

Step Zero: Why Sobriety is a Big Deal

1. Homecoming's definition of sobriety:

- No sex outside of marriage (and no emotional affairs)
- No pornography
- No sex with self (masturbation)
- Progressive victory over lust.

As a fellowship, we have agreed to embrace this definition of sobriety collectively rather than set our own individually. Remember, your best thought out plans landed us here in the first place.

2. There are at least 3 different approaches to Sobriety

I. Therapeutic Approach (used by many professional therapists)

- Is about "understanding yourself."
- Is about learning how to understand how past affects present.
- Is rarely confrontational, or directive; there is usually no accountability. If the man relapses, generally the response is: "What did you learn?" While this is important, we have found it essential to stress the importance of sobriety, the importance of not relapsing. When relapse occurs, it should bring negative consequences.

Self understanding never got anyone sober. There is a common belief that "If I just knew more about it or if I knew the 'right' thing, THEN it would all work like I know it should." The lie that promotes this belief is that the answer is out there somewhere, and if you could just find it, your dreams will all come true.

II. Secular 12 Step Approach

- This approach is generally meeting-centered.
- If a man does have a sponsor (mentor), the sponsor is usually non- directive, and the recovery program unstructured. "Call me if you have a question," is often the posture of the sponsor.
- This puts control of the recovery program in the hands of the addict. He decides when or if he is ready to do the work. While the responsibility for the addict's recovery is in his hands, their reasoning is so goofed up, they can't realize what end is up.
- If relapse occurs, the prescription given is often: 'Attend more meetings.'

The result for both the secular 12 Step and the therapeutic approach is often "Revolving Door Sobriety." Addicts keep relapsing, week after week. Continual relapse leads to despair and self-hatred. It perpetuates the lie that there is no hope or escape.

Proverbs 13:12 says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." A lot of us were "heart sick" for a long time before we got to Homecoming.

III. Homecoming 12 Step Approach

- It's not for everyone; Because of its intensity, it should be viewed as the "last house on the block."
- The Homecoming program is mentor-centered; we have accountability both from our mentor and from our peers in the program. Never underestimate the power of peer pressure.
- It is confrontational, directive, and highly structured. Our mentors are guides, helping us to identify our blind spots and the lies that we act on as if they were truth. This guidance comes from the lessons gained from their own experiences in recovery. They have been where we are and are closer to where we want to be.

Why do we need wrap-around accountability? Because the problem is in our own minds — which means that the problem (us and our minds) can't fix the problem (us and our minds). If we could have fixed ourselves we would have long ago.

"A sex addict's mind is like a dark alley at night. It's a scary place; don't go in it alone."

Long-term sobriety is attainable! It is possible; you can be free of your addictive behavior.

3. Expectations about Sobriety

Here are some of our own expectations

- "It will be relatively quick and easy"
- "I'll feel better immediately."
- "Everything else in my life will fall into place once I'm sober."

You'll still have the same problems. In fact, you'll feel them more because you're no longer medicating the pain and running away from the problems. But at least now, you'll see life more clearly, and you'll be able to begin solving the problems instead of running away from them. In time, this will result in more stability, less chaos, and fewer problems of the type we bring on ourselves.

- "I will earn the undying admiration and respect of my wife for my noble and courageous efforts to attain sobriety."

Don't expect her to throw you a parade. She needs to see changes in you over time. What took years to destroy will, in most cases, take years to rebuild. Just keep faithfully doing the work of recovery, and focus on pleasing God and not your wife. You're really

doing this work for Him, because He wants you to. Leave your wife's attitude toward you to God; that's His business. Your perspective is "Look how far I have come!" Her perspective is probably, "Look how far you have to go!" Remember, even if she leaves you, you'll still be there. Make sure you're someone you can live with.

Wife's possible expectations

- Your recovery will be quick and easy.
- Once you're sober, your bad character will go away. (Yes, you do have bad character, like the rest of us: and yes, God will transform that bad character over time into something that resembles His Son.)
- Once you've "got it," you'll become "normal", i.e. you'll never struggle with lust again, won't have to keep attending meetings, etc.

The bad news is: we're in this for life. The good news is — this is where God wants us, and the result is more transformation inside us and more peace and contentedness with life than we ever thought possible. Our addiction is a manifestation of our sin nature, and we don't get rid of that this side of heaven.

4. We have found some of the benefits of sobriety

- It's the doorway to contentedness, a clear conscience, guilt free living, a sense of integrity, and freedom from the craziness of living a double life.
- It's the doorway to dealing with other issues/problems in life
- We escape fantasy world; begin living in reality. We regain sanity.

Questions:

Please answer the following questions. Write several paragraphs on each question. The purpose here is to help you think deeply and honestly about these issues.

1. Why is sobriety a big deal for you? Why do you want to be sober? Why now? What are you willing to do now that you haven't been before?
2. Why is sobriety hard to achieve and maintain?
3. What are your expectations for recovery?
4. What are the expectations others have for your recovery? How do you think these expectations will affect your recovery?
5. Why do you think this program will work when other attempts to quit this behavior have failed?
6. Are you willing to submit to the recovery process? What do you think this means?
7. What benefits of sobriety are you expecting? What benefits are you hoping for?

