

# Sex and Sobriety

(Relationships and Recovery)

Thirty-Six Years of Experience  
From the Atlanta Men's Workshops

**Look to this day,  
For it is life.  
The very life of life,  
In its brief course lie all  
The realities and verities of existence,  
The bliss of growth,  
The splendor of action,  
The glory of power—**

**For yesterday is but a dream,  
And tomorrow is only a vision,  
But today, well lived,  
Makes every yesterday a dream of happiness  
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.**

**Look well, therefore, to this day.**

Sanskrit proverb by Kalidasa

Indian poet and playwright, 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## **Purpose and scope**

Initially the focus at the Atlanta Men's Workshops for the Sex and Sobriety sessions (S&S) was on the presentation of information, both professional and personal (Actually the title could have been Relationships and Recovery, but S&S was more of an attraction.). Emphasis was on what worked and did not work in healthy relationships. As more workshops were experienced and we began to receive feedback from men returning to future workshops, we learned that information and instruction was important. Many recovering alcoholic men simply did not know how to be in a loving, caring, and sober relationship.

However, it also became rapidly apparent that the most important healing part of the S&S was the opportunity for men to share themselves and their secrets with other sober men in a loving, caring and non-judgmental atmosphere.

The small group breakout sessions rapidly became the central focus of the sessions. One facilitator expressed it very well. He said "I heard deeper and more honest sharing in the small groups than I had heard in many 5<sup>th</sup> Steps."

Therefore the primary purpose of this writing is to provide a handy source of information gathered from experiences over 36 years from many sources. The most important source has been the feedback from men about what did and what did not work. This writing will also make this information available to men unable to attend the S&S workshops.

These words are not meant to be all-inclusive, nor exclusive of other information. A bibliography is attached for references for further reading.

## Disclaimer

In no way is this writing a substitute for taking the Twelve Steps of AA with an understanding and informed sponsor. These words should be looked upon as only an additional source of assistance in recovery. There should be no conflict between these words and AA literature. If you find any, please let me know.

Nor should this be a substitute for sharing yourself with other men. Time with other men where there can be honest sharing over a significant period of time is extremely important. Each time “secrets” are shared they become less shameful and painful.

If you find anything conflicting with your own morals or religion, please be forgiving and accepting. As Bill Wilson said on page 69 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, “We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone’s sex conduct.”

**We know we are healed (from our past) when we can reveal ourselves completely without shame.**

In summary, if you find something that is helpful to you and your relationship, that would be wonderful. Pass it on.

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## Introduction

Over the past 36 years, thousands of men have attended the Atlanta Men's Workshops. For the first 8 years, the Sex and Sobriety (S&S) meeting was the main Friday night program. After 1990, a Friday night Speaker meeting was added to the Workshop program and the S&S became a "breakout" session following the speaker meeting. S&S has also been a significant part of spin-off workshops (sometimes called the "Children of the Rock") in Roanoke, VA, Leesburg, FL., Southern CA., and Boone, N.C.

Thousands of recovering alcoholic men have attended and participated in these sessions. Many various experiences have been shared at very deep levels between recovering men. Valuable information has developed as trust between these men has grown over the years. We soon realized these sessions could have been called "Relationships and Recovery" (R&R), but S&S made for a sexier attraction.

The purpose of this writing is to put this information into a form that it may be used by future alcoholics who want to heal from prior "sexual secrets" and to have on-going relationships built on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. The author is sharing his experiences in order they will not be lost when he is no longer present. This is meant to be only a guide. There will be a few absolutes. We take a very pragmatic approach to life and relationships. Is what you are doing working for you? If not, you can read more.

Above all, it is suggested that we do not live life alone, any longer. We who are addicted have tried to be the judge of our own behavior in the midst of our addiction without success. As we learn how to live "happy, joyous and free," may we find other men on the same path and share our relationship journey with them.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank and acknowledge the men responsible for the Sex and Sobriety (S&S) program of the Atlanta Men's Workshop (AMW).

