

Foundation notes: 15 min or less is the goal

Name(s) of new guy(s):

Introduction

- Welcome, _____. I'm glad you're here today. You are the reason we have meetings – so we can share our experiences and provide some hope that recovery from sex addiction is possible.
- I'm _____ and, after _____ years of active addiction, my sobriety date is _____.
- This graphic illustrates the problem sex addiction as described in the original Twelve Step textbook for addicts called Alcoholics Anonymous. Called the Big Book for short. We use the Big Book in our meetings because we consider it the purest form of 12-step recovery available.
- It's not our job to diagnose you as a sex addict. But if you identify with the information I'm about to share with you then you may decide that you are a sex addict like us.
- Let's look at step 1 for a second. Step 1 is a statement of the problem. It says *We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior-that our lives had become unmanageable.*
- We will use the graphic to show you what it means to be powerless over *control* and *choice* and how our lives are *unmanageable* even while abstinent.
- Sex addiction is a three-part progressive disease. Untreated it gets worse over time. We'll start on the left and side with the problem associated with our body.

Problem of the Body

- On page XXVIII that authors tell us why we act out. That's a great question. Why is it I do what I do? It says men and women act out essentially because they like the effect produced when using.
- They go on to say the effect is simply that sense of ease and comfort that comes at once when we begin to use. That feeling can also be described using some other words. We like the temporary escape. We love the excitement and anticipation. We seek to fill a void. To numb painful emotions or circumstances we don't like. We might seek connection, attention, love, validation, pleasure, etc. We love what it does for us. It does something for us that it doesn't do for everyone.
- At some point we discovered we could get that effect by engaging in some sort of selfish sexual behavior. Nothing else in life provided that effect to the extent this does. What might have started as a curiosity, gradually becoming a bad habit, ultimately becoming a constant obsession we could not avoid or control.
- **Seeking an effect** leads us to our **first behavior**. It could be porn, masturbation, flirting, affairs, or just getting lost in fantasy. There are many different behaviors but what they have in common is that it is some sort of selfish or inconsiderate sexual behavior. We all act out differently.
- Why is it that once we start, we tend to lose control over how much we use? The book describes this problem as the phenomenon of craving. It is what separates us from normal users. When I begin using this type of behavior my body responds with a **physical craving** for more. This physical response can be likened to an allergic type of response in my body. An allergy is an abnormal response to a normal substance. For someone with an allergy to grasses the physical manifestation is itchy watery eyes. Can that response be controlled by willpower? No, it will happen so long as the substance remains in the body. The physical manifestation of our allergy is – once we start, we can't stop, our body physically

craves (demands) more and more. The body is now in control so long as the substance is in my body. (Estimated time to detox from selfish sexual behavior is 90-100 days) Until then I'll be impacted by the physical craving aspect of the disease.

- Here are some practical examples that demonstrate this phenomenon. I want to watch some videos for a few minutes before going to bed. I want to get a full night sleep because I have a lot to do the next day and I don't want to be tired. I tell myself that I can watch for a few minutes to take the edge off and next thing I know several hours have gone by and I'm tired and irritable the next day. Another example. I want to only spend \$100 on the activity but next thing I know I just spent \$500. This is what separates us from normal people – they don't lose control and can honor boundaries and limits. We have lost the ability to control our behavior based on our will power alone. *This is why we need to learn to live sober.*
- The inability to stop ourselves leads to a **binge or spree**. It could last hours, days or weeks, depending on our problem behaviors. The binge usually only stops because of an outside factor – we don't choose to stop. That could be getting caught or interrupted, running out of time, running out of money, having to go to work, or just plain exhaustion.
- Eventually, we start to experience **consequences** – otherwise known as bad shit happening (BSH). We lose time, money, or sleep. We could lose a relationship or a job. We could feel worthless, shame, depression, or anxiety. We could get arrested and go to jail. We could have suicidal thoughts or attempts.
- These consequences are awful, but we aren't really ready to stop, so this leads us to **plan new ways of control or moderation** so that we minimize the consequences. I'm still going to act out but at least I won't do ____ (fill in the blank). This time, I'll use cash or a secret card my spouse doesn't know about. I'll limit it to once a week. I'll limit it to never doing anything at work. I'll only act out when I'm traveling. I won't do anything when other people are in the house. I'll just talk to them and not share my phone number. I'll only do stuff that doesn't cost anything.
- How did that new attempt at control work out for you? Didn't work for me. I thought I could control it so I wouldn't get divorced, loss my job, get at STD, get arrested, spend more money, or simply not feel so bad about myself. I tried many times and I failed many times!
- As long as we continue to use, we stay in the physical craving with subsequent binge and consequences. This cycle will last as long as I continue to use and it will get worse.
- Over time, our disease **progresses** – our behaviors and consequences get worse. We need more, darker, or different to get the same effect that we got from the first time.
- Eventually, we hit **rock bottom**. This is different for everyone. Rock bottom is when the pain of the consequences finally outweighs the perceived pain of not using anymore. We all have different tolerances for pain and suffering. For me, I thought I hit my rock bottom and then just kept going downhill from there until the disease finally beat me into a state of surrender.
- Finally, **we swear it off**. We are done and we mean it.
- I have two question for you that you don't have to answer in this moment but will be good for you to reflect on– 1. **can you identify with the inability to control how much you use?** 2. **Do you really want to stop?**

