly made many of the mistakes listed above. Your attempt can fail if you’re making only one of them. They decided that working with me would be their last attempt to build a good marriage together. Today they are a happy couple. It wasn't easy. Healing a relationship and overcoming sex addiction never is. The rewards are always worth it.

Most couples who lose marriages to addiction do not have to put themselves, their children, and their families through the pain of divorce. Most people who act addictively today feel hopeless about overcoming their addiction. They are not hopeless. You are not hopeless. You have free will. You just need to know how to use it.

If there is any message to take away from this book, it's this:

Given the correct approach, most people will gladly face their feelings and choose to stop acting addictively.
Chapter 12
Addiction Fairy Tales

We live in a media-driven world. You will be bombarded with mistaken ideas about addiction for a long time to come. You need to be aware of them so that your attempt to overcome sex addiction is not hindered by misconceptions.

Let's discuss some of the more popular ones.

1. Myth: Positive addictions are good for you:

There is no such thing as a positive addiction because all addictions are self-destructive.

2. Myth: Certain substances are addictive:

This is probably the biggest myth of all. In fact, your use of a substance might become addictive. For instance:

After surgery many patients are allowed to self-administer morphine. Morphine is the medical form of heroin, and just as powerful. Yet most people who rely on morphine after surgery don't get addicted to it.

Tens of millions of people smoked marijuana. You might be one of them. Relatively few use it to the point of abuse.

Most people experimented with alcohol. You may have. Few became alcoholics.

Millions of people experimented with cocaine, crack and other hard drugs. Maybe you did. Relatively few became drug addicts.

The difference between the person who becomes addicted and the person who doesn't has nothing to do with the substance. The difference lies in the choice each person makes regarding the use of the substance. Look at your own life. You made choices about substance abuse.

Substances don't take you over and make you act addictively any more than:

- Books make you read.
- Cars make you drive.
- Water makes you thirsty.

3. Myth: An addiction is a moral failing:

Morality and addiction are two different phenomena. For instance, molesting a child is
much more of a moral issue than an addictive one. A person with an overeating addiction is not immoral, just someone with a problem. We’re going to discuss the difference between addiction and morality in much greater depth later on.

4. Myth: Addictions are hereditary:

Some "scholars" claim there's an alcohol gene that makes people become lifetime drunks. Reality proves them wrong. There are millions of people who have alcoholic parents and do not get addicted to alcohol or drugs. Millions of people get addicted to alcohol and/or drugs whose parents never abused either.

5. Myth: Addictions are caused by sneaky advertising and evil corporations.

Supposedly:

- Advertising causes people to smoke and drink.
- Pornography causes people to act sexually addictive.
- Movies cause people to use drugs.

These arguments assume that you have no free will, that you are merely a product of the media marketplace. So, let's look at a few facts:

- **Tens of millions of people were addicted to smoking and alcohol in the former Soviet Union and there was no advertising allowed for either.**
- **There are millions of sexually addicted people who have no interest in pornography.** They prefer the real thing or to use their own imagination.
- **Drug use was widespread long before Hollywood showcased it.**

Addictions are not caused by the marketplace; they arise from choices a person makes to escape dealing with the demands of real life.

Now that we've gotten some of the myths out of the way, let's discuss real symptoms of sex addiction.
Chapter 13
Symptoms Of Addiction

We’re going to discuss the symptoms of addiction and how to show a sexually addicted person that he is addicted.

_Symptom: The Behavior Increases Over Time_

A person begins addiction by using a substance or activity to escape dealing with the difficulties of life. The escape fails because escape never works - and it always worsens life's problems. Then - and this is the big mistake - the person decides to flee further into addiction rather than face the problem.

This cycle of escape-failure-more escape is what causes addictive behavior to increase over time.

It has nothing to do with a chemical imbalance or the environment. The person chooses to escalate escape even though escape attempts always fail.

However, after a while, most addicted people reach an abusive level of addictive behavior and don't increase it; they maintain it.

_How To Get Through To An Addicted Person_

Some addicted people try to deny their addiction the way Bill, a middle-aged client of mine, did. He argued: "I haven't increased my behavior in 10 years, so I'm not addicted."

If you are trying to get through to someone like Bill, ask this question: "Did your behavior escalate in the first few years?"

Virtually any addicted person will answer "Yes."

Once the person admits that their behavior escalated, don't take it any further. Instead, move on to the other symptoms, because many healthy behaviors escalate over time also.

Some addictive behaviors decrease naturally over time. An addicted masturbator, like Bill was, will not masturbate as frequently at the age of 35 as he did when he was 19. Most overeaters decrease their eating as they get older, but they still use food addictively. In the final stages, many alcoholics drink less but still drink abusively.

Increasing behavior over time is a symptom. It's not final proof. It's a strong indicator if combined with other factors.

_Symptom: The Behavior Is Self-Destructive_
Addiction relies on the misuse of a substance or an activity or a natural drive. Sex addiction is the misuse of a natural drive. Alcoholism is the misuse of a substance. Compulsive exercising is the misuse of an activity. Consistent misuse of a substance, an activity or a natural drive leads to harmful consequences.

*How To Get Through To An Addicted Person:*

Soft-spoken, easy-going Tommy claimed, "I'm not hurting anyone; I'm just having harmless fun."

I used the data on the list below to get through to him. If you're trying to get through to an addicted person in denial, go over these points with him or her carefully. Don't use them to attack. Approach the list as an opportunity to explore and discover the facts.

- The activity takes up too much time and/or costs too much money.

Most addicted people don't realize how much time and money they put into their addiction. Others know and wish they could stop wasting their time and money on it.

For the addicted person:

If you don't know how much time and money you put into your addiction, now's a good time to start thinking about it.

For the partner:

If you're trying to get through to an addicted person, ask him to write down everything he spends on the behavior and to keep track of the time he puts into it. These factors alone can become the wake-up call that gets your partner to admit his addiction.

- It affects a person's physical health.

Addictions are usually done until the point of exhaustion. Most addictive people don't realize the terrible stress addictive behavior puts on the body until they stop.

For the addicted person:

The next time you feel exhausted, think about the last time you acted addictively. Did it contribute to the exhaustion? Was it the main cause?

For the partner:

Many addicted people in denial will argue that their addiction decreases stress and gives them energy. This can be a very difficult defense to break through. However, addicted people are exhausted at the end of an addictive binge. Ask your partner, "How do you feel at the end of a binge?" That might be all you need.
If he denies that he binges, that presents a more difficult problem. Instead of trying to get him to admit a binge, ask him, "Do you mean to say that you cannot increase your energy level and deal with stress in a more natural way? Wouldn't you rather be able to feel better relying on yourself without any artificial stimulants, or overeating, or compulsive sex?" That can help him or her realize their dependency.

If you can get him to at least admit he has a dependency, the door is open to discuss more symptoms, which might break through his defenses completely.

- Addictions have a terrible effect on relationships.

Some defensive addicted people will say, "If you weren't so intolerant, we wouldn't have any problems." In other words, he blames the problem on you.

Your options are:

Learn to live with your partner's addictive behavior. Or suffer through life with an addicted partner who does not want to work on his problem, or give him the ultimate choice: "It's either me or the addiction."

Symptom: The Behavior Causes Harm To Others

Some of these case histories may sound familiar:

- Bob broke promises to friends, family, and co-workers because of his sexually addictive binges.

- Marty's children were accidentally exposed to his hardcore pornography.

- Luke's family was living from hand to mouth while he spent money on prostitutes.

- Instead of the loving, intimate marriage Doreen expected, she struggled with the burden of Henry's deceptions and betrayals.

- Sylvia endured years of emotional neglect because Phil spent more time with porn than he did with her.

- Sally went without sex for five years and didn't realize that the cause was her husband's sex addiction. She thought there was something wrong with her. Her story is not that unusual.

- Another far too common tragedy: Linda caught a sexually transmitted disease from her unfaithful husband.

- Going out in public with her husband was hell for Phyllis because he stared at other women as if he were undressing them with his eyes.
- Floyd harassed people he was interested in sexually.

In rare cases, the person might choose to become a sexual predator by molesting children as William did, or become a stalker like Dennis, or a voyeur like Sam. But these cases are rare.

Most addicted people, if they're honest and care about their relationship, will admit the harm they've caused others.

If you're dealing with an addicted person who will not admit the harm he's caused others, do not settle for anything less than a full admission and genuine remorse.

In order to get an admission from a defensive addict, prepare for a difficult, nasty battle. Get all your data together before you confront him. Go over every possible evasion your partner might come up with. I'm sure you know most of them by now.

Figure out how you're going to respond. If you can't come up with a suitable response, then tell him, "OK, these are the facts. I'm not going to argue with you about them. Take it or leave it."

With some highly evasive people, your only option is to give them a take it or leave it proposition. We're only talking about the highly evasive few. The way to get through to them is to have all your facts together and fight hard.

It might take the most draining confrontation you've ever gone through, but if he's at all honest and caring, you have a good chance of getting his admission and remorse.

After you've given it everything you have, if he still denies his addiction, then it's time to tell him: "It's either me or the addiction you say you don't have."

If your partner admits the harm he's caused, then show him support. But not until then.

*Symptom: The Behavior Is Used To Alter Moods*

When people take drugs to feel good or use alcohol to stop feeling bad, they're trying to alter an uncomfortable mood rather than face it. Other people use prescription medication, sex, and/or eating for the same escapist purpose.

Again, most addicted people will admit that they use the behavior to alter their mood. But some will also say, "What's wrong with that?" The question could have two interpretations because the person might mean:

1. Is it immoral to alter your moods? and/or
2. Will it hurt me to alter my moods?
An effective way to reply to "What's wrong with that?" is, "It's not immoral or evil. It just isn't good for you. Eventually, it will hurt you. You're always better off facing your feelings rather than running from them."

There are some addicted people who will not admit that they use the behavior to alter moods. Here's a question to ask them:

"If you're not addicted, then why do you (drink, overeat, use sex, etc.) when you feel stress, loneliness, guilt, fear, failure, rejection or other uncomfortable feelings?"

If they deny it, then point out the times that you have seen them use addictive behavior to escape dealing with real life.

**Symptom: The Inability To Be Satisfied By The Behavior**

Addiction begins with a decision to avoid facing an uncomfortable feeling. Since escape always fails, the uncomfortable feeling is not relieved.

But addiction also causes an anxiety of its own because life's problems get worse when they are not dealt with. As the anxiety caused by addiction increases, it overpowers any feeling of satisfaction the addicted person may have gotten from the behavior. In a nutshell, addicted people are never satisfied, because nature designed evasion of reality to always be unsatisfying. In the final stages of addiction, most addicted people know they are not deriving genuine satisfaction from their behavior. But there are some who will say, "The behavior is my greatest thrill." Here are a few effective replies:

1. "If addictive behavior is your greatest thrill, you don't have much of a life. Wouldn't you like to get more pleasure out of life than just a quick, empty high?"
2. "Are you saying that being with your addiction is more satisfying than being with someone you love?"
3. "If you think fantasy is superior to reality, then why do you feel so bad when the fantasy ends? Don't lie to me. I know you feel empty and miserable when the fantasy ends."
4. "If your addiction is so great, why are you ruining your entire life for it? Things that are good for you make your life better. Sure, the addiction gives you a quick, shallow thrill. And what good is that compared to the joys of finding real pleasure with real people?"
5. "The high you get from addiction is temporary and fleeting. The highs of real life
are always with you."

**Symptom: The Person Tries To Stop**

Depression, guilt, anxiety, fear, shame, apathy and frustration accompany addiction because they are nature's way of telling the addicted person, "Face your problems or continue to feel miserable until you do." In the final stage of addiction, the stage when it's clear that the addiction was an awful mistake, many addicted people spend the better part of their lives:

- Attempting to stop
- Wishing they could stop
- Preparing for their next attempt to stop.

The Twelve Step Program and conventional, licensed therapy say, "If you can't stop, it means you're addicted." I disagree. If you haven't been able to stop it probably means you haven't approached the problem correctly.

The indication of addiction is the attempt to stop, not the failure to stop. My clients like Carlos prove it. He had never attempted to stop. I carefully prepared him to deal with the issues we're discussing, and many more. He succeeded on his first try. Carlos and many of my other clients prove that failure to stop does not indicate addiction because they never had a failed attempt to stop.

Most of my clients were more like Doug. He had made many, many attempts to stop before contacting me. Even in those cases, we usually achieved success on the first attempt. Failure to stop does not indicate addiction. **Failure indicates your approach is flawed.** If you approach it correctly, your chances of success on your first try are excellent.

If you approach your partner about his past attempts to stop, don't tell him, "You can't stop, so that means you're an addict." It does your partner a disservice.

Instead tell him, "I respect your attempts to stop. It means you really care and you want to make your life better. I think you need a better approach. And I think when you find it, there's a good chance you'll succeed."

Now we're ready to move on and talk about the unique aspects of sex addiction.
Chapter 14
What's So Unique About Sexual Addiction?

We are not born with a natural desire to get drunk on alcohol, get high on drugs or to distort one’s mind with prescription medication.

We are born with natural, healthy desires for sex, work, and eating.

Addictions that stem from natural drives need to be treated differently from addictions based on artificial drives. Here's why:

1. **Natural drives need to be fulfilled.**

   If you attempt to completely eliminate an addiction based on a natural drive, you will be in conflict with nature. Going through life without sex or work leads to frustration, depression, and anxiety. If you completely stop eating you die.

2. **Naturally based addictions are more complex.**

   A person with a naturally based addiction experiences their natural healthy desire to eat, or make love, or be productive. S/he also experiences an addictive desire to overeat, act sexually addictive, or overwork.

   To overcome a naturally based addiction, the person needs to be able to distinguish between these two drives. With substance abuse the person only needs to focus on the addictive drive because there is no natural drive associated with it.

3. **Substance addictions can destroy the mind.**

   Let's take a look at Sarah the alcoholic and Curtis the porn addict. Both go on an all-night binge. At the end of his binge, Curtis feels disgusted, exhausted, depressed, and guilty. He is also able to carry on a conversation and do simple tasks like drive a car. His ability to reason and draw rational conclusions is intact. Sarah also feels disgusted, exhausted, depressed, and guilty at the end of her binge. But her problems don't stop there.

   When the morning sun comes up, Sarah isn't able to reason; she probably doesn't even know where she is or what she did. She is incapable of the simplest tasks like walking or driving. She might hallucinate; she might break out in tears or rage for no apparent reason; she is incoherent and obnoxious.

   **As bad as sex addiction is, substance addictions are worse.** Those who share Sarah's
problem know it too well. So do their friends and family.

4. **Substances can cause more destructive personality changes.**

An overeater or a sexually addicted person goes through mood swings caused by their addictive behavior. A substance abuser experiences more than just a mood swing. A substance abuser becomes a different person.

For instance:

- After a person goes on a porn binge, he doesn't walk into a bar looking for a fight. Some alcoholics do.

- An overeater might be too sensitive to criticism. But someone under the influence of drugs will go beyond oversensitivity. They will verge on paranoia.

- A workaholic might feel isolated and unappreciated, while someone hooked on prescription medication will feel hated and hopeless.

If you've ever lived with an alcoholic, a drug addict or someone hooked on prescription medication, you know the hell that substance abuse causes. If you have never been in a relationship with a substance abuser, consider yourself fortunate if for no other reason than the following:

- Substance abuse worsens other addictions.

The unique driving force behind sexual addiction is the attempt to escape the natural, healthy need for intimacy. Some people escape intimacy more than others. Some escape differently than others. But all sexually addicted people have one thing in common:

To some degree, every sexually addicted person flees from intimacy and turns to fantasy to meet his or her needs for a healthy, loving intimate sexual relationship.

You don't have to analyze your childhood, change your environment, wipe out stress, or chemically alter your mind to overcome sex addiction. The answer to your addiction lies in two challenges:

1. Dealing with your intimacy issues and
2. Correctly stopping sexually addictive behavior.

You might be wondering "Can I do it? Can I really overcome my sex addiction? I've struggled with it for years. I feel shame about it. I feel guilt about it. It's ruining me and everything I love. Can this horrible secret I live with really be overcome?"

I'll answer the question with two questions:
1. "Are you willing to be honest?"
2. "Are you willing to work hard to achieve your goal?"

If your answer is "Yes," all you need is knowledge. You can gain that knowledge by using this book and your own experience as the guides.
Chapter 15
Why You Can Overcome Sex Addiction

Dear Joe,

Thank you.

I was about to lose my wife of 10 years and go through my fourth divorce.

You see, I tried the Twelve Step Program no less than 10 times. I sought psychological counseling with five different psychologists not to mention one psychiatrist. I tried religion. My situation seemed hopeless and I was desperate. I sat at my computer and searched on sexual addiction and found your site. I took the interviews. I called you.

First, you helped my wife and I restore the foundation of our marriage.

Then you and I addressed my addictions to strip clubs, massage parlors, prostitutes, masturbation and pornography.

I have reached a point I never thought possible. My marriage is better than I had ever hoped it could be and I know how to keep it this way.

I no longer feel driven, controlled, or helpless to my situation. Joe, you have done something for me no one else has been able to do. I am 50 years old and have been trying to overcome this problem for 25 years. You have taught me how to regain control of my life.

There are good reasons for every principle in your approach. It makes sense. It works. Thank you for the happiness I finally feel in my life.

Roger
(Real name withheld)

Overcoming sex addiction is one of the most rewarding things a person can do. I know because through the approaches I developed, I overcame four addictions:

- a two-to three-pack-a-day smoking addiction
- overeating
- addictive gambling
- sex addiction.
I started smoking when I was nine. By 14, I was smoking a pack a day. Fifteen years later I was up to three packs a day, feeling miserable, and constantly trying to quit.

Stop-smoking programs had sprung up across the country and I was willing to try anything. I carefully looked into programs offered by private industry, charities, government, and universities. My research showed they didn't help most of the people who used them. But my research had done me some good because until then I had not thought of using a program to stop; my attempts had been to impulsively just stop. So, out of desperation, I went to work developing a program for myself. Then I applied it.

For the first time in my life, I was confident I had actually stopped smoking and felt good about it.

I realized that other people would want the same experience. So, in 1975, I made my program available.

Hardcore smokers who had tried everything for years successfully stopped with my program. Some came back and asked me to help them with alcohol and drugs.

I developed a program for them. It was so effective, I still use it today to help people overcome alcohol and drug problems.

Some of the people I helped with alcohol and drugs told me about their sexual problems. That was how I came to the realization I was sexually addicted.

That did not shock me. Actually, I was glad to have put a name to a problem I had been struggling with since my teens.

What stunned me was the realization that if I did not overcome my sexual addiction, I would lose my marriage. My wife and I had been together since 1977. We still are happily. I told her about my sex addiction as soon as I discovered it. She didn't put any pressure on me or make any threats. But I realized that if I did not overcome my addiction I would lose her.

It took me years to discover the information needed to overcome sexual addiction. She stayed with me because she saw I was honest with her and working at it. Her decision paid off wonderfully for both of us. Now, that same information I and so many others successfully used to overcome sex addiction is available to you. Do any of the following situations apply to you?

1. You stopped your sexually addictive behavior before and went back.
- Your best chance of long-term success is being able to:
- Cope with addictive desires under any situation, at any time, and any place.
- Stop without picking up a new addiction in place of the old one.
- Handle any stressful situation - no matter how grueling - without acting addictively.
- Stop addictive behavior without anger, resentment, apathy, or depression.
- Develop effective, positive motivation.
- Keep good relations with family, friends and co-workers while stopping.

Have so much control over the addiction it becomes a thing of the past, like a faded memory.

Mark Twain made an insightful comment about stopping smoking that also applies to sex addiction. He said, "Stopping smoking is easy. I do it a thousand times a day." When I started helping people overcome addiction in 1975, I wanted their first attempt to succeed. It took time, but I did achieve the goal. Now you can do the same thing my clients did.

You can stop and stay in control throughout the rest of your life. Let’s discuss your situation to learn why you can stop and stay stopped.

- You are trying to stop acting addictively.

You've learned a lot from your efforts. But you've made mistakes. Now you need to find out what they were.

The Most Personal Addiction will show you mistake after mistake people make when attempting to overcome sex addiction. More importantly, it will teach you how to correct your own mistakes.

Then, step-by-step, you'll learn the same approach I used to overcome sex addiction in 1982 - and my clients have successfully used to overcome their sex addictions.

You've tried hard but you haven't had the advice you needed. The Most Personal Addiction can give you that advice.

- You feel hopelessly caught in your addiction.

The biggest reason people fail at overcoming addiction is they rely on approaches put out by the Twelve Step program and conventional, licensed therapy. These approaches are abysmal failures.

Once a person is properly advised and he is willing to be honest and work hard, his
chances of successfully overcoming addiction are excellent.

People who felt just as hopeless as you overcame their sex addiction using the approach in this book. You can do it, too.

- You’re in danger of losing your relationship.

Has your partner said anything that resembles:

"I don't trust you."

"It makes me sick when I think of what you're doing."

"It's me or the addiction."

"I feel like every time you use pornography you're having sex with other women."

"You've broken every promise you made about your sex addiction."

"You say that you've never cheated on me. How can I believe anything you tell me?"

"When you're with me sexually I don't know if you want me or if you're thinking of other women."

"I feel like I have to watch your every step."

"I feel like I'm involved with a stranger. You are not the man I married."

"I hate lies! Why do you always lie to me?"

If any of those distressing statements sound familiar, the worst is yet to come if you do not stop successfully.

The Most Personal Addiction will show you how to immediately bring some healing back in to your relationship.

Then it will show you how to make your relationship into the wonderful marriage you've both always wanted.

Even if you've been thrown out of the house or your partner has moved out, if there's any hope left in your marriage, the techniques in this book can help both of you.

Most or all of your sex life is addictive.

Here's how we'll attack the problem:

You'll learn how to overcome your relationship barriers and make the emotional connections you need. Then you'll be able to overcome your addiction.

Instead of spending most of your sex life in an empty fantasy life that leads to guilt,
fear, and anxiety, you'll be able to enjoy a genuine loving relationship and wonderful sex with a real person.

People who never had an intimate relationship in their life have been able to use the techniques in this book to build a great love life. You can do it, too.

People whose sex life with their partner was pushed aside because of their sexually addictive behavior overcame their addiction with this approach. Now they have a wonderful sex life. So can you.

The Most Personal Addiction will show you how.

- You're cheating on your partner.

If your partner suspects you're cheating, some of these thoughts might sound familiar to you:

"I'll stop the behavior and I'll never tell my partner about my cheating."
"I'm not going to stop. I'll take my chances about being caught."
"I can't live with the guilt any more; I'm going to tell her everything."
"I won't ever do it again. But if I do, I'll tell her and take the consequences."
"I'll end the relationship before she finds out what I've been doing."
"I'd rather kill myself than have my secret life exposed."
"I'll tell my partner it's her fault I wasn't faithful."

If your partner doesn't have the slightest idea that you're cheating, you're probably feeling much of the above and:

"Why stop now? I have the best of both worlds."
"I can't take living a double life."
"What will I do if my partner finds out?"
"My partner will never find out."
"If I didn't have sex on the side, I wouldn't be able to stay in my marriage."
"Sex on the side is killing my marriage."
"I love my partner."
"If I really loved my partner I wouldn't cheat on her."

The Most Personal Addiction will show you how to work through these conflicts and more that aren't listed here.

You'll read about other people who were in your situation or maybe worse. They
saved their marriages using the techniques in this book.

You might be wondering, "Will I be able to use them, too?" The answer is, "Anyone can use them if they're willing to be honest about their addiction and work hard at overcoming it."

- *You’re on the verge of doing something illegal.*

Let's talk about Bob. He's a pedophile. No one knows.

He's married, has two kids and has begun molesting one. He lives with some fear of being caught, but not much. He's sure he can get away with it. But he feels guilt and remorse and wants to stop. He seeks help.

If he is honest with his counselor, if he works hard, and is properly advised, his chances of stopping are excellent because his primary motivation is not legal. It's personal.

Now let's talk about Hank. He has never touched a child sexually. But he's planning it.

The only thing holding him back is fear of being caught. He feels no remorse or guilt about what he's planning. He relies on the nonsense put out by many conventional, licensed therapists that morality is a social issue and that plenty of societies sanction pedophilia.

Hank doesn't believe he has a problem. He believes society is bigoted against people like him. He firmly believes that by molesting a child he's giving the child a pleasure the child can't get from the parents.

One day, Hank comes across the "perfect" opportunity. He feels wonderful afterwards. No guilt. No remorse. He's completely convinced he did the child a magnificent favor. He continues to do children "favors."

Hank gets caught. His lawyer tells him to get into counseling to show the court he is remorseful and wants help. Hank doesn't belong in counseling; Hank belongs in prison for a very long time.

Pedophilia can definitely be overcome - by people like Bob.

I've helped them do it. If you share Bob's feelings, The Most Personal Addiction will introduce you to the process of overcoming pedophilia. It will explain what goes on in the pedophile's mind, why it goes on, and it will give you a brief overview on how to cope with it. The Most Personal Addiction will also discuss some of the legal issues that
confront the pedophile and his or her family.

Please don't get the idea that just by reading my book you will overcome pedophilia. What The Most Personal Addiction can do is get you started in the right direction.

- You want a better sex life.

Most books written about improving your sex life emphasize the physically erotic part of sex. Too bad they know so little about what makes sex sexy.

Real sexy sex isn't derived from candlelight dinners, soft music, trendy lingerie, or x-rated videos.

Every day I teach my clients how to have great sex.

I don't talk to them about positions, techniques, gimmicks, or toys. Instead, I help them develop what makes the absolute best and most terrific sex.

What I help them develop and what they love so much is the emotional part of sex.

Sex addiction is emotionless. It enables the sexually addicted person to experience sexual satisfaction without the "complications" of an intimate, loving relationship.

For the person in a committed relationship, addictive sex enables him to escape the demands of genuine emotional intimacy.

The intimate, exciting and passionate connection that arises from loving, romantic emotion is not what sex addiction is about. Sex addiction is about an impersonal thrill built on a fantasy quickly destroyed by reality.

The Most Personal Addiction teaches you how to build the emotional romance that leads to great sex. It will also teach you how to deal with the following sexual intimacy problems:

- Impotence and other sexual performance problems
- Using your partner as a sex object
- Forcing sex on your partner
- Avoiding sex
- Obsessing over sex
- Sexually abusing your partner
- Imagining that you are with someone else when having sex with your partner
- Preferring sex alone
- Preferring sex with prostitutes or strangers
You can overcome these problems and many other sexual issues not listed here. You'll read about people who had devastating sexual problems and overcame them using the techniques in The Most Personal Addiction. The techniques can help anyone experience a better sex life.

- **You’re involved with someone who is sexually addicted.**

You're probably suffering more from his addictive behavior than he is. He probably doesn't realize the pain you're in, even though you've tried to tell him. So the first thing we need to do is take care of you.

Here are some of the issues The Most Personal Addiction can help you with:

1. How to deal with feeling that you must compete against his addiction.
2. Wondering if you should give him another chance, or if it's better to leave now and cut your losses.
3. Believing, "If I were a better woman he wouldn't want to act sexually addictive."
4. Wondering if he's making love with a porn fantasy in his head when he's with you.
5. Asking yourself, "Should I spy on him? Should I trust him? What if he fools me again?"
6. How to get him to realize he's sexually addicted.
7. What you can do to help him overcome his sex addiction.

Then comes our next challenge: saving the relationship. If you decide to give it another chance, you'll want to know:

1. How to bring healing into the relationship.
2. How to restore trust.
3. What promises he's capable of keeping.
4. How to tell if he's serious about overcoming his sex addiction.
5. What to do if he breaks a promise.
6. How to improve the love life between the two of you.
7. How to rebuild and improve the communication.
8. How to resolve anger issues.

At the same time that the relationship is healing, you'll want to address addictive issues. For instance:

- How to get infidelity stopped immediately.
- How to determine if he's masturbating addictively and what to do about it.

What a pornography addiction really is and how it's overcome.
- What to do about staring.
- How to make sure you do not become a part of his addiction.
- How to tell if you are co-dependent.
- When to be tolerant and when to take a no-compromise stand.
- How to make sure the addiction does not affect the lovemaking between you and your partner.
- Understanding the different forms of sex addiction and how each of them is successfully dealt with.

You've probably gone through years of grief trying to get him to stop and trying to adjust to his addiction. You can end the grief in a positive way.

Anyone can overcome sex addiction if they're willing to be honest and work at it diligently. But he's probably lied to you so many times, you're wondering, "Can he be honest?"

The odds are: "Yes. It's not too late."

As you read through the book, you'll meet couples who seemed as hopeless as you might be feeling. Today they have excellent marriages because of what they learned in my counseling. The same things I taught them about saving a relationship and overcoming sex addiction are now available to you through this book.

You can have the wonderful relationship you've always wanted.
Chapter 16
Two Crucial Distinctions

I divide sex addiction into two categories:

Addictive Sex Alone

Addictive Sex With Someone Else.

The category of addictive sex alone includes:

- Masturbation (with no one else present)
- Porn (with no one else present)
- Cross dressing (same as above)
- Any other form of addictive sex that does not include an interaction with another person.

Addictive Sex with other people is characterized by: interacting with another person for the purpose of non-intimate sexual stimulation.

You do not need to touch the other person or even see the other person for it to be addictive sex with someone else. Phone sex is a good example of interacting with another person for the purpose of non-intimate sexual stimulation, thus sex with someone else. Going to a strip club and not touching anyone still falls into this category because there is an interaction between you and the other person.

Voyeurism falls into this category also, even though the other person is not aware of what the voyeur is doing. The voyeur is interacting with the victim for the purpose of non-intimate sexual stimulation.

There are degrees of sex with someone else. Going to a strip club is not as serious a problem as having sex with a prostitute. Voyeurism is not as criminal as rape.

We also need to identify that there are two groups of people who engage in sex addiction:

People in a committed relationship, and

People without a committed relationship.

Ask yourself:

1. "Do my addictive behaviors fall into the category of sex alone or sex with someone else?"
Keep in mind that many people engage in multiple sex addictions, so your behaviors might fall into both categories.

2. "Am I in a committed relationship?"

Usually the answer to this question is pretty straightforward, but you might be in a relationship that is breaking up and you would like to save it. Or you might be starting one you hope will become committed. In these cases, I suggest you assume you are in a committed relationship because both situations have that potential.

For instance, Tim was addicted to pornography and masturbation. He had not had a serious relationship in over 10 years.

At the beginning of counseling I asked him, "Do you want a serious long-term relationship, a lifetime commitment to someone?" His answer was honest: "I don't think I can do it."

The Twelve Step Program he was in before he came to me had advised him not to date anyone or seek any kind of serious relationship for at least a year. This advice is given to most unattached people entering the Twelve Step program.

His conventional, licensed therapist supported the advice and added, "You still have unresolved issues with your mother."

The driving force behind sex addiction is the attempt to escape the demands of a reality-based, honest, monogamous, loving, intimate relationship.

By encouraging Tim to avoid intimacy, the Twelve Step Program and his conventional, licensed therapist had mistakenly encouraged Tim's sex addiction. There are thousands upon thousands of people sincerely involved in the Twelve Step program making Tim's mistake.

Tim had started counseling with me severely depressed. He was on prescription medication for his depression and he had been advised to increase his dosage because his depression was worsening.

I told Tim, "Of course you're depressed. You have no one to wake up to, no one to come home to, no one to share your day with. You have a few friends, but they can't fill your needs. Tim, you have no one to make love with! On top of that you expect yourself to be 'strong' enough to go through life happily alone. Tim, everybody needs someone to love on an intimate level. You're like a starving man who thinks the way to regain his
health is to avoid eating."

Today Tim is free of medication, doesn't go to meetings, and is happily married.

*If you are single and you want to overcome sex addiction:*

Become oriented toward building a lifetime, monogamous, committed, loving relationship.