1. Dock Crandall and Bill Hollingsworth (both deceased) who started the workshops in 1982; both felt that S&S should be the anchor of the workshop.
2. Bill S. who has continued the direction and leadership initiated by Dock C. and Bill H.
3. Dr. Ed Waits (deceased) who started the first S&S and drafted the author as a participant at the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop in February 1983.
4. Numerous men who have spoken and/or facilitated the small groups over the years. To name a few would be a disservice to the remainder. You all must remain anonymous because of my memory and the lack of space for the numerous men I do remember. Without your assistance, the S&S would have become only a lecture series and not the dynamic opportunity for the change and growth that it was given.
5. The thousands of men who have participated in this experience over the past 36 years. Your persistent commitment to recovery and continual positive feedback has kept the process dynamic and rewarding for all who attend.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Sex and Sobriety**

**“Life is difficult”**

### **Section A**

#### ***History of the Atlanta Men’s Workshop***

The Atlanta Men’s Workshop (AMW) was founded in 1982 by Dock Crandell and Bill Hollingsworth. The workshops are held twice yearly, since 1984, in late March and early October. The first and 3<sup>rd</sup> workshops were in Toccoa, Georgia. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and all of the remainder (#71 in March 2017) have been at the Rock Eagle 4-H Center near Eatonton, Georgia (about an hour’s drive east of Atlanta). Hence the workshop has been called “the Rock” or “Rock Eagle” which comes from the name of a pre-historic effigy on the grounds of the facility.

There were approximately 55 men at the third workshop. After moving to Rock Eagle on a permanent basis the workshop rapidly filled to 300 men. In 1998, the workshop increased to 400 men and has been at that number since time. Many years have resulted in men being turned away because of lack of space. However, no man has ever been turned away by lack of money. Scholarships are made available from previous year’s donations to the Dock Crandall Memorial Scholarship Fund. Many men have returned to the workshops to contribute money for the scholarship fund. This is not considered charity to the scholarship recipients; it is felt to be an investment in their recovery.

Men from other locations have been inspired by the AMW and have started men’s workshops patterned on a similar format. There are currently a total of twelve workshops each year (sometimes called “the children of the Rock”) across the country: including Roanoke, Virginia; Leesburg, Florida; “Heavy Hitter’s” (also at Rock Eagle); Idyllwild, California; Boone, NC; Western Colorado, and Louisiana.

For more information go to [www.mensworkshop.org](http://www.mensworkshop.org)

## Section B

### *History of Sex and Sobriety at the Atlanta Men's Workshop*

The 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> Atlanta Men's Workshop contained a session on Sex and Sobriety (S&S) led by Dr. Ed W. I attended my first workshop (the 3<sup>rd</sup>) in February 1983 (held in Toccoa, Georgia). I was in the audience as Ed was speaking at the S&S session. [Ed and I had been meeting for a two-hour lunch on Wednesdays for the previous 2 years since we had both started our recovery in 1980. He had questioned me extensively about the female perspective on this subject; my limited insight was from that of a practicing Obstetrician and Gynecologist.]

As Ed was talking at the S&S that year he continued to say, "and Steve says." Finally, someone from the audience shouted, "Who is Steve?" Ed pointed to me and said, "That's Steve." Someone else shouted out, "Let Steve speak for himself!" So, Ed called me to the front of the room to speak and I have been in front ever since for the S&S sessions.

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Workshop in October 1983, 'Sex and Sobriety' was the Friday night opening session at 8:00 PM in the Bankers Building. We had over two hundred men at this workshop, which rapidly grew to 300 at future workshops. Initially, Ed and I thought that our primary purpose was to disseminate information and the secondary purpose was the small group discussions. Ed and I would speak for about 45 minutes each. We would share information we had learned from our personal journeys (taking the 12 Steps, marriage counseling, Adult Children Workshops, readings, practice of medicine, etc.), share what we found in the Alcoholics Anonymous literature and finally share our own sexual and relationship journeys.

