

RECOVERY FROM CO-ADDICTION IN A SEXUALLY ADDICTED RELATIONSHIP

The Problem

Some time during our lives we came to believe that no one would love us as we are, that we are basically bad and somehow unworthy of being loved. For some of us, these beliefs may have been caused by an abusive or absent parent, or other relationship, during our childhood. We have learned the only person we can rely on and trust is ourselves. We believe that if we have to depend on someone else, our needs will never be met. We also believe that sex is one of the most important signs of love.

Throughout our lives we may have had many chaotic relationships. Some of us have become helpless over our own lives; we have failed to hold the addict accountable for his actions. We have been inconsistent with following through on consequences for the addict's behavior. We have given in to his desires, even when it violated our own personal values or boundaries. We have attempted to take control away from the addict physically, emotionally and sometimes financially when he has failed in his responsibilities.

We have tried to control the addict's behavior, thinking that as long as he follows our directions, or suggestions, he will stop being a sex addict. We have sometimes pretended to family, friends, and co-workers, that everything is "wonderful." We have been unforgiving and sometimes punishing toward the addict.

Many of us blame ourselves for the addict's behavior: "If only I were prettier, thinner, taller, shorter, etc.... if only I were more sexual" We give in to him, only to lose ourselves in the process. Sometimes we have even participated in his sexual fantasies, or joined in by buying him pornography or renting videos, leaving us feeling used and abused. Some of us ignored or did not recognize the signs that the addict was living a secret life.

Many of us blame the addict and his behavior for every problem in our relationship. We believe that if he would only change, everything would be fine.

Some of us have mistaken the intensity and excitement of our sex lives for intimacy and love. But we have come to realize there is no real closeness in our relationship and our needs are left unmet.

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The Solution

We came to realize that we could not control the addict or his behavior. We understand that our problems are emotional and spiritual. We have become ready to face our denial and accept the truth about our lives, and our past issues. We realize that blaming ourselves, trying to control the addict and/or ignoring his behavior, refusing to set and uphold our own personal boundaries, are all signs of co-addiction.

We are ready to accept responsibility for our own actions and make Jesus the Lord of our lives. We are dedicated to learning about sexual addiction and co-addiction and becoming partners with our spouse or significant other in recovery. We realize we are not responsible for his addiction or recovery. It is not our job to "cure" him. We are willing to find healthy ways to release our fears and anger and refuse to use anger inappropriately towards the addict.

We are willing to begin the process of recovery and working through the 12 steps to heal ourselves, and start living the life God has planned for us. We are willing to find a sponsor and accountability partners. We are willing to give up sexual relations. For some of us this will be necessary for our spouse to gain sobriety, and for emotional and spiritual healing for ourselves. For single women, this means abstinence until marriage. We are willing to begin the forgiveness process, understanding first, how much God has forgiven us.

We realize our group provides a safe place to share our fears, hurt or anger and also is a place to rejoice in victories. We have become willing to face our own defects and work through these feelings in our group. We are willing to take the focus off of the addict and focus on God and our own thoughts and feelings.

We are willing to seek a closer relationship with God. By facing our fears we have realized that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are what we need to overcome them. As we surrender our relationships to God, we will come to know that He is all we need. We will continue to seek a daily quiet time with God and understand that as we realize how much we can trust God and how much He truly loves us, our trust in others and in ourselves will grow. We will be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

COSA SOBRIETY

- A state of confidence resulting from a reliance and trust in God and myself
- Focusing on myself and relying on God to meet my needs
- Letting go of control and trusting God for the outcome
- Not taking responsibility for the addict's behavior or recovery; allowing the sex addict to be responsible for his own actions and recovery---no rescuing
- Being honest with myself about the need to be in recovery
- Minding my own business: no checking up on or spying on the addict, trusting that God will reveal any necessary information