Now, we follow the arrow that leads us up to the **Problem of the Mind**

- For the sake of this discussion, let's say that we have managed some self-willed abstinence for about 90+ days. We have detoxed off the chemicals, so we are no longer physically craving more acting out. You would think life would get better at this point but watch what happens.
- This leads us to the main problem of sex addiction which centers in our mind rather than our body (p23) . We are now referring to powerless over choice. Can I choose to stay sober on my own power?
- We tell ourselves, "**I'm going to change and here's how.**" Here are some examples of things many of us have tried to change our selves to ensure that we won't act out anymore. We trash the stash. We get rid of accounts, delete emails and phone numbers. We go to church more, fill up our time with healthy hobbies, work more, or get content blockers. We might even read self-help material or start a little talk therapy. Some of us moved to a different city or state, got a new job. We tried getting into relationships and sometime getting out of relationships. Maybe we prayed that these efforts would fix us. All these different methods have *two things* in common. *1 they didn't work to prevent me from starting again. 2. They are all examples of human power. Me trying to use my mind or the minds of other humans to change me. The book tells us we are beyond human aid.*
- As I try to incorporate some of those methods life still happens. Because I haven't really changed, I still experience life as **restless, irritable, and discontented**. Somebody cuts us off, the boss is being a jerk, we're overwhelmed with life's commitments. We don't have the coping mechanism (the medicine) that we use to rely on because we said we would never do that again.
- We experience what the book calls a **mental obsession**. An obsession is a thought that pushes out all other thoughts. It is a persistent, disturbing, preoccupation with an unreasonable idea. I'm either thinking about acting out or obsessively thinking of not acting out. This type of thinking is so normal for me that I don't even know I am obsessing about it.
- Eventually, we experience a **mental blank spot**. Page 24 talks about this. It says I will not remember with sufficient force the pain and suffering of a week or month ago. I am without defense against the first use. Consequences will only keep me sober for a little while. We think it wasn't that bad.
- This leads to some **insane ideas**. Eventually I start to listen to the insane ideas my head comes up with. It sounds something like this. We start to think that we have the power to control it and think this time will be different. I know I got into some trouble in the past but if I try a little harder, I can control and enjoy (30) my behaviors. I convince myself that I am like a normal person (30) who can safely use this behavior. Our brains think our old behavior, which seemed to work so well for so long, will fix our life problems.
- We rationalize and justify so easily. I'm not hurting anyone if they don't know. What I did wasn't all that bad. I can just do a little bit. I deserve it. This is totally normal. Everybody does this.
- Life will bring **opportunity**. We are left alone or unmonitored. We have extra time or money.
- Now I'm faced with an **unmanageable decision. Will I, or won't I?** The last part of step 1 says my life has become unmanageable. This refers to the decision about will I use or won't I. I know that engaging in this behavior can destroy my life and ultimately kill me. I don't have the power to **manage a decision** to save my own life. Yikes! This all happens while abstinent and relying on my own power.
- It's important to recognize that we can and do say "no" many times a day and throughout the months. But eventually, our willpower is exhausted, and we say "yes." The scary thing is we don't know when that day will come. Could be a good day, could be a bad day. Could be feeling happy, or sad. Circumstances aren't a good indicator of when I use or not.

- When we give in it sets in motion this awful cycle. At the bottom of the page, you can see the tornado that is spinning down into death or insanity. Death doesn't have to be physical, it could be spiritual, emotional, or relational.
- We can stay in this infinity loop for years.
- Now, let me ask you – **“Can you identify with the inability to stay sober on your own power?”**
- **There is good news and bad news; the bad news is that you're screwed.** On your own you can't solve this dilemma.
- **The good news is that this is a problem of your own making.** That is good news because if it were caused by something outside of you then we wouldn't be able to fix it. If you bring a little willingness, honesty, and open mindedness to this party there is hope.

Now let's talk about the 3rd piece of the disease. The Spiritual Malady

- Step 2 is a statement about our solution. It says, *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.* If my problem is lack of Power than the solution is Power Greater than all this. Greater than me, you, the disease, etc.
- However, there are things in my life that are blocking my ability to be restored to sanity. We can see this represented by bricks in a wall. These are what separates me from the needed Power.

Bricks

- These are all symptoms of a spiritual malady that drives the obsession which leads to acting out one more time. (Taking that first drink if you will)
- These are the character defects that keep us stuck in our addiction cycle and prevent us from living our best life.
- It says “GOD” at the top of the page, but it can be any power greater than ourselves. Some of us are religious, but many of us aren't. This is a spiritual program, not a religious program. This is a methodology not a theology. If you are uncomfortable with the three letter word God, I would encourage you to talk to guys here to see how they think of their higher power or what they call this power.
- The Power (GOD) removes these bricks as we work the 12 Steps with a sponsor.
- We can't do this on our own. If we could have, we would of by now. But by working the steps the bricks began to crack and fall apart and we gain access to a power greater than ourselves, our mental obsession is lifted and I'm comfortable in my own skin. I don't need to treat anything.
- Working the 12 Steps doesn't have to take a long time. Some of the AA founders did it in a weekend, but most people take a few months. Many of us encourage 90 days or less.
- The sooner you begin the sooner you'll experience a little bit of joy, peace of mind, and serenity
- At the end of the meeting, you'll have the chance to start your journey and commit to sobriety (24 hour chip). There will also be a point where anyone who is available to sponsor will raise their hands, so you'll know who you can ask if you're ready to start the work. You can get a temporary sponsor. You can change sponsors at any time.
- **Do you really want to stop? Excellent, we can show you how we got well.**
- Guys, is there anything that I missed?