The FAQ below addresses many of the more important questions people ask when I talk to them about sex addiction and the unattached person. Each question also applies to a person in a committed relationship because each question covers an area of intimacy sexually addicted people try to escape from.

**Q:** Joe, I prefer the single life. Are you saying I can't overcome sex addiction?

**A:** If you do not want the joys of a loving, honest, monogamous, committed relationship you have two other options:

- Live a life of sex addiction.
- The other is celibacy. Celibacy is sick. It is the attempt to escape the natural need for intimacy and the fact that you are a sexual being.

If you prefer to go through life alone, your options are not pleasant.

**Q:** When you say that a single person who does not want a long-term, intimate relationship cannot overcome sex addiction, it sounds unfair to me. Why are you so sure?

**A:** Nature sets the rules of life. I don't. I'm an observer reporting what he sees.

Observe people's lifestyles and you'll see that the single lifestyle has the highest rate of alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide, sex addiction, and overall unhappiness. If you are committed to the single lifestyle, you're committed to avoiding intimacy. Escaping intimacy is at the heart of sex addiction.

**Q:** You mean I have to get married?

**A:** You need to be oriented toward a monogamous, honest, loving, intimate relationship. You might go through a few of those before you build one that leads to a lifetime relationship. Most people do. I don't think you have to marry; I think you need to build a good life with someone.

**Q:** Are you saying I should get into a relationship in order to overcome sex addiction?

**A:** That's a good question and from what I've said so far it's understandable how you might draw that conclusion. So let me elaborate.
Sex addiction is not the cause of a person's relationship problems; it is a symptom of relationship problems.

A genuine loving relationship is a reward in itself. That reward is more important than overcoming sex addiction.

Q: You said that if a person doesn't want a relationship they wouldn't be able to overcome sex addiction; then you said that I shouldn't go into a relationship to overcome sex addiction. Would you please straighten this out?

A: Sure. Here's the issue: What's your intention?

If your intention is to be with someone to build a long-term, genuinely intimate relationship, then your intention is honest and achievable. You are not using the person to escape an addiction.

If your intention is to use a relationship to overcome sex addiction, you would not be in the relationship for honest, healthy reasons. I doubt you would want to be in a relationship with someone whose real feelings for you were, "I need an escape from sex addiction and you're it."

If you realize that you need intimacy—not to escape sex addiction, but for personal fulfillment—then you are pursuing a relationship for the right reasons.

Let me give you a true story about one of my failures. We'll call the client Adam. Because of his use of pornography and prostitution, he had lost two marriages.

About six months into his third marriage he started going to prostitutes. He had not used any pornography.

He then returned to pornography in the hope that it would keep him away from prostitutes. It didn't because pornography and prostitutes are two different addictions.

My first question for him was, "Why do you want to stop your sexually addictive behaviors?" He gave me the following reasons:

- He felt guilty.
- He was afraid of being caught.
- He was spending too much money on his sex addictions.
- He was afraid of catching a disease.
- He had a new baby son by his third wife and he wanted to set a good example for his son.
I asked him if there were any other reasons he wanted to stop. He said, "No." He had left out the most important reason: "I love my wife."

She had no idea about his infidelities and he had not expressed any loving feelings for her to me. That's not a good sign. I asked him how he felt about the marriage. His reply was a letdown. He said, "It's not bad." It indicated that Adam had married to escape his sex addictions.

I took him in as a client in the hope that underneath his sexually addictive drive were genuine, loving feelings for his wife. After a few months of intense counseling it was clear that Adam had never loved his wife and was not interested in developing a genuine, loving relationship.

I stopped the counseling.

He asked me to keep him on as a client. I wouldn't because I have a moral responsibility not to waste a client's time or money, even if the client asks me to. I don't know where Adam is today. I hope I was wrong in my assessment of him, but I doubt it. He never wanted a close relationship with anyone. Marriage for him was a substitute for prostitutes and pornography.

Now let's talk about George, another client who had avoided genuine intimacy all his life. He was 31 and had never had sex with anyone. His sex life had been pornography and masturbation.

But George had one thing going for him that Adam didn't. George had never faked an intimate relationship. George was a decent person terrified of intimacy. Today George is in a serious long-term relationship and his sex addiction is overcome.

Let's take a look at the similarities and differences between George and Adam:

- Both were terrified of intimacy.
- Both had plunged into sex addiction.

George had retained his honesty, although he had never been in an intimate relationship. Adam had faked relationships. George succeeded in building a genuine loving relationship and overcoming his addiction. Adam didn't.

Bottom line: Don't go into a relationship to overcome sex addiction; it's a dishonest motivation. Go into a relationship honestly and for the rewards of genuine intimacy.

Q: But if I'm sexually addicted, doesn't that mean that I can't have a relationship?
If every sexually addicted person decided they were not qualified for a relationship there would be very, very few marriages or long term relationships because most men become sexually addicted.

People are complex; we have conflicting values at times.

Sex addiction and a relationship do conflict, but sex addiction does not eliminate you from a relationship.

Sex addiction makes a relationship more difficult and it limits the joy of a relationship.

But sex addiction is one part of your personality. It is not your entire personality. You probably have many wonderful qualities to bring to a relationship.

Q: You said to be honest. Shouldn't I tell a prospective partner that I'm sexually addicted?

Yes, definitely.

And let your prospective partner know that you're doing everything you can to overcome it. If your partner cares for you and you are faithful, there's good reason to believe your partner will be supportive. In my opinion, if your partner would leave you after you were honest about your sex addiction, your partner has a lot to learn about love (assuming your addiction does not involve sex with other people).

I've counseled many couples who married knowing there would be a sex addiction to contend with. They built a good marriage in spite of the sex addiction, and then the sex addiction was overcome after they entered counseling.

Contrary to what you might hear, sex addiction does not mean the end of a good relationship. It means a new challenge for the couple to face and overcome.

Q: What if I can't overcome my sex addiction?

A: You can. It takes honesty, hard work, and proper advice. Then your chances of success are excellent.
Chapter 17
A Kiss That's More Than A Kiss

Let's look at our two sets of distinctions again:
Addictive sex alone or addictive sex with someone else.
Are you in a committed relationship or are you unattached?

These variables identify which group of sexually addicted people you are in and what category of sexually addictive behavior you indulge.

But because sex addiction is the most complex addiction, we need another variable before we can analyze the different kinds of sex addictions, such as masturbation, pornography, infidelity, voyeurism, and pedophilia.

That variable is also the most complex; it answers the question: Is the behavior unethical? There are many competing ethical views:

Some people will tell you that masturbation is evil; others will say it's a spiritual enhancer.

Some people claim that pedophilia is cultural and is not an ethical issue. Others claim pedophilia is the worst sexual crime of all.

Some will say infidelity is OK as long as your partner doesn't know about it; others will say it's never OK.

There is always someone ready to argue that any sexual behavior is OK. Rather than drag you through a complicated debate on sex addiction and ethics, I'm going to take this conversation directly to the bottom line:

Assuming that you are in not in a committed relationship, as long as your sexual behavior is with adults who give you voluntary, informed consent, there is no ethical issue.

I believe in this standard of ethics because observation has shown me that
It protects the innocent.
It holds people responsible for their actions.
It does not make unrealistic demands.

Let me give you some examples:
Masturbation/pornography: If you masturbate and use pornography in the privacy of
your home, as far as I'm concerned you are not acting unethically. Here's why:

You are not involving anyone else but yourself.

A masturbation/pornography addiction cannot be stopped immediately. (We'll discuss why when we talk about the sexually addicted mind.) To say that you are unethical for doing something you can't stop immediately would be unrealistic.

If you masturbate in public then you are acting unethically because:

It involves other people without their consent.

It can be stopped immediately precisely because it is unethical.

Pedophilia: It's morally wrong because:

Children are not capable of voluntary, informed consent. It can be stopped instantly, if the perpetrator so chooses.

The phony conventional, licensed therapists who tell you pedophilia is a "learned behavior" and the criminal has to "unlearn" it don't know what they're talking about. Pedophilia is an immoral, evil behavior that can be stopped the instant the evildoer decides to act morally. Pedophilia is not an intellectual challenge; it's a matter of right and wrong.

Prostitution: It is not unethical as long as:

The prostitute delivers as promised and restricts his/her activities to informed adults.

The client pays as agreed and does not force the prostitute into more than was agreed.

Some people argue that prostitutes tempt married men to be unfaithful, therefore prostitution is unethical.

That's nonsense. Adults are responsible for their actions. A prostitute cannot sell a service that's not wanted in the first place.

If you are in a committed relationship the ethical issue also includes the questions:

- Are you breaking a promise?
- Are you living a lie to commit the behavior?

For instance: If you told your wife that you will stop using pornography and then you use pornography behind her back, your behavior is unethical.

Not because you are using pornography. But because you broke a promise and are concealing it.

Ethics can even be more important than the actual behavior.
For instance, a kiss can have more serious ethical consequences than intercourse. Two clients I helped overcome sex addiction can attest to that. We'll call them Howard and Charles.

Howard was single; Charles was married. Both flirted with women in their offices. Howard had a one-night stand with one of the women he flirted with. There was nothing unethical about it because it was based on voluntary, informed consent between adults - and neither of them was in a committed relationship.

Charles was tempted to sleep with one of the women in his office and he knew she wanted him. She approached him one evening when everyone else had gone home; they kissed passionately in the privacy of his office. Then he told her, "I can't do it." He explained that he did not want to betray his wife. The relationship between Charles and the other woman never went any further.

Good for Charles. But he didn't tell his wife about it.

He was ethically required to tell his wife about the kiss. The principle is informed consent. Charles' wife was not informed, therefore the relationship existed under a false pretense. Some people will call me a prude because I believe that Charles is ethically required to reveal the passionate kiss. Here's the other side of the story:

Please tell your partner, "If I passionately kiss someone else I'm not going to tell you because I'm not a prude, OK?" I doubt your partner will be foolish enough to enter into such an agreement. An intimate relationship is built on trust. Trust means full disclosure. If you think full disclosure is for prudes, I feel sorry for anyone who trusts you.

If you're unattached, you might develop a deep relationship that you want to hold on to. Please tell your new partner: "If you passionately kiss someone else, don't tell me about it. I'm not a prude. I'm cool."

Let's go back to Charles, the man who did not tell his wife about the passionate kiss. You might be wondering what happened to his marriage. Although Charles did not go any further with the woman, he flirted with other women in his office and passionately kissed them as well. It's no surprise that when he hid the first kiss, he went ahead and did it again and again until he was caught.

Had Charles been honest with his wife the first time, he'd have probably stopped his behavior much sooner.
When Charles entered counseling, he finally stopped lying to his wife and saved his marriage. If you want to overcome sex addiction, the sooner you learn and apply Charles’ lesson, the better.
Chapter 18
Feelings, Thoughts, And Actions

Some ethical approaches teach that you are evil simply because you were born. These approaches lead to self-hatred just because you're human.

Another approach to ethics is moral relativism.

The moral relativist argues that there are no black and white ethical issues; everything is gray. For instance, no one is completely responsible for their destructive behavior; a bad childhood or a chemical imbalance is the real culprit.

It's interesting how the moral relativist's beliefs change when he loses the life savings he invested in a highly successful corporation that turned out to be cooking its books. All of a sudden, the corporate executives' childhood traumas are no excuse for immoral behavior. And for some strange reason, a supposed chemical imbalance does not eradicate moral responsibility when the moral relativist is the victim.

*In the area of ethics there are blacks, whites, and shades of gray.* You need to know the differences.

Unrealistic ethical standards cause excruciating no-win conflicts between the demands of life and the demands of ethics.

So let's start by discussing the differences between thoughts, feelings and actions because everything about you is expressed through them.

**Thoughts and feelings:**

*Are only in your mind:* If you think of raping your neighbor, as long as you don't act on the thought or feeling, it has occurred only in your mind.

*Affect only you:* A thought cannot bend a spoon; a feeling cannot cause the weather to change. If you feel like raping someone, your feeling does not cause her to be raped.

**Actions are the things you do or say.**

*Actions occur in reality:* If you pick up a spoon and bend it, your thought did not cause it to bend; your action did. Feelings don't cause rain. But if you chemically seed clouds you can cause rain. If you grope your neighbor, your feelings did not grope her, your action did.

*Actions might not have a direct effect on others:* If you masturbate imagining that you...
are raping your neighbor, your action has no direct effect on her.

They can directly affect others: If you assault your neighbor with the intention to rape, your action directly affects her.

Taking these facts into account, I advise my clients the following:

Don't morally judge thoughts and feelings.

If your actions do not directly affect another person, there's no need to bring in ethics.

*Ethics are important when your actions directly affect another person.* I advise and practice this approach because I have observed that it:

Helps people make beneficial changes in their lives - because it helps people set positive goals rather than live in fear of their thoughts and feelings.

Protects the innocent - because morality is demanded whenever your actions directly affect another person.

Demands responsibility for one’s actions - because it means that you can choose whether or not to respect the rights of others.

Encourages freedom of thought - because you are not morally punished for thinking.

Supports the natural need to experience your own emotions - If feelings are morally condemned, you will live in a continual state of painful repression. By limiting morality to actions only, your mind has the freedom to feel.

Advising people to apply morality only when your actions directly affect another person helped William and Cynthia.

William came to me for a masturbation/pornography problem. He had spent three years in a Twelve Step program sponsored by his religion. He believed that because he wanted to have sex with the woman next door, he had committed adultery, even though he had never touched her. He was also convinced that because he wanted to sneak porn magazines into his house, he had broken his promise to his wife, Rochelle, that he wouldn't bring any porn into the home.

William had made the mistake of morally judging his thoughts and feelings.

Cynthia had an alcohol problem. She believed that because she drank, she was a bad person. She didn't bother other people when she drank; she kept to herself and drank at home. But she believed that she was immoral because she had a drinking problem. By the
way, Cynthia was not religious.

She had made the mistake of morally condemning herself, even though her actions didn't hurt anyone else.

By the time William got to me he was sneaking porn into the house and he was using binoculars to spy on Trisha, the woman next door.

Cynthia had almost given up all hope. She came to me through a friend I had helped stopped drinking.

William would make comments like, "I'm disgusting. If Rochelle found out, it would kill her. I should kill myself and get it over with."

Cynthia's remarks were, "I don't care any more. Guys ask me out but I know what they're after. I wish I wanted it, too. I don't want anyone. I'm a lost cause."

In the other areas of his life William was an honest, responsible person. He had a demanding job and was well respected. He was a good father. Except for his hidden sexual behaviors, he was truthful. He was a kind, considerate husband, and he genuinely loved Rochelle.

Cynthia had been married once. After the divorce she decided she would never get married again and retreated further into alcohol. She was a creative person on the verge of building a successful career. But she could not accept praise because she secretly believed her work was mediocre. The more she drank the less she believed in her work.

When people engage in self-destructive behavior, like Cynthia did, they feel bad about themselves. The bad feeling is nature's attempt to keep you from engaging in more self-destructive behavior.

If you break agreements, as William did, you will feel guilty. If you violate the privacy of others by spying on them, you will feel bad about yourself. The guilt and self-disgust are nature's way of telling you to respect the rights of others.

I respect nature. So I didn't tell William, "Don't feel bad about your broken promises and spying. Everyone makes mistakes. Give yourself a break."

And I certainly didn't tell Cynthia, "Don't worry about your drinking. Just feel good about yourself."

But William and Cynthia had compounded nature's pain signals. Their mistakes caused them far more pain than necessary and made it more difficult for them to
overcome their problems. Let's find out why:

When William spied on Trisha he had acted unethically because he had violated her privacy. A strong moral judgment about his spying was necessary and appropriate. When he sneaked porn into the house he had acted immorally because he had broken an agreement and lied about it.

But William compounded his problems by morally condemning himself whenever he felt like spying on Trisha or felt like using pornography. This led to more spying and more use of pornography. Why? Because feeling like doing it and actually doing it were no different for him. As he said to me, "If you feel like stealing candy from a baby and you're going to be punished for stealing the candy, you might as well do the crime and enjoy the candy."

William's standard of morality encouraged immoral behavior.

When Cynthia spoke about herself she'd say: "I'm a waste. I have no talent. I can't love anyone. I can't do anything right." She was highly talented, she was kind and very competent. She had friends who cared about her. But she would not acknowledge her good qualities because "Anyone who drinks like I do doesn't deserve to be a part of life."

Her belief that she did not morally deserve to partake in life drove her further into alcohol because it was the only thing she felt worthy of. Cynthia's moral standards were leading her to self-destruction.

When I finally got William to stop condemning himself for his feelings, he was able to see that there is a moral difference between feeling and doing. Once that was achieved, he was able to make realistic moral choices. Today he is not besieged by guilt and condemnation. He does not spy on anyone; he doesn't sneak pornography into the house. His marriage is happy and honest.

Cynthia's feeling of moral unworthiness went beyond alcohol because she also believed that if she made mistakes in her work, she was morally bad. She avoided relationships for the same reason. My work with her took longer and was more difficult because she had isolated herself. After I helped her stop drinking, she almost went back a few times because she felt that life was hopeless.

Today she's doing much better. She still has bouts with self-hatred, but they're mild and relatively easy to overcome. She's involved with a guy she can be vulnerable to.
went through a long slump of not working at her career because her mistakes felt like moral indictments. It was more difficult to help her through this phase than it was to help her stop drinking. Today she is pursuing her career again and free of moral self-indictments.

Morality is like any other force of nature. Used correctly, it can enable you to enjoy life. Used incorrectly it destroys.

Choose your code of morality carefully. It can determine whether or not you overcome your addiction.
Chapter 19
The Prevalent Three

As we've established, sex addictions fall into the category of 1) sex alone or 2) sex with other people. Any of them can be overcome.

Sex with other people:
- Takes more effort
- Influences your approach to relationships
- Is usually more harmful than sexually addictive behavior alone

Because the consequences are so damaging, sexually addictive behavior with other people is easier to overcome than sexually addictive behavior alone.

A few examples might help:
- It is easier to stop sexual promiscuity than it is to overcome a masturbation addiction.
- An addiction to erotic massage parlors is not as difficult to stop as an addiction to Internet pornography.
- A person can stop using prostitutes much quicker than he can stop addictive use of X-rated movies.

Sexual addictions that are unethical are the most damaging to you and those around you. They can be stopped instantly.

Of the three most prevalent sex addictions, the first two fall into the category of sex alone. Don't count on stopping them immediately.

The third can be overcome much quicker, but remember it is not easy to stop any sex addiction.

The prevalent three are:
- Masturbation
- Pornography
- Meaningless sex with other people

I'm going to give you brief highlights about them now; in later chapters I will discuss each in more depth.

Masturbation
Not everyone who masturbates is addicted. But, it is safe to assume that almost every
sexually addicted person has a masturbation problem.

Most people who become addicted to masturbation don't realize they're hooked until they suffer a serious consequence like the threat of losing a relationship - or the inability to form a long-lasting, loving relationship.

A teenage male does not have the same need for a long-lasting romantic relationship that an adult male does. Most adult men hooked on masturbation are in denial about their addiction because they still think like teenagers.

The following distinctions apply to masturbation addiction:
- It is a sexually addictive behavior done alone.
- People with or without a relationship can become addicted to it.
- It is not an ethical problem unless:
  - You do it in public without consent.
  - You made a promise to your partner not to masturbate, broke the promise, then lied about it. The lie is the unethical aspect.

**Pornography**

Pornography and masturbation are separate addictions.

There are sexually addicted people who have no interest in pornography.

For the person hooked on masturbation and pornography, masturbation is usually the driving force behind the pornography addiction. Many people who believe they have a pornography problem actually have a masturbation problem.

If you are in a relationship with someone who uses porn, the real problem is probably masturbation. Pornography is usually just a visual aid. If your partner is sexually addicted, don't make the drastic mistake of saying to your partner, "I don't care if you masturbate, just don't use porn to do it." That's like telling an alcoholic, "I don't care if you drink, as long as you don't look at the glass."

Because pornography has become politicized, many misleading ideas are associated with porn. I'm going to identify a few and then give you the facts:

*Myth: Porn is the first step to becoming a sexual predator.*

*Fact: Porn does not cause rape or any other sexual crime. Porn is primarily a visual aid for masturbation. Masturbation does not cause you to commit crimes. Reading murder mysteries is not the first step to becoming a murderer. Sitting by a fireplace does not
cause you to become an arsonist. Rock and roll is not the first step to drug addiction.

**Myth: Porn is a cause of moral decay.**

Fact: Porn is a response to the marketplace.

If people didn't want it, it couldn't be sold. If porn causes moral decay, then the sports section in the newspaper causes baseball, exams cause people to cheat, and fancy department stores cause people to steal.

**Myth: A ban on porn would support family values.**

Fact: A commercial enterprise like pornography reflects a society's values. Banning porn would have no more effect on family values than banning mirrors would have on ugliness.

The following distinctions apply to pornography addiction:
- It is sexually addictive behavior done alone to create a masturbation fantasy. Sexual activity through fantasy alone is not the same as sexual activity with another person.
- People with or without a relationship get addicted to it.
- It usually has more negative impact on a relationship than masturbation, even though the real problem is usually masturbation.

Porn is not an ethical problem unless:
- It depicts children.
- It depicts unwilling participants like women who have been physically threatened.
- You made a promise to your partner not to use porn, broke the promise, and lied about it. The lie is the unethical aspect.

**Meaningless sex with other people**

In this kind of sex there is no romantic attachment. The sex is just a fix. It includes the following:
- Phone sex with strangers or someone you use only for sex.
- Erotic massage parlors.
- Online sex with strangers or someone you use only for sex.
- Prostitutes.
- Strip clubs. Even though there might not be direct sexual contact between the stripper and the audience, the people in the audience are using a real person in real time as a meaningless sexual stimulant.
Note: Fantasizing about having sex with someone else is not the same as involving a real person in real time.

Let's assume you fantasize about going to a strip club. That's not sex with someone else. That's fantasy alone. It doesn't become sex with someone else until you use a real person in real time as a meaningless sexual stimulant.

A unique problem associated with sex addiction is staring. Because it involves other people in real time, we need to discuss it here.

When a sexually addicted person stares, he often does it unconsciously. But no one walks into a strip club or an erotic massage parlor unconsciously.

Also, it's very difficult to draw a clear line between appreciating another person's beauty and staring at the person.

One clear line is when staring becomes stalking. Then it's an issue of sexual harassment.

I don't consider staring an addiction, I consider it a symptom of sex addiction. Although it's more of a symptom than an addiction, staring can create frustrating problems in a relationship. Approached correctly, staring can be overcome rather quickly because it is not an addiction.

The following distinctions apply to meaningless sex with other people:
- Because it involves other people, it has a greater impact on a person than sexually addictive activity alone.
- People with or without a relationship can become addicted to it.
- It is not an ethical problem as long as you restrict your activity to adults who give you informed consent and you keep your part of the agreement.

It is unethical:
- If children are involved.
- If adults are involved without their informed consent.
- If you are in a committed relationship and have promised to remain faithful to your partner. The unethical aspect is breaking the promise and/or lying about it.

Other sexual addictions
The next most widely practiced sex addictions are infidelity and pedophilia.
Both fall into the category of sex with other people. And as you will see in the next
chapters, they also include complex ethical issues.
Chapter 20
Religion And Sex Addiction

When it comes to the ethical issues involved in sexually addictive behavior, both religion and conventional, licensed therapy make big mistakes. The difference between them can be summed up by two statements:

- Conventional, licensed therapy: "If it feels good, do it."
- Religion: "If it feels good, it's sinful."

Essentially, religion demands that your every feeling be subject to moral judgment. It is a costly, torturous error.

Conventional, licensed therapy avoids morally judging feelings. But it also avoids judging actions. For the conventional, licensed therapist, all behavior is relative. Morality is whatever you feel it should be.

It leaves a person with no objective standards by which to live his/her life.

Let's take the case of Victor. As a teenager, he thought seriously about going into the priesthood to escape his desires to masturbate. Fortunately, a priest he was close to convinced him that masturbation was not a sin. Unfortunately, the priest attempted to seduce him. Victor didn't let him get far. In his twenties, Victor made his mind up that it was time to lose his virginity. He went to a prostitute. He left feeling terrible because he could not get sexually aroused.

He decided to seek help from a conventional, licensed therapist. Victor spent two years examining his childhood. He was told that his dogmatic religious beliefs had prevented him from having sex with a prostitute. "You should be more open-minded about sex. It's human to want it," the therapist said.

Had Victor been in counseling with me, I'd have told him, "Maybe you weren't sexually aroused because you wanted something more meaningful than paid sex with a stranger."

The therapist also advised that because Victor would not let the priest seduce him, Victor was a repressed homosexual. Victor was afraid the therapist might be right. Throughout his teens, Victor had experienced a nagging interest in young girls. In his twenties the interest heightened. About a year into therapy, Victor told his therapist that
he had a strong interest in girls about 12 to 14 years old. His therapist responded, "Your interest in teenage girls is a displacement of your repressed homosexual desires. You're not exploring your real self."

Victor tried to find his supposedly repressed homosexual feelings. Week after week Victor told the therapist he couldn't find them and the therapist told Victor he wasn't looking hard enough. Finally, Victor left therapy more confused and depressed than when he had started. Fortunately, he had resisted his therapist's advice to use psychological medication.

As a vegetarian, Victor felt that he should not rely on medication to overcome his problems; instead he tried an assortment of natural herbs. Although they did not help him, he was able to meet a woman who shared his interest in alternative medicine and whom he felt comfortable with. Her name was Alicia. She was his first sexual experience. The relationship, however, turned out to be a disaster. In his own words, "I wanted someone as dysfunctional as I was."

After Alicia, Victor's feelings toward young girls accelerated. He started hanging around web sites and news groups for teenage girls from the inner city. Then he entered chat rooms using a girl's name. He chatted with the girls about school, guys, homework, parents, etc. In case you're not aware of it, there are grown men on the Internet who pass themselves off as young girls. Eventually Victor was able to tell if a girl was real or a man playing the same game Victor was.

One of the real girls figured out Victor was an adult male. We'll call her Kate. She approached him for sex. Victor was worried that Kate was an undercover cop. But his interest in young girls got the better of him and he made a date to meet her. She lived about 50 miles from him. Victor went to the meeting place, a popular park in the inner city. He saw Kate wearing the school uniform she said she'd have on. In her hand was a daisy. Then his fear that she was an undercover cop took over. And he still had strong moral reservations about what he was doing. He hid in the crowd and observed her.

Kate paced back and forth for about an hour. She tore the daisy in pieces and left. Victor followed her. She took a bus to a residential street and went inside a modest single-family home. Victor realized that Kate was real; she was not a cop.

"I was afraid that she would never want to speak to me again. I decided to tell her that
I got called in to work and that my computer crashed. She'd believe me."

He told her his story by e-mail. She wrote back, believing him completely. Her belief in him spurred a feeling of genuine warmth toward her. He decided he didn't want to lie to her any more. He told her what he had done. Kate's response was supportive. She told him she felt bad about it too. She suggested that they both get help. I don't know what Kate did for help. Victor joined a Twelve Step Program.

He had resisted going to the Twelve Step Program because he had not wanted to confess his problems in public. But after the incident with Kate he decided that maybe public confession was what he needed. At his first meeting he told the group about Kate. Everyone was supportive. Victor felt that he had made the right decision. He started going in person twice a week and attended online meetings at least once a day.

He found a sponsor. Carlos was about 15 years older than Victor. Carlos was single; he had been sent to prison for child molestation. Carlos attributed most of his problem to alcohol and had stopped drinking through the Twelve Step Program. He built up a successful business after leaving prison and was well respected by the people who knew him. He promised Victor, "Turn yourself over to the Higher Power like I did. The Higher Power will give you anything you want. You have to have faith in Him."

Carlos also assured Victor that he was not homosexual. "Look man, I had sex with pretty young girls and I'm not queer. Man, don't go near those pretty young things. You'll get your ass thrown in prison." But Victor wanted a stronger motivation than fear of going to prison. "I knew that if the desire was strong enough, I wouldn't care what happened to me," he told me.

Victor diligently turned himself over to the Higher Power. "I was feeling stronger and stronger. I really thought I had it beat. I felt guilty because no one else in the group was doing as well as I was. Guys were falling off the wagon. No one was clean for more than a year."

Victor had restricted his activities to masturbation and adult pornography. He did not seek a relationship with anyone outside his Twelve Step group. Carlos told him, "Whacking off with porn is OK. Stay away from the kiddie porn. Do whatever it takes to stay out of prison, man."

Victor started feeling an intense loneliness that he could not get satisfied at the group
meetings. Carlos told him, "Hey man, I know a doc who will prescribe medication for you for social anxiety. Man, it helps. Whatever it takes." Victor wasn't interested.

He lived a few blocks from a high school. He bought a pair of binoculars and spied out of his window at the teenage girls walking home. He didn't tell Carlos or the group about it. He returned to the chat rooms. He met another teenage girl who wanted to have sex with him. He made a desperate phone call to Carlos. Carlos told him, "Get down on your knees and pray to the Higher Power. Don't get off your knees until I get there, man. I'm on my way." Carlos spent the rest of the night talking to Victor about the Higher Power and staying out of prison. A week later, Victor was back in the chat rooms. He didn't call Carlos.

He found me because a girl in one of the chat rooms mentioned my web site. I don't know if she was a real girl, a cop, or a man. All I know is Victor is in a mature relationship today and his bout with pedophilia is won. Let's find out how he got there.
Chapter 21
Untangling The Mess

Victor demanded that I explain his supposedly hidden homosexual desires. He wanted to know why the Higher Power had not saved him from returning to his addictive behavior.

When he wasn't feeling sorry for himself about his childhood he was angry about "the intolerant society I'm forced to live in."

But something more damaging was eating at Victor. Although he had rejected the belief that masturbation was sinful, he still believed that feelings were subject to moral judgment. He hated himself for having the "wrong" feelings.

To escape his moral self-hatred, he adopted the conventional, licensed therapy mantra of: "There is no right and wrong. Everything is relative. What's right for you might not be right for me." It encouraged him to act on his pedophilic desires.

Here's a breakdown of his problems:

1. His religious beliefs encouraged him to painfully repress feelings and thus refrain from his borderline pedophilic behavior.
2. When he was in religious mode, he hated himself any time he experienced pedophilic thoughts or feelings, even though he didn't act on them.
3. He believed that there was no difference between feeling something and doing it. Thus, he had no incentive to refrain from borderline pedophilic behavior.
4. The only alternative he saw to his religious teachings was, "There is no right and wrong. Everything is relative."
5. Eventually he would act on his borderline pedophilic feelings to relieve the pain of repression, the agony of self-hate, and to gain some pleasure in his life because: "I was going to be punished anyway. And there is no right or wrong; everything is relative."

When a person is repressing desires that can lead to immoral behavior, my first goal is to show him that he is capable of feeling the desire and still refraining from immoral behavior.

I showed Victor that he did have control over his actions when it came to moral issues by asking him questions such as:
"Have you ever felt like punching someone in the nose and decided not to do it, even though you really wanted to?"

"Have you ever felt a deep urge to steal something, and you knew you could get away with it, but you decided not to?"

"Have you ever felt like lying and you knew you could get away with it but decided not to?"

If you ask yourself the same questions, I'm sure you'll realize - as Victor did – that you have control over your actions in ethical areas. Then I asked him: "Have you ever felt like acting pedophilic and decided not to?"

He said, "No."

I reminded him that he did not meet with Kate even though he had the opportunity and desire. I also reminded him that he had chosen to be honest with her when he had the opportunity to lie to her.

That was a breakthrough for him. He asked me: "How come sometimes I don't act on the feelings and other times I can't help it?"

"You've been relying on repression," I replied. "Sometimes you were able to repress your feelings; other times you couldn't work up enough fear and self-hatred to repress. There is an alternative to repression, fear, and self-hatred. You can experience very powerful feelings and let them go unsatisfied without repressing them. And you can feel good about it."