Step Zero: The Problem of Lust

"There was nothing left for me to try, there was nowhere else to go and still be in charge, managing my will and life. I see now that in all my religious striving and psychotherapy I was waiting for the miracle to happen first, that I should somehow be zapped or 'fixed' unable ever to fall or be tempted again. I thought that if a person just had the right religious belief, he was automatically "a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' That all thought of lust would be removed, much as a surgeon would excise a tumor. The "religious solution" was one of the subtlest strategies in my arsenal of denial.

I didn't realize that the essence of being human is to have free choice. God doesn't want to remove from me the possibility of falling; he wants me to have the freedom to choose not to fall. I'd been praying self-righteously all along, "Please God, take it away!" not realizing my inner heart was piteously whining, "...so I won't have to give it up." There was belief in God without surrender. That belief availed nothing! I had never died to lust."

The program doesn't tell us how to stop — we had done that a thousand 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. (SA p. 20, 65)

Do you have a passive approach to your recovery? Are you waiting for someone else to "do something to you" rather than taking responsibility for your own program?

- "Yes, I know it's wrong. I'd like to get rid of my guilt and shame."
- Sorry, but here's the bad news: Your conscience by itself won't keep you from practicing your addiction; it will only keep you from enjoying it.

Change that is guilt-driven always collapses eventually. We have to get beyond just wanting to get rid of the guilt feelings; we have to want to get rid of the addiction itself, and then let God clean house from attic to basement.

This is what hitting bottom looks like when it's real:

- "Yes, I'm ready to...embrace the pain of giving up my medication."

If you're like the rest of us, this is how you've coped with life since adolescence or before. It's a big deal, but it's absolutely necessary.

Go through withdrawal

You may have physical, as well as emotional response to withdrawing from our drug of choice. You can expect the addiction to be "calling out to you" regularly, especially when you are under stress, angry, resentful, or unable to control the people and the world around you. (That pretty much adds up to all the time, doesn't it?)

Make a commitment to surrender to God when you feel withdrawal symptoms, surrender your right to medicate your pain, and then call your mentor or another man in the program. These are the times when you are most vulnerable. You need to think ahead, and have a plan for dealing with them.

Face the painful issues underneath the addiction (anger, resentment, fear, stress, selfishness, etc.)

Addicts in general don't handle emotional pain well. We've run from it all our lives by numbing it. Ask God for the courage to feel those feelings and not run from them.

Choose only healthy ways of dealing with life

When a challenging situation arises, for instance, a disagreement with your wife, or criticism from your boss, or whatever, try following these steps:

1. Don't react.
2. As soon as possible, get alone and talk to God. Surrender your right to have the people in your life treat you kindly (or whatever the situation is). Remind yourself of God's unconditional love for you, and His promise of blessing if you follow His path.
3. Call your mentor or another man in the program. Ground the experience by talking about it.

Whatever you do, don't just "stuff" your negative feelings. Like mushrooms, they have a way of growing in the dark. Drag them out into the light with someone else in the program.

You will probably want to get outside help in dealing with some of the painful issues that come up. Counselors are specially trained to help you through these kinds of circumstances. Learning to actually address and resolve problems, instead of running from them and medicating them, will feel strange, but it's part of learning to live life in a new way.

Give up blaming others for my addiction and excusing it

For most married men, that blame is usually focused on their wives. This is toxic, and will undermine your recovery. Someone has defined resentment as the negative feelings we have about someone or something when we replay the offensive incident over and

over in our minds. You'll need to short circuit that resentment cycle by cutting off those critical thoughts as soon as the memory comes around again. Surrender your right to nurse these grudges. Refocus on your side of the street. We can't change the people around us; we can only change the way we respond to them.

Do whatever is necessary to uproot this from my life

I have to take responsibility for working my own recovery plan, to be active, not passive in my approach to recovery; I'm ready to own this recovery plan as my plan. I will be teachable and accept guidance in my recovery, but I won't look to someone or something outside myself to do the work that has to be done.

The following Scripture passage captures the balance between our part and God's part in recovery. When we do our part — the hard work — God does His part — transforming us.

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." Philippians 2:12,13

Have you hit bottom?

Questions:

Please answer the following questions. Write several paragraphs on each question. The purpose here is to help you think deeply and honestly about these issues.

1. Were there times in your past when you thought you had hit bottom, and made a solemn commitment to never act out again, only to fall back into your addiction? Describe those incidents, and what you felt inside each time.
2. Have you hit bottom now? If not, what is holding you back? If so, what circumstances or consequences finally made you ready? Be specific and detailed.
3. List the behaviors that have been part of your sex and love addiction, along with the age at which you began that behavior.
4. Write five insights (of at least 2 sentences each) from the SA White Book quote, The Problem of Lust.
5. In the past week, describe situations where you thought "I can handle this situation on my own," or "I can get away with this and no one will know"

Step Zero: Addicts & Reality

Sex & love addiction is a sickness of perception, of how we view the world.

- Why "rigorous honesty" is the key to recovery.

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

Honesty & recovery: Biblical insights.