After the above 90 minutes, we would break out into small groups of 10 to 12 men. Initially we had a "scribe" who would take notes in a general way about the issues discussed by the men in each group. After an hour of sharing, the "scribes" from each small group would come to the front of the room and read their notes to the entire audience. Quickly, we found that most of the groups were talking about similar issues and we discontinued the "scribes" after a few workshops.

Sex and Sobriety continued to be the main event on Friday evening for eight years (16 workshops). Ed and I would talk for ninety minutes; there would be a short break, and then we divided up into small groups of 10 to 12 with each group having a “facilitator”. Ed stopped coming to the AMW in 1991 because of health reasons. Around 1990, Sex and Sobriety was shifted to a “break-out session” after the speaker meeting on Friday evenings.

Changing to a “breakout” mode, limited the amount of time for S&S from over 3 hours to somewhere between 60 to 90 minutes. With this new format, the leaders omitted sharing their “wisdom” and shared mainly their “experience.” Other recovering men were asked to share to the entire group for a few minutes, in order to get different perspectives. We have included single and married men, heterosexual and homosexual men, young and older men, and men who are recovering sexual addicts. The men sharing with the entire group were usually asked to be facilitators in the small group sessions.

This small group sharing has become the most valuable part of the program. Many men have been able to reveal themselves to other men for the first time. Some men had taken prior 5<sup>th</sup> Steps, but omitted their deep dark sexual secrets. For others, it was a chance to be open with men other than their sponsor.

Now for some comments about the small groups: There has been a learning curve to produce and keep a safe environment. We have a “facilitator” to start the group with his sharing in an honest and frank manner. The combination of honest sharing from the front of the room and then by the facilitator creates a safe environment for further and deeper sharing. Initially I was surprised by the increasing depth of sharing as we held more workshops. I discovered that each workshop was able to build and grow on the prior experiences shared by men from previous workshops.

The Sex and Sobriety sessions continue to be a part of the Atlanta Men’s Workshop which just had its’ 71st workshop (March 2017). Sex and Sobriety sessions have also been held at workshops in Leesburg, Florida; Roanoke, Virginia; Boone, North Carolina; and Idyllwild, California.

## Section C

### ***What Alcoholics Anonymous has to say about S&S***

It is interesting that sex is discussed on page 69 of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (AA). Bill Wilson had a sense of humor. If you don't understand ask someone (what a concept, to ask for help in understanding.)

“Sex” is actually mentioned 18 times in Chapter 5. We just stop too soon in our reading of “How it Works.” Of course, this is in the description and discussion of the sexual inventory in the 4<sup>th</sup> Step. For those not familiar with Step 4, it includes evaluating resentments, fears, and sexual behavior.

“Resentment is the ‘number one’ offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else.”(Page 64 *Alcoholics Anonymous*). The book never mentions what the number two destroyer is. But, I think that sex and relationships are close behind resentments.

The following are direct quotes from *Alcoholics Anonymous* pages 68 through 70. The underlining is my own which I have added for emphasis.

“Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question... we hear the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind...We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?”

The book goes on to outline and review of our own sexual conduct, “Where have we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom have we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.”

“In this way we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relation to this test---was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always

that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.”

“Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.” (See Chapter 10, Making amends to exes)

“God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with persons is desirable, but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice. Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble? Does this mean we are going to get drunk? Some people tell us so, but this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing. These are facts out of our experience.”

“To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. It takes us out of our selves. It quiets the imperious urge, where to yield would mean heartache.”

Most of the above are read at the S&S sessions when time allows.

### **A pause for humor**

Frequently, the author starts the S&S meetings with the following: (This is to put laughter into the meeting and to give late comers a chance to be seated.)

Be very careful when you give information to newcomers, especially women. A sweet young lady at an AA meeting once asked Todd where sex was found in the “Big Book” (Nickname of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*) He told her page 96 and this is what she found when she opened her book that evening: (see pp.96-97)

“Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you...To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy.”

“...Let him know you are available.”

“He may be broke and homeless. If he is, you might try to help him about getting a job, or give him a little financial assistance. But you should not deprive your family or creditors of money they should have. Perhaps you will want to take the man into your home for a few days. But be sure you use discretion.”