That got his attention.

Victor thirsted for more insights. We had many discussions about the relationship between feelings, ethics, repression, addiction, and choice. The bottom line can be summarized as follows:

1. **Ethics have more impact than addictions.** For instance, most people don't engage in continual unethical behavior such as stealing, lying, murder, rape, assault, and pedophilia. But most people continually engage in some form of addiction such as overeating, alcohol, drugs, prescription medication, addictive masturbation, porn, gambling, or smoking.

2. **Most people refrain from continual unethical behavior** because people have more control over their actions when it comes to ethical issues.
When a person acts unethically it's because he or she chooses to. They're not forced to; genes don't make them do it; a lousy childhood or a miserable environment is not the cause.

3. By nature, addictions are more difficult to stop than unethical behaviors.

People get into addictions because they choose addiction as a means of escaping anxiety. They don't go into addiction for unethical reasons. The reason most people don't stop addictive behavior is that they don't know how to. Religion, conventional, licensed therapy, and the Twelve Step Program are the methods commonly relied upon to stop addictive behaviors; these methods are abysmal failures.

4. When Victor accepted the belief that he had a disease, he had no reason to demand ethical behavior of himself. Then the moral relativism of "there is no right or wrong" would become his mantra.

5. When Victor shunned moral relativism, he turned to religion for ethical guidance. His religious beliefs led him to painful repression, overwhelming self-hatred, and feeling that he had molested a child even though he had never sexually touched one.

Victor wanted to act ethically; he just didn't know how to do it in a way that was consistent with the needs of the mind. It took a few months before he was able to stop condemning and repressing his feelings. Then I was able to call on his strong sense of morality to get him to make moral choices about pedophilia without relying on repression or self-hatred.

The danger of his acting pedophilic had been overcome. That was just the beginning.
Chapter 22
When Masturbation Becomes An Addiction

Let's start with two facts about sex.

1) When you are with someone sexually you gain the person's consent or use force and expect some kind of reaction from the person.

2) The person you choose is an expression of what you want in a relationship.

- If you choose promiscuously, it means you are not serious about building a long-term, committed relationship.
- If you use force, it means you have no respect for the sovereignty of other people.
- If you build an emotionally honest relationship with someone before it gets sexual, it means you want more than a quick, meaningless fix.
- If the sex stems from honest emotions between you and your partner, it goes beyond sex; it becomes making love.
- If sex to you is nothing more than a momentary sensual experience, it means your partner is an object you use for a cheap thrill.
- If you don't care about your partner's pleasure, it means you don't care about your partner.
- If you go to prostitutes, it means you want a limited form of personal relationship you control through money.
- If you avoid sex with other people, it does not mean you are seeking a higher spirituality. It means you are afraid of genuine intimacy.

When we were working on pedophilia, I told Victor, "You seek a child so that you can be in charge. You can manipulate the child to do whatever you want. You want to use the child to help you avoid the risk of an intimate, adult relationship." This awareness is necessary for anyone struggling with pedophilia.

Even after he overcame his pedophilic behavior, Victor still longed for a relationship that put him in charge and protected him from the risks of rejection and failure. It was clear that he desperately wanted to avoid dealing with rejection and failure because his primary form of sex was masturbation and porn. It had been Victor's primary form of sex throughout his life.
In the masturbation/porn mindset, Victor had complete control. He created the circumstances, the people, the behavior, the reactions, and the emotions. He had no risk. Everything always turned out just the way he wanted. Getting Victor to see that he was still attempting to escape the demands of an intimate relationship would be difficult. For him, like most people, there were only two alternatives when it came to masturbation:

- Masturbation is a sin and you should not do it.
- Masturbate whenever you want to because it's perfectly natural.

It's amazing how defensive some people will become about masturbation. Just about any reasonable person will admit that a natural behavior like eating can become addictive. But, politely mention to that same person, "Masturbation can become addictive also." Here are some of the reactions you might get:

- A look as if you just urinated on the person's leg.
- The person acts like they didn't hear you, then changes the subject.
- A tirade of politically correct jargon about how masturbation is natural and you should not feel guilty about it. But you didn't say people should feel guilty about it; you didn't say it was unnatural. You said it could become addictive.

Anything can be used additively. Here is a short list of harmless, everyday activities some people turn into addiction:

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Reading
- Listening to music
- Talking
- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Watching TV
- Shopping

Addictions are not restricted to substances like alcohol, drugs, and prescription medication. They are not confined to socially unacceptable behavior. Addictions are a method of escape. For instance:

- Some people compulsively clean in the hope that fanatical neatness will replace their
For some people, TV is their drug of choice. They seek to escape anxiety by sitting back and being entertained. A few signs of TV addiction: It's on all the time even if you're not watching it. You watch it even though it bores you. You mindlessly channel surf. You can't fall asleep without it. In extreme cases, the people on TV are your best friends. You feel a sense of anxiety when it's time to shut it off. On some level you know you watch too much and you wish you could cut back or stop. (Comment: Notice how the TV media broadcast specials on cyber addiction but they don't do investigative reporting on TV addiction?)

- Some people talk compulsively to avoid taking a good close look at themselves.
- An addicted sleeper uses sleep the same way an alcoholic uses booze.
- Compulsive exercising has become almost as popular as workaholism.
- Some people get lost in a world of books, others in music. Not for relaxation and pleasure, not to learn, not to grow, not for love of knowledge and beauty, but to continuously escape facing their own problems.

It is socially acceptable to discuss any of these activities as a possible addiction. Many people laugh about these addictions. Some people even brag about them. But discussing masturbation as an addiction is taboo.

If you want to overcome or learn about sex addiction, it's time for an open-minded, blunt dialogue about masturbation.

If you masturbate, here are a few questions to consider:

- Do you want a fully committed relationship that includes complete emotional and sexual commitment? Do you want the best possible sex with your partner? If you're not in a relationship, do you want the best chance of getting into one? Do you want your sex life to be based on loving sex with a real person or would you rather relate to fantasy? Do you prefer to use sex as a drug or do you want to experience a profound form of intimacy? Do you notice any difference between the feeling you get from masturbation and the feeling you experience when you have sex with your partner?

The next chapter is a masturbation interview. It covers these questions and many more. They helped Victor understand that his masturbation had become addictive. If you masturbate, whether you're a man or a woman, it will help you decide if your
masturbation is addictive.
Chapter 23
The Masturbation Interview, Part 1

Let's start with three questions regarding relationships.

Q: Do you want a fully committed relationship that includes complete emotional and sexual commitment?
A: What you need to consider:

Sexual activity that does not include your partner takes sexual energy away from building a closer bond between the two of you.

Masturbation also entails fantasy. Fantasy demands emotions in order for it to be appealing. Those emotions could be going into the relationship with your real partner. One of the major benefits of overcoming a masturbation addiction correctly is that the emotional and sexual relationship between you and your partner deepens.

Q: Do you want the best possible sex with your partner?
A: What you need to consider:

If you masturbate, there are many times you are not able to have sex with your partner because you used your sexual energy for masturbation. The sex life between the two of you is neglected to the degree that you masturbate.

Also, when you masturbate you create a sexual bond between you and fantasy. That bond competes with your feelings for your real partner. You live two distinct sex lives - one real, one based on a masturbation fantasy.

This leads us to the next insight about sex and emotions:

When your partner is your exclusive source of sexual satisfaction, the sexual and emotional involvement between you intensifies because the two of you need each other so much more.

Q: If you're not in a relationship, do you want the best chance of getting into one?
A: What you need to consider: Masturbation depends on illusion.

Whether you use porn or create the illusion in your own mind, if your primary form of sex is masturbation, then your primary intimate relationship is illusion-based.

When illusion is your guide, real people become boring. No real person can provide the temporary, shallow thrill of a masturbation fantasy; hence, some addicted
masturbators find life alone more appealing. But: all fantasies end with a crash.

When the masturbation fantasy ends, the addicted masturbator experiences painful loneliness and acute anxiety. S/he might also experience numbing depression.

Unfortunately, the addicted masturbator might resort to more masturbation to relieve the aftereffects of the crash.

For the addicted masturbator, masturbation offers:

- Sexual satisfaction without the risk of rejection and failure.
- An illusion of intimacy s/he can completely control.
- A high not based on alcohol, drugs, or prescription medication.
- A seemingly pleasurable escape from dealing with the demands of real life. But fantasy does not work. So:
  - The sexual satisfaction the addicted masturbator relies on is short-lived and shallow.
  - Since his/her intimacy is based on illusion, the addicted masturbator lives with loneliness and a sense of futility about developing a genuine, intimate relationship.
  - When the high of addictive masturbation ends, the addicted masturbator suffers the depression and anxiety of another failed attempt to escape facing life.
  - Because the addicted masturbator is not dealing with life, s/he does not enjoy the profound rewards of life.

As a result, the source of all genuine rewards - life itself - becomes dreary and foreboding.

Bottom line:

Addictive masturbation creates acute loneliness and alienation from reality.

You have your best chance of finding happiness in life by building a real relationship rather than seeking it in the illusionary world of addictive masturbation.
Chapter 24
The Masturbation Interview, Part 2

Let's explore some other misconceptions about masturbation and addiction.
"Everyone does it" and/or "It's a normal thing for men to do" are the most common rationalizations.

First of all, everyone does not do it.

Women do not get into masturbation like men do. I think there is an inherent reason why most women are not interested in masturbation. Women, by nature, are more relationship-oriented. Sex alone just doesn't interest them that much.

Men, by comparison, have a very difficult time forming relationships and performing sexually. Sex alone is a relief from the strains of a relationship and reduces the performance anxiety a man can easily develop.

But the "everyone does it" argument goes beyond sex addiction. It's also a stupid way to think.

For instance, in Elizabethan England it was popular not to bathe. "Everyone" avoided bathing as much as possible. If you go through life trying to figure out what everyone else thinks so that you know what to think, the next time you bathe, ask yourself what good it does to follow the herd.

Let's take a brief look at why most men get hooked on masturbation. When men discover masturbation, they feel like they've found the best candy jar in the world. The only exception I'm aware of is men who come from a strict religious background. They undergo a terrible struggle with the cruel belief that masturbation is a sin.

For now, what we need to explore is how a person goes from a natural process of self-discovery to addiction. One thing you can be sure of:

_No one starts addictive behavior expecting to become hooked._

Since most women don't have problems with masturbation, and since many of my readers are women, I also want to give you a similar, though not equal, addiction to think about: overeating.

_People become addicted to eating and sex the same way._ They take a natural, needed, pleasurable activity and use it as an escape mechanism.
For instance, at the end of a difficult day, the addicted eater says, "I need my bag of cookies." For the sexually addicted person, masturbation is their bag of cookies. Many women do not understand masturbation addiction. For them it holds no appeal. So they'll tell the guy they're involved with, "Why don't you just stop???” They believe that if the guy really, really wanted to, he would "just stop it."

If you are a woman who believes that the man in your life should "just stop masturbating," let me point something out. You either have an eating addiction or have a friend addicted to eating. You know how difficult it is deal with overeating. It would be unfair and callous for a man to tell a woman struggling with an eating addiction, "Just stop overeating!"

Sex addiction is more damaging to a relationship than overeating. However, if you want to deal with sex addiction realistically, the first thing you need to realize is: Someone addicted to masturbation and/or pornography does not "just stop."

As far as masturbation being "a normal thing men do," I don't use the term "normal." To me it means following the herd. The standard of judgment I use and encourage my clients to use is: "Does the behavior lead to happiness and wellbeing?" With masturbation the question is: "At what point is masturbation healthy and at what point does it lead to problems?"

It doesn't matter if every man in the world masturbates ten times a day. If it's not healthy and does not lead to happiness it means every man in the world has big problems and the sooner he deals with them, the better his life becomes.

The following questions will help you evaluate whether or not you're addicted to masturbation. A "Yes" or "Sometimes" answer indicates addictive masturbation.

1. Is masturbation a hobby to you; do you do it to pass the time or relieve boredom?
   Yes No Sometimes

2. Do you feel like, "I need to masturbate," the same way an alcoholic feels, "I need a drink"?
   Yes No Sometimes

3. If you are single, do you prefer to stay home and masturbate rather than go out and try to build an intimate relationship?
   Yes No Sometimes
4. Do you experience masturbation hangover (disoriented, fatigued, and stressed after masturbating)?
   Yes No Sometimes
5. Do you wish you could go a week without masturbating? Yes No Sometimes
6. Does masturbation cause you physical pain? Yes No Sometimes
7. After you have sex with your partner do you need to masturbate? Yes No Sometimes
8. Do you prefer masturbation to having sex with your partner? Yes No Sometimes
9. Does masturbation hinder you from having sex with your partner? Yes No Sometimes
10. Are you impotent with your partner but capable of masturbation? Yes No Sometimes
11. If your partner turns you down for sex, do you find that you must masturbate? Yes No Sometimes
12. Do you sneak masturbation in at work? Do you do it in the car or in public places? Yes No Sometimes
13. Do you rely on masturbation to relieve stress? Yes No Sometimes
14. Does masturbation get in the way of accomplishing the things you want to do? Yes No Sometimes
15. Do you wish that your partner or people you meet were as exciting as your masturbation fantasies? Yes No Sometimes
16. Do you feel proud of yourself when you are able to not masturbate and feel unhappy when you do masturbate? Yes No Sometimes

You might look through the questions and say, "Oh, I'm not as bad as that." You're probably right. But that's not the point. The issue is whether or not you are addicted, not if you are addicted less than someone else.

Some people might answer "Yes" or "Sometimes" to only one question. Others might answer "Yes" to all of them. It does not matter how addicted you are. What matters is: How honest are you willing to be about your addiction?
If your honest decision is you are not addicted to masturbation, I hope you are correct. If you believe that you are addicted:

1. Don't beat yourself up. Addictive masturbation is not a sin; it is not perverted or disgusting. It's a problem, not a moral weakness. Don't treat yourself like a horrible person. You have a problem, nothing more - or less.

2. Addictive masturbation takes a great toll on a person, but don't expect yourself to overcome a masturbation addiction today. It takes time. You're better off understanding that you are not ready than you are demanding the impossible of yourself.

3. Don't avoid relationships because you have a masturbation problem. You can still build a good relationship even though you are struggling with masturbation addiction.

4. Don't lie about your addiction. If you are in a relationship with someone, the sooner you're honest with your partner, the better for both of you.

When I got through to Victor that he was addicted to masturbation and that he was not a disgusting, perverted person because he had a masturbation addiction, he felt relieved and hopeful. He was relieved because he had properly identified a big problem in his life. He felt hopeful because he knew he had an opportunity to make the positive changes in his life he had wanted for a long, long time.

Now let's discuss his porn problem.
Chapter 25

Pornography: Rights, And Addiction

You do not have the right to tell me who or what to find attractive. I do not have the right to dictate your personal or artistic interests. Beauty, as you know, is in the eye of the beholder. People who use porn have the same rights you and I do. As long as the porn consists of consenting, informed adults, it's not your business, mine, or anyone else's to tell the porn user what to be attracted to.

You certainly are not required to be supportive of porn. If you despise porn, you have every right to express your opinion. If you don't want your children exposed to it, they're your kids.

But as you assert your rights, remember that you have no right to intrude in the affairs of consenting, informed adults.

If you are in a relationship with someone who uses porn addictively, you have the right to insist that they stop because:

- You have the option to leave a relationship any time you wish.
- You have the right to set your standards for someone to be in a relationship with you.
- You are not required to love someone who does things that offend you.
- You are not required to be with someone who does not appreciate your needs.
- You have the right to be tolerant or intolerant of your partner's problems.

Pornography addiction is not a matter of taste, beauty, ugliness, or tolerance. It's an issue of addictively using sexually explicit material.

But what is sexually explicit material? For instance:

- There are people who use the underwear advertisements in the newspaper for sexually addictive activity
- Some people use erotic stories the same way other sexually addicted people use porn videos.
- Some pedophiles get a sexual high from watching children's TV programs.
- TV evangelists are a sexual turn-on for some people.

I know that some of my readers want to ban pornography. What everyone needs to realize is that a ban on pornography becomes a ban on thoughts, feelings, and desires.
except for those approved by the regulators.

Now let's talk about pornography as an addiction.

Again, we encounter differences between men and women. As mentioned, most women don't get hooked on masturbation. Interestingly, most of the women I've spoken to with masturbation addictions don't use pornography. So when it comes to porn, the gap between men and women widens.

Here are some relevant comments wives and girlfriends have made to me about porn:

"I can't compete against those women. They're younger than I am. I don't have the body they do."

"I would never do the things they do. If that's what he wants, I can't please him."

"When we make love, I feel like he's making love to them, not me."

"What's wrong with me? Why isn't he attracted to me instead of them?"

"I feel like he's comparing me to them - and I'm losing."

"I feel like he'd rather be with them."

"I feel like he has sex with me to do me a favor."

"When I'm out of the house, I'm afraid he's with them."

"Why doesn't he just tell me he doesn't want me?"

"Sometimes I feel like they're in our bedroom."

In many of these statements, pornography is referred to as "them." It's an interesting use of language I've observed for years. The reason wives and girlfriends refer to porn as "them" is: Many women in a relationship with a sexually addicted man feel like his use of pornography is adultery.

However, the guy does not feel he's committing adultery. In most cases the thought of adultery doesn't even cross his mind. In fact: Most sexually addicted men are shocked to discover that their partner feels that the use of pornography is the equivalent of adultery.

In helping a couple deal with pornography, one of the first goals is to get both parties to understand the other person's perspective.

The man needs to understand that the woman in his life feels she is being cheated on.

The woman needs to accept that her partner is not having sex with another person, even though it feels that way to her.

Life is easier said than done. Accomplishing the goal of mutual understanding is
definitely easier said than done. If the couple does not understand each other's perspective, then:

- The woman will feel that her partner is cheating on her and doesn't care.
- The man will feel that she is trying to stop him from doing something that's harmless and pleasurable.

Eventually, if both parties don't change their perspective, the relationship ends - or the couple spends a lifetime in misery. These mutual understandings are necessary because:

- Pornography addiction cannot be overcome immediately. The relationship needs to survive until the porn addiction can be correctly stopped.

In other words: The addicted person will use porn even while he's in counseling attempting to stop. No counselor can get a porn addiction successfully stopped quickly. It takes months before pornography addiction can be successfully stopped.

Successful stopping means: "The client has an excellent chance of staying free of the addiction once he's stopped." Sure, you can get instant, easy results. But the addicted person will most likely return to pornography because quick, easy results are based on repression.

In order for the relationship to survive the initial months of difficulty, the couple needs mutual understanding. When the understanding is developed, the relationship can strengthen even though the pornography addiction has not been stopped. A couple can build a good relationship even while the addicted person is still struggling to overcome his addiction. Later on we're going to learn how it's done. Then, when the porn addiction is overcome, the couple can go on and build an even better life together.
Chapter 26
Pornography And Crime

Victor was single and unattached, so he did not experience the stress that using porn creates in a relationship.

From some of his religious teachings, he had picked up the notion that masturbation was OK as long as he didn't use porn. Contrary to his religious notions, his conventional, licensed therapist had told him using porn was an acceptable substitute for having sex with a child. Because conventional, licensed therapy relies on behavior modification, it is not uncommon for conventional, licensed therapists to recommend porn as a substitute for illegal sexual behavior.

Advising pornography as a substitute for sexual behavior that's illegal is the equivalent of telling someone to pig out on health food instead of stealing junk food. The problem is not the food; it's the addictive activity and the lack of ethics. Encouraging any addictive activity encourages more addictive activity. Ethical problems are not overcome with addictive substitutes.

- Child molesters want much more than to just look at child porn. They want to get their hands on a real child.
- Wife beaters don't settle for an obsessive workout at the gym.
- Voyeurs seek more than watching porn videos. They want to spy on real people.

Ethical problems are best dealt with by demanding ethical behavior and providing a system that makes a person pay for his/her unethical, unlawful actions.

Victor was torn between a) his religious belief that pornography was a sin and b) the conventional, licensed therapy approach of using porn as a substitute for unethical, illegal behavior.

Because he felt that pornography was a sin, he tried to repress his porn feelings. When he couldn't keep them repressed, he used pornography and felt angry and disgusted with himself. Most of his porn was adult-oriented; he occasionally used child porn. His conventional licensed therapist did not advise that he use child porn. But based on his therapist's advice to use adult porn instead of molesting a child, Victor rationalized the use of child porn by telling himself, "I'm protecting a child from being hurt" because
Victor figured that it's better to have sex with a picture of a child than a real child.

Here is what happens when you offer an addictive substitute to deal with an ethical problem. In Victor's words, "I felt like the porn was teasing me. I felt like it was tempting me more to do the real thing."

Between Victor's religious feelings and the terrible advice given to him by his conventional, licensed therapist, the bigger of his problems was reliance on pornography to deal with an ethical issue. Victor genuinely wanted to live an ethical life, not out of fear of divine retribution, but because he honestly wanted good relationships. Because of his own desire to be ethical, I was able to help him understand that if he continued to rely on porn, his chances of returning to his unethical, illegal behavior would increase.

Victor said, "I told my therapist that I was using child pornography. He said that I shouldn't do it, but if I really felt like I was going to do something worse, it was OK to use it as long as I didn't get caught. When I went to the Twelve Step Program, Carlos said I should stop."

Victor used child porn in the Twelve Step Program anyway and didn't tell Carlos. Why didn't he tell Carlos? Because Victor used the excuse that he had a disease and his disease had made him lie to Carlos.

When you are talking to a Twelve Stepper about their addiction, remember, Twelve Steppers believe they have a disease that can make them lie to you or anyone else at any time.

There are many people in the Twelve Step Program who are honest. The other side of the Twelve Step Program is that there are plenty of Twelve Steppers who do not want to be held responsible for their actions. They want to be able to continue destroying themselves and others and be told by other Twelve Steppers, "Your disease makes you do it."

Victor had almost become such a person. He needed to understand:

In the Twelve Step Program "I'm powerless" means, "I'm not responsible." It took months until I finally got him to fully accept that he - and he alone - was the cause of his addictions, his pedophilic interests and his pedophilic behavior.

One problem that we encountered along the way was the issue of whether or not using pornography causes people to be more likely to do something unethical and/or illegal.
Victor's question was: "Joe, if pornography doesn't make me do bad things, then why did it feel like the more I used it the more I wanted to do something bad?"

It is true that if you have criminal sexual tendencies, using porn will feed those tendencies. But the issue is not tendencies. The issue is the tremendous moral barrier between tending to feel like doing something and choosing to actually doing it.

Victor had great difficulty in dealing with his pedophilic desires because he believed that once he felt a pedophilic desire, he had acted immorally. After we cleared up his confusion about feeling something and actually doing it, I explained:

"Pornography does not cause a person to engage in sexual criminal activity. The person becomes curious about the activity. The person uses porn to stimulate a feeling that was already there. The more he chooses to stimulate the feeling, the stronger it becomes.

"For instance, billions of men and women do not have any sexual interest in children. They might not use any porn, or they might use adult porn to some degree. Let's compare them to the person who lusts for child porn. The person interested in child porn has a sexual interest in children regardless of pornography. He seeks the kind of porn that will feed his interests. People - all people - seek that which fulfills their interests.

"Money doesn't make people steal. Books don't make people read. People make decisions. Then they find a way to implement them. If money didn’t exist, people would steal something else. If there weren't books, people would find some other way to gain knowledge. Porn doesn't create sexual criminals The overwhelming majority of pornography users have never committed a sexual crime and never would.

"Many - not all - sexual criminals use pornography. Many of them also read the Bible. Many of them don't.

"Almost all criminals were exposed to the Bible before they were exposed to porn. The Bible didn't make them follow the Ten Commandments. And pornography didn't make them become sexual predators. They made choices. You make choices. I make choices. We all make choices. And each person has no one to blame but him or herself."
Chapter 27
The Pornography Interview, Part 1

Even though the motivation for porn is usually masturbation, pornography is a separate addiction for most sexually addicted people. So we need to find out:

Whether or not you are addicted to it.
If addicted, how intense is your addiction?

Some symptoms are more evident when a person is in a relationship. Because of this, many single, unattached people don't realize they're addicted to pornography. Other single people sense they are addicted to porn and/or masturbation but believe that if they get into a relationship the addictions will end. In most cases, that's a big mistake because a relationship does not heal an addiction.

This interview is designed to help the single, unattached person and the person in a committed relationship. It consists of Yes, No, and Sometimes answers. The questions have explanations to help you decide if you are or are not addicted to pornography.

1. Do you have a porn collection? It might consist of pictures you keep on your hard drive or burn onto a CD. It might also be porn videos, magazines, books, photos, etc.
   Yes No

   People not addicted to porn can take it or leave it. If you have a porn collection, it means you have an attachment to pornography beyond "I can take it or leave it."

   Interestingly, most people with a porn collection don't have the time to view it because they're obsessed with collecting more.

   Be careful of the following rationalization: "I don't have a porn addiction. I just like to collect things." Yeah, right. Overeaters like to collect stomachaches, alcoholics like to collect drunk driving tickets, and smokers like to collect ashes on their clothes.

2. Do you spend hours surfing the Internet for pornography, or watching porn videos, or looking through porn mags? Yes No Sometimes

   The time a person spends with pornography is an excellent indicator of addiction. The person not attached to porn doesn't spend much time with it. The addicted person spends hours.

3. Do you search for the "perfect picture"? Yes No Sometimes
An indicator of addiction is the inability to achieve lasting satisfaction from the behavior. The porn-addicted person obsessively searches for the "perfect" image. He never finds what he's looking for because what he really wants is the "perfect" escape from life. It doesn't exist; it never has; it never will.

4. Do you feel like, "I gotta stop now. I've spent too much time on porn tonight," and then you find you can't stop? Yes No Sometimes

A good test for addiction is if you can walk away from it anytime. If you get into a porn session and feel yourself wanting to stop, but you keep going anyway, you might be more attached to porn than you realize.

5. Do you access porn at work even though your company has a no-porn policy? Yes No Sometimes

A sure sign of addiction is the risks a person takes to engage in the activity. For instance, overeaters and smokers knowingly put their health at risk. Alcoholics risk their sanity. Drug addicts risk jail terms. Some sex addicts risk their jobs.

6. Do you spend money on it you can't afford? Yes No Sometimes

A person who can take porn or leave it won't spend more money on it than they can afford. Addicted people are notorious for wasting money on their addictions.

7. Even if you can afford it, do you find that your spending on porn is compulsive? Yes No Sometimes

For instance, you have numerous memberships to porn sites. Or you know that what you're buying isn't worth the money. Or you tell yourself, "I wish I were spending my money on something worthwhile." Or, when it comes to porn, you don't think about the money; you just spend it.

8. Do you get disgusted, throw out your porn collection and then a few weeks or months later build a new one? Yes No Sometimes

Some porn-addicted people remove all the porn from the home and then slowly but surely bring it back in. If they're in a relationship, they bring it back in the same way an alcoholic sneaks booze in, a smoker sneaks their smoking, or an overeater secretly binges. If they live alone they might tell themselves, "I'm really not building a new collection and starting the addiction again. I just don't want to get rid of this one picture."
The cycle of throwing out porn and then bringing it back in is a good indicator of addiction.

9. Do you regularly argue with yourself and others about how much you enjoy the behavior and that it's not harming anyone?
   Yes No Sometimes

Some addicted people are honest with themselves and others about their addiction. Others prefer to lie about it. The person who feels compelled to defend addictive and harmful behavior is trying to fool himself. He secretly hopes that by getting others to agree that his behavior is not harmful or addictive, he will believe it too.

10. Has your use of porn increased? Yes No

Increasing use of a harmful substance or activity is an indicator of addiction. However, some addicted people don't increase their use; others cut back and are still addicted. Increasing usage is not the acid test. But it is a sign.

11. Do you wish you could cut back?
   Yes No Sometimes

This is a more reliable indicator because most addicted people wish they were doing the addiction less. It makes sense. Addictions are not good for you and so the less you do it, the better you feel. The more you do it, the worse you feel.

12. Do you compare your partner or women you date to your porn interests? Yes No Sometimes

Let me give you a few examples: You wish your partner had the kind of breasts you seek in porn land. You wish your partner's butt was like the one you saw last night in porn land. You wish your partner wore the same kind of clothes they wear in porn land. You wish she spoke the same way porn land people speak.

13. Do you create pornographic images in your mind to help you have sex with your partner?
   Yes No Sometimes

This is a powerful indicator of porn addiction. Sex is about relationships. If you use porn images to have sex with your partner, it means you are dependent on fantasy and do not have sex with your partner for who she really is. That's not good for you or her.

The dependency might be infrequent or constant. It doesn't matter. Once you are
dependent on porn fantasies to start sex, to continue, or to complete sex, you are addicted.

Please go on to Part 2.
Chapter 28
The Pornography Interview Part 2

1. Do you have favorite porn stars? Yes No

Smokers have favorite brands of cigarettes; overeaters have favorite binge food; drinkers have their favorite drinks. Some sex addicts have favorite porn stars. One thing you can be sure of: If you have a favorite porn star, you're so hooked on porn, you've become a fan of it.

2. Do you pressure your partner to act out your porn fantasies? Yes No Sometimes

This is a devastating consequence of porn addiction. Here are a few examples:
- You tell your partner to wear clothes, makeup, or do her hair in a way that resembles your favorite porn star.
- You have ethnic preferences in your porn and you try to get your partner to make herself look like your pornographic ethnic preference.
- You pressure your partner into having sex with you that she finds degrading, but you like it because it's the kind of sex you go to porn for.
- You pressure her to wear clothes that give you a porn thrill.

Essentially, you are trying to get your partner to turn your pornographic fantasy into reality. She can't do it. No one can. Reality relationships take hard work and bring lifetime rewards. Fantasies are for the emotionally lazy. They offer no more reward than a quick, shallow thrill that leads to depression, anxiety, alienation, and loneliness.

3. Do you spend more of your free time with porn than you do with people? Yes No

This is one of the more serious forms of porn addiction. It develops because the person decides that rather than try to build an intimate relationship, or even friendships, it's easier to retreat into a fantasy world of porn and masturbation.

4. Have most of your peers had a loving, sexually intimate relationship - not a one-night stand or a series of quick flings - but you are a virgin and your only form of sex is with porn?

Yes No

I usually see this symptom in sexually addicted people who believe that sex before marriage is a sin. They hold themselves back from having sex with a real person. For
sexual satisfaction, they go into the fantasy world of pornography and get hooked.

5. Does your use of pornography interfere with your personal and/or professional responsibilities?
   Yes No Sometimes

   The hours that a porn-addicted person spends in porn fantasy land come from somewhere. There are no free lunches. Everything has a price; the price is not always in dollars. The biggest expenses are not financial. They're personal.

   - A porn-addicted person will break promises made to friends and family because of the time he lost to pornography.
   - He will be late with projects, or the quality of his work will suffer, because the time he could have put into his career he lost to porn.
   - Porn doesn't just take time. It takes energy. It demands that you use your mind for fantasy purposes. The physical and mental energy that goes into porn doesn't go into your close relationships, your career, or the healthier part of yourself

6. Are you eager for your partner to leave the house so that you can get to the porn?
   Yes No Sometimes

   One of the most tragic and harmful signs of porn addiction is the secret life of the porn addict. He feels eager at the first sign that his partner will be out for the afternoon because that will be his opportunity to access pornography.

   In some cases, the porn-addicted person will manipulate the partner into leaving so that he can be alone with his porn.

   In other cases, if the partner is out of town for a few days, the addicted person goes on a porn binge. Then he covers it up just before she gets home.

   In more extreme cases, the porn-addicted person will feel that his partner is an enemy standing in between him and his beloved porn.

   If any of the above symptoms apply to you, the Twelve Step Program and conventional, licensed therapy will say, "Your disease makes you lie to your partner." They are wrong. Here's the real story:

   You engage in addictive behavior and then you choose to lie to your partner rather than tell the truth.

