

Sobriety – What Works for Us

Those of us who are recovering in Sexaholics Anonymous were driven here by many different forms of the same problem. Some of us fit society's stereotypes of what a sexaholic might be and some of us did not. Some of us were driven to buy or sell sex on the streets, others to have it anonymously in bars or public places. Some of us found ourselves in painful and destructive affairs or consumed by an unhealthy obsession with a particular person or succession of persons. Many of us kept our obsessions to ourselves, resorting to compulsive masturbation, pictures, fetishes, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. Some of us victimized others. And with many of us, our compulsions took a toll on family, coworkers, and friends. Very often, we felt that we were the only ones who could not stop, that we were doing this – whatever it was – against our will.

When we came to SA, we found that in spite of our differences, we shared a common problem – the obsession of lust, usually combined with a compulsive demand for sex in some form. We identified with one another on the inside. Whatever the details of our problem, we were dying spiritually – dying of fear, guilt, and loneliness. As we came to see that we shared a common problem, we also came to see that for us, there is a common solution – the Twelve Steps of recovery practiced in a fellowship and on a foundation of what we call *sexual sobriety*.

Our definition of sobriety represents, *for us*, the basic and necessary condition for lasting freedom from the pain that brought us to SA. We have found that nothing else works. When we have tried to deny what our common experience has taught us, we have found that recovery still eludes us. And this seems to be true whether we are male or female; married or single; whether our acting out was with the same or opposite sex; whether our relationships were “committed,” “meaningful,” or one-night stands; or whether we just resorted to a little sex with self as a “physical outlet.” As the men and women of Alcoholics Anonymous learned over 80 years ago, “half-measures availed is nothing”!

We don't claim to understand all the ramifications of sexual sobriety. Some of us have come to believe that there is a deeper spiritual significance in sexual sobriety, while others simply report that without a firm and clear bottom line, our “cunning, baffling, and powerful” sexaholism takes over sooner or later. Nor do we claim that sobriety *alone* will lead to a lasting and joyous recovery. Like alcoholics, we can be “dry” without being sober in a deeper sense. We don't even claim that sexual sobriety will make one feel better immediately. We, like other

addicts, can go through withdrawal symptoms when we give up our “drug.” Nonetheless, in spite of the questions, struggles, and confusion that we have gone through, we find that sexual sobriety is truly “the key to a happy and joyous freedom we could otherwise never know.” That’s why we keep coming back to SA.

We have a solution. We don’t claim it’s for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we’d like to share our solution with you.

A Caution

We suggest that newcomers to Sexaholics Anonymous *not* reveal their sexual past to a spouse or family member who doesn’t already know of it, without careful consideration and a period of sexual sobriety, and even then, only after prior discussion with an SA sponsor or group. Typically, when we come into the program, we want to share our excitement with those closest to us and tell all right away. Such disclosures might injure our family or others and should be confined to the group of which we are a part until a wise course is indicated. Of course, if there is any chance that we have put others in danger, we take immediate steps to try to correct that.

Few things can so damage the possibility of healing in the family as a *premature* confession to spouse or family where sacred bonds and trust have been violated. Unwittingly, such confessions can be attempts on our part to dump our guilt, get back into good graces, or make just another show of willpower. Great caution is advised here.

Amends to family must begin with a sexually sober, changed attitude and behavior on a daily basis. Then, as we grow in recovery, we will find how to make direct amends. Help from sponsor and group is indispensable here. There’s always a way, if we really want to make things right.