“...You may be aiding in his destruction rather than his recovery.”

### ***Other information in Alcoholics Anonymous***

Appendix VII: A.A. Tradition, page 561

“Alcoholics Anonymous has made the difference between misery and sobriety and has been the difference between life and death. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together; else most of us will finally die alone.”

Appendix II: Spiritual Experience, page 563

“Willingness, honesty, and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But, these are indispensable.”

Spiritual expressions:

Page 47 *Alcoholics Anonymous*: “When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you.”

## Section D

### **What *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12&12)* has to say about S&S**

Sex and relationships are also discussed in the *12 & 12*. These sources are also used during the S&S sessions at the AMW. The following are direct quotes from the *12&12* which are frequently read when time allows.

1. “So, these desires—for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship—are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given...Our desires for sex, material and emotional security and for an important place in society often tyrannize us. When thus out of joint, man’s natural desires cause him great trouble...Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct.” Page 43, Step 4.
2. “...we do have sex and marital problems, and sometimes they are distressingly acute...Our main problem is not how to stay married; it is how to be more happily married by eliminating the severe emotional twists that have so often stemmed from alcoholism.”  
“Nearly every sound human being experiences, at some time in life, a compelling desire to find a mate of the opposite sex with whom the fullest possible union can be made—spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical. God fashioned us this way.” Page 121, Step 12
3. “The alcoholic...nearly always takes up his marriage responsibilities with a willingness to repair what he can and accept what he can’t. He persistently tries all of the A.A.’s Twelve steps in his home, often with fine results. At this point he firmly but lovingly commences to behave like a partner instead of like a bad boy. And above all he is finally convinced that reckless romancing is not a way of life for him.”
4. For single alcoholics who are looking for marriage within A.A. “The prospective partners need to be solid A.A.’s and long enough acquainted know that their compatibility at spiritual, mental, and emotional levels is a fact and not wishful thinking.” Page 121, Step 12 p. 124: “With clear understanding and right, grown-up attitudes, very happy results do follow.”

If you keep doing what you are doing,  
you will keep getting what you are getting.

If you want something different,  
you have to do something different.

If nothing changes,  
Nothing changes.

## **Chapter 2**

### ***Words are important***

“Words and magic were in the beginning one  
And the same thing, and even today  
Retain much of their magical power.”  
Sigmund Freud

Words are extremely important in all our communication and especially in relationships. Words have the history of magic and mystery from the beginning of articulation by man. Our mind values words and their meaning. Words are the primary way we communicate with ourselves, the people around us, and with our Higher Power.

The words we use to talk about sex and to describe our partners both in our own minds and to other people influence (subconsciously at least) how we behave toward them and how they feel and act toward us. The words we use can show respect with positive expressions, be neutral with no emotional content, or be a tremendous putdown using abusive and negative words.

Even in this writing, it is worth emphasizing that no one should feel excluded or marginalized by the words chosen in these pages. Since the author is heterosexual and most of the men reading this material are likely to identify as heterosexual, it is possible that some might see a heterosexual bias in the language used. Please know that any such bias is unintended. Again “we do not want to be the arbiter of anyone’s sex conduct.” (Page 69 AA)

Think for a minute about the words you use to describe your significant other. It doesn't make a difference if your significant other is your wife, girlfriend, husband, or boyfriend.

“Negative” words (like “the old lady,” battle-axe, bitch, lesser half, whore or worse, describing her by body parts,(i.e. pussy, cunt) will have an extremely negative impact on the relationship. If expressed directly to your partner, they can ruin a relationship and can never be “deleted” from her memory. (Unfortunately, we humans did not come with a “delete button” like our modern electric gadgets.) Often such expressions simply cannot be forgotten. They cannot be erased or replaced even by years of loving words. If expressed to your friends, they still have a deleterious impact on the relationship. Your attitude and behavior toward your significant other will be affected.

“Positive” words, [like my bride (no matter how long you have been married), lover, sweetheart, precocious angel, etc.] can have a definite beneficial effect on your attitude and behavior. When expressed directly they will have a beneficial effect that will establish your attitude and commitment to the relationship. When expressed to your friends, they will affect how you and they relate to your partner positively.