   Addictions do not make people lie. Some people choose to lie about their addictions.
Others choose to be honest about them.

7. Have you ever chosen porn over a relationship? Yes No

If you are a regular porn user, it's highly probable that your partner will discover your pornography. After more discoveries, she'll probably give you a choice: "It's either me or the porn."

In rare cases, the addicted person chooses the porn without making any attempt to stop. In most cases, the person attempts to stop the porn to save his relationship. Unfortunately, because he did not stop correctly, he returns to the porn. His partner comes to the conclusion that he will never stop and she leaves him.

If you don't have a partner and you use porn regularly, porn will become an issue in your relationship, if you get into one.

If your partner has not yet discovered your porn, the clock is ticking as you continue to live a double life.

8. Have you destroyed the trust in your relationship because you lied about your use of porn? Yes No

The most common problem any sex addiction counselor deals with is lost trust between the couple. If you have destroyed the trust in your relationship to protect your use of porn, the first thing to do is stop lying about your addiction.

The addiction doesn't make you lie. You don't have a disease. You choose to lie. You can choose to tell the truth.

9. Are you turned on more by porn than you are by a real person? Yes No Sometimes

If you prefer sex through fantasy rather than with a real person, you're missing out on one of the greatest rewards in life. Most people don't consistently prefer sex with fantasy. But to the extent that you do, your relationships are limited and so is your enjoyment of life.

10. Do you use pornography to relieve stress, boredom, frustration, depression, or other uncomfortable feelings? Yes No Sometimes

Let's try to understand why this indicates addiction:

Whatever problems you have in life need to be dealt with for what they are. For
instance, if you're out of work, creating a porn fantasy will not help you find a job. If you have an anger problem, porn fantasies will not help you treat people correctly. If you are plagued by depression, porn won't bring you happiness.

When you rely on pornography to relieve uncomfortable feelings, pornography becomes your way of escaping things that need to be faced.

Addiction is the use of an activity or substance to escape dealing with life. When you use porn to escape, you become addicted to it.

11. Have other people been harmed or put at risk because of your use of pornography?
Yes No Sometimes

The following is a true story that represents what can happen when a person does not deal with his sex addiction:

Theodore and his wife Carlene had one child, George. The boy was very sick and needed constant care. Carlene worked from home as a freelancer, and Theodore worked in an office.

One afternoon, Theodore came home early because Carlene was supposed to take George to the doctor. Theodore had planned a porn binge while she was out of the house. At the last minute, the doctor's office called and said that an emergency situation had occurred and the appointment would need to be rescheduled.

Carlene asked Theodore if he could watch George so that she could use the time she had scheduled for the doctor to do some errands. Theodore agreed.

When Carlene left the house, Theodore went on his porn binge. He told himself, "George looks fine. He'll be OK." When Carlene got home she asked Theodore, "Did you give George his medicine?"

Theodore had forgotten to give George his medication. Carlene suspected something and fought with him for hours until he admitted that he had become engrossed in a porn binge.

When Theodore and Carlene entered counseling with me, Carlene was terrified to leave her son in her husband's care.

I was able to help them. Theodore did regain his wife's trust. But it shouldn't have been lost in the first place and his son shouldn't have been put in danger.

When people think about the nature of pornography, they're torn between the religious
teachings that pornography is a sin and the politically correct opinion that it's a harmless diversion. Let's put the preachers and the politically correct warriors aside. The issue you need to decide is:

What good does pornography do you?
Does it restrict your ability to have an intimate relationship?
Does it limit the intimate relationship you're in?
Do you spend at least some of your time living in a shallow, empty fantasy world?
Is it worth your time and money?
Does that fantasy world have an effect on your relationship, your career, and your ability to deal with life?
Are other people being put at risk because of your use of porn?
Are you proud of your porn use or do you feel shame about it? Is the pride justified? Is the shame justified?
If you're living a double life, are you happy living a lie?
To some degree, has porn become your drug?

Only you can decide these issues. Hopefully, you'll decide them honestly.
Chapter 29
Promiscuity, Love, And Premarital Sex

Meaningless sex with others has long-term consequences most single people don't identify.

For the person in a committed relationship, meaningless sex with other people is more serious than promiscuity. It's infidelity. He or she is usually unaware of the devastating consequences of this hidden behavior.

Victor was not promiscuous. Even when he was interested in young girls, he wanted a committed relationship with them. His desire for commitment was one of the main reasons I was able to help him deal with his pedophilia.

Andy was different. He had no sexual interest in children. He had lost one marriage due to his infidelities, but to say it was a marriage would not be accurate. It was an experiment; he wanted to see if he could be married. The woman he chose had an alcohol problem and was also promiscuous. The marriage lasted six months.

For the next ten years Andy lived the promiscuous life. When he called me, he said he wanted help with pornography because it was taking up too much of his time. He didn't mention the pain of loneliness or the desire to share his life with someone. He was approaching his pornography addiction as if it were a time management problem, another bad sign.

In today's world, living the single, uncommitted lifestyle is considered no big deal. Taking into account that the "family values" coalition is in a holy war against the single lifestyle, by advocating the committed lifestyle I run the risk of being called a closed-minded, intolerant bigot.

Nevertheless, the single lifestyle - by that I mean going through life without a long-term partner - is not a happy one. It's sad, lonely, depressing and filled with anxiety.

When I hear someone in the media claiming how happy they are without a relationship, I feel sorry for them. They are fooling themselves about the need every human being has for long-term love, commitment, and intimacy. Going through life without a partner is not a sin; it's not a moral weakness. It's a big mistake.

On a sexual basis, the person who avoids committed relationships has three
alternatives: a) celibacy, b) sex alone, c) meaningless sex with others.

I feel sorry for anyone who thinks those alternatives are equal to a happy, committed, intimate, long-term, loving sex life.

Many single people who avoid commitment don't admit it. Instead they say, "When the right person comes along I'll get married." That comment indicates their mistake. The right person doesn't just show up one day. In order for you to build a long-term, committed, loving relationship you need to become "the right person." People who deliberately go through life without a long-term partner have not developed the personality traits necessary for the loving relationship every human being needs.

Andy didn't see that he needed genuine, long-term love in his life. Getting that through to someone like Andy is extremely difficult. The person committed to the single life protects his lifestyle with excellent rationalizations. But they're only rationalizations; they're not reality. Following are a few of the rationalizations the "I love the single life" person uses:

- The divorce rate.

  Yes, there is a high rate of divorce. But at least those couples tried. And many of them will try again and succeed. And don't forget, there are millions and millions of people who have built happy marriages. You don't hear about them in the media because the media don't have the journalistic skills to report good news. Bad news reporting is easy.

  - The conflicts that occur in every marriage.

  The other day I was talking to a young, single client about how difficult it is to build a good marriage. In all sincerity, he said to me, "You mean you don't just fall in love?" I chuckled.

  Many single people have no idea of the great rewards that come from a long-term loving relationship because they have never put out the effort it takes to get those rewards. They focus on the difficulties you find in any marriage. By selectively focusing on the difficulties, the single person avoids making the effort it takes to build a long-term loving relationship.

  They don't get the rewards either. What they get is a lifetime of loneliness, and celibacy, or meaningless sex with other people, or sex alone.

  - "I have a lot of good friends."
The argument is that having good friends can take the place of building that special relationship with one person. It's a shallow argument. Friendship cannot provide the profound, loving warmth you get in that special, long-term loving relationship.

- "I like living alone."

The single person doesn't answer to anyone. S/he can leave the toothpaste wherever they want, play whatever music they wish, watch TV when and where they choose. They can keep a spotless home or cover the walls with fungus. If they don't want to talk, there's no pressure to speak. They can go to sleep when it's convenient and get out of bed when they decide.

Married life is not like that. If you don't fight over the toothpaste, you'll fight over where to put the dishes or how to fold the towels. Watching TV, listening to music, turning up the heat, buying a new chair, getting up, going to bed - everything you do impacts the other person. Everything they do impacts you. Living together isn't easy. But when you want to share good times with someone really, really special, your partner is there. When you're down and you need someone to talk to, you don't have to call a 24-hour hotline. You don't need to run out to a support group meeting. You don't mope and wish you had someone to talk to. The same person you just fought with over what color to paint the bathroom is there to listen and help - because s/he loves you.

And you have someone to care for, someone to love, someone to learn from.

What does the single person have? Well, his toothpaste is exactly where he wants it to be. He gets to listen to whatever music he wants - alone. The TV is all his – and that's the problem. He doesn't have anyone to laugh with, to cry with, and to just hang around with. But he does get to have everything his way.

Andy's real problem wasn't porn. It was prostitutes, one-night stands, and short-term fantasy flings. Underneath his real problem was a desperate attempt to escape the difficulty of building an honest, loving, committed relationship. I did get through to him about the inborn need for that very special loving relationship.

After some of our sessions, Andy spent the night crying. Other times, his palms would get sweaty and his breathing would become tense before he called. At times, he would lose sleep the night before a session. There were many sessions he felt like not calling in. But he hung in there because he realized that he needed genuine long-term love in his
life.

Andy made it. He became the kind of person who builds a happy marriage - and he built it. But there are many more single, promiscuous people who will never experience the joy that Andy does. They'll never experience it because they don't think promiscuity is anything to worry about. They're cool. Andy's not cool any more. He doesn't put on an act to get a woman in bed. He doesn't keep score. He's not on the lookout for the next hot chick. He's so uncool, all he gets to do is be happily married. Poor Andy.

Instead of a separate interview for promiscuity, the next chapter provides an introductory interview that covers many aspects of sex addiction. It's designed for the married or single person who wants to find out more about him or herself and about sex addiction.
Chapter 30
The Introductory Sex Addiction Interview

1. Do you go from one sexual partner to another? Yes No Sometimes

One of the most glaring signs of addiction is the recurring need for a new empty thrill. The promiscuous person seeks a new person in the hope that the new person will give him or her the impossible thrill s/he seeks. But every addictive thrill ends with a loud, destructive crash. If the addiction is not overcome, the promiscuous person is doomed to a life of shallow thrills and meaningless relationships.

2. Do you use masturbation and/or pornography to get to sleep at night? Yes No Sometimes

Another common sign of addiction is dependence on the substance or activity to get to sleep. Usually, though not in all cases, trouble falling asleep means unsettled issues need to be faced before you can sleep calmly. The addicted person feels s/he cannot face their problems, so they turn to their addiction to help them sleep. Just as people who use alcohol and drugs to fall asleep can't escape their problems, sex can't help you escape.

Unfortunately, many people who use alcohol, drugs or sleeping pills don't believe they have a problem. Many sexually addicted people don't think that dependency on masturbation/pornography is a problem. What they don't realize is that masturbation, like eating, or anything else, can become addictive with devastating results.

3. Do you go to prostitutes for sex? Yes No Sometimes

One symptom of addiction is abuse. Eating is not an addiction. Overeating is. Sex is not an addiction. Impersonal sex is a sign of abuse.

Rather than deal with the underlying emotions of developing a genuine loving sexual relationship with a partner, the sexually addicted person buys a short-term thrill. Just like alcoholics buy alcohol and drug addicts buy drugs to escape dealing with life, the sexually addicted person rents a body.

4. Do you lie, deceive, or manipulate to get sex? Yes No Sometimes

In the cool world, playing the role - saying or doing anything to get sex - is praised. "Cool" people brag about their exploits and are applauded by other "cool" people. What no "cool" person will admit to their friends is:
Sex based on deception is empty and results in guilt and despair.
You feel guilty because you know that you deceived a person who trusted you.
You sink into despair because you know that your need for genuine intimacy cannot be met through lies, deception and manipulation.

The “cool” person hopes that the image he projects to his friends will overcome the pathetic life he lives. Betraying another person is nothing to be proud about.

As a sex addiction counselor, let me tell you what really goes on behind the closed doors of the player.
- Many players are impotent. They brag to their friends about sex because they live in mortal fear that someone will discover their impotence.
- Players do not enjoy sex. They enjoy the game. For a player, sex is a mechanical - not a loving - process. Their real love is winning the game. Players are intimacy cowards.
- Some players are homosexuals in the closet. They seek out women as way of covering up their homosexuality. Many of them think of men when they have sex with a woman. Others force themselves through the sex act and are glad when it's over.

Honesty is the key to mental health. Dishonest sex tells you plenty about a person. So, the next time you hear a guy bragging about his sexual exploits, here's another way to look at him:

He's impotent and is trying to cover it up.
He's a pathetic emotional coward.
He's gay and in the closet.

5. Do you use sex to relieve anxiety? Yes No Sometimes

Addiction is characterized by short-term thrills and long-term problems. Alcohol, drugs, and food can provide short-term relief for the addicted person. The price is long-term dependency and aggravated problems.

Anxiety is truly relieved by only one thing: facing the problem and overcoming it.

The momentary relief provided by addiction produces the illusion that the underlying anxiety is taken care of. That illusion is quickly wiped away by the harsh reality of increased anxiety. Then the addicted person makes an awful mistake: S/he believes they need the addiction to escape the increased anxiety, so s/he seeks another empty high.

Tragically, the addiction soon becomes the bigger problem.
Using sex to overcome anxiety is not only a definite sign of addiction. It is a guaranteed way to worsen problems.

When a sexually addicted person overcomes his addiction, he's amazed to find out that his anxiety decreases as well. But it's no surprise. Addictions cause anxiety. Sex addiction causes profound anxiety. Overcoming it is a profound reward.

6. Is masturbation/pornography your favorite form of sex? Yes No Sometimes

Instead of trying to establish an intense meaningful relationship with another person, the addicted masturbator relies on sex with him or herself. As masturbation/pornography becomes the favorite form of sex, an intimate relationship becomes secondary.

When masturbation/pornography becomes more important than intimacy, something is definitely wrong. Overcoming a masturbation/pornography addiction opens a whole new world for the sexually addicted person. It enables him to enjoy life for what it is and find genuine pleasures in loving sex that he never thought possible.

7. Is masturbation/pornography an alternative form of sex for you? Yes No Sometimes

Pornography is an excursion into a fantasy world in which the sexually addicted person cannot be rejected, does not have to risk failure, and substitutes impersonal fantasies for genuine, loving sexual intimacy.

Masturbation/pornography-addicted people fall into two categories:

Those in a relationship.

Those whose primary relationship is masturbation/porn.

The masturbation/porn-addicted person without a relationship goes through bouts of intense loneliness. The more dependent he becomes on masturbation/pornography, the lonelier he is.

The addicted person with a relationship keeps himself unaware of how his sex addiction is driving a wedge into the relationship. By overcoming the addiction he can hold on to his most important things in life: the person he loves.

8. Do you experience sexual impotence? Yes No Sometimes

One of the greatest illusions about sexual addiction is that it makes you more sexy, increases your sex drive, and brings more pleasure to your life.

Sex addiction is escape. When it comes to dealing with real life, many sexually addicted people have increased difficulty engaging in genuine, loving sex. Many sexually
addicted people do not realize that the root cause of their impotence stems from their sex addiction.

9. Has sex become so prevalent in your life that it interferes with your job responsibilities?
   Yes No Sometimes

   Everything in life has its place. The sexually addicted person places sex above everything. Leaving work in the middle of the day, sneaking sex in at the office, a quickie in the restroom, are all part of some sexually addicted people's work day.

   Just as some alcoholics use lunch as an excuse to get drunk or some drug addicts sneak in a hit at work, some sexually addicted people risk their jobs. Like alcoholics and drug addicts, they convince themselves that their addiction is not really interfering with their work. They discover the truth by getting fired, ruining their careers, or suffering harsh financial losses.

   It's true that all work and no play makes life dull. But addiction is not play. It's a dangerous obsession with escape.

10. Do you neglect your family in order to indulge your addiction? Yes No Sometimes

   One way an addicted person keeps indulging their addiction is by telling him or herself, "I've got it under control." Addicts can fool themselves, but at a certain point, they can't fool their loved ones. The people close to the sexually addicted person know they are being shut out of the addicted person's life. They might not know why they've been shut out, but they know something is wrong.

   Some sexually addicted people try to deny that they are neglecting their loved ones. Others don't realize it until it's too late. If you engage in sexually addictive behavior, your most precious relationships are in jeopardy.

11. Has your sexual activity become a financial problem? Yes No Sometimes

   If the only price you paid for addiction was money, being addicted would merely be a bad investment. The problem with addiction is more than just a money thing. It's slavery. Slaves don't get paid for their labors. Addicted people make themselves slaves by sacrificing the fruits of their labor to their addiction.

   Most slaves know they're being ripped off. Many sexually addicted people don't know they're ripping themselves off.
They look at the cost of their addiction as a worthwhile investment - until it's too late. **The best sex is not for sale.**

12. Do you live a double life by hiding your sexual activity from your partner? Yes No Sometimes

The most destructive thing that can happen to a relationship is the dissolution of trust. Many addicted people do not realize that their duplicity is more painful and more destructive than their addictive behavior. Others are aware of it and are desperate to live an honest life.

One of the great rewards of overcoming an addiction is being honest with the people closest to you.

Do you think a little bit of addiction is harmless? Yes No

Around 1980 a woman came to me and asked me to help her stop drinking. When I asked her how much she drank, she replied, "One glass of wine every day at 5:00 p.m."

I asked her why she wanted to stop drinking.

She replied: "Because I can't get past 5:00 p.m. without my glass of wine."

The real story begins after I helped her stop. The wine had been enabling her to escape facing the abusive relationship she was in. Her husband was beating her and stealing from her. It wasn't until she stopped drinking her one glass of wine every day at 5:00 p.m. that she was able to leave the relationship and build a better life for herself.

Addiction is like a malignant tumor - no amount is tolerable in a person who wants to get the most out of life.
Chapter 31
The Infidelity Interview

The other interviews in this book are designed to help a person discover if he is or is not addicted. This interview is different because you already know if you are cheating on your partner. The purpose of this interview is to help you begin the process of overcoming infidelity. Once you've made up your mind to act ethically, infidelity can be overcome immediately through ethical choices.

Don't confuse infidelity with a masturbation/pornography addiction. Infidelity is an ethical issue because it involves breaking a promise and living a lie. It also falls into the category of sex with other people. In most cases, masturbation/pornography is not an ethical issue; you don't take a solemn oath in front of witnesses not to masturbate or use porn. And masturbation/pornography does not involve anyone else but you. Masturbation/pornography takes months to successfully overcome. Infidelity can be stopped immediately.

When an infidelity issue is handled on an ethical basis, the feelings to cheat might still linger. They can be dealt with, provided you don't try to repress them. In other words, don't try to drive the feelings out of your mind. Instead:

- When dealing with feelings of wanting to cheat, acknowledge that the feelings are there and then make an ethical decision whether or not to act on them. The purpose of the questions below is to help you awaken your sense of ethics.

In previous chapters we discussed repression. We'll discuss it more in later chapters. If you develop a good understanding of repression and ethics, you can stop cheating on your partner instantly.

Occasionally I counsel a client who had been cheating on his partner and also had a masturbation/pornography addiction. He had stopped cheating through his own ethical choices. Then, he sought help for his masturbation/pornography addiction. I've helped other clients stop their infidelity in the first session simply by helping them get an ethical perspective on their problem.

Many people don't overcome infidelity because:

- They believe they must repress the feeling.
They believe infidelity is a disease.
- They believe a Higher Power will overcome it for them.
- They believe medication is the answer to their lack of ethics. Their beliefs are mistaken.

The best way to overcome infidelity is through ethics without repression. So let's start working on your ethics by using this interview.

1. Do you believe that you love your partner and you would never do anything to hurt her?

Yes No

In order to cheat on your partner, you lie. If you believe that you would never do anything to hurt your partner, you've become very good at lying to yourself.

Infidelity hurts the relationship even if your partner doesn't know about your cheating. It hurts because you are not fully committed to the relationship. You remove sexual and emotional energy from your relationship and waste it on strangers. As a result, the relationship suffers. For instance:

You create tension because you live in fear that your partner will find out.

You hesitate to express deep feelings because you are afraid that they might lead you to say something that will expose your infidelities.

You limit the time you and your partner have together so that you can indulge your infidelities.

You might be antagonistic to your partner because you're afraid that your partner knows.

You might be cold to your partner because you're afraid that if your partner gets too close, she'll know something is wrong.

You feel guilty and depressed. Your guilt and depression negatively impacts the relationship.

You feel ashamed. Your shame negatively impacts the relationship. If you want to overcome infidelity, you need to realize:

You don't love your partner as much as you say you do. If you loved her as much as you say, you would be faithful to her.

Cheating hurts every relationship.
2. Some people say, "The only woman I love is my wife. I didn't care about the woman I had sex with, so it wasn't cheating." Others say, "We didn't go all the way. So I wasn't unfaithful." Do you agree with them?

Yes

Cheaters live in guilt. So they come up with rationalizations like:
- I didn't really care about the woman I had sex with, so it's not really cheating.
- If you pay for it, it doesn't count because it's just a business thing.
- We played around but we didn't go all the way, so it doesn't matter.
- I would never have intercourse with anyone but my wife. If I play around from time to time that doesn't make me unfaithful because I never let it go too far.
- My friend X is with a different woman every night. His wife is an alcoholic; she doesn't know what's happening. I only do it once or twice a year. He's the one with a problem. I just like to get a little recreation now and then.

You can rationalize any unethical behavior. But you can't escape your guilt. The more you rationalize, the more likely you are to act unethically. Be honest with yourself. Take a good close look and you will see that you live a hidden, shame-ridden life. If you want to overcome infidelity, *if you want to free yourself of the guilt and shame you live with, stop lying to yourself.*

3. Do you feel that if your partner treated you better you wouldn't cheat on her? Yes

We live in a time when holding someone responsible for his or her actions is considered judgmental, barbaric, simplistic and unfair.

One reason the Twelve Step Program and conventional, licensed therapy are so popular is they tell people, "It's not your fault. You have a disease. You have a chemical imbalance. Your mommy and daddy didn't give you enough love. The environment made you do it."

The cheater's version of this racket is, "My wife made me do it." No matter what troubles you have in your marriage, there are men and women in marriages as bad or worse than yours - and they do not cheat on their partner. Cheating is a choice. No one is responsible for your choices but you. Your partner didn't make you do it.

4. Do you believe that it’s normal for men to cheat on their wives"? Yes
Every once in a while I come across a study that draws the absurd conclusion that men are driven by hormones to cheat on their wives. If you take the study to its logical conclusion, it means that your ethics are determined by your hormones.

If hormones determine ethics, how do these studies explain the men who cheated on their wives, learned their lesson, and stopped cheating? After all, their hormones didn't change. What enabled these men to stop cheating? The answer is: an ethical decision to live an honest life.

And what about the men who were born with the same hormones and don't cheat on their wives? The study conveniently leaves those men out.

Your hormones don't make you become a cheat and a liar. Once again we get back to the same issue: You are completely capable of remaining faithful to your partner, if you decide to live an honest life.

5. Which do you think is more likely to cause you to cheat on your partner:
1- the desire to have sex with another person or
2- the decision to lie to your partner about it.

If you picked 2, you are correct.

Let me tell you a true story. It's about a man who was given advice from professionals who really knew their business. He had become addicted to prostitutes. And each time he went to them, he regretted it. The prostitutes liked him because he was gentle and treated them courteously. One day he asked the girls, "How do I stop? I can't stand what I'm doing to our marriage."

The girls gave him great advice. They said, "Tell your wife."

The girls knew that if he told his wife, then he would have to make a choice between them or her. They figured he would choose his wife.

Rather than tell his wife, he called me.

His wife had no idea about his cheating. I worked with him for a few months, getting him to the point where he could tell her. I also taught him how to help his wife once he told her. It was a terrible shock for her. Because of what he had learned in counseling, he was able to help her through it. The next day the three of us spoke and eventually the relationship healed. I don't consider the story unusual. Helping people heal their relationships is an everyday occurrence in my practice.
I tell you this story as a demonstration of the fact that once you decide to live an honest life, you have an excellent chance of ending your infidelities.

In later chapters, we'll discuss these issues further. For now, let's establish that infidelity is an ethical problem. It is best overcome by deciding to live an honest, loving life.
Chapter 32
Pedophilia And Pedophiles

(Note: I no longer counsel for pedophilia because of the complex legal issues involved) Pedophilic behavior has been or will be a threat to someone in your family. Child molestation is the secret crime that's been part of human history ever since the human race began.

Because pedophilia ignites fear, innocent people have been put in prison for crimes they did not commit. Because people do not understand it, actual child molesters have beaten the system time and again. Children are molested every day by cunning pedophiles. The parents don't know. Most likely, no one ever will.

So let's start with defining the difference between pedophilia and pedophiles

Pedophilia is the experience of sexual interest in children. It is a sexual desire. In other words, it is a feeling. If you feel tempted to steal, it doesn't make you a thief. If you want to rape your neighbor, that doesn't make you a rapist. Now let's define what a pedophile is.

A pedophile is someone who sexually molests a child. In other words, a pedophile doesn't only feel a sexual desire for children. He acts on it. If wanting to have sex with children makes someone a pedophile, then:

- Every person who ever felt like stealing should be put in jail for theft.
- Anyone who experiences a rape fantasy should be in prison.
- If Sally feels like picking up a knife and stabbing Sam to death, she should be put in jail for murder.

When discussing something as complex and serious as pedophilia, we need these fine distinctions, just as we need the distinction between daydreams and real life. Without these distinctions, the person who doesn't act on his pedophilic feelings is considered the moral equivalent of someone who sodomizes children.

With that distinction in mind, let's discuss another question that might be of concern to you:

"Why is there so much pedophilia in today's world?"

My answer is, "We have abandoned objective standards of morality." We live in a
world of moral relativism. Criminals love moral relativism. It releases them from their own guilt and offers them an opportunity to get away with the worst crimes. As long as a pedophile has the slightest chance of walking into a courtroom and successfully blaming his actions on his parents, society, his genes, or a chemical imbalance, children are not safe. Furthermore, as long as the courts send pedophiles to counseling rather than prison, children will pay the price for the legal system's moral cowardice. Pedophiles are cunning and desperate. If a pedophile believes he has an opportunity to molest a child and get away with being sent to counseling, the child doesn't have a chance.

I used to work with pedophiles regularly. They know what I'm telling you is true.

No one should ever be put in prison for experiencing a feeling. Feelings are not actions. Feelings don't hurt people. Actions can. If you are experiencing pedophilic desires, that does not make you a pedophile. You don't become a pedophile unless you act on them. Right now, you are someone who struggles with a pedophilic conflict. You can definitely be helped.

If you have molested a child, can you be helped? Let's find out.
Chapter 33
Help For The Pedophile, Part 1

This interview is designed to help anyone who:
- Has molested a child and wants to stop.
- Feels urges to molest a child.
- Wants to know more about overcoming addiction.
- Is trying to understand pedophilia, criminal behavior, and motivation.

The purpose of the interview is to get the pedophile to stop his immoral, criminal behavior right now, today, this moment. The reason he or she can stop instantly is that child molestation is a moral and criminal issue. In those areas people have direct and immediate control over their actions. Now for the interview:

1. Do you want to stop because of social and legal consequences?

Motivation based on social and legal consequences is not personal enough. It also means your real motivation is a fear of being caught. If your motivation is fear of being caught, you're more likely to molest when you find an opportunity you feel is safe. So let's look for a better motivation.

As a pedophile, you live with guilt apart from society's demands, the legal system's consequences and whatever your religious teachings are. The guilt is based on your knowledge that you are harming a child. Just as you did not want to be harmed as a child, you know that what you did was wrong. No one needs to tell you. You know it already and you don't respect yourself for what you did. So change your motivation to achieving self-respect.

Conventional, licensed therapy claims you need love and respect before you can stop. But you know that as long as you molest, you are not worthy of love and respect. Self-respect is not handed to you. You earn it or lose it through your actions. It doesn't come before a positive change; it comes afterward.

Your first step toward achieving the love and respect you crave is: Respect the rights of others. Put the legal consequences aside. Put society's hatred of you in the background. Instead, focus on achieving self-respect and becoming someone worthy of being loved.

When you are tempted to molest, make the following connection: By letting the desire
go unsatisfied, you take an important step toward achieving the self-respect you need.

Fear of being caught is not the strongest motivation. It can deter you, but it won't get you to change. Wanting real self-respect and genuine love will motivate you to change. And remember, those things come after you respect the rights of others.

2. Do you try to figure out what happened in your childhood so that you can understand why you molest?

At least you're trying to find answers and that's a good sign. So let's assume that you were molested terribly as a child. Conventional, licensed therapy will claim that the abuse you suffered as a child causes you to harm other children. In other words: The minute you were molested, you lost all free will. You could not think for yourself from that moment on. You could no longer tell the difference between right and wrong. Your criminal future was already determined for you and you had no say in the matter. The conventional, licensed therapists are wrong.

There are millions of people who were molested as children - as bad or worse than you were. They don't molest. They make choices. You make choices too.

Tens of millions of people are looking in their childhood for answers. It's not helping them. There's no need to recall years of pain and agony. Your childhood is over. It's time to move on and make the best of your life.

Diving into your childhood causes a neurosis of its own. You lose contact with reality. You begin to believe that you were a victim of evil parents, an evil society, and an evil environment. You carry those angry feelings with you in the present. And who will you take your anger out on? If, as a pedophile, you blame your actions on others, there's a good chance you'll take your anger out on a child.

Let's assume that you were molested from the age of 2 through 18. Here are a few questions to ponder:

- Did you lose free will from the age of 18 onward?
- How come other people who were molested as badly or worse than you, don't molest?
- If a miserable childhood destroys free will, then let's apply that theory. We'll assume that the person you dislike the most had a miserable childhood. Because he feels so bad about his childhood, he breaks into your house to steal your most valued possessions.
You walk through the door. He attacks you. A policeman walking by hears your cries for help. Your attacker is arrested and you've been permanently disabled because of his attack on you. When he's convicted, shouldn't you beg the judge not to punish him? After all, it's not his fault. His childhood made him do it, right?

- Some people claim that their miserable childhood causes them to murder. OK, why haven't you murdered anyone? I'm sure you've had feelings of wanting to kill someone. Isn't it true that you haven't murdered because you chose not to? If you can choose not to murder, can you choose not to molest? Don't both decisions rest on a person's free will choices?

- If a miserable childhood makes people become child molesters, then how do you explain the child molesters who had fine, loving parents? Isn't it true that they made choices, just like you did?

- Aren't you really saying, "I want to blame my crime on everyone and anything but me"? Do you realize that in order to stop hurting children you must first accept that you are a criminal because that's what you choose to be?

- If you want to change your actions, first blame yourself - and no one else - for your crimes. Then you can start the process of responsible change.

3. Do you try to drive pedophilic thoughts or feelings out of your mind because you think pedophilic desires are evil?

Pedophilic actions are evil. Thoughts, feelings and desires are not actions. A thought, feeling or desire occurs only in your head. It cannot violate another person unless you choose to act on it.

When you try to drive addictive thoughts or feelings out of your mind, you make an impossible demand on yourself because the thoughts and feelings will return.

In fact, trying to get rid of thoughts and feelings can actually bring you closer to acting on them. Here's why:

When you attempt to drive thoughts or feelings out of your mind, you rely on repression for success.

If you keep the thoughts or feelings out of your mind, you are able to stop the behavior - as long as you don't experience the addictive thoughts or feelings.

Some people can keep addictive thoughts or feelings repressed for years. Some people
only last a few minutes. No matter how long you can keep the thought or feeling out of your mind, you are vulnerable the minute it returns.

Because sexual thoughts and feelings are so strong, your chances of successfully repressing them are not good.

When the repressed thoughts or feelings return, you will feel hopeless because your entire success was dependent on their absence.

As the addictive thoughts and feelings get stronger, you will try harder to repress. With each attempt to repress you will find it more and more difficult to keep the thoughts and feelings out of your mind. Finally, you won't be able to keep them out. Then you'll be at a loss for how to deal with them because you never taught yourself to face them.