Write your thoughts on how the following passages reflect on rigorous honesty.

- Psalm 51:6
- Ephesians 4:17-32

Questions:

Please answer the following questions. Write several paragraphs on each question. The purpose here is to help you think deeply and honestly about these issues.

1. Write your thoughts on 'How It Works'?
2. What is rigorous honesty?
3. Why is "rigorous honesty" the key to recovery?
4. Why is a mentor crucial to my recovery?

Step Zero: What is “Progressive Victory over Lust”?

4-fold definition of Sexual Sobriety

- No sex outside marriage
- No pornography (email, too)
- No masturbation
- Progressive victory over lust

A description of lust: “Lust is a desire...to avoid emptiness and find satisfaction by using others... [Lust] is the effort to possess another in order to steal enough passion to be lifted out of our current struggles into a world that feels for maybe an instant like paradise. Lust involves fantasies that are a private magic carpet ride to deliver our souls from boredom, anxiety, anger, loneliness, and rage to a ‘better’ world that offers momentary relief and satisfaction. When satisfaction is not forthcoming, lust will inevitably turn darker and meaner. Lust will devalue the soul, and, in fact intensify the emptiness inside.”

- Dan Allender, *Bold Love*

Read:

- I Thes. 4:3-5. God is clear about lust. It’s to be completely off limits — zero tolerance.
- Phil. 4:8 One of the main strategies in defeating lust is not to feed it.

This passage talks about the need to put positive, edifying thoughts and information into our mind. It’s not enough to vow to not be involved in vehicular voyeurism” or fantasizing every morning on the way to work. We have to replace the toxic habit with a new, uplifting one — like listening to recovery tapes, or getting on the cell phone with a brother in recovery.

Steps to Sobriety

- Stop acting out
- Establish boundaries. We’ll help you implement a “scorched earth” policy to rid your daily environment of sexual triggers.
- Begin progressive victory over lust
- What are Main Challenges to Progressive Victory?
- “Public voyeurism”. If we’re staring at women in public, ‘feeding off them”, as Allender says above, it’s the same kind of violation as peeping in through their window at home.
- How we relate to women. We’ll help you construct a protocol for establishing healthy ways to relate to women. It will take a lot of pressure off your lust cycle.
- (For marrieds) Sex in marriage can be a lust generator.

Lust in marriage

1. Using wife to gratify self — Author Dr. Mark Laaser has an indelicate term for this: “vaginal masturbation.” It’s not pretty, but it’s the truth. The intimacy is not really about you and your wife; it’s about you satisfying your need.
2. Fantasizing, not being present
3. Forcing wife to have sex at times and in ways she doesn’t want (power/control). Many sex addicts act out within the marriage by putting a lot of pressure, and often guilt, on their wives to have sex, even when she is not comfortable with it.
4. The victory over lust begins with surrender to God. We can’t win the battle; as sex and love addicts, we’re powerless over lust. But God can win that victory. The next time you’re tempted with a fantasy, surrender your right to the fantasy to God. Then surrender yourself to His love — asking Him to fill the hole inside that you’d wanted to fill with lust.

Questions:

Please answer the following questions. Write several paragraphs on each question. The purpose here is to help you think deeply and honestly about these issues.

1. Write your own definition of sobriety.
2. Write your thoughts on our fourfold definition of sobriety.
3. Is your definition different from ours? Why?
4. Write your own definition of lust.
5. Write your reaction to Dan Allender’s description of lust.
6. Write your insights into 1Thes. 4:3-5 and Phil 4:8.
7. In what ways have you fed lust?
8. Is lust a problem for you? Why or why not?

Step Zero: Why Lust is the Central Issue in our Addiction

Common rationalizations

- 'Boys will be boys'
- "There's nothing wrong with looking."
- "I'm just enjoying God's beautiful creation."

What's wrong with a little lust?

- Treats women as sex objects.
- Is selfish
- Damages women's self-esteem
- Creates dissatisfaction with reality. Whether it's ogling an attractive woman in public, or whether it's pornography, no woman will measure up by comparison.
- Creates fear of intimacy
- Is a form of infidelity (Matthew 5:27, 28)

Is progressively addictive. You can never satisfy lust. When you feed it, it just demands more.

- Violates the sanctity of the marriage bed. When we bring lustful images of other women into the bedroom, we are blocking real intimacy with our wife, and indulging in mental infidelity.
- Lust disconnects us from God, from our wife, and from ourselves. We become spiritually empty, and emotionally withdrawn.
- Lust is the central issue in our addiction because it is the river that feeds all the other streams of our addictive behavior. It is the mental frontier we must defend daily. Because lust always demands more, this is where the fight must be fought, or it is only a matter of time before we are back in active addiction.

Questions:

Please answer the following questions. Write several paragraphs on each question. The purpose here is to help you think deeply and honestly about these issues.

1. How have you justified or excused lustful behaviors?
2. What consequences are you experiencing as a result of your lust?
3. What consequences are those around experiencing because of your lust?
4. Why does Jesus set the standard so high in Matthew 5:27-28?
5. If you know lust is wrong, why do you continue to lust?