### ***Words used to describe sex and body parts:***

Think for a moment about the words you use to describe sex. Do you:

1. Have sex
2. Make love
3. Screw
4. F- - -
5. Oral sex vs. blow job
6. Other numerous euphemisms

Body parts:

1. Breasts vs. jugs, tits, compare to fruit from lemons to grapefruit in size
2. Vagina vs. cunt, pussy
3. Clitoris vs. clit
4. Penis vs. dick, organ, gun

Are your words respectful and full of love and compassion? Are your words filled with hatred, loathing, and disrespect? Calling your partner a bitch in a loving manner sends mixed messages to everyone. Consider the real message you want to communicate to your partner and your friends.

A major part of communication in any relationship is honesty. Being honest with the words we use is a beginning on the journey toward intimacy. Dishonest and/or humiliating words will create confusion, antagonism, and mistrust.

Do you want to be married to a bride... or a bitch? Do want to make love... or screw?

Think about the “goal” for your sexual relationship you were asked to develop in Step 4 (page 69 AA). All of our activities in our daily life are either contributing toward that goal or headed away from that goal. We make a big issue of living “one day at a time”, but without a goal or direction we will not become better men (includes all areas of life).

The 12<sup>th</sup> Step challenges us to “practice these principles in all of our affairs” and this is the overall compass for our behavior. “We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.” (Page 60 AA) Some days we may not make progress, or even go backward in our actions. The importance of the 10<sup>th</sup> Step inventory at night is to continue to evaluate our behavior for the day and make plans for the next day.

### **Source of your Sexual (Relationship) information**

As you read these words and consider the information it contains, I would like to ask you a question. “Where did you get your information on sexuality and relationships?”

Did your parents give you information and set an example to what a healthy, loving, kind relationship was between two people?

Were you taught this at school or church?

Did you learn from “locker room” conversations with other boys or young men?

Did you learn from magazines or the Internet, etc.?

Did you learn from older boys or girls (or same age)?

Our experiences are unique and yet still so similar.

### ***Sex is Natural***

Sex is very natural. It is necessary for the continuation of the species. We have been made sexual by our Creator. For some unknown reason our sexual responses are connected to the spiritual. Men and women could reproduce just by feeling “horny” and copulating.

I like to compare sleep and sex. We can set the stage for sleep with a favorable environment, but we cannot will ourselves to go to sleep. The same is true with sex. We can set the stage for a sexual encounter, but we cannot by force of will create an erection, lubrication (for females), or orgasm.

## Chapter 3

‘If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.’

Ancient Chinese proverb

### ***TRUST, EMOTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS***

Trust is important in all relationships, whether friendships, marriage, or sponsorship. A frequent question asked at the AMW is “How long will it take for her to trust me again after beginning recovery?”

To be trusted we must do trustworthy activities on a consistent basis. In our disease of alcoholism, we lied and cheated so much that we didn’t even trust ourselves. How can we expect that our families will trust us? In recovery, following the 12 Steps we are expected to become honest and consistent. This means that it will take time not only for us but for our families to see a genuine long lasting change as well.

The answer to the above question is “It will take a very long time.” But trust will not occur unless our behavior becomes trustworthy consistently.

### ***TRUST, SHARING, AND INTIMACY***

All happy, intimate relationships contain the following:

1. TRUST
2. RESPECT
3. ENCOURAGEMENT
4. FORGIVENESS
5. SHARING OF FEELINGS
6. FUN
7. A SPIRITUAL QUEST

And in sexual relationships: 8. SEX

It is only in Romance Novels that great relationships happen spontaneously and without effort.

The cornerstone of intimacy is shared feelings. And, one of the most important elements in sharing is TRUST. Trust builds slowly in relationships and depends on HONESTY. The more the trust—the greater the intimacy.

When trust is violated, it takes a long time to rebuild. Trust can only be rebuilt with consistent actions that demonstrate that trust has been reestablished and will continue.