Your mind is perfectly capable of facing addictive thoughts and feelings, if you let it - especially when it comes to moral and legal issues. Thoughts or feelings cannot take you over and make you do anything illegal or immoral. I speak to people every day who have deep desires to do very bad things. They choose not to act on them. You are capable of the same choice.

When you focus on driving addictive thoughts and feelings out of your mind, you put your energies into repressing rather than concentrating on the moral issues involved. Instead of trying to get rid of addictive desires that can't be gotten rid of, focus on making a choice about whether or not you will respect the rights of others.

In other words, focus on the realistic goal of accepting the desire. Then remember that thoughts, feelings or desires cannot force you to do bad things. You do have a choice. You are capable of choosing to respect the rights of others and becoming a better person.

4. Do you believe that if people treated you better, you would not feel a need to molest children?

We live in an age of victimization. The conventional, licensed therapists refuse to admit that their distorted theories lie at the root of, "[fill in the blank] made me do it." You can fill in the blank with society, my genes, a chemical imbalance, my Mommy, my Daddy, a dog, voices, another personality - whatever.

You can buy into the nonsense that you're just reacting to the unfair treatment that you get from other people. It won't help you. You will not feel any better about molesting children. You will not gain the self-respect you crave. You will not escape the guilt you
live with. You will feel more anger than you experience now. When you blame the world for your crimes, in your mind the world becomes a place that forces you to commit horrible acts. Under those circumstances, hating the world is rational.

You will feel even more depressed than you do now. Your depression will increase because it's rational and justified to feel depressed if the world at large hates you so much that it makes you molest children.

You know that you live with a horrible guilt that only you are responsible for. You can't escape the guilt of your past crimes. But you can build a new life. It starts as soon as you choose to respect the rights of others.

You are perfectly capable of stopping on your own any time you choose to recognize the rights of others.
1. Do you think that the society you live in is intolerant and bigoted toward pedophiles?

Every evil movement justifies its actions. The people administering the Inquisition believed they were doing the right thing. The mass murders of communism were supported by political fanatics. Hitler believed in the Holocaust. Osama bin Laden believed he was destroying evil. There is an underground movement to justify pedophilia. These people don't just practice pedophilia, they believe they are right.

I get letters from them attacking me. Some letters spew the conventional, licensed therapy hogwash that all morality is relative and that crime is a matter of social perception. Others claim that the pedophile is the real victim. These pedophiles believe that they are suffering the same injustices that homosexuals did before the gay revolution that started in the 60's. Some of them go so far as to believe they have a superior way of life that most people are not sophisticated enough to appreciate.

Their justifications are based on the following distortions:
- There is no right and wrong. All morality is relative.
- Society punishes pedophiles because most people in society lack proper education.
- Children need the "love" pedophiles offer.
- Society is bigoted against minorities and pedophiles are a minority.

There's no sense in arguing this nonsense. Would you waste time debating Osama bin Laden about 9/11? Pedophiles sexualize, dehumanize and molest children, period.

If you are a pedophile, and you believe that morality lands where the wind blows it, if you believe you are the victim of an intolerant bigoted world, you will continue with your evil ways until you change your asinine beliefs - or you are caught.

If you believe that your strong feelings to molest a child justify acting on them, well, let's apply that belief. There are people who believe that convicted pedophiles should not be sent to prison. They believe that convicted pedophiles should be executed. Other people believe convicted pedophiles should be castrated, tortured, and then executed. Shouldn't those people have the same right to act on their feelings that you have to act on
yours? Or are you the only person who should have the right to act on his or her deepest, most destructive feelings?

When morality gets down to "act on your deepest feelings," the innocent and the weak suffer.

You hate yourself for what you are doing. But instead of being honest about the self-hate you live with, you interpret the hate as coming from an "unjust" society. Then you fantasize yourself as an innocent victim of unjust hatred. As long as you molest, you will hate yourself. No distortion will free you of the self-hate. The unjust hate you say society has for you is a small reflection of the intense self-hate you have for yourself.

If you want to build a life beyond self-hate, then make the moral choice to respect the rights of children.

2. Do you ask a Higher Power to remove your pedophilic desires?

Let's talk about the criminal mind. It is characterized by lies and distortions. The criminal will use any excuse to justify his immoral acts. Now let's observe the criminal mind and the reliance on a Higher Power.

The Twelve Step Program states that you must turn your will over to a Higher Power and ask the Higher Power to release you from your addictive desires. The Higher Power might or might not grant your request. No reason is given why the Higher Power might turn your request down. According to the Twelve Step program, if the Higher Power does not release you from your addictive desires, you are helpless.

Once the criminal mind gets hold of this assumption, the door to committing the worst evils is open. The criminal can fool himself into believing that for some unknown reason, the Higher Power did not stop the criminal from doing bad things. From the criminal's point of view: "I turned myself over to the Higher Power. I did everything I was asked to do. But the Higher Power didn't stop me." What the criminal conveniently leaves out is, "God helps those who help themselves."

If you want to stop pedophilic behavior, don't expect a Higher Power to do for you what you are completely capable of doing for yourself. You know the difference between right and wrong. Instead of asking a Higher Power to remove a desire that you know is going to return anyway, ask yourself to make a choice between right and wrong.

Don't look to a Higher Power to carry your burdens. Instead look in the eyes of a child
and ask yourself, "Do I have a right to molest?" If your answer is no, then rely on your moral convictions. They will make the difference for you. If you rely on a Higher Power, you will have the perfect excuse to molest. It will be: "The Higher Power didn't help me."

3. Do you believe that when you molest, you show a child love?

It is certainly possible for a person to have pedophilic feelings and feel parental love for a child. Helping people work through that conflict is part of sex addiction counseling.

But feeling a sexual desire for a child and molesting a child require two different mindsets. For someone to actually molest a child, he must climb a steep moral barrier. Most people who do feel sexual desires for children choose not to violate the barrier. Those who cross the barrier, create rationalizations to justify tearing it down.

One rationalization is the belief that the pedophile is sharing love with the child. The belief is not true, but that is what some pedophiles believe. The pedophile creates that rationalization because he knows that what they really feel is a cold, calculating hatred. The child is used to turn the pedophile's hatred into sexual pleasure.

What does the pedophile hate? The demands of an adult world and adult relationships. Rather than face and deal with those demands, the pedophile withdraws into a fantasy world in which a child becomes the source of the love the pedophile is incapable of experiencing. The shallow, cold, hateful world of the pedophile has nothing to do with his Mommy, Daddy, genes, or a chemical imbalance. Pedophiles are not created, they are self-created.

We are all self-created.

Pedophilic feelings result from fleeing the demands of a genuine, intimate, adult relationship. They are only feelings. They are not actions. Some people struggling with pedophilic feelings feel an intense anger toward the world. Others feel anger, but not as intensely. The pedophile goes beyond pedophilic feeling. The pedophile chooses to act. Through a child, the pedophile can finally have what he wants, domination over others. The child becomes the symbol of the world that the pedophile wants to destroy. The sexual act is used to make hate and destruction enjoyable.

Pedophiles are cunning. They are so cunning they fool themselves. The pedophile doesn't admit that he seeks domination. He doesn't acknowledge that he wants to hurt. The pedophile distorts the hate in his mind and calls it love. He perverts domination into
a symbol of affection. Evil is not honest. It is always - and will forever be - founded on deliberate distortion. The hopeless pedophile believes his perverted way of thinking.

If you are a pedophile and you want to rise above the hate that corrodes your mind, start by being honest about love and hate.

If you molest children, you don't love children. You hate. You use children as the helpless target of your hate. No child should be forced to pay the price for your hate. If you want dignity, earn it. If you want self-respect, achieve it. If you want real love, you don't have a chance as long as you violate children.

You are perfectly capable of stopping your criminal, immoral behavior right now. You know it. I know it.

You can fool a lot of people. But you can't escape the hate you live with. You can't escape the knowledge that what you've done is morally despicable. You can't undo the past. But you can choose to stop now and salvage whatever shred of decency is left in you.

4. Do you believe you have a disease?

The disease argument comes in three flavors:
"My pedophilic disease was caused by the way my parents raised me."
"I inherited pedophilia. Some people inherit Alzheimer's disease; I inherited pedophilia."
"I'm forced by chemical imbalances in my mind to molest children."

At the core of every disease argument is the same assumption: "People don't have free will. Human beings are flesh and blood puppets manipulated by their parents, their genes, society and chemical imbalances. No one chooses to do bad things. Bad influences make people do bad things."

If you believe you have a disease, here are a few common-sense questions for you to ponder. By the way, since you don't have free will, I don't know how you can choose to think about these questions. I can only hope that your Mommy and Daddy allowed you to think from time to time, or that your "bad" genes are feeling tired now, or that your chemical imbalance has the day off.

Q: If your disease was caused by the way your parents raised you, how do you explain the fact that people who had a worse childhood than yours did not grow up to be a
criminal low-life like you?

Q: If pedophilia is inherited, how do you explain the pedophiles whom I have helped stop their criminal behavior? I did not remove their genes. What happened? Did new, moral genes suddenly sprout somewhere? How do you explain the pedophiles who stopped their criminal behavior for fear of being caught? Did they grow an anti-prison gene?

You are right, your chemical makeup is different than other people's. Mine is too. So Every person’s chemical makeup is unique. Your chemical makeup is a reflection - not a cause - of your most profound choices. Your so-called chemical imbalance is really a moral imbalance caused by your choices. Because of your moral crimes, you experience an overload of guilt, fear, anxiety, and self-hate. In other words, you experience stressful chemical reactions caused by the bad things you've been doing.

No pill, no drug, no medication will take away the guilt, self-hate, stress and fear you live with. You can choose to change, though. Make moral and ethical choices and you will begin to experience relief. The relief will be genuine and will stay with you as long as you continue to make moral choices.

That concludes the interview. If you are a pedophile and you want to stop, your only effective means is through moral choices. Besides prison, nothing else will stop you. You can make a moral choice to respect the rights of children under absolutely any circumstance. No amount of depression, fear, stress, self-hate, guilt, confusion or loneliness can make you molest. Child molestation is a black and white, moral or immoral, good or evil choice made by you. You know it.

Now is the time for you to stop lying to yourself. The sooner you accept that you molest children solely as a result of your choices, the sooner you can redeem yourself.

Some people might say, "C'mon, Joe, it can't be that simple." They're wrong. We all make choices in life. Some choices are gray. Others are black and white. The choice to molest a child is not gray or white. There are thousands of people walking around with strong sexual desires for children. They don't become pedophiles because they choose to respect the rights of a child and/or they choose to avoid the risk of being caught.

They molest children by their own choice.
Chapter 35
Two Relationship Challenges

Let's start by talking about the two biggest destroyers of any intimate relationship. They are:

1. Dishonesty
2. Victim's Anger

Victim's Anger is another way of getting angry at the world for your problems. Let's observe it in action:

Phil comes home late. He had spent the evening acting sexually addictive at work. When he walks through the door, his wife, Christine, is angry. "You said you were going to be home hours ago!" she screams.

Phil replies, "Why do you have to be so nasty? I was working late and I'm tired." Or he meekly says, "I'm sorry. I got busy and lost track of the time." But in both cases he's thinking, "If she wasn't such a bitch, I wouldn't have spent so much time at work. It's always like this. She should be more understanding."

The data Victim's Anger relies on is usually accurate.

For instance, Christine was bitchy when Phil came home late. If you tried to argue with Phil that Christine wasn't angry, you wouldn't be able to get through to him. In fact, when Phil comes home on time, Christine lashes out at him over something else.

The source of Victim's Anger is not the data, it's how you interpret the data. Here's what Phil could have done:

He could have sincerely apologized to Christine and thought to himself, "I should have come home on time. We have enough problems without me making them worse."

Now let's take a look at Christine. She too is suffering from Victim's Anger.

When Phil comes home, she lashes out at him. Let's assume she's not overacting. But the next morning she's still telling him off. The next night he comes home on time. She says, "Don't ask me to pat you on the back. Don't ask me to feel good about it. I know you're going to do it to me again." And then she lashes out at him for all the times he came home late and all the times she expects him to come home late again.

Let's get some effective solutions to Victim's Anger.
1. The data will probably be accurate. It's your interpretation you need to correct. When Phil says that Christine has anger problems of her own, he's correct. When Christine says that Phil is inconsiderate and emotionally unavailable, she's correct.

Here's a true story of accurate data, and how the client used it to create Victim's Anger.

Zachary had been sexually molested from the ages of 10 through 16. He entered conventional, licensed therapy to get help for his sex addiction and his anger. He didn't overcome either because his therapist told Zachary that Zachary's sex addiction was caused by the childhood abuse he had suffered.

When he entered counseling with me, I was able to get him to realize that the abuse he suffered as a child did not cause his sex addiction. As a result, he changed his interpretation of the data. His new interpretation was: "My childhood is over. I made mistakes then, and I can correct them now."

That realization opened the door to Zachary ending his Victim's Anger and overcoming his sex addiction.

The problem with Victim's Anger is not the data; it's the interpretation of the data.

2. Watch for an underlying anger that emerges when the right excuse comes along. A victim blames his/her shortcomings, failures, anxieties, guilts, and fears on someone else.

It does not matter how good or bad the victim's childhood was. It doesn't matter how well or badly people treat the victim in the present. The victim will blame others because taking the blame for one’s own problems is difficult.

But the results of Victim's Anger are worse.

Let's assume you hire a friend who's out of work to paint your bedroom blue. Your friend gets drunk, paints your bedroom black and demands that you pay him again to paint it blue.

Not all anger is bad. Sometimes it's needed. So let's assume you tell your friend off and demand that he paint the room as agreed. Or you demand that he refund the money you paid him. Or you insist that he pay for the room to be painted correctly.

Here's what a victim does with the same incident.
Victims wallow in their misery.

So the victim will drag out the pain. He'll talk about the bedroom fiasco for months. Years later, he might still feel "ripped off."

Victims let one problem ruin other areas of their lives.

The victim might not be able to work for days because he is focusing on the bedroom. Or the victim might throw a fit when he walks into the house. Or the victim might sleep out in the living room, even though the bedroom is really more comfortable for him.

The victim might not stop talking about the problem. Every chance he gets, he tells people about his tragedy.

The victim will use the problem to excuse his own problems.

If he doesn't keep promises he might say, "I was under so much stress from what happened to my bedroom, it was just too much."

3. In order to overcome Victim's Anger, one question to ask yourself is: Am I overreacting?

Sometimes it's hard to tell. So let's identify some symptoms of Victim's Anger:

- Your body is in pain or constant stress because of your angry outbursts.
- People around you are afraid to talk to you.
- You get migraines after you have an angry outburst.
- You harm yourself, like banging your head on the wall, etc.
- You resort to violence when there is no real threat.
- You scream and yell when you feel angry, rather than trying to have a decent discussion.
- You withdraw into a silent rage that undermines your relationship.
- You are never wrong. Or almost never wrong.
- You know everything that's wrong with your partner and very little about what's wrong with you.
- People have told you that you are overly sensitive.
- You decide you have carried the entire burden and your partner has not carried his/her fair share.
- You're sure that every major problem in the relationship is your partner's. Your problems are minor.
Some of these symptoms might not be Victim's Anger. For instance, you might be in a relationship where the major problems are your partner's. You need to look carefully at the whole picture.

Here are some methods to help you decide if you are overreacting:

_Argue the issue from the other person's point of view._

Let's go back to the bedroom problem. You'd argue the following.

"The guy says he's sorry. He wants me to pay him again so that he can use the money to pay his rent and get his act together to get a job. I knew he had a drinking problem when I hired him. I shouldn't have hired him in the first place. I'm going to write this off as a lesson and move on with my life."

Or you might argue like this: "He says that I told him it was OK to paint the bedroom black and that I didn't care if he had a few drinks. He said it happened the night we got smashed together. Wow, I might have done that. I don't know what I'm doing when I drink too much. I've got to admit that I don't know the facts for sure. Maybe we can work something out. Maybe I should be angry at myself for drinking too much."

By arguing the other person's point of view you get a more accurate perspective. By challenging your own interpretation of the data you can prevent or defuse Victim's Anger.

Another method is to ask yourself, "If a reasonable third party observed this conflict, what would their evaluation be?"

Let's go back to Phil and Christine. A reasonable third party would tell Phil, "You told your wife that you would be home hours ago. She has a right to be angry and you owe her a sincere apology. And you need to start coming home on time."

That same reasonable third party would tell Christine, "You're taking it too far. When he comes home on time, don't beat him up. Give him credit for what he does right. You need to show him that you appreciate his efforts, otherwise he won't have much incentive to change."

An excellent way to appreciate the other person's point of view is to find someone who can give you unbiased feedback.

You could go to your partner. We'll talk about how the two of you can work out Victim's Anger in a later chapter.
For now, let's assume you decide to go to a friend. Tell your friend:

"I need some feedback on a situation. Please don't take my side. Try to argue the other person's side. I know my side. I have a problem with anger and I want to overcome it by understanding the other person's side."

Then let your friend play devil's advocate so that your mind can be opened to your partner's perspective.

Now let's talk about you and your partner working together to overcome Victim's Anger.
 Chapter 36

Eleven Ways To Improve Communication

Let's discuss how you and your partner can work out Victim's Anger - and other problems - together. We'll begin with some realistic goals.

*Look for small signs of progress.*

Don't expect the big magic breakthrough you see in the movies. Real life doesn't work that way. Real improvement is accomplished through a series of small, consistent, positive changes.

There will be confusion.

The concepts you're learning are complex and difficult to apply. You will make mistakes. Everyone does.

There will be many arguments and disagreements.

Both of you will get angry over your discussions about anger. It's part of the process. The big issue is whether or not you settle your disagreements and build a better relationship from what you've learned about yourself and your partner.

Now let's discuss the basics:

1. *Never call your partner a name.*

   If you disagree with your partner say, "My opinion is that the sun rises in the east." Or, "I'm sure the sun rises in the east." Never say, "You're so stupid. Any idiot knows the sun rises in the east."

2. *Do not try to win an argument.*

   In a relationship, whatever happens to your partner happens to you. If your partner loses the argument, you lose. The goal in an argument, even the heated ones, is to create mutual understanding.

   There will be heated disagreements. But if the goal is mutual understanding, the relationship can be built even when there's intense disagreement.

3. *Make sure you know your partner's point of view at least as well as you know yours.*

   Most arguments in relationships are over misunderstandings. The misunderstandings arise because one or both people are more focused on their point of view than they are on their partner's.
You're not required to agree with your partner. Your requirement is to fully appreciate his/her perspective.

Let's assume you and your partner are arguing over how much money to spend and where to go for a vacation. You want to stay close to home and save money. Your partner wants to go on an expensive vacation because there might not be another opportunity for the two of you to take a great vacation for a long time to come.

Your job is to put yourself in your partner's shoes. Imagine that you are willing to spend the money to have the great vacation. Imagine how much more fun you would have on the great vacation. Imagine how frustrated you would feel staying close to home.

Your partner needs to do the same thing. He or she needs to think about having a good time together no matter where you are. S/he needs to consider the peace of mind that comes with saving money. What if there's a financial emergency and the money had been spent on a vacation?

Once the two of you fully appreciate the other person's point of view, problems can be settled quickly and in a friendly way. Treat your partner's point of view as being at least as important as yours; it will pay off for both of you.

4. *If either of you starts screaming, don't call it a discussion. Call it a screaming match.*

   No matter how right you might be, all discussion ends when the screaming begins.

5. *Be the first to make up.*

   One of the worst mistakes is waiting for the other person to make the first move for peace. If you feel your anger ending, go to your partner and offer to make up.

   Don't hide your desire for peace. Hiding it is dishonest. As soon as you feel, "I'm sorry," say so. As soon you feel like, "I don't want to fight any more. Can we be friends?" say it.

   A good relationship is not a negotiation between adversaries. It's an honest, spontaneous expression of thoughts and feelings.

   The sooner the two of you make up, the sooner the wounds heal.


   Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Imagine what you would feel if you went through what they say they're going through.
If your partner tells you, "I can't sleep at night because of what you're doing," then imagine yourself feeling so much tension about your partner's behavior you can't sleep.

If your partner says, "You insulted me," imagine what it would feel like to be insulted by your partner.

You might not agree with their point of view. Maybe your partner is overly sensitive. That's not the point. The point is: You need to appreciate what s/he is going through before you can communicate.

7. Expect disagreements.

Couples fight. It's part of living with another person. The fights are not as important as whether or not the two of you make up and learn from your arguments.

8. Admit you're wrong.

If you know you're wrong, don't play games. Admit it immediately and get it over with. If you try to avoid admitting you're wrong, your partner will sense it and things will get worse.

9. If your partner admits he or she is wrong, show your appreciation.

Don't say, "I told you so." Don't reply with, "Why didn't you admit it sooner?" Show your partner that you appreciate his or her honesty and integrity.

10. Let the other person talk.

Some people try to win an argument by spewing a verbal barrage that makes it impossible for the other person to respond. It doesn't work. If you're a spewer, you're not winning any arguments. You're creating more hostility.


This is the opposite of spewing. The person shuts down and refuses to talk. The shutdown usually occurs when it's their turn to admit that they are wrong. Or the person shuts down when they realize that they're about to look bad. If you want a good relationship, keep talking even if it hurts.

Now let's discuss some advanced techniques.

The advanced techniques are designed to help you make important changes in yourself as a person. They'll help with your relationship - and they will also help with overcoming sex addiction.

1. Feelings are not facts.
Some people go through life assuming that "I feel" means "It's true." For instance, Kelly told me, "I feel that my husband was yelling at me."

I replied, "Mark didn't yell at you. He raised his voice, and then he calmed himself down. When his voice was raised, it was not at you. He was talking to me."

She replied, "But I feel it was directed at me."

"OK, that's how you felt," I responded. "Are you willing to look at the facts?"

Throughout their marriage Kelly had accused Mark of having an affair with another woman. Mark had always been faithful to Kelly. She did not have one shred of conclusive proof he had been cheating. She had feelings of fear and suspicion. Nothing else.

She was a follower of the therapists who advocated, "Go with your gut." She applied that belief throughout her life. As a result, even though Mark had been acting sexually addictive, he was ready to divorce her! He had reached his limit of being told that what he said didn't matter because Kelly's gut told her he was lying.

Here's what I told Kelly about facts and feelings. It helped her turn her life around. "Feelings are your internal temperature, to use a metaphor. They measure your inner world. They do not reflect the outside world." Then I explained the following example to Kelly: for instance, let's say the temperature in your home is 71 degrees and outside it's freezing. The attitude of people who live by their feelings is, "If I feel it's 71 degrees, that's what the temperature is."

Metaphorically speaking, if you tell a live by your feelings' person, "It's freezing outside," they will respond, "But I feel it's 71 degrees." The person conveys to those around him or her, 'My feelings come first.'

No one can correct you or disagree with you. If you say you feel it's 71 degrees, you're probably telling the truth about what you feel. So what? There's more to life than what you feel. A lot more. If you want an excellent, intimate relationship, you need to respect the world that exists apart from your feelings. If you don't respect the world outside your feelings, the message you send to the people around you is, "My feelings need to be at the center of your life."

It wasn't easy for Kelly to hear that. If she hadn't loved Mark, I believe she'd have stopped the counseling. What made the difference was Mark's response. He said, "Joe,
you're expressing exactly what I've been going through for years."

Kelly and Mark have a good marriage today. The most difficult part of our work together was not helping Mark overcome sex addiction. It was getting Kelly to treat her feelings as her personal, internal experience, not as reality.

You certainly need to consult your feelings and express them. They are your internal temperature. There's also a whole world that exists apart from your feelings. At times your feelings will be consistent with reality. At other times they won't be. In order to have a good life and an excellent relationship, you need to know the difference.

By showing respect for the world apart from your feelings, you show respect for the other people in your life. If you want good relationships, show the other people in your life you respect and care for them by reality-checking your feelings.

2. You cannot read another person's mind.

Sheldon was a highly successful entrepreneur. He was well loved by his employees and his business associates. He was a great father. Patricia, his wife, was ready to divorce him.

In counseling Sheldon said, "I built my life up on my ability to read people. I can read people better than anyone." If Patricia told Sheldon that she was tired and didn't want to have sex, Sheldon told her, "You're afraid of intimacy." If she told him, "I had a hard day at work because my boss was picking on me," he told her, "You have an attitude problem."

When you act like you know what goes on in another person's mind, here's what happens:

You establish yourself as a superior person in the relationship because you supposedly know what's going on in the other person's mind better than he or she does. Sheldon treated Patricia as if she were inferior to him because she didn't share his special ability to read other people's minds.

If someone disagrees with your conclusion about their thoughts and feelings, you will treat them as a liar. If Patricia didn't agree with Sheldon's evaluation of her mental state, he said, "Be honest with me."

Your partner will avoid talking with you because you will tell him or her what s/he thinks, rather than listen to their thoughts and feelings. Open conversation between
Patricia and Sheldon had been closed down for years.

Here's what I told Sheldon.

"Let's assume you have the superior ability to read other people's minds. No matter how superior your abilities are, everyone makes mistakes. So let's assume that your ability to read another person's mind is correct 95% of the time. "The other 5% will cost you your marriage.

"Since you are so confident in your superior ability to read another person's mind, you will defend your errors. Even if your partner honestly tells you that you are wrong, you won't believe it because you are 'superior.' You will treat your partner like a liar when you are the one who's wrong.

"Look at your relationship. Your partner is afraid to talk to you because you tell her what she thinks. How would you like to live with someone who treats you like you're a liar and assumes you're stupid even though you are not lying and you know what you're talking about?

"Patricia knows what's going on in her mind better than you do. "The attitude you're taking toward her sends a message of, 'I decide the truth about you. Do not disagree. Do not explain. Shut up and listen. You are too stupid to know what's going on in your own mind. Obey me.'"

3. Give your partner credit for his/her changes and let go of the past as the relationship improves.

It's true that you won't find the answers to your problems in the past. But please don't take that to mean, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Today is an opportunity to make your life better than it was yesterday. But, your strongest feelings in the present are a result of choices you've made day after day for years.

One of the most common problems in healing a relationship is that whoever is wrong wants to hurry up and forget the past. In the meantime, the injured party is in no hurry to risk a replay of the past. Here's how to settle the issue:

4. The healing progresses at the injured party's pace. If you try to push the injured party to heal faster than he or she is ready, you will be mistreating your partner again. No one can determine how long it should take another person to heal. The injured party has the responsibility to recognize the improvements their partner makes.
Even under the best circumstances, the improvements occur slowly. There will be setbacks. Some are acceptable; others aren't. Later on I will give you some guidelines about what's acceptable and what isn't.

As you make your improvements, you will be more aware of them than your partner will. For instance:

Marlene micromanaged the relationship between her and Gregory. As she worked on the problem, she made great improvements rather quickly. But Gregory didn't see them for weeks. Marlene understood because she realized that Gregory could not live inside her head. Over time, he appreciated her changes as they became more obvious to him.

Igor was the kind of guy who if you asked him for the time would reply, "Why do you want to know?" He made great improvements in overcoming his defensiveness. His fiancee, Tess, didn't notice because she was focused on the past. Igor didn't push her. Since she was the injured party, his responsibility was to go at her pace. Tess eventually overcame her focus on the past as Igor continued to make his positive changes and Tess strived to recognize them, at her own pace.

Let's do a quick recap:

1. Feelings are not facts. You need to respect the world that exists apart from your feelings.
2. You can't read another person's mind. No one has a superior ability to know what is going on in another person's mind. You don't know until that person honestly tells you.
3. Give your partner credit for his/her positive changes.
4. The healing occurs at the injured party's pace.

Next we'll discuss things you can do on your own to overcome Victim's Anger and make other positive changes in your life.
Chapter 37
How To Develop A Positive Focus

Here's a way you can improve yourself in any area, including dealing with Victim's Anger.

Focus only on your problems. Don't focus on your partner's.

This technique alone can end Victim's Anger. It will also help you improve in other areas of your life. Let's find out why:

1. **You cannot change your partner.** You can only change yourself. By focusing on your problems, you put your energies into factors directly under your control.

2. **At the core of Victim's Anger is the belief that other people are responsible for your problems.** By focusing on yourself - and not your partner - there's no one to blame for your problems but you.

3. **Each person is responsible for how he or she thinks, feels and acts.** Your partner does not "make" you mad. Your partner does things and you get angry. Your anger is a result of the way you are. Maybe your anger is justified. Maybe it isn't. Either way, it's a result of your choices.

   For instance, let's say you come home feeling awful and your partner ignores you. Some people will feel, "I'm so miserable. I need someone to talk to. My partner doesn't care about me." Other people will feel, "I'm so miserable I don't want to talk to anyone right now. I'm glad s/he is ignoring me." Others will feel, "I wonder what's the matter? I hope s/he isn't in worse shape than I am."

   Each of these possible responses is a result of your choices.

   By focusing on your problems and not your partner's, you train yourself to take full responsibility for whatever you think, feel, do, or say.

   That doesn't give your partner license to do whatever s/he wants to you. It simply places the source and cause of your feelings with you, not someone else.

4. **You don't need to focus on your partner's problems because if your partner wants to build a good relationship, s/he is focusing on their problems.** In other words, you take care of your problems; your partner takes care of theirs.

5. **Focusing on your partner's problems could put you in the role of his/her emotional**
supervisor. You could come across as if you are trying to:

- Control his/her life
- Tell him/her what to do
- Decide what s/he is thinking or should be thinking. A supervising relationship is not good for either of you. Now let's apply some of what we've learned to 1) the person whose bedroom was painted black and 2) Christine and Phil's anger problems. Let's take a look at the difference between the victim and the person who approaches life through choice.

- The Case of the Bedroom Painted Black

Victim Approach: He ruined my bedroom! I'll never be able to enjoy my house again. I'll get him for this. Why do these things always happen to me?

Choice Approach: What a mess! Hiring him was a big mistake. I should have known better. I'll get the bedroom repainted right away. I want to talk to him and see if I can get my money back. This is a real pain! I'm going to learn from this!

Comment: Notice how the victim takes no responsibility for hiring the guy in the first place? Also, the victim expands the incident to his entire house. Then he decides that the bad things in life "always happen to me."

Comment: In the choice approach, the chooser is upset. But he doesn't seek vengeance; he doesn't extend the problem beyond its borders. He focuses on his own mistakes. He comes up with a plan. He does not decide that the bad things in life seek him out. He learns from his mistakes and moves on.

- Phil comes home late because of addictive behavior. Christine lashes out at him.

Victim Approach: He thinks, "I'm tired. I've had a long day. She doesn't care about me. She doesn't care how hard I work. She bitches at me for every little mistake I make." To her he says, "I'm sorry." But he feels like, "Here we go. Another night of yelling and screaming. She's going to get me tomorrow. She's not going to let me forget it." He looks at her and thinks, "Shit happens, woman. Get over it."

Choice Approach: He thinks, "I screwed up. I shouldn't have come home late. I have an addiction and I'm out of control. There's no excuse." He looks at her and says, "I'm sorry." He feels, "She's not going to let me forget it. I can't blame her. I've been treating her terribly. I wonder how she's put up with it for so long? I've got to stop what I'm doing
Comment: Notice how the victim conveniently forgets why he came home late? Instead, he focuses on the mistreatment he's getting. Also, he's not honest with his wife about his feelings. His facts are correct. She will take it too far; she does have an anger problem. But what does he do with her anger problem? He uses it to justify his.

Comment: The chooser acknowledges that he is late because of choices he made. He is aware of his wife's problems, but he puts most of the focus on dealing with his issues. Notice something else: no Victim's Anger. Instead he shows his wife understanding, even though he knows she has anger problems of her own.

- Christine's anger when Phil comes home late.

