

## Step Zero:

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### **Step Zero – Introduction:**

Sexaholism: Disease or Bad Habit? Am I bad getting good or am I sick getting well?

### **The Doctor's Opinion – adapted for SA meeting:**

SA does not have a Dr. Silkworth but what he's written in the AA Big Book certainly applies to our situation.

The doctor writes:

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

We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of *lust* on these chronic sexaholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate person. An allergy, they called it. The tyrant wields a double-edged sword over us: first we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on lustng, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process. These allergic types can never safely indulge *lust* in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve. Few indeed were those who, so assailed, had ever won through in single handed combat. It was a statistical fact that sexaholics of our type almost never recovered on their own resources.

Men and women *lust* and act out essentially because they like the effects produced. The sensation is so elusive and powerful that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. In other words, they have lost the whole context of what is right or wrong. To them, their sexaholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable, and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by indulging their *lust* filled fantasy leading to acting out, which they are convinced is natural and that others are doing so with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to act out again. Think back on a time when after a spree you were determined to never to act out again.

This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope for recovery. *What is another name for a "psychic change"?*

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

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

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

I do not hold with those who believe that *sexaholism* is entirely a problem of mental control or the inability to make the right choice. I have had many men who had, for example, been *lust* free for a number of months but for whatever reason decided it was ok to entertain *lust* just a little and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that work, wives and family obligations were not met. These men may have started to act out to escape; they were now acting out to overcome a craving beyond their mental control. (Think about what this sentence is saying)

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

The classification of *sexaholics* seems most difficult, and in much detail is outside the scope of this writing. All these types can appear entirely normal in every respect except in the effect *lust* has upon them. They are often able, intelligent, friendly people. There is the type of man who is unwilling to admit that he cannot entertain *lust*. He plans various ways of indulging. He acts out only when he is out of town, or he claims that he was the pursued not the pursuer, he justifies his needs by rationalizations and justifications, or convincing himself that just looking at a little porn never really hurt anyone. There are those who start to believe that they are entitled to a little on the side, that they have a lot of making up to do because of their perception they've missed out when younger. There are those who are convinced a change of scenery will fix everything. There are those who confess all (dump) and earnestly promise their wife or loved one that this will never happen again. There are, of course, the psychopaths who are emotionally unstable. We

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are all familiar with this type through horrific news stories or sometimes our own memories. There are those who are convinced that it is all the fault of someone else or some experience out of their past and therefore not really their fault. There is the type who always believes that after being entirely free from *lust* for a period he can entertain *lust* again without danger. All of these addicts are always "going to quit for keeps." We can be over-remorseful and make many resolutions, make many decisions but never take the necessary action.

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

What is the solution? Acceptance of the plan outlined in the AA Big Book – The 12 Steps of Recovery. To quote (and it's important to read what the sentence says)

### **Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery (pg. 59 AA)**

But before we can start on the steps there is one that must be mastered first:

#### **"Step "Zero"**

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

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

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

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

#### **We Stop**

We stop practicing our compulsion in all its forms. We cannot be "sober" in one area

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while acting out in another. There can be no relief from the obsession of *lust* while still practicing the acts of *lust* in any form.

- I can be masturbating to the image of a blank wall, and I'm still resorting to my drug
- We stop feeding lust
- We get rid of all the materials and other triggers under our control.
- We stop feeding lust through the eyes, the fantasy, and the memory
- We stop relishing the language of lust, resentment, and rage.
- We stop living only and always inside our own heads.

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

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

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

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

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

I earnestly advise every sexaholic to start working the steps suggested as a program of recovery. And though perhaps we came to scoff, we may remain to pray.

In other words, it means giving up trying to make the program work for me and to start working the program.

**Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery.**

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.