Example: “**The Trust Bucket**” An actual bucket with Styrofoam peanuts has been used as visual aid at the S&S sessions.

Each time we are trustworthy on small issues (examples-- come home when we say we will, call when we say we will, pick up bread at the store as asked, call if we are going to be late, etc.) we will add a unit of trust to our “trust bucket”.

Each time we are trustworthy on larger issues (i.e. remember anniversaries and birthdays with cards and presents, etc.) we will add numerous units of trust to the bucket. However, all we have to do is one untrustworthy thing [come home 2 hours late from your AA meeting (without calling), forget an important date, etc.]] and our trust bucket is turned upside down and empty again. We will need to start over again.

If our history includes affairs (not just with other people, but even with internet pornography, gambling, or any conduct that separates us from our partners) it will take a long time before we even start filling our bucket of trust.

I had a relapse in AA after 6 months of not drinking and going to meetings, which lasted 6 months. It took 2 years before my wife trusted that I truly was in recovery to stay.

We build trust one small act at a time. We lose trust by any action that empties the “Trust Bucket.” A minor action may only partially empty the “Trust Bucket,” but a major action can turn the “Bucket” over. This can be a relapse, an affair, or by discovery of pornography, especially the Internet.

## ***EMOTIONS***

Expressing emotions is essential to healthy relationships. It is in the mutual sharing of feelings that intimacy is developed.

Emotions do not lie. They tell our truth. When we share our truth with someone, we feel trust and closeness.

All addictions, (i.e. chemical, sexual, work, gambling, overeating, etc.) are used to hide, cover-up, or run from our feelings and emotions. We medicate our feelings and/or emotions first from ourselves and then from “our world.”

Medicated feelings become blocked and unexpressed. They will continue to be experienced and expressed, if only subconsciously until we become honest and openly share with our taking of the Steps.

Addictions lead to more complications in lives and relationships. This brings more pain and hurt, which leads into a vicious cycle of continuing our attempt to escape from reality and live in our own fantasy world.

See Appendix III: Feelings

## ***SPIRITUAL DIVORCE***

People stay in unhappy relationships for different reasons. Staying may be easier than leaving. Couples may stay “for the children” or want the financial or emotional security the coupleship offers. It’s more about fulfilling a need than it is about mutual love and respect.

Couples in this sort of relationship need to be honest with each other. They need to end the relationship—or commit to it and do the work to improve it so they can get on with their lives.

## ***AFFAIRS***

Affairs are most likely to occur when a relationship is already damaged and unfulfilling. A spiritual divorce has already taken place. Usually after the superficial erotic novelty of an affair has faded, with all the life stories told and sexual tricks played out, the adventure will cease. The person who seeks multiple partners does not experience the power and joy of commitment.

## ***REENERGIING A RELATIONSHIP***

Ways to bring new vitality to a tired relationship.

1. Plan some timeless time together.
2. Give three unexpected hugs per day
3. Find a hobby to share
4. Leave notes around the house
5. Buy or pick flowers for you partner
6. Take a sunrise or sunset walk together
7. Make a phone call together to an old friend
8. Tell your partner one of your fears
9. Cuddle together at bedtime or in the morning as you awaken.
10. Say prayers together in morning and evening
11. Sit outside for an hour after dark, look at the stars and share your day
12. Pick a movie, eat popcorn and hold hands
13. Touch your partner when they least expect it
14. Add your own

**ACT LIKE A MARRIED MAN!!!!**

## ***EMOTIONAL INTERCOURSE***

In order to feel safe sharing our passion and feelings with another, we also need to develop safety (“You will honor my feelings.”) and trust (“You will not hurt me”). When safety, trust and sharing all come together there is intimacy. Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse calls this “emotional intercourse.” The fulfillment of sex is directly related to the quality of intimacy that preceded physical contact.

## ***PHYSICAL INTERCOURSE***

Healthy people do not share their bodies with just anyone either. They also want safety and trust, as well as honesty and caring. Intimacy is shared emotion and feelings. Without it, sex can become totally mechanical and unfulfilling.