**Victim Approach:** She thinks, "He always does this to me! I cannot trust him to do anything he says he's going to do. Why does he put me through this? He's destroying our relationship. I have to carry all the burden. I clean the house. I take care of the kids. I pay the bills. I clean up after him. I wash. I cook. He won't even clean up after himself." She looks at him and throws a fit. He says, "I'm sorry." She says, "Don't apologize. You don't mean it." She storms out of the room and has a sleepless night. In the morning she tells him, "I can't sleep because of you. I'm going to have a heart attack because of what you're doing to me."

**Choice Approach:** She thinks, "I hate this. Why doesn't he come home on time?" She says, "Where have you been? Do you know how worried I was?" Phil apologizes. Note: we'll assume victim Phil, whose apology is not sincere. She thinks, "I know he's going to do it again." She says, "Isn't there some way you can at least call me? Don't you care about my feelings, too?" She's so angry she leaves the room before he can answer. She doesn't sleep that night. In the morning she says, "I couldn't sleep again. We have to work this out. I don't know how much more I can take."

Comment: Christine the victim forgets that Phil does not always come home late. She paints a picture of someone who never keeps his word. She acts like he's deliberately late just to hurt her; as if she is the center of everything he does. She's more focused on lashing into him than finding a solution. In fact, she's so intent on making him the bad guy in her life, a solution would be a threat to her.

Comment: As a chooser, Christine is angry. But she wants an answer to the problem.
She asks Phil to work with her. She tries to come up with a solution because her main concern is to create harmony between the two of them. She loses sleep but doesn't blame him. She blames her own limitations. Although she is very upset, she does not create Victim's Anger. She keeps the door open for her and Phil to work things out.

These incidents are based on true stories. They show us that at any point in life every person has choices. Once can choose to act like a victim. Or you can choose to make the best of your life.

Let's discuss three more approaches you can use to improve yourself and your relationship. They are:

1. **Apply the benefit of the doubt instead of the assumption of distrust.**
2. **Don't expect anyone to read your mind.**
3. **Don't attack your partner's problems. Communicate your limitations.** Apply the benefit of the doubt.

In the best relationships the thought of distrust doesn't cross either partner's mind. When a couple struggles with sex addiction, distrust occurs even if the relationship is excellent in all the other areas.

When you apply the benefit of the doubt, essentially you're saying, "I don't have all the facts and so I have doubts. My partner says he's telling the truth. Since I don't have enough evidence to prove he's lying, I'll take his word for it."

Victim's Anger relies on accusing the other person of causing your problems. It uses what I call "the assumption of distrust." In a Victim's Anger state of mind, you assume other people are not to be trusted because they are trying to hurt you.

By applying the benefit of the doubt, you neutralize the assumption of distrust. People are no longer out to hurt you. They make mistakes - you do, too - they disagree with you, but they're not out to hurt you.

Also, when you apply the benefit of the doubt, you might decide that the cause of the conflict is you, not your partner.

In the area of sex addiction, one of the biggest obstacles to applying the benefit of the doubt is, "I don't want to be made a fool of again."

It's understandable. But if the benefit of the doubt is not used, the other option, the assumption of distrust, is applied. Then the relationship does not heal because doubts -
and there are many when it comes to sex addiction - will usually be treated as lies.

The fear of being fooled again is powerful. It can be overcome with a basic question about human nature. Answered correctly, it can help put the fear of being fooled again to rest. The question is: Do people have free will? Can a person who has consistently and deliberately lied to you in the past, choose to tell you the truth?

I hope your answer is "Yes" because it is true.

If you apply the benefit of the doubt, then your relationship can heal because your partner has the opportunity to prove whether or not he has changed.

Without the benefit of the doubt, the relationship will collapse under the weight of constant distrust.

But before you can apply the benefit of the doubt you have a deeper decision to make between two opposing beliefs:

Do you believe that addiction is a powerful disease which causes people to lie?

Or do you believe that people can choose whether or not to tell the truth even if they are addicted?

If you choose to apply the disease model, you'd be a fool to grant your partner the benefit of the doubt. How could you give your partner the benefit of the doubt? You'll never know when his "disease" will "make" him lie to you.

If you choose the free will model, you give your partner the chance to prove if he or she is choosing honesty.

Don't expect anyone to read your mind.

If you want something, say it. If you disagree, say so. If you like something, let your partner know.

Sometimes you expect a person to read your mind and you don't realize it. For instance, Tom and Gloria went to dinner at a popular restaurant. At the restaurant, Gloria announced that she was pregnant. Tom was overjoyed. To celebrate their child's first birthday, Gloria made reservations at the same restaurant. Tom was upset. "I don't like their food," he said in an angry tone.

Gloria thought he had loved it. What had really happened was that Tom was so happy about her pregnancy, he didn't want to ruin the evening by complaining about the food.

If you want good relationships with people and if you want to minimize the conflicts
and misunderstandings, let them know what's on your mind.

*Don't attack your partner. Communicate your limitations.*

Let's assume your partner has a problem with being on time. A 3:00 p.m. appointment means he'll show up between 3:10 and 3:30.

When the relationship began, he acted like it wasn't a problem. Then he acted like you had a problem with being "uptight." Finally, he admitted he had the problem with being on time. But he still shows up late.

Here's the wrong way to tell him you've had it: "You are inconsiderate. You don't care about what I go through to be on time. You're so wrapped up in yourself, you don't think of other people. I'm never going to make an appointment with you again." The statements about the partner are true. But as I'm sure many of you already know, they will put your partner on the defensive.

There's another way to communicate the same thing without putting your partner on the defensive. **Talk about yourself and your limitations, firmly.**

For instance, "I try very, very hard to be on time. I start out early if I have to. I'll miss lunch. Sometimes I run. It feels like you don't care about my time. I want you to make the same effort for me that I do for you. If you're not willing to, this is our last appointment. And I need more than promises. I need results."

When you talk firmly about your limitations:

- Your partner has nothing to be defensive about.
- You send a message to your partner: "If you really care about me, you'll treat me the way I want to be treated."
- You acknowledge you cannot change your partner. In effect, you tell him or her:
  "If you don't want to change, then I won't be able to be with you because I can't handle the way you treat me."

In real life, there will be times you'll blow off and put your partner on the defensive. After you calm down, if you want to heal the conflict:

1. Go back and apologize for losing your temper. **Always strive to be the first to make peace.**
2. Express your complaints by talking about your limitations. Now let's learn more about establishing trust.
Chapter 38
Building Trust

If there's distrust in a relationship, it means at least one of the partners has been consistently untruthful. Since we're talking about sex addiction, I'll assume the guy has been deceiving the gal about his sexually addictive behavior.

Healing proceeds at the injured party's pace. In this case, the injury is due to a lie therefore, it is up to the man to establish trust at the woman's pace.

The question most men ask me about healing their relationship is, "Joe, I know I screwed up bad. What do I do now to fix it?"

Here's what usually occurred before the question:
1. The guy was caught acting addictively numerous times.
2. His first response was to lie his way out of it.
3. The woman caught on to his lies.
4. Finally, when he couldn't get out of it, he admitted he was acting sexually addictive.
5. He promised to stop.
6. He stopped for a while but then went back.
7. He lied about going back.
8. She caught him again.
9. This scenario might repeat dozens of times.
10. Now that he's lied so well and so often, she doesn't know whether to believe him or not, even if he is telling the truth.

If you've lied to your partner and your partner has not divorced you, there is still hope. Even if she's started the divorce proceedings, there might be some hope left.

The golden rule for establishing trust is:

From now on, do not lie to your partner about anything. Notice, it's don't lie about anything. Here's why:

She does not know if you will act sexually addictive again. She doesn't want to follow you around like a sex cop. She's probably told you that your deceptions upset her more than your behavior. She was telling you the truth.

Her biggest fear is that you will lie to her again.
So, she isn't going to wait for you to lie about your sexually addictive behavior. She'll look for lies in other areas. **If she sees that you lie to her about anything, she'll assume you'll lie to her about your sexually addictive behavior.**

She's doing what she needs to do to protect herself.

Most people lie to save face. They feel guilty and trapped. They don't want to feel worse, so they lie.

There are some people who lie for malicious reasons. They don't lie only to get themselves out of an uncomfortable situation; they lie to hurt.

Other people are so sensitive, they seem to lie almost all the time. They're not malicious and they don't want to hurt you. They're obsessed with not looking bad.

No matter what category you fall into, here's another golden rule to apply. Use it and you will have a great chance of saving your relationship.

**Looking bad from telling the truth is better than looking good through deception.** If you lie to save face, there's a simple shortcut you can use to help you become truthful.

Before I mention it, I need to talk to the readers who don't lie. I'm sure most of those readers feel, "He doesn't need a shortcut. He just needs to tell the truth!" I agree with them. It always gets down to a yes or no decision when it comes to telling the truth.

I'm providing the shortcut so that the untruthful person can understand how he deceives himself and what it takes to tell the truth:

When it comes to telling the truth, don't hold back relevant data that makes you look bad.

People who lie to save face direct their answers away from looking bad and toward looking good. **If the person who lies to look good is willing to look bad, he's capable of being truthful.** For instance,

Before counseling, when Bea asked Jim, "How many porn sites did you join?" Jim told her, "Not many." She became furious and demanded, "I want to know how many!" Jim felt that if he told her the truth, she would get madder at him. So to save himself from looking worse, he said, "One or two, I'm not sure." Bea went through the credit card statements from the last six months. She discovered the real number: 10. It almost cost Jim his marriage. When I spoke with Bea, I told her, "What Jim needs to do is be willing to tell the truth even it makes him look bad. If he's willing to do that, there's an excellent
chance he'll be truthful with you."

The thing about telling the truth is that once you decide to be truthful, you can do it. You have free will. You can choose to tell the truth and thereby choose to save your relationship.

Words are the window to your mind. They show you and those around you what's inside you.

You have only two things to offer your partner: what you say and what you do. If your relationship is in trouble, and you are not completely truthful, your partner will rightfully assume that your actions are not to be trusted.

Tell your partner the truth and it will show her that you are serious about becoming a better person.

If you have lied to your wife about sexually addictive behavior, whether it's masturbation, pornography, infidelity, massage parlors, strip clubs, phone sex and even pedophilia, tell the truth means:

Be ready to undergo a thorough, intense questioning and cooperate completely. For instance,

Stanley had been going to massage parlors and prostitutes. Viola caught him when she noticed a strange phone number on her caller ID. She sat him down in the kitchen and pulled out a stack of legal pads she had prepared with questions and facts. She proceeded to interrogate him. Here's the catch: This occurred about two weeks after he admitted he had been cheating on her.

Some guys think, "OK, I told her I cheated. I admitted it. Isn't that enough for her? What else does she want?"

Answer: "It's not up to you to decide. It's up to her. Take it or leave it."

Also, some people believe that "Tell the truth" means, "Say as little as possible." That might work in a law court. In a marriage it will destroy trust.

Here are the requirements for how to cooperate with your partner so that you can save your marriage

1. Do not lawyer your answers.

For instance, your wife asks you, "Did you use pornography on the Internet this morning?" You watched a porn video at 3 p.m. The proper loving response to the
question is: "I didn't do anything this morning; I watched a video this afternoon." Many husbands reply to the question by saying, "No." Technically they did not lie. In reality, they destroyed the trust in their marriage. Eventually the wife figures out that in order to get the truth, she needs to become an opposing attorney. If you lawyer your answers, rather than live with someone she cross-examines, your wife might divorce you. If she doesn't divorce you, she still won't trust you and the relationship will be miserable for both of you.

Whenever you feel like lawyering your answers, remember this advice: "Don't withhold any relevant data that makes you look bad. Tell the whole truth."

2. Do not defend your actions. You have no defense.

For instance, your fiancee asks you, "Why did you go to prostitutes?" The proper answer is: "I was a cold, shallow, stupid idiot. What I did was wrong. Nobody made me do it. We had our problems, but there was still no excuse for what I did."

Here's the atrocious reply: "We were fighting and you didn't want to have sex with me and I was under a lot of stress at work and I was feeling depressed, and I was feeling angry about the abuse I went through as a child and I felt abandonment issues, and I don't know, it just happened."

Actions don't happen. You choose to do them.

Rain happens. It falls from the sky; you have no control over it. Cheating on your wife and/or lying to her didn't just happen. You weren't struck by a thunderstorm of infidelity and deception. You chose to cheat and/or lie.

If you've cheated on your wife, don't blame her for your actions. Even if she chose not to have sex with you for years, you still have no excuse. You could have divorced her. You could have asked her for an agreement to allow you to have sex outside the marriage. Or you could have had sex alone.

When it comes to ethical issues, you - and only you - are always responsible for your actions.

If you promised your wife or girlfriend that you would stop using pornography and/or stop masturbating, you have no defense if you break the promise. Admit that you screwed up and leave it at that.

3. Give your partner the same complete answers you would want if you were in her
situation

Some people who discover cheating don't want the details because the more they hear about it, the more it hurts. Others need every detail for closure. Some wives demand that the husband answer questions like: "What color shoes was the other woman wearing?" "Was the room well lit?" "What was the weather outside?" "How do you explain this receipt from two years ago?" "Last week you had a nightmare. You said, 'I'm lost. Help me.' Were you talking to her?"

In some situations the wife asks for a minute-by-minute account of the sexual behavior, including positions.

Your responsibility is to answer every question completely. Here's why she's asking:
She is asking herself, "Should I trust him again?" She's afraid you will continue to betray her. Any attempt on your part to resist her questions indicates to her, "Don't trust him again."

She is wondering, "Was there something wrong with me?" Every cooperative response you give her conveys, "Honey, it wasn't you. It was me." When you resist, you send a message of, "I don't care about you. I won't even take the time to answer your stupid questions."

Your partner needs closure. She's dependent on you to get it. If you don't do your best to give her everything she wants, she feels like you are stopping her from healing.

You've probably told your wife or fiancee that you'll do anything to prove that you've really changed and that she's the most important person in the world to you. Here's what she's probably thinking: "Yeah, right. If you loved me that much, you wouldn't have done what you did. I don't believe you. I wish I could... Maybe you're telling the truth, maybe you really learned your lesson, and maybe there a teeny-weeny chance I can trust you again. But you're going to have to prove it."

The opportunity to prove it is given to you every time she asks you a question. If you want to prove you love her, give your partner what she says she needs, not what you decide she needs.

4. Don't make up answers to please your partner.

Your partner will ask questions you won't be able to answer because you won't remember. That's fine. She knows you're not perfect.
Because you lied to her in the past, she won't know if you really can't remember, or if you don't want to remember. So, she isn't going to accept "I don't know" as an honest response, at first. Your job is to remain consistently honest. Don't make up an answer. Tell her you don't know. If you are completely and thoroughly honest with each and every question, there's a good chance she'll accept your "I don't know" answers as true.

But if you lie once, and she catches it, every "I don't know" becomes a potential "He's lying again."

5. Expect to answer the same questions over and over and over and over. Many times, to get closure and to make sure that you really are being honest, your partner will ask you the same questions dozens, and in some cases, hundreds of times.

Do not resist. Just answer the questions.

Do not say, "How many times do you want me to answer the same questions?" Just answer the questions.

Do not say, "If you ask me that question one more time, I'm out of here." Just answer the questions.

You don't set the terms. She does.

Now let's learn more about telling the truth, establishing trust and saving your relationship.
Chapter 39
The Benefits Of Honesty

Quentin and Hugo entered counseling with me at the same time. Quentin had been going to prostitutes for about 15 years. He also had an intense masturbation and pornography addiction.

Hugo had never cheated on his wife. His addictive use of pornography and masturbation was not nearly as intense as Quentin's.

Quentin's relationship healed quickly, with a minimum of pain for both him and his wife. The counseling process was difficult, but much less difficult than Hugo's.

The difference wasn't Hugo's wife. It had nothing to do with a chemical imbalance or a miserable childhood. Here were the differences:

Hugo had been caught.

Quentin confessed to his wife even though she had no idea what he had been doing.

Hugo's wife had suspected his masturbation/pornography for years. And for years he lied his way out of it. He went so far as to accuse her of being distrustful and paranoid.

Quentin's wife didn't suspect his use of prostitutes or his intense addiction to masturbation/pornography. If he hadn't told her, she might have never known.

Hugo was dishonest with his wife because he did not want to stop. Quentin was honest with his wife because he wanted to stop.

Hugo's wife wondered, "What if I hadn't caught him? Would he have told me? Would he have wanted to stop? Would he still accuse me of being untrusting?" She had very good reasons not to trust him.

Quentin's wife trusted him because his confession was proof that he really wanted to change and that she could trust him.

In the previous chapter I discussed what to do if your partner catches you. Now we come to another - and more important - question: "What's the best option if your partner doesn't know?"

Here's what I tell a client in our first session, if the wife does not know:

"Your best chance of stopping your addictive behavior is to be honest with her.

"I understand that you may not be ready to tell her now. That's fine. Whether or not to
tell her will be a big decision for you. I will not attempt to push you in either direction. I'll show you the advantages and disadvantages of each. The choice will be yours.”

The biggest fear a client has whose wife doesn't know is that she will divorce him. Of course, he usually doesn't say it directly. He usually expresses it this way:

"I don't want to tell her because I know how much it would hurt her. I just don't think she could get through it. I’m only thinking of her, not myself."

It sounds nice, but that's not what's going on. What's really going on is human nature. We are all selfish, always.

The issue in life is not, "Should you be selfish or shouldn't you be selfish?" You are selfish.

The question is "How do you go about pursuing your selfish ends?"

Do you pursue them honestly and by respecting the rights of others?

Or do you pursue your selfish ends dishonestly and by violating the rights of others?

The "I don't want to hurt her" excuse is an excellent example. The motivation behind the statement is selfish. It's not to spare the wife. It's to spare himself from the pain she will hurl at him after he tells her.

When he says, "I don't think she can get through it," what he really means is, "I don't think she can get through staying married to me if I tell her." He's trying to protect his own selfish interests.

I'm not against people being selfish because to me it's like being against the law of gravity. It's a constant fact of existence you can't change.

The husband who says, "I don't want to tell my wife because it will hurt her," is pursuing his selfish ends dishonestly. He's also trying to convince himself that the deception is for her good, not his!

If you decide not to tell your wife, don't bring in the hypocrisy that you're doing it for her. You're doing it for you. We are all selfish, always.

Here are two more facts we need to discuss:

1. You run the risk of a divorce if you tell her.

2. The odds are she will not divorce you, if you're honest with her. Here's one of many true stories to support the second fact.

Clyde was having an affair with Sonya, his wife's co-worker. It wasn't a love affair; it
was meaningless, addictive sex. Clyde called me and started the counseling with the decision not to tell Phyllis, his wife. After a few months, it became clear to me and Clyde that if he wasn't honest with Phyllis, he wasn't going to stop his sexual behavior with Sonya. He was terrified Phyllis would divorce him. He was terrified of what Sonya would do.

There were many sessions when he broke down in tears. He had stomach aches on the day of his appointment with me. He didn't rely on medication to get through it; he didn't try to blame it on his parents or his "disease." Facing his problem for what it was helped him decide to be honest with Phyllis. Phyllis had not suspected anything. She was torn apart when he told her. She did not divorce him. They worked through it and built a good marriage.

Today, Phyllis is confident he will remain faithful to her. She knows that there is always a chance he'll return to his old ways, but the change she's seen in him gives her tremendous confidence he will stay faithful to her.

This is what I told Clyde to help him understand why there's an excellent chance she wouldn't divorce him, if he was honest with her:

"If you tell your wife that you've been cheating on her, she will go through hell. The shock will devastate her. She might withdraw into a depression. She might be furious at you. She might move out. She might throw you out. I can't predict how she will react. Neither can you.

"After the initial shock wears off, she's going to be faced with an ultimate decision:

'Should I end the marriage, or should I try to save it?"

"She'll go through a debate in her mind about whether or not to risk trusting you again. The debate will be volatile. You betrayed her for years. You covered your tracks well. She'll feel like, 'I don't know him any more. He's not the man I married. Who is he?'

"She'll think of the good times the two of you had together and ask herself, 'Were they real? Was he faking it?'

"She'll think back to all the times she trusted you when it seemed that maybe you were lying to her. She'll remember how she told herself, 'Don't be stupid, he wouldn't lie to you.'

"She'll feel like a fool. Are you familiar with the old saying, 'Fool me once, shame on
you. Fool me twice, shame on me"? That's what she'll go through.

"She might beat herself up because she'll feel, 'I should have known. Why didn't I see it? What's wrong with me?"

"She'll wonder what else you've been hiding from her. She'll feel like she's been used.

"Every one of her questions, her fears, her doubts, and her anger will boil down to one question: 'Will he betray me again?'

"She'll know that you did not have to tell her. She'll realize that you might have kept it hidden for the rest of the marriage. She'll realize that it wasn't easy for you to tell her. She'll have a hard time saying to herself, 'I can't trust him' when she knows that you told her voluntarily.

"She'll realize that telling her was your first step toward creating an honest relationship with her. She'll sense that you do love her because you told her when you could have gotten away with it.

"She'll see that there is hope because although you've been living a lie, the fact that you told her shows you are determined to be honest with her.

"I believe she will stay with you, as hard as it might be, if you prove to her that she can trust you. The best way to prove it is to tell her the truth."

You might have noticed that there was one reason I left out. I didn't leave it out because I was afraid to mention it. I left it out because I believe in facing reality in a positive way. So I did not say, "If you don't tell her, she might catch you anyway and then it would be worse. The longer you do it, the more likely you are to be caught. You better tell her now before it's too late."

I don't recommend that kind of approach because it's not a loving and truthful motivation. It's a motivation based on fear and manipulation. You can have a wonderful relationship with your partner based on honesty with each other for loving reasons.

Now let's discuss the everyday details of "OK, I'm convinced it's better for both of us if I tell her. So, what's the best way for me to do it?"

Here's what I've observed:

1. Tell her on a Friday night or over the weekend. It gives her time to recover before the workweek begins.

2. Tell her when the kids are asleep or when they're out of the house. Give her
recovery time before she needs to cope with them.

3. Don't beat around the bush.

Don't put her through a long preamble of how sorry you feel about what you're going to tell her, etc. Tell her directly.

4. Once you tell her, your job is to comfort her.

Don't ask her for any credit because you told her. Don't ask her to understand how hard it was for you to tell her. You're the wrongdoer. Your responsibility is to comfort the person you hurt.

5. She calls the shots.

If she wants to talk about it, then talk. If she tells you to get out of the house, do not resist. Quietly pack your bags and go.

6. If she decides to move out, do not try to stop her. Whatever you do, do not try to physically stop her from leaving.

7. Don't leave anything out.

One of the biggest mistakes you could make is to decide to tell her, but then not tell her everything. If you're going to be honest about it, be honest about it.

8. Cooperate.

For instance, if she doesn't want to be in the same bed with you, don't whine, don't complain.

9. Take her seriously.

If she says she hates you, don't tell her, "That's the way you feel now. But I know if you think about it, you'll realize how much you love me."


11. If you love her, make sure she knows it.

If she accuses you of not loving her, don't say, "OK, if you think I don't love you, fine. I don't love you." Instead, if you love her, tell her, "I know what I did was wrong. But I do love you."

If she throws you out of the house, go. On the way out, if you really love her, tell her you love her. If she decides to leave, and you really love her, tell her you love her and you wish she would stay.

If she wants you to sleep on the couch, don't argue. If you really love her, tell her you...
love her and that you'll sleep on the couch for as long as she wants you to.

If she gives you a thousand reasons why she's sure you don't love her, and you really do love her, tell her you love her.

12. You get no sympathy.
She gets your support, your sympathy, and your caring.

13. Don't make a promise you can't keep.
You are capable of remaining faithful to her and refraining from any kind of sex with another person.

But if you make a promise like, "From this moment on I won't use porn or masturbate," I doubt it is a promise you could keep. It takes months to overcome a masturbation/pornography addiction. Instead tell her, "I'll do the best I can and I promise not to lie to you about it ever again."

I am not promising you that she will stay if you tell her. I will give you an opinion, though. It's controversial - and it's honest. I believe that if she were to leave you after you voluntarily confessed, you'd have good reason to wonder: "Did she love me in the first place?" I'm assuming that she had no idea of what you were up to and that you told her in a loving, caring way.

I've helped people heal marriages where there was cheating going on for decades.

The reason the wife stayed was that she realized his confession was the sign that he did love her and he intended to remain faithful.

Intentions are not facts. They're not results. They are the starting point.

When I talk to a husband who tells me, "I love my wife, but I'm not going to tell her," I seriously wonder if he loves her. The high failure rate of those who don't tell their wives indicates to me that most of those men do not love their wives.

It's not easy to tell her. You need to prepare for it carefully and lovingly. If you do tell her, I don't believe it will be the end of your marriage. It will be the beginning of a potentially good one.
Chapter 40
No One Is Perfect

Most women I speak with want to help their partner overcome his addiction. Their first question is: "How can I help?"
   My reply is "Be yourself. The counseling will adjust to your needs and guide you."
   Another question on the minds of many women involved with a sexually addicted man is, "Am I a codependent?"

I define a codependent as "a person who needs his/her partner to act addictively." The Twelve Step Program deserves credit for being the first to identify codependency. However, the program has a dual purpose:
   To help people overcome addiction
   To get as many people into the program as possible.
   In its zeal to recruit, the Twelve Step Program stretched the boundaries of codependency. Now they've gone so far that a concerned woman who reads a book on sex addiction by a Twelve Stepper or a conventional, licensed therapist has a good chance of coming away from it convinced she's codependent.

The books take the approach that if you're involved with a sexually addicted person, you are probably codependent because:
   It assumes that if you had really wanted to see the signs of his sex addiction, he wouldn't have been able to hide it from you. You didn't want to see the signs because you're a codependent. Let's do a reality check.
   Most women don't become sexually addicted. Most men do. The men hide their addiction well. Unless you knew the signs of sex addiction before you got involved with a sexually addicted man, you wouldn't have been able to realize he was sexually addicted.
   Because of the profound differences between men and women, it's difficult for a woman to understand a man’s sex addiction. Let me give you an excellent example.

A client asked me to read a letter written to an advice columnist about a man's erratic behavior. My client wanted to know, "Is the man sexually addicted?" I read the letter. "Of course," I told her. Here's the point: The letter writer, a woman, didn't know. The columnist, also a woman, gave a reply that showed she had no idea the man was sexually...
addicted. My client, who was involved with a sexually addicted man, didn't know. Had the same letter been shown to just about any man, he'd have known instantly.

No one is perfect. If the man you are involved with got away with hiding his sex addiction from you, that doesn't make you codependent. It makes you human.

Many times a woman looks back and says to herself, "I should have seen it." She remembers every little indication she "should have" realized meant something was wrong. By those standards, you'd go through life trusting no one.

The codependent arguments made in most books by Twelve Steppers and conventional, licensed therapists rest on what I call "the argument from perfection." The authors assume that because there were signs indicating sex addiction, you should have figured it out, perfectly.

The underlying message is: If you're not perfect, you're a codependent. Codependency does exist. If you are a codependent, you need to change. If you're not, treating yourself as a codependent is harmful to you. So, let me give you a few simple questions to help you determine if you are codependent. They're straightforward and don't demand perfection.

1. Do you encourage your partner to engage in his sexually addictive behavior? For instance, do you encourage him to use porn?
2. Do you engage in the addictive behavior with him and rely on it? Example: One codependent woman told me, "I'm pissed off at my husband for stopping his use of porn because now we can't watch it together."
3. Do you feel threatened by healthy behavior?
   For instance, if your husband shows a genuine, loving interest in you, do you start a fight?
4. Do you secretly feel turned on when you think of him with another woman? Most women turn off when they think of their man with another woman. Some codependent women get turned on by it.
5. Are you cheating on him?
   Sometimes a codependent woman wants her husband to cheat so that she can justify her cheating.
6. Do you have one or more addictions?
Sometimes - it's rare - the woman wants the man to act addictively so that she has an excuse to indulge her addictions.

7. Do you wish he would increase his sexually addictive behavior?

For instance, a codependent woman told me, "I wish he would masturbate more. I'd rather fold clothes than have sex with him."

I think you get the picture.

A bigger problem to watch out for is the Righteous Victim role. Again, this is rare. Most women want to help their man overcome his addiction; they don't want to make themselves a victim of it.

Some women go through life as victims long before they find out about their partner's sex addiction. When this type of woman discovers her partner's sex addiction, it becomes the justification for all of her problems. Let me give you some signs of the Righteous Victim:

The marriage had been suffering because of her anger problems. When she discovers his sex addiction, her anger becomes righteous fury she blames on him.

She has problems with intimacy. She's rarely interested in sex. When she discovers his sex addiction, she uses it as an excuse to avoid sex even more, or to stop their sex life completely.

She doesn't want to work at building a good marriage. She expects it to be handed to her and if it's not handed to her, it's his fault. The sex addiction becomes the reason he didn't give her a wonderful marriage.

She has a history of failed relationships. As the work on his problems progresses, her problems come out. She ends the relationship and/or the counseling to avoid facing her problems.

Some Righteous Victims spend their entire lives in a miserable marriage rather than divorce. Others end the relationship and go on to loneliness or to create another miserable relationship.

Getting through to a Righteous Victim is difficult because she's convinced that the real problem is her partner. As far as she's concerned, if she has any problems, they're minor. Once a Righteous Victim honestly admits how serious her problems are, she can go on and build the happy marriage she's always wanted.
It all comes back to this principle: Honesty is the key to mental health.

In a good marriage, no one is in charge. In a bad marriage, someone is. So, our next destructive profile is the Dominator. She's in charge of everything, including her marriage.

First, let's discuss a few indicators of the Dominator. Note: these indicators apply to male dominators also:

She rarely admits mistakes, if ever.

She's the decision maker in the relationship. The partner might have some say, but she has the final word. Joint decisions are scarce.

She has an anger problem but claims, “I'm being assertive.”

She expects the world to revolve around her.

She surrounds herself with people who live by her rules. If they don't, they're out.

Most of her conversation is about herself. If she's not talking about herself, she's criticizing someone else.

The relationship is controlled by her moods.

Dominating, controlling men share the same characteristics. Their sex lives are a mess.

So is the sex life of the dominating woman.

The dominating woman seeks out a passive, insecure man because secure, confident men dump her. The passive, insecure man responds positively to a dominator because he is afraid of a genuinely confident woman.

When the dominator finds an attractive, insecure, passive man interested in her, she's ecstatic. She has everything she wants, on her terms, with a man she finds appealing. She also thinks he's "superior" to other men. Little does she know there's a hidden reason why the man is so cooperative:

He's too wrapped up in sex addiction to take an assertive role in the relationship. He goes along with her domination because he has what he wants: someone else to take care of reality for him while he gets sexually high in fantasy.

When a confident, loving woman discovers her man is sexually addicted, she feels upset, rejected, insecure, angry, frustrated, depressed, and betrayed. After the initial shock, she wants to help him overcome the addiction.

For the dominating woman, the sex addiction represents more than profound rejection
and betrayal. It is the ultimate threat to her control. She doesn't try to help her man
overcome the addiction. She goes to war against him and the addiction. Her weapon is
emotional intimidation. Note: the male dominator uses the same tactics. For instance:

She tries to create a controlled environment. She might tear the lingerie ads out of the
daily paper. She might decide what shows he can watch on TV. She might end his access
to the Internet. She might not let him listen to certain music. She might forbid him to be
home alone.

She attacks him on the slightest pretext. It might be the color of the shirt he's wearing.
Maybe he answered the phone in what she considers to be the wrong tone of voice. She
might decide that he was looking out the window too long.

She tells him what he thinks and then accuses him of thinking the wrong thoughts.
She decides what he should be feeling and then tells him he wasn't feeling it.
She might decide that he had an affair with someone and nothing can convince her
she's wrong.

He can't do anything right. For instance, she tells him that he doesn't apologize for his
mistakes. Then she attacks him for not apologizing even though there was nothing for
him to apologize about. If he apologizes for a mistake he made, she doesn't believe him.

She sends confusing sexual signals. If he makes a pass at her, she attacks him. Then
she attacks him for not making a pass at her.

She reads things into his body language and tells him what they mean. If he disagrees,
he's lying. If he agrees, she doesn't believe him.

She throws temper tantrums and accuses him of baiting her. Or she accuses him of
starting a fight she started.

She sinks into deep depressions caused by her own problems. She blames the
depressions on him.

If she's in a good mood, she expects him to be in a good mood too. If he isn't, he
doesn't love her.

If she's in a bad mood, she expects him to feel bad also. If he doesn't, he isn't caring.
She demonstrated many of these traits before she discovered the sex addiction. Now
they're magnified by her rage.

Sometimes a woman who is not dominating will make some of these mistakes because
she doesn’t know what to do to get the addiction stopped.

Usually the intimidation succeeds in the beginning. In the long run it's doomed to failure because:

1. He holds on to his sex addiction as a sanctuary from her domination.
2. The sex addiction also becomes his payback for her intimidating ways. The dominating, controlling woman can be helped, if she is willing to speak to a counselor she's not capable of controlling. Thus we have the tragic irony of many dominators; they seek help from a counselor they are in charge of.

I have helped some dominators - most are impossible to deal with. If you've ever tried to get a dominator to admit a mistake, you have a mild idea of what the sessions are like.

Essentially, I do the fighting that the passive, insecure partner should have done long ago. Interestingly, if the passive, insecure partner finally asserts themselves, the dominator has a better chance of overcoming his/her problems. But if the passive, insecure partner is not willing to assert themselves, the relationship stays miserable until it ends.

When dealing with a dominator who refuses to change, divorce is an act of kindness.

We’ve discussed three rare personality types that can ruin any relationship. Most people are not codependents, Righteous Victims, or Dominators.

In the next chapter we'll discuss how you and your partner can overcome some of the more sensitive issues in saving a relationship.
Chapter 41
How A Relationship Heals

Many women will tell their partner something to the effect of, "Your masturbation/pornography feels to me like adultery."

Even she doesn't think his masturbation/pornography is adultery, she will probably feel painfully rejected and betrayed by her partner's sexually addictive behavior. To varying degrees, she responds with anger, distrust, depression, loss of sexual interest in her partner, and a desire to end the relationship.

Ultimately she finds yourself faced with two competing options:

a) End the relationship.

b) Build a new and better relationship with him as he works on overcoming his addiction.

As a reader of my book, you most likely you chose to try to build a new and better relationship with him. So, let's go over in detail how to heal the relationship and get it to flourish:

1. Go at your pace.

You might try to go faster to please your partner. You could end up resenting him because of it.

Another pacing problem: As you see good changes in him, you might begin to feel warmer toward him. But you might smother your warm feelings for fear of being betrayed again. If you continue to slow down or deliberately stop warmth from developing, you run the risk of becoming a Righteous Victim or creating a cold relationship that is not good for either of you.

2. Let your partner try to build a better relationship with you.

It's easy to believe that the relationship will never be good again. One thing you can be sure of: It won't go back to the way it was, and neither of you want it to. It can get better - in fact, better than it ever was - if both of you work at it.

Some women feel, "He hurt me. Why should I let him build a new relationship with me? I want to make him suffer." If you indulge a desire for vengeance, the relationship worsens.
Your partner will never suffer enough because you can’t relieve the pain of your suffering by making him suffer. Another person's suffering cannot relieve yours.

3. Give your partner the benefit of the doubt.

In previous chapters, we spoke about this crucial issue. Let's look at it from some other perspectives. After being lied to for years, your first response will be distrust, considering what you've been through. However, if you decide to give the relationship another chance, you're faced with the question of, "How can I ever trust him again?"

You can't follow him around 24 hours a day and probably don't want to. So, you'll be required to take his word from time to time. If you don't eventually give him the benefit of the doubt, the trust needed for the relationship to heal is impossible to build. Sometimes a wife will say, "I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, but first I want to be sure he's telling me the truth."

What she wants is impossible. He's lied to her for years. In order to save the relationship, she'll need to take a risk. This doesn't mean, "Close your eyes and accept whatever he says as true." It means keep your eyes open and take the risk of trusting him until you clearly see he's lying again.

Sometimes the wife will say, "I don't feel it's fair that I'm the one who should have to take the risk." Here's another way to look at it:

First, you're right. It’s not fair. In many ways you have suffered more from his addiction than he has. But now, your options are to either end the relationship or to build a better one while he attempts to overcome his addiction. There will be doubts about him in your mind. When you feel doubt, you have two alternatives:

1- Assume he can't be trusted.

2- Give your partner the benefit of the doubt.

There still can be some improvements if you do not give him the benefit of the doubt. But the real healing doesn't begin until you take the chance of trusting him again.

There is no risk-free answer when it comes to saving a relationship.

Let's assume he's lying to you. If you give him the benefit of the doubt, and keep your eyes open, you'll eventually discover the lies. He fooled you before, but this time you know his tricks and you have a much better chance of catching him. When you do catch him, you'll probably end the relationship. So instead of ending the relationship sooner,
you end it later.

But what if he's not lying to you? What if he's telling you the truth? If you don't give him the benefit of the doubt, you destroy a potentially good relationship because every good relationship depends on the benefit of the doubt. No relationship can survive a situation where doubts are treated like lies, especially when it comes to dealing with sex addiction.

You are taking a risk. But there's also a wonderful reward.

By giving him the benefit of the doubt, the two of you have the opportunity to build the loving, trusting relationship you both want.

4. Don't use his guilt to your advantage.

The Righteous Victim and/or the Dominator might use the partner's remorse to get what she wants from him. She might demand a new car, jewelry, etc. Or, for vengeance, she might insist he give up something he enjoys, such as a sport or a hobby.

When there's a conflict between the two of them about the relationship, she might take the attitude, "You're a sex addict. You can't be right."

If there are conflicts about how to raise the kids, she might decide, "A sex addict can't be a good parent."

To exert total control over him, she might demand that he call her whenever he changes locations, for instance, when he goes to lunch, when he leaves the office, etc. She might want a daily list of every woman he speaks to. If he goes out of town, she might demand a detailed daily journal of his activities.

If your partner is sincerely trying to change, treat him as a trustworthy equal until he proves differently. It will relieve you of the burden of being his supervisor. And it will give him the opportunity to prove that he can be trusted.

Also, a relationship in which one person is always wrong is not good for either of you. It creates resentment. It makes building a good relationship impossible.

Below you will find an interview that you and your partner can take together. It will give both of you an opportunity to find your own mistakes and speak your mind to your partner.

The interview is designed for one person to ask the questions and for the other to answer. Then, whenever the two of you are ready, you switch.
Before you begin the interview, I suggest you tell your partner something to the effect of: "I came across an interview in a book about sex addiction. You can relax, the interview isn't about you. I really want our relationship to heal. I don't want to hurt you. I don't want to do anything that would make it more difficult for you to overcome your addiction.

"The interview consists of questions about me. I was hoping you'd be willing to answer them. I want you to be completely honest with me. Don't worry about hurting my feelings. I just want the truth.

"I promise not to attack your answers. I promise not to defend my actions. I won't start a fight. I promise to listen to your side."

You want him to feel, "I can tell her anything and she won't take offense or attack me. She just wants the truth so that we can build a good relationship together."

Here are a few suggestions to help you and him discuss the questions:

- Politely ask your partner for examples when he gives you his answers.
- The examples will help both of you. Don't defend your actions when he gives you an example. Use the examples as an opportunity to learn about yourself.
- If he can't give you an example, don't tell him: "Then I refuse to accept your answer unless you give me an example." Instead, try to come up with one yourself.
- Don't interrupt.
- Let him speak at his own pace in his own way, just as you would want him to do for you.
- After each answer, thank him.
- If he's telling you something he knows you'll feel hurt by, he's trusting you not to attack him. You promised you wouldn't; now's your opportunity to prove it.
- A thank you at the most difficult times in the interview can create healing and mutual respect. I suggest you say it after each question because you don't know how stressful it might be for your partner to give you honest feedback on issues you might be very sensitive about.
- The more appreciation you show for his efforts, the more effort he'll give you.
- If you disagree with him, wait.
- This is his opportunity to give you his feedback. Take it all in. Think about it. Try to
understand it from his point of view. Give yourself at least a few hours and maybe even a few days to think about his comments. Then talk to him about it from a supportive perspective.

   Discuss your disagreements; don't attack.

   After you've carefully thought about his answers, don't start your response with, "I think you were very unfair to me. You were picking on me. You didn't give me a chance. . . blah, blah, blah."

   Take this approach: "I appreciated your feedback very much. There were a lot of good things about it."

   Then tell him the things you agree with.

   Then mention the things you disagree with.

   Use your disagreements as an opportunity to learn more about each other in a loving, supportive way.

   Now for the questions:

   1. Do you sometimes get the feeling that I am too sensitive?
   2. Do I sometimes treat you like you can't do anything right?
   3. Do you feel that sometimes I'm waiting to pick a fight with you?
   4. Am I unforgiving?
   5. Do you feel like I try to take charge of the relationship?
   6. Do I sometimes expect you to read my mind?
   7. Do I refuse to admit my mistakes?
   8. Am I overly critical of you?
   9. Do I act like I expect the world to revolve around me?
   10. Do I sometimes accuse you of lying when you are telling the truth?
   11. Do I sometimes act like I can read your mind?
   12. If you disagree with me, do I become defensive?

   Let's identify some of the differences between a good relationship and a lousy one so that both of you can make the best use of the questions.

   Good Relationship:

   - Both parties are honest even if it means a conflict.
   - Both partners listen even if it hurts.
**Lousy Relationship:**

- One or both partners would rather deceive than say what's on his/her mind.
- One or both partners defend their feelings rather than face facts.

If you've been defensive and/or deceptive in the past, use these questions as an opportunity to:

- Be honest even if it means conflict.
- Listen even if it hurts.

When both partners are emotionally open and honest, they create the foundation to build trust, intimacy, and loving sex.

So let's talk about how to cope with sexual problems in a relationship.
Chapter 42
Sex And Emotions

Let's start with impotence. We'll define it as "the inability to develop or maintain an erection during intercourse."

Sometimes the cause is medical.

When a client mentions an impotency problem, I ask him, "Do you masturbate?" If he can masturbate, my observations have shown me the cause of his impotence is emotional. I'm not a doctor, so don't take my observations as medical advice. And doctors are not addiction counselors. But it doesn't hurt to get a medical opinion if you are struggling with impotence.

The underlying cause of emotional impotence is approaching sex as a test.

Let's identify some of the feelings a man goes through when he approaches sex as a test. They don't cause impotence in every case. They certainly undercut his enjoyment of sex.

- "I gotta get as much sex as a normal guy does."
- "The more I do it, the better man I am."
- "Is my penis big enough? The bigger the better."
- "I gotta be a good enough lover to make her orgasm."
- "How long can I go? The longer I go, the better I'm doing."
- "Am I the best she ever had?"
- "I better not finish before she does."
- "I did it. Wow, I'm a man!"

For many men, sex is what I call "The Man Test."

Here's the irony of it: Anyone who takes The Man Test fails it. Everyone who takes The Man Test flunks because:

Sex is an emotional expression.

It is not a bodily function. Bodily functions are emotionless operations like urinating, moving your bowels, etc. Sex has more in common with the emotion behind laughter than it does with the function of urinating.

Your body is the metaphor of your emotions.
Emotions are expressed through your body. If you feel happy, you emit a sense of joy about you. You'll smile, your eyes will seem brighter, your walk will have more life in it. If you feel sad, it will show on your face and the way you present yourself. Anger shows through your body. So does fear. Boredom and apathy are expressed through your body. Laughter is a physical expression of an emotion. Crying is also.

*Sex is your body's expression of your feelings about the person you are with.*
- If you're with a prostitute, your feelings are shallow and short-term.
- If you're alone, your feelings are fantasy-based.
- If you're with someone you genuinely love, your feelings are reality-based and loving.

*Loving sex is a personal expression of loving feelings.* Loving sex is not a test of how well you perform the sex act. When you perform something, you control your emotions and direct them toward achieving a goal.

For instance, a ballerina on stage will put aside any personal emotion that interferes with her performance. A pianist will reject a personal desire that distracts him from giving his concert. During a game, a football player will bury personal feelings that threaten his ability to win.

The difference between expressing your love and performing something is this:

Performance is a method of accomplishing something.

Love is not a method. It is not used to accomplish anything. **Love is the accomplishment.**

You can love someone and still have problems with impotence. The problems occur if you try to have sex with your partner without being emotionally vulnerable to her. If you attempt to have loving sex without being vulnerable to your partner, you will experience a genuine fear of failing.

The fear is your mind warning you that it's impossible to have loving sex without being vulnerable to your partner.

If you react to the fear by expressing honest emotion, loving sex is still possible. If you react by trying to repress your emotions, your mind goes into performance mode. In other words, "Pass The Man Test."

The reward of passing The Man Test is being able to say, "I did it." That's not much of
an emotional payoff considering the risk and effort involved. So your mind shuts down the emotional connection between you and your partner. The result is impotence.

Here's a step-by-step breakdown of impotence in a loving relationship:

1. Attempting to have loving sex without being vulnerable leads to a genuine fear of failure.
2. If you react by expressing honest emotion, loving sex is still possible.
3. If you react by repressing your emotions, impotence occurs.

Masturbation doesn't require you to be vulnerable to another person. Plus, it offers much more pleasure than being able to say, "I did it."

That's why some people struggling with impotence are able to masturbate.

One myth about sex addiction is that it is a cure for impotence. In fact, sex addiction and impotence caused by emotional issues stem from the same problem:

The person struggling with emotionally-caused impotence is really struggling with being emotionally vulnerable.

The appeal of sex addiction is that it offers a fantasy world in which a person can have sex without emotional vulnerability.

Let's learn more about the connection between impotence and sex addiction and then go on and find out how a great sex life is built.
Chapter 43

Overcoming Emotional Impotence

If a man is sexually addicted and impotent, he needs to overcome his impotence before he'd be able to overcome his sex addiction.

However, many conventional, licensed therapists recommend that an impotent man use pornography to get sexually aroused in order to have sex with his wife. This leaves the man with the choice of

- Using his wife as a sexually addictive substitute
- Or impotence.

Some of my clients were told by their conventional, licensed therapist, "See a prostitute," on the assumption that going to a "professional" would cure the problem. But what prostitutes specialize in is cold, shallow, impersonal sex - the cause of impotence during loving sex.

If you want a good idea of how unaware conventional, licensed therapy and the Twelve Step Program are about impotence, go to a Twelve Step meeting or talk to a conventional, licensed therapist about it.

Some of the replies you'll get are:

- "Think of someone else who turns you on while you are having sex with your wife." This can cause further impotence because of the emotional conflict it puts the man in.
- "Pray before sex." Praying before sex is like praying before The Big Game. It makes sex a performance test. When loving sex becomes a performance, the "game" is lost.
- "Stimulate yourself manually up until the point you're ready to ejaculate, then do it." This won't work in a case of emotional impotence. Also, it can lead to premature ejaculation - another form of emotional sexual dysfunction.
- "Take medication." Viagra is not a solution for impotence caused by emotional problems. The following is a direct quote from Viagra-impotence.com: "Diseases, including diabetes, kidney disease, chronic alcoholism, multiple sclerosis, atherosclerosis, and vascular disease, account for about 70 percent of cases of impotence. Experts believe that psychological factors cause 10 to 20 percent of cases of impotence."
From the same site: "Some 78% of men reported improved erections while taking 50 mg and 100 mg doses of Viagra (versus only 24% on a placebo)."

Twenty-four percent reported improved erections on a placebo! Rather than go through a long analysis, don't count on Viagra to solve impotence caused by emotional problems.

- "You think your wife is your mother and you don't want to have sex with your mother." More nonsense from the mouths of charlatans.

- "Do deep breathing exercises and think of being in a wonderful vacation spot with a sexy woman." In other words, create a fantasy and use the fantasy to become sexually aroused. Fantasy is not a solution to any problem, especially a sexual problem. It's like telling an alcoholic to have a drink in order to sober up.

- "You are capable of masturbating because your penis is accustomed to it; your penis is not physically comfortable with intercourse. Your penis needs to be resensitized to intercourse." This foolishness comes from the school of thought that sex is a bodily function and you just need to train your body to function correctly. Sex is not a bodily function. If you can ejaculate through masturbation and you are impotent, you have an emotional problem. Your penis does not function on its own. It responds to your mind. The idea is to figure out what's going on in your mind and change it for the better.

When Jerry started counseling with me, he was a heavy user of pornography, an addicted masturbator and impotent with his wife, Dora. She loved him and went from doctor to doctor with him, hoping to find the "cure." At first, Dora accepted the advice of different doctors that Jerry needed porn and masturbation so that his body would not "forget" how to have sex. She didn't ask the doctors, "How come he 'forgot' how to have sex with me but he didn't 'forget' how to use porn?" She did what the medical profession wanted her to do: "Follow the doctor's orders." She spent many sleepless nights knowing that Jerry was still in front of the computer, surfing for porn and masturbating. Finally, she decided to do something about it. She started by researching pornography. She discovered that Jerry was probably sexually addicted.

Jerry did love her. He missed the warmth and closeness of the loving sex they used to have. When she told him that he was probably addicted to pornography and masturbation, he wasn't defensive about it. He was open to it.
They began the rounds of Twelve Step groups and conventional, licensed therapists. By the time they got to me they were emotionally exhausted. Their marriage was basically still good. But there was one big problem that almost destroyed the counseling before it started.

Dora was a professor at a prestigious university. She believed wholeheartedly in the education system. I don't. I have no degrees. I am a high school dropout. I did get an equivalency diploma and did go to college for a while. I stopped going because I vehemently disagreed with what I was being taught. Rather than compromise my integrity to get a degree for studies I didn't believe in, I decided to go out on my own. Not too long afterward, I successfully stopped smoking with my own program.

Today, I still refuse to be licensed because to get a license I must practice conventional, licensed therapy protocols. I believe their protocols are harmful. I refuse to knowingly harm a client.

Dora did not view me as someone who thinks for himself. She did not perceive me as offering an effective, common-sense alternative to the failed theories of conventional, licensed therapy. She just saw me as unlicensed.

She had a string of letters after her name, as did Jerry. She looked at the world as divided into two groups: those who had the proper education with the proper credentials and those who didn't. She lived in the world of an intellectual caste system. The more letters after your name, the more licenses and certifications you had, the more prestigious committees you were on, the higher up in the caste system you were. Someone like myself, a person without a single official degree, wasn't just at the bottom of the ladder. I was the rag she put on the sidewalk so that her ladder was not contaminated by the filth of everyday life.

Jerry was in computer sciences. He had a real job in the real world. He had started out in the ivory tower life but left it because of the politics, and - as it came out in counseling - because of elitists like Dora.

Dora had another side. She wasn't a joke teller, but she loved to laugh. She was gentle. She didn't brag about her scholarly accomplishments. Despite her elitist feelings, she wanted a relationship of equals with her husband. She understood on some level that her elitist sentiments blocked her from appreciating the world outside her ivory tower.
There was a bitter behind-the-scenes fight between Dora and Jerry over whether or not to work with me. Jerry wanted to because he had gone through my site word for word and had done a few sessions with me. Dora had started reading my site; when she found out I was neither licensed nor degreed she couldn't imagine I would have anything of value to offer her. The fight ended when they discussed Dr. ---, the last conventional, licensed therapist they had been to. He had billed himself as a super-stud. He said that he could have sex with any woman at any time under any circumstances. He had gotten a reputation as the man to go to for impotence.

Dora found Dr. --- obnoxious. But he was degreed and licensed, and she was desperate. His course of therapy was to rehearse Jerry for sex with Dora. When Dr. --- told Jerry to pull his penis out in therapy and to talk to it in front of Dora, both she and Jerry stopped the counseling.

During the fight over whether or not to work with me, Jerry told Dora, "A therapist I spoke to said that Dr. --- was a sex addict. The therapist said that Dr. --- isn't capable of loving sex and that I'm in better shape emotionally because at least I'm trying to have loving sex."

Dora said, "Which therapist? He's the one we should be talking to."

Jerry replied, "Joe, the unlicensed one."

Dora's wonderful sense of humor and her integrity emerged. She responded, "OK, Jerry, you win."

In the beginning of counseling the wife is usually suffering more from the husband's sex addiction than he is. Jerry and Dora were no exception.

Dora had gone through a phase where she believed Jerry was impotent because there was something wrong with her. She had worked through that phase pretty well on her own. I encourage my clients to become as independent of me as possible. Since Dora had worked through her problems of "there must be something wrong with me," I immediately moved on to other issues with her. The first thing she wanted to know was why Jerry would need to overcome his impotence problem before he could overcome his sex addiction. Jerry wanted to know also. I explained,

"Sex addiction and impotence stem from the same problem, fleeing from vulnerability. The similarity ends there. When a man engages in sexually addictive behavior, he is
dependent on fantasy for sexual pleasure. The impotent man doesn't get sexual pleasure in reality, either. **In order for a person to overcome sex addiction, he ultimately makes a choice between reality and fantasy.** Right now reality offers Jerry impotence. Until he finds sexual pleasure in reality, there's just about no chance that he will give up sexual pleasure in fantasy for impotence in reality."

It made sense to Dora, but Jerry felt that if he could stop his sexually addictive behavior, the addictive sexual energy would need to go somewhere. He could channel it to Dora.

"That's a nice idea," I replied. "But sex is about emotions; it's not about which direction you channel a bodily function. If you were to use Dora instead of sexually addictive behavior, there would be no real emotional connection between you and her. She'd be nothing more than a fantasy replacement.

"Let me tell you a true story about another client who I helped overcome alcohol, impotence, masturbation, voyeurism, and pornography. He had stopped all of his sexually addictive behaviors before the counseling began. He had stopped through repression. Sometimes, when a person represses sexually addictive feelings, he also represses loving sexual feelings.

"The man and his wife had not had any sex for five months. He felt no sexual desire for her because he had repressed all his sexual feelings. **Stopping sexually addictive behavior is not a cure for impotence because loving sex depends on experiencing loving emotions.** It doesn't have anything to do with redirecting addictive sex.

"You're better off overcoming the emotional issues causing your impotence. **Build a wonderful emotional connection and great sex life with your wife first.** Then go after the sex addiction."

Jerry became defensive about his sexually addictive behavior. He claimed that he had more sex drive than Dora and that he needed masturbation and pornography to satiate his greater sexual needs. I asked Dora if this issue had been brought up with the conventional, licensed therapists they had consulted. She said that they had agreed he might have more sex drive than she could satisfy.

I replied, "Dora, did any of those degreed, licensed therapists say to Jerry, 'Well, if you have so much extra sex drive, why aren't you having sex with your wife?""
Sheepishly, Dora replied, "No." I asked Jerry the question.

His answer was, "I don't know." I responded:

"One of the myths about sex addiction is that sexually addicted people have more sex drive than 'normal' people. Actually, sexually addicted people have two drives:

1. A natural, loving sex drive
2. An addictive sex drive

"Most people don't realize that there are two drives because the authorities who run the addiction treatment system - the conventional, licensed therapists - don't recognize free will. To them, whatever sex drive you have is the sex drive you received. The only question in the conventional, licensed therapy community is whether your sex drive was caused by 'nature or nurture.'

"If they were to acknowledge that a person's sex drive is the long-term result of how he or she engages in relationships, they would have to throw out their deterministic theory that you are either a product of your environment or your heredity.

"It's not politically correct to hold people responsible for their actions. It's more acceptable to say, 'You have a disease that enlarges your sex drive just like mumps swells your salivary glands.'

"If you want to know why you have sex alone but you don't have sex with Dora, the bottom line is: It's easier and less threatening to have sex alone."

Then we discussed the differences between loving sex and addictive sex.

Dora grasped the concepts immediately. It wasn't surprising. When it comes to intimacy issues, the woman usually understands more about sex addiction than the guy does.

Jerry had another concern. "If I don't stop my sexually addictive behavior, I don't think I'll have anything left over for Dora."

It's a common misconception about impotence and sex addiction. I told him,

"We're going to keep coming back to one basic principle about sex and build on it. Sex is about emotions.

"As you allow your emotions for Dora to develop, as you allow yourself to take emotional risks with her, your natural sex drive for her will develop.

"I agree with you that if you put sexual energy in one area, you don't have sexual
energy for the other area. But let's look at it this way: If you act on escapist emotions, you strengthen them. If you act on reality-based, loving emotions, you strengthen them.

"The goal I'm suggesting is that you identify the emotional blocks stopping your natural sex drive from coming out. As you make more and more of a reality-based, emotional connection with Dora, the natural, loving sex drive will be there.

"It's human nature. Sex is your body's expression of the feelings you have for the person you're with. Sex through masturbation/pornography is easy because there's no vulnerability.

"You love Dora. She knows you love her. Now you need to break through your fear of being vulnerable to her. Do that and your sex drive for her will be there."

That got through.

Dora was worried that she had pushed him away from her. There were problems between the two of them, many of them hers:

- She turned most of their talks into intellectual competitions.
- When he came up with an idea, an insight, a general comment, or a discussion point, she made it her business to come up with a better one.
- She tended to be overly sensitive to criticism.
- She would make decisions affecting both of them without getting Jerry's opinion.
- She expected Jerry to be supportive of her work, while she was overly critical of his.
- She was somewhat of a workaholic. She said, "We don't have children. My career became my child." It was a rationalization. The fact was she had problems with intimacy; that's why she was a borderline workaholic.

As we identified Dora's problems, Jerry needed to accept that his impotence had developed apart from Dora's problems. When Jerry and Dora began their relationship, their sex life started off with a bang, as it usually does in most relationships. Jerry had been heavily into masturbation and pornography long before he met Dora. He had been withdrawn also. His feelings for her were so strong, though, that he came out of his shell to get into a relationship with her. They married about two years after they met.

As the conflicts between the two of them increased, Dora threw herself more into her work. Jerry didn't like it. He should have said, "We're growing apart, Dora. Let's talk about our problems so that we can build a better relationship." Instead he withdrew from
her emotionally. Sometimes things got so bad between the two of them, they lived more like roommates then lovers. There was still sex between them, but it was infrequent.

The more Jerry withdrew emotionally from Dora, the further he went into the world of sex addiction. Eventually sex with Dora became a chore because the fuel of loving sex—the loving emotional connection—had faded due to neglect.

Sex addiction was fun for him because it gave him sexual pleasure without the risk and effort of making an emotional connection with Dora.

Jerry and Dora did build that emotional connection. His impotence was overcome and so was his sex addiction. Dora and Jerry are happy today and to tell you the truth, it's no surprise to me.

As I've been saying throughout my book, honesty is the key to mental health. Dora and Jerry were basically honest people who loved each other. They had some big problems. Who doesn't?

Dora and Jerry built the life together they always wanted because they stayed honest with each other and themselves, they worked hard, and I guided them correctly. Had any one of us not carried our responsibilities well, the counseling would have failed.

Now, let's go beyond Dora and Jerry. Let's talk about how any couple can develop the emotional intimacy that creates wonderful, loving sex.
Chapter 44
Sex And Emotional Intercourse

You've read the articles or seen the headlines in popular men's and women's magazines:

"Turn her on like she's never been turned on before!!"
"Make him go crazy over you!!"
"Is your sex life dull? Find out the secrets of exciting sex!!"

Basically they all offer the same advice:
- Wear sexy clothes.
- Say sexy things.
- Play sexy music.
- Make sure the lighting is sexy.
- Buy her a sexy gift.
- Tell him what a great stud he is.
- Blah, blah, blah.

Wonderful, loving sex isn't about clothes, lighting, music, or magic words. It's about intercourse. A very special kind of intercourse:

Sex is emotional intercourse experienced through your body.

If you want great sex, build great emotions between you and your partner. If the sex is not wonderful between the two of you, a candlelight dinner won't make a difference. A better emotional connection will.

Some people will argue, "Doesn't the candlelight dinner make it easier to build the emotional connection?" Nope. In fact, if your relationship is in trouble, there will probably be a fight over something like which candle to light first, what music to put on, and who spilled the water.

A candlelight dinner has about as much effect on a troubled sex life as fantasizing about swimming in the ocean does while your house is burning down. It doesn't address the problem.

So let's put aside quick and easy, no-minded solutions to a serious, complex problem. Let's discuss couples whose sex lives were suffering and how they built a great sex life.
by building the great emotions that cause it.

We'll start with some of the small things:

When Jack and Pauline watched TV together, Pauline would give a running commentary on the show. Jack didn't want to hear Pauline's opinions, even if he agreed with them. He wanted to watch the show. The problem was he didn't tell her because he didn't want to get into a conflict with her.

The result: Jack felt that he could not enjoy every day experiences with Pauline. His feeling that the two of them couldn't share enjoyment had a direct effect on his sexual interest in her.

The solution: Jack told her how he felt. Pauline had no idea how disturbing her commentary was to him. She stopped the comments. It led to Jack being open with her about other things that bothered him.

Talking about the things that bothered him gave him and Pauline a chance to work through them.

After a while sex was no longer a Man Test for Jack. It became an expression of the closeness he felt for her as the two of them worked through their problems together.

Sylvia and Dan had been struggling with impotence for about five years before they came to me. In one of my private sessions with Dan, I asked him, "Do you experience loving feelings for Sylvia?" He said, "Sure." I asked him, "Do you express them to her?" He was a little surprised by my question. "Come to think of it, I don't," he answered.

The result: Because Dan did not express his loving feelings for Sylvia, he was avoiding being vulnerable to her.

The solution: Whenever he felt affection for Sylvia, he expressed it. This was the beginning of allowing his sexual feelings for her come out.

Mike loved the way Robin took care of the kids. He appreciated how well she took care of him also. But he never told her.

The result: Robin thought he was taking her for granted. She felt angry and unappreciated. Mike noticed her anger. Rather than ask what was wrong, he figured, "She's not going to want to have sex with me." So Mike withdrew further and further into sex addiction.

The solution: Mike started paying attention to Robin's feelings. He made himself
available for her to talk to him about what she was experiencing. The more she told him about herself, the closer he felt to her. It helped build the emotional closeness they both needed for wonderful sex.

At the end of a hard day, Chris would come home and lock himself in his home office. He wouldn't talk to anyone until he felt comfortable. Sometimes he'd be in his office until it was time to go to bed. He usually didn't act sexually addictive at those times. He didn't drink. He would sit and read or try to work through a job project.

The result: Chris felt that he had to go through life emotionally alone. Kathleen, his wife, suffered emotional neglect.

The solution: Chris started talking to Kathleen about his problems at work and other issues he was struggling with. Kathleen became his emotional partner in life. It had a wonderful effect on their sex life.

Here's what we learn from these examples: If your relationship is troubled by impotence or a less than satisfactory sex life, you start building a better sex life by expressing your thoughts and feelings to your partner.

Some people ask me, "Should we schedule it for a certain time each day? Should we each get 15 minutes? Should we make a list?"

That kind of advice is the usual nonsense you get from conventional, licensed therapists. Real life doesn't work that way. Don't watch the clock; it'll stifle your emotional expression. A list won't help because instead of talking to your partner, you'll be reading from a list. Finally, a good emotional relationship is spontaneous; it's not scheduled.

Here's my advice:

1. When should you express what you're thinking and feeling? When you are thinking and feeling it.

2. How much time should you take? As much as you need.

3. Should you make a list? A list detracts from sincerity and spontaneity. Besides, if what you want to say is important to you, you won't need a list.

The first step to a better sex life is to create spontaneous emotional intercourse between you and your partner whenever, wherever, and however it works for the two of you.
Sometimes a client will say, "I don't know what I'm feeling."

The following is a simple step-by-step process for identifying feelings. I teach it to my clients and I use it, too. It can help anyone.

1. Start by trying to decide if you feel positive or negative. Keep the initial identification as broad as possible. For instance, "I'm feeling good" or "I'm feeling lousy."
2. Once you know your overall emotional state, tie it to something in the here and now. Let's take a few of our previous examples and see how it's done:

   Jack is watching TV with Pauline. He begins to feel uncomfortable. He identifies, "I'm feeling upset." Next he ties it to a here-and-now situation. He realizes he's watching TV and he realizes Pauline is giving him her running commentary. Now he knows his general emotional state and he has a pretty good idea of what he's responding to.

   If he had looked into his childhood, who knows what he would have come up with. If he had taken medication, he'd have never gotten to the core of the problem. If he had closed his eyes and imagined he was somewhere else, he wouldn't have spoken to Pauline about what was bothering him.

   Mike looks at Robin and feels uneasy. Instead of emotionally closing down out of fear, he asks himself, "What am I feeling uncomfortable about?" He sees an angry look on Robin's face. He knows what he's feeling and why. Now he has an opportunity to build a better relationship with Robin by simply asking her, "Are you upset about something?"

   Dan and Sylvia are out for a ride on a Sunday morning. Suddenly Dan starts feeling good. He asks himself, "Why am I feeling good now?" He doesn't try to remember what happened to him on a Sunday morning 20 years ago. He looks for a here-and-now reason and realizes that he's sharing a wonderful morning with the woman he loves. He tells her. It's the beginning of a great day for both of them.

   Sometimes you'll have split feelings, some positive, some negative. Identify both sets. So, let's say you get home after a hard day. Your partner seems to ignore you. But you're glad to see her. Now you've got split feelings: You're glad to be home with your partner. But, you feel ignored by her.

   I suggest you express both feelings. By expressing all your feelings you can get valuable feedback. For instance:
You might find that your partner wasn't ignoring you; you were being overly sensitive. Your partner was ignoring you because you walked through the door with an angry look on your face you weren't aware of.

Your partner was ignoring you because she felt guilty about forgetting to pick up your package at the post office that she had promised to get.

You don't know what's on another person's mind until you ask. They don't know what's on your mind until you tell. You build a better relationship which leads to better sex by:

- Identifying what you're feeling
- Then telling your partner.

Sometimes you will be confused about your feelings. Let's say you and your partner just had a big fight over how you are treating her. You believe she's being overly sensitive. You also know that you probably did something wrong, but you don't know what it is. The fight has been going on for about two hours now. You know that you've been defensive and trying to win. You know she's been doing the same.

You feel like you're to blame for the whole mess. Then you feel she's to blame. You feel maybe it falls in the middle. Share your confusion with your partner. The more you share your thoughts and feelings with your partner, the closer the two of you get.

Each couple develops their own unique way of discussing their issues. The most important factor is the decision to be spontaneously open and honest with each other. The two of you can work the rest out over time, as long as both of you remain honest and committed to the relationship. Honest emotional expression can help many couples develop the emotional intercourse necessary for wonderful, loving sex.

In other cases, there might be other sexual issues that need to be addressed also. Let’s discuss those.
Chapter 45
Better Sex Through A Better Relationship

As far as I know, every client of mine who overcame their sex addiction correctly and
applied the advice in the next two chapters experienced a profound, wonderful change in
their sex lives.

Here are the guidelines:
1. Make your partner your sole source of sexual satisfaction.
2. Make your partner your primary emotional interest.
3. Appreciate the differences between men and women.
4. Sex is about making love, not making orgasms.
5. If your partner turns you down for sex, reassure your partner.
6. Don’t try to pressure your partner into anything that’s sexually uncomfortable for
him or her.

Now let’s get into the details:

Make your partner your sole source of sexual satisfaction.

Whatever sexual energy you put in one direction, you don’t have for any other
direction. If you have sex with prostitutes, you remove emotional and sexual energy from
your relationship and put it into empty, meaningless encounters. For the person in a
committed relationship, sex with prostitutes is a black and white issue.

Now let’s talk about addictive masturbation, a much more complex issue. The
following questions are from the second part of the masturbation interview. They will
help you evaluate whether or not you’re addicted to masturbation.

A “Yes” or “Sometimes” answer indicates addictive masturbation.

1. Is masturbation a hobby to you; do you do it to pass the time or relieve boredom?
Yes No Sometimes
2. Do you feel like, “I need to masturbate,” the same way an alcoholic feels, “I need a
drink”?
Yes No Sometimes
3. If you are single, do you prefer to stay home and masturbate rather than go out and
try to build an intimate relationship?
Yes No Sometimes
4. Do you experience masturbation hangover (disoriented, fatigued, and stressed after masturbating)?
   Yes No Sometimes
5. Do you wish you could go a whole week without masturbating? Yes No Sometimes
6. Does masturbation cause you physical pain? Yes No Sometimes
7. After you have sex with your partner do you need to masturbate? Yes No Sometimes
8. Do you prefer masturbation to having sex with your partner? Yes No Sometimes
9. Does masturbation hinder you from having sex with your partner? Yes No Sometimes
10. Are you impotent with your partner but capable of masturbation? Yes No Sometimes
11. If your partner turns you down for sex, do you find that you must masturbate? Yes No Sometimes
12. Do you sneak masturbation in at work? Do you do it in the car or in public places? Yes No Sometimes
13. Do you notice a conflict between your feelings for your partner and your masturbation? Yes No Sometimes
14. Do you rely on masturbation to relieve stress? Yes No Sometimes
15. Does masturbation get in the way of accomplishing the things you want to do? Yes No Sometimes
16. Do you wish that your partner or people you meet were as exciting as your masturbation fantasies? Yes No Sometimes
17. Do you feel proud of yourself when you are able to not masturbate and feel unhappy when you do masturbate? Yes No Sometimes

If you believe that to some degree you are addicted to masturbation, here’s the next thing for you to realize:
Addictive masturbation is harmful to a committed relationship.

**When you addictively masturbate you create an alternate sex life.** It’s not the same as sex with a real person. It’s sex with whatever fantasy you experience while masturbating. Inevitably, your fantasy sex life will clash and compete with your real sex life. Here’s why:

In order to addictively masturbate you invest emotions and sexual energy into the addictive, fantasy process. **The sex and emotion you put into fantasy, you don’t invest in your real sex life.**

Your real-life partner competes for your sexual and emotional interest because: No real person can give you the fantasy experience of masturbation. In order to get that unique fantasy experience, you lessen your emotional and sexual commitment to your partner.

**One of the great rewards of overcoming a masturbation/pornography addiction is your partner becomes your sole source of sexual satisfaction.**

Let's talk about Bert. He was heavily into masturbation; he did not use pornography. He created addictive fantasies in his own mind. Anna, his wife, had occasionally walked in on him masturbating and thought, "Oh, that's just what guys do." She never found any porn because there wasn't any to find. Bert ended up coming to me because Anna thought he was having an affair. To prove to her he wasn't, he told her about his hidden masturbation activities. She sent him to me.

In our first private session, Bert told me, "If it was up to me, I wouldn't be here. This is her idea." The most he was willing to say about his masturbation addiction was, "Maybe I do it a little too much, but I don't think that makes me an addict. I know it's not getting in the way of my love for Anna."

I replied, "Then here's what I suggest. Since you love Anna so much, how about if you set a goal of making her the sole source of your sexual satisfaction? It's not something you'd do today. It would be a long-term goal."

Bert resisted.

When someone resists the goal of eventually making his partner the sole source of his sexual satisfaction, he's confirming his addiction - unless:

- His partner refuses to have sex with him for an extended period of time.
- He is not emotionally interested in his partner.
- He is emotionally conflicted about having sex with her because he's genuinely interested in someone else.

Anna wanted to have sex with Bert. He said he loved her and that he was not interested in anyone else. So, by refusing to make her his sole source of sexual satisfaction, as far as I was concerned, he had confirmed his addiction. Proving it to him would be far from easy.

His first defense was: "When I'm turned on, you know, like really hot, sometimes, Anna turns me down. Man, I'm on fire! What do you expect me to do? Take a cold shower? I tried the shower routine; it doesn't work for me. I just want to finish myself off. What's wrong with that?"

I replied, "There's nothing morally wrong, if that's what you mean. And I agree with you, showers don't work. Exercising doesn't work. Getting drunk or taking medication won't help. For a moment, let's look at it from Anna's point of view. When you 'finish yourself off' you send her a message of, 'If you're not willing to have sex with me, then I'll find some other way to get it.'

"Some addicted people will do that out of vengeance. It's an 'I'll show you' kind of response. For most people there's no vengeance attached to it. But the thing to understand is that in a committed relationship, it's definitely a sign of sex addiction. A man who is not sexually addicted or who has overcome his addiction is capable of being super turned on, getting turned down, and letting the sexual desire subside naturally.

"In your addicted state, Bert, what I'm saying might sound like I'm expecting you to be a superman. I'm not. There are plenty of men who do not have to masturbate if their partner turns them down. If you overcome your addiction properly, you'll experience that for yourself. And you'll have the wonderful pleasure of making Anna the sole source for your sexual pleasure."

He was intrigued by the idea that Anna could turn him down and he would not be driven to masturbate. That was a good sign. It meant that he would like to make her the sole source of his sexual satisfaction - if he thought he were capable of it.

Then he brought up one of those, "I'll say anything to defend my addiction" arguments. It was, "What if I was in the military and I was assigned to a remote place for
two years? Would you expect me not to masturbate?"

After we established that he's not on a two-year assignment in an isolated place, I said, "You'd be surprised how long you can go without sex, naturally.

"I've had situations where the woman becomes pregnant after the client overcomes his sex addiction. It's a difficult pregnancy; they're not able to have sex during most of it and for the first few months afterwards. The guy does fine. He doesn't climb the walls. He doesn't wake up in the middle of the night craving a porn site. He doesn't try to pressure his wife into sex. He accepts his situation and deals with it in a positive, loving way. You can do it, too."

Bert looked at me like I wanted him to go on some kind of no-sex endurance test. I told him, "I'm not a prude. I'm not a reformed sex addict who wants to stop people from having a good time. If anything, I wish people got more pleasure out of life than they do. The reason I'm suggesting that you make Anna the sole source of your sexual satisfaction is so you can experience what really dynamite, wonderful, loving sex is about."

"My sex drive is greater than hers," he replied. "She could never satisfy me completely." I explained that the sexually addicted person has two sex drives, one addictive, the other natural. "Addictive sex provides an empty, shallow momentary thrill that leads to a crash later on. If you deal with your addictive sex drive correctly, it subsides naturally. "When you correctly overcome sex addiction, the natural drive becomes more intensified, but not in an addictive way. In a sense the guy who correctly overcomes sex addiction has the best of both worlds. He's not driven up the wall by his sexually addictive desires. He experiences the profound joy of 100% committed, loving sex and he's able to comfortably go without sex when necessary."

Then I told Bert about Norman.

Norman contacted me because he was hooked on prostitutes in a big way. When he went to a brothel, he'd spend the entire day there, going from one prostitute to another. He was a sex machine - at the brothel. However, when Norman made love with his wife, he would do it once and fall asleep feeling really nice. He wanted to know why.

I told him, "When you go to the brothel you try to satisfy a drive that cannot be satisfied. Every time you have sex with a prostitute, you get some relief, but then the anxiety of addiction returns and you try to satisfy it by having more sex until you literally
cannot move.

"When you have sex with your wife, it gives you the genuine, loving satisfaction you want so desperately. That's why you only need sex with her once."

Then I told Bert, "Just for the record: I'm not saying that if you want sex with your partner more than once, you're addicted. Norman is a real-life example of the difference between the joyous fulfillment of genuine, loving sex and the empty, shallow world of meaningless, addictive sex."

Bert wanted to know if Norman overcame his addiction. I replied, "Yes. And the sex between him and his wife was the best they had ever experienced because she became his sole source of sexual satisfaction."

Bert replied that what I said sounded too good to be true. "No, it's not too good to be true," I said. "It sounds too good to be true to you because you're still acting sexually addictive."

A few months later, Bert had overcome his addiction. If you were to ask him today, "Bert, is it too good to be true that a person can overcome sex addiction and have a really great love life and feel comfortable going without sex when necessary?" he'd tell you, "It's not too good to be true. It's real."

If you subscribe to the conventional, licensed therapy school of behavior modification, you might interpret my advice to mean, "Channel the sexual energy from porn or prostitutes over to your wife." That is not what I said or meant.

**Never use your partner as an addictive substitute or as a means to overcome sex addiction.**

Build an emotional commitment with your partner. Then, as an expression of your emotional commitment - not as a gimmick for overcoming sex addiction - make her your sole source of sexual satisfaction.

**Build the honest, emotional love first. Wonderful sex will follow, especially if your partner is your sole source of sexual satisfaction.**
Chapter 46
How To Make Your Relationship Special

Make your partner your primary emotional interest.
You'll hear happily married people say, "My partner is my best friend."

On the other hand, in some lousy relationships the couple does plenty of things together, but the friendship isn't there. The special kind of friendship that characterizes the great relationships is an emotional friendship.

Building a relationship requires emotionally hard work. Manual labor is easy compared to the emotionally hard work of building a great relationship. If building relationships were as easy as digging ditches, just about everyone's relationship would be wonderful.

When I explain this to couples, sometimes I'm asked, "If building a great relationship is so difficult, what keeps the couple together through the difficult times?"

What keeps the couple together is their unique emotional friendship, especially during times of sexual conflict.

Sex does not keep a relationship together. Making your partner your primary emotional interest and creating that special emotional friendship is what keeps a relationship together.

So let's get down to the details of how to achieve that special emotional friendship.

1. Share special things with your partner and don't share them with anyone else. Your life is not a public record and your relationship is a special private experience between you and your partner. The more private you keep it, the more special it is to both of you.

2. Don't build your relationship by taking a consensus.

For example, if you and your partner are having a disagreement about what color to paint the bedroom, don't take a poll of your friends to find out what they think. Your friends don't share your bedroom. They don't live in your house. It's between you and your partner. I suggest you keep it that way.

There's nothing wrong with getting advice. Use good judgment, though. The more you and your partner work things out on your own, the more special your relationship is.

You might be thinking, "Hey Joe, don't people talk to you about very private matters?"
Don't they depend on you to help them work out their problems?"

I do everything I can to get the couple to work out their problem independent of me. And when I talk to them about sex, here's my protocol:

I don't discuss what positions they prefer because it's none of my business.

I don't advise on techniques to use because it's a private matter between the two of them.

I don't pry.

I ask as little as possible about the private sex life of any couple. Before I ask I preface it with "May I ask?" If I need to know how often a couple has sex together, I'll say, "May I ask how often the two of you have sex together?" That is about the only specific question I ask a couple about their sex life. It's all I usually need, because sex is emotional.

Occasionally, in a private session, a client starts giving me details of the sexual activity between himself and his partner. I'll stop the conversation and tell him, "I don't need to hear it. Also, you're violating your partner's privacy."

If a couple needs to have a discussion about erotic areas, etc., I will suggest that they discuss it without my participation. I know that if I teach the couple how to communicate, they don't need me to discuss private erotic matters.

If a couple has pet names for each other, I don't want to know them. It's nobody's business but theirs.

I hope you demand the same standards of any counselor you speak to.

3. If you and your partner have a fight, keep it between the two of you.

The less you tell your family and friends about your problems, the closer you and your partner become. A marriage is not a group project.

I suggest that you talk to family and friends about your personal problems only under the most trying circumstances and even then, the less the better.

Other people will tell you differently. They'll say, "Oh, you have to get it off your chest. You need a support group."

The problem is the support group becomes your emotional interest. You're not married to a support group; you're married to your partner.

You don't need an emotional dumping ground for every problem in your life. Most
people who go to support groups to dump their problems are playing the victim game with as big an audience as they can find. Others just don't realize how much better off they would be keeping their problems private and working them out with their partner.

If you and your partner can't work the problems out, find some help. But stay away from groups. The more private you keep your relationship, the closer it becomes.

4. Friends are important. But they're not as important as a quiet evening at home with your partner.

If the two of you spend most of your free time on the social circuit, you're missing out on the joy of being alone with the person you love.

You don't need a planned evening to enjoy each other. Just hanging around together and spontaneously being yourselves is the real joy.

5. Sex is a private, personal matter.

If your friends want to talk about how great or how lousy their sex life is, that's their problem. I suggest you don't join in. If you talk to your friends about your sex life, you violate your partner's privacy. It doesn't matter if you want to tell your friends how great your sex life is or how miserable it is. Your partner has a right to privacy.

Marriage is not easy. One of the most difficult parts of marriage is respecting the rights of your partner. A good place to start is by keeping your sex life private.

6. When you're feeling good, share it with your partner. The sooner the better. For instance: you're at work and you've just read something funny. You've got a minute or two break. Call your partner and share it.

You and your partner are taking out the trash. You notice a beautiful bird. Tell your partner about it.

You and your partner are out for a walk. You see a cute-looking kid. Tell your partner.

You get off the phone with a friend. The friend told you a very funny story. Tell it to your partner.

You just finished reading a great book. Talk to your partner about it. Whenever and wherever you're feeling good, share it with your partner.

7. Always be emotionally attentive of your partner.

If he or she looks like they have something on their mind, don't ignore them. Ask, nicely. If they want to talk, then listen. If they don't want to talk, say, "I'm here to listen
whenever you want to talk."

If your partner wants to be left alone, respect your partner's wishes.

8. Buy your partner a gift whenever.
Don't wait for a holiday to buy your partner something. If you want to get him/her a gift this afternoon, do it.

When it comes to gifts, money doesn't substitute for appreciation. A thoughtful item that costs a few bucks can have more meaning than something that costs thousands.

9. Always maintain emotional integrity.
If you're upset at your partner, don't put a phony smile on your face and say, "I'm fine." It ruins the emotional friendship. You're better off saying "I'm fine," in an angry tone. At least that way you maintain the emotional integrity of your relationship.

10. Show your loving emotions.
If you feel like kissing your partner, don't wait. Do it. If you want to sing to your partner, go for it.

If you like the way your partner looks, say it.

If you want to hold your partner's hand, make your move. If you suddenly feel like saying, "I love you," blurt it out.

Well, that's about it. And just to let you know, writing this chapter was fun.
Chapter 47
Something Women Need To Know About Men
Appreciate the differences between men and women.

There are phases in overcoming sex addiction that can be more difficult for the woman than for the sexually addicted guy. One of those situations occurs if the woman has been initiating a significant portion of the affection and/or sex in the relationship.

Let's go inside the mind of the sexually addicted man to identify the problem we're about to take on.

People go into sex addiction to escape dealing with the difficulty of building a genuine, loving relationship in reality. In the sex addiction fantasy world, everything is "perfect."

In order for the sexually addicted guy to overcome his sex addiction, he gives up fantasy for a loving relationship in reality. Now comes the catch: What if he hasn't built a great reality relationship?

Answer: He won't give up his fantasy life because fantasy gives him greater rewards than reality.

In order for a sexually addicted person to overcome sex addiction, he must find reality more rewarding than fantasy.

If you're a woman and you've been initiating the affection and sex in the relationship, your partner has been sitting back and letting you do the initiating he should have been doing. The result: He has not taken the initiative to build a strong relationship with you. He let you do the work for both you and him.

Now, in order to get him to build a relationship with you stronger than his "perfect" fantasy life, you need to pull back and wait for him to initiate affection and sex in the relationship.

Here's the bad news:
1. Waiting for him to initiate could be extremely frustrating for you.
2. It might take months before he initiates anything. Here's the worse news:
   1. If you had not initiated the affection and/or sex, a relationship may have never developed between the two of you.
   2. Waiting for him to initiate might deliver the shocking reality that he is truly not
interested in you.

Here's the good news:
1. If you wait, he'll probably initiate.
2. Once he starts initiating, the two of you will grow closer than you are now.
3. You'll find that the relationship is more comfortable for you if he takes on his responsibility to initiate affection and sex.
4. The new, closer relationship becomes the proof that he really wants to overcome sex addiction and that he's capable of overcoming it.

I am not instructing you to stop initiating affection and sex. I'm explaining something I've observed.

One reason women work with me is that I have a pretty good idea of what they are going through and I can explain men to them. So, if you're a woman, let me tell you something about men:

If a man is interested in a woman, he'll make an advance. If he's not making an advance, it means:

1. The guy's not interested, or
2. The guy's interested but he's not willing to take the risk of making an approach.

If you're a woman and you've been making the advances in your relationship:

1. You don't know if he's really interested in you because you've been initiating the advances.
It's the equivalent of telling someone, "I want to see if you are willing to take a two-mile walk with me this morning." Then you pick him up and carry him during the entire walk. You won't know if he wants to walk with you until you put him down and let him go his own way.

2. He hasn't been confronted with the need to build confidence because you've been doing the work for him.

In effect, he has not learned to stand on his own two feet and suffer his own falls. The result: He's emotionally unprepared for the challenges of a real relationship.

3. The more a woman initiates in reality, the more attractive fantasy becomes for the sexually addicted man.

Men are built to initiate sexually. Rather than argue this point endlessly, try it out for
yourself. If you're a female initiator, keep on initiating. Here's what happens:

You'll never know if your partner really wants you because you'll never put your relationship to the reality test of, "Does my man want me so much that he's willing to initiate?"

I seriously doubt your partner will overcome his sex addiction because he will not find it necessary to initiate in reality. So he'll go to fantasy to initiate.

4. By nature, men initiate. If they don't initiate in reality, they'll initiate by escaping into fantasy.

5. By letting him initiate:
   You find out if he's really interested in you.
   He is given the opportunity to build genuine confidence.
   If he is genuinely interested in you and he takes the risk to build confidence, the sex life between the two of you intensifies and becomes more intimate.

Since this phase can be more difficult for the woman than the guy, let's discuss what she might go through.

If she's been initiating affection and/or sex, it's a tremendous emotional upheaval for her. She might experience extremes like, "I can't even kiss my own husband" or "My own husband doesn't want to kiss me."

She might feel conflicts such as, "He gets to call all the shots and I have to sit here and wait for him" and "I wish he'd hurry up and do something."

She might wonder, "Would we have had a relationship if I hadn't initiated the affection?" and "I love him so much I'd do anything to keep him. Can we make it?"

She might think, "He has sex with porn and now I have to stop showing him affection" and/or "This is his chance to show me he really cares for me."

It's an emotional roller coaster for her. It does end. In most cases, I see it end on a positive note because the guy finally initiates. In other cases it ends negatively because:

The guy does not initiate and the woman realizes he never really wanted her.

The woman decides not to wait. She returns to initiating. He responds by running back to the sex addiction fantasy world, where it's easier and safer for him to initiate.

Success in this phase is not a straight-line process in many cases. Usually the woman stops initiating as an experiment to see what will happen. That's fine with me. If she waits
long enough, the guy begins to initiate. How long is long enough? Anywhere from a few weeks to months. When he does initiate, it isn't much at first. So, she starts initiating.

As she returns to initiating, the guy draws further back into his emotional shell. His retreat usually becomes the proof for her that:

As difficult as it is to wait, it's worse to initiate.

The less you've been initiating affection and sex in the relationship, the less difficult this phase will be for you. The more you've been initiating, the more difficult it will be, at first.

Now for the details on how to let the guy initiate:

1. If you have been initiating the kissing, wait for him to kiss you.
2. If you've been initiating the hugging, wait for him to hug you.
3. If you've been initiating the hand holding, wait for him to take your hand.
4. If you've been initiating the verbal affection, wait for him to express verbal affection to you.
5. If you've been initiating the foreplay, wait for him to initiate it.

In rare, extreme cases - and only in the rare extreme cases - there is no kissing, touching, verbal expression of affection, no foreplay, and no sex for weeks.

The lack of affection and sex is not because I've told the couple not to make emotional and sexual contact. If anything, I want them to experience as much sexual and emotional contact as possible.

This emotionally barren stage occurs because the husband never strived to build a genuine loving relationship in reality.

In most cases the difficulty is not intense and is over quickly.

In some cases, this stage is necessary to get the husband to face reality and build a genuine, loving relationship with his wife - or lose her.

You would be mistaken to approach this phase as a restriction on the affection between the two of you. It's not. If anything, it is an opportunity for the sexually addicted man to establish that his partner is more important to him than fantasy.

Before you start this stage, I suggest that both of you read this section together. Then have an open and honest discussion about initiating affection and sex. Here's what to expect if this stage is necessary in your relationship.
1. At first both of you might feel awkward because change - whether it's healthy or unhealthy - usually feels awkward in the beginning.

2. The woman might feel an intense sense of being ignored. The guy might feel a deep fear of initiating affection and/or sex. The fear might show itself in anxiety or a deadening of feelings.

3. If the guy decides to take the risk of initiation:
   - His fears begin to subside as he continues to initiate. Eventually they are replaced by a new confidence.
   - The woman's feelings of rejection and being ignored are replaced by feelings of being loved and appreciated for who she is.
   - As this phase progresses, she feels less inclination to initiate because the guy is naturally doing most of the initiation.

   A question on your mind might be: "When does the woman start initiating again?"

   Answer: If the guy goes ahead and overcomes his addiction, then it won't matter if she initiates because he's built his commitment to her and he's put his fantasy life aside. Until then, she's better off letting him do the initiating.

   For some couples this phase is the most rewarding because it enables them to take the man's need to initiate and use it to build a more confident and loving relationship.
Chapter 48
The Test Of A Loving Relationship

Sex is about making love, not making orgasms.

A rampant cause of impotence or diminished sex in a marriage is the man's belief that if he does not bring his partner to orgasm, he has failed as a lover.

Earlier, I mentioned that impotence in a loving relationship is caused primarily by The Man Test. One version of The Man Test is, "Can I bring her to orgasm?" The sad irony in many impotent situations is that the emotional relationship between the man and woman is fine. However, the man avoids sex with his wife or becomes impotent because he believes he must bring her to orgasm.

In many of these emotionally close relationships, the woman truthfully tells her husband, "I don't need to orgasm every time we have sex. I get profound sexual satisfaction with you even when I don't orgasm." Unfortunately, the husband does not believe her. He believes, "She's just saying that because she doesn't want to hurt my feelings." No matter how many times she tells him, he still doesn't believe her. When the couple enters counseling, I explain to the guy,

"Your wife was telling you the truth. From a man's point of view, you might think that a woman can't have profound sexual enjoyment unless she orgasms. But your wife explained that she has great sex with you even if she doesn't orgasm. Sure, a woman would like to orgasm every time she has sex, but she'll also tell you it's not a do-or-die requirement. You're making it a do-or-die requirement. And it's ruining the lovemaking for both of you. If a woman tells you she's having wonderful sex with you even if she doesn't orgasm, she's telling you the truth. Unless you prefer to believe what you read in porn mags or see on porn sites rather than your own wife."

One phrase that helps the client who believes bringing his wife to orgasm is a do-or-die requirement is: "That why it's called making love, not 'making orgasm.'"

Here's the quick advice:

If you find yourself approaching sex feeling like, "I gotta bring her to orgasm," I suggest you remind yourself, "Hey, I'm here to make love and have fun." A big part of the fun is giving your partner pleasure, but be careful. Giving someone pleasure is not a
test of how well you perform. The secret of giving pleasure is getting pleasure from the giving. If you're giving pleasure to pass the orgasm test, you're not making love. It comes back to this one simple recurring principle: Wonderful sex is not a performance. It's an expression of love for your partner.

*If she turns you down for sex, reassure her.*

Too many times people approach a relationship as "the war between the sexes." Well, to bring up an old phrase from the 60's: Make love, not war. If your partner turns you down for sex, you could respond like she is your enemy. Or you could respond like she's your loving partner. The enemy response is:

- Anger
- Whining
- Pressure
- Revenge by being cold to your partner

Now let's talk about making love. By the way, if you think making love is all in your genitals, wow, think again. Here's a loving response:

"It's OK, honey. I'm here for you. If you're not in the mood, I still love you." Then be nice to her. Give her a kiss and a hug. It's about making love, right? Some people might take this advice and create a callous interpretation of it like: "If your wife turns you down for sex, tell her you love her. Even if you don't mean it, say it anyway. It'll warm her up for next time."

That's not what I said or meant. What I said was: make love, not war.

*In a warring relationship, emotional deception defines the battlefield.* In a loving relationship, you are emotionally honest and you assume your partner is. If your partner turns you down, you need to realize a very simple fact of life: She'd rather have sex than be tired. She doesn't like turning you down. She doesn't get pleasure from turning you down. The test of a loving relationship is not when times are good and you are getting everything you want. The test of a loving relationship is when times are bad and you are not getting what you want. If you are supportive of your partner in bad times, then your partner knows she's more to you than just a good time. If you flake out when times are tough, you're not loving. You're emotionally stupid.

When you love someone, you treat her lovingly, especially when she reluctantly is not
able to have sex with you.

Don't try to pressure your partner into anything sexually uncomfortable for him or her. Underlying truths recur constantly. An underlying truth about sex is that the best sex is loving sex. When you love someone, their comfort is your main concern - not for unselfish reasons - for selfish ones. Since your partner is your sole source of sexual satisfaction, your primary emotional interest, and your best emotional friend, whatever happens to your partner, happens to you. If you try to push your partner into an uncomfortable sexual experience, she will sense that you do not have her best interest at heart. If you don't have her best interest at heart, she won't have yours. That's human nature.

Great sex is about great love. It is impossible to pressure someone into loving you. You might be able to pressure your partner into some form of reluctant sex; you can't remove the resentment she will feel. Love is earned. You can't buy it; you can't pressure someone into it. If your partner even hints she's uncomfortable with something you're proposing, drop it - if you love her. If you don't drop it, if you push it, you will regret it.

Wonderful sex is about making love, not war. When you make war, you pressure the other side into doing things you want them to do. War is a power play. Love is not about power. Love is making sure the other person is happy because of the joy it gives you.

This is the last chapter devoted to strictly relationship issues. The rest of the book will concentrate on the process of overcoming sex addiction.
What Now?

My policy is not to tell clients what to do. I prefer to make suggestions and let the client make the decisions he or she thinks is best. If their decision is mistaken or my suggestions were, we can make corrections as we progress. Here’s what I see as your options.

Trying to stop on your own is a viable alternative. When you compare it to stopping with an advisor who doesn’t know what he or she is doing, you’re better off on your own. Bad advice is worse than no advice. If you’re going to try it on your own, remember that in order to overcome sex addiction for the long-term you need to work out the intimacy issues you’ve read about. If the intimacy issues aren’t worked out, your chances of long-term success are not good.

Getting help is the best and worst option. If you find someone who knows what they’re doing and can help you, it’s your best option, in my opinion. It took me decades to overcome my addictions (smoking, gambling, overeating and sex addiction) without help. I rejected conventional licensed therapy, the 12-step program, and religion as effective means for overcoming addictions. My alternatives were to remain a slave to my problems or find a way to overcome them on my own. You’re faced with the same decision. Do you stay out of control? Do you get help? Do you do it on your own? Of all the options, working with someone who isn’t qualified to help you is the worst. Chapter 10 provides a questionnaire to use in your search for a competent counselor.

What about the rest of the book? The “Read This First” section said, “The Most Personal Addiction was published in 2002. Its purpose was to teach people how to overcome sex addiction without relying on an expert counselor. You could call The Most Personal Addiction a book that didn’t achieve the author’s goal, but still helped many people. I offered all the buyers a full refund when I realized it could not replace excellent counseling. Not a single purchaser took advantage of the offer. Years after it was published people still relied on it to help them, even though by my standards it had not met its goal.”

From everything I know about my own approach, and from what I learned after publishing The Most Personal Addiction, you could not use the rest of the book without
my help. That’s why I offered the purchasers a full refund and why I don’t sell the book today.

I plan to publish more information about overcoming sex addiction some time in the future. In the meantime I wish you the best of luck and I hope that what you’ve read will be of help to you in achieving your goal of overcoming sex addiction.