True physical intimate sexual activity involves the entire person, not just the genitals.

## ***MECHANICAL SEX***

Mechanical sex occurs when someone is aroused only by external, artificial stimulation, and there is an absence of feeling and emotion with the activity. This behavior includes chronic masturbation, pornography, and repeated affairs.

Developing a healthy sex life is a challenge in today's society. One of the most common sexual problems that couples report to marriage counselors is lack of desire or a significant difference in the level of desire between the partners.

### **Barriers to good sex:**

1. Medicated feelings (chemical)
  - Nicotine
  - Alcohol
  - Drugs of abuse
  - Prescribed medication
2. Medicated feelings (behavioral)
  - Workaholics
  - Excess exercise
  - Excess fatigue
  - Sexual addiction
  - Physical illnesses
3. Old feelings
  - Childhood sexual abuse
  - Date rape
  - Prior sexual experiences
  - Betrayal by an affair

Numbers 1 and 2 may be addressed by the individual or couple, when applicable. Number 3 may require extensive individual or couples therapy and may never be completely resolved.

## Chapter 4

### *Steve's story*

I am the oldest of 4, born into an alcoholic family. My Father was the alcoholic. At age 15, I made two decisions as a result of a conversation with Dr. Vernal Fox, a physician at the Georgian Clinic (the first inpatient treatment for alcoholism in Georgia where my father was a patient). She told me that alcoholism was inherited and that if I drank I would likely become an alcoholic.

My first decision was that I was not going to drink alcohol. I did not drink alcohol for the next 13 years. The second decision was that I would become a doctor, a physician like Dr. Fox. I thought if I became a physician that would make me feel okay, normal even.

On June 10, 1963 I graduated from Emory Medical School, but I still did not feel okay. So, I then thought I would feel okay or normal when I finished my internship, had a son, etc. Normal feelings would arrive when I completed some future activity. That day of being comfortable within myself never arrived. It was always out in the murky future.

Another significant event took place when I was 16. The minister of music at my Baptist Church seduced me. We had a sexual relationship over a period of three to four months. I finally realized I was being used and ended the relationship. This became my secret, which I held onto until I did my 5<sup>th</sup> Step when I was 41 years old. So for 25 years I had a secret that I thought I would take to my grave. This man had been the first person to whom I had felt close and shared thoughts and feelings.

This situation...

1. Separated me from my faith in the church and God. I had held strong religious beliefs and was very active in the church activities until then.
2. Erased any trust in men.
3. Brought up fears that I might be homosexual. I am not.
4. Eroded my self-esteem. Even though I became a successful physician with good surgical skills, I did not feel enough, ok with myself.

Two years later, I had my first sexual encounter with a female, a member of the choir. I thought she was a tease, but a friend told me she was not. We started having sex soon thereafter. (Retrospectively, I was probably trying to prove to myself that I was not gay.) This relationship lasted a few years. There was never any intimacy or concern for this young lady. My only act of responsibly was that I did use condoms.

I was married in December 1961, when I was a 3<sup>rd</sup> year medical student. This relationship was primarily one based on compatibility on mental and physical levels. I was focused on my education and knew little about being a husband. We had three sons born from 1963 to 1965. I certainly had had no personal knowledge of how to be a husband or father nor how to address problems that always develop in families. This subject was absent from my family of origin. I was unavailable to my wife on an emotional or spiritual basis. I was selfish, and completely focused on my education and training.

By 1968 I was in the middle of my Obstetrics and Gynecology residency, again focused on my education and training. Marital problems were occurring with which I could not cope. The emotional pain and frustration was too much for me to deal with. There was no one in my world with whom I would share or ask for support.

I was working in a private office to pay the bills (The residency paid about \$300 per month). I turned to narcotics and an affair with a nurse for relief of my discomfort. Neither of the above really helped. I quickly became addicted and started stealing narcotics at the hospital. I was caught and for this I was fired. We were divorced in a few months. Actually getting divorced helped for a while.

In 1969, I married the nurse and continued my odyssey of drug usage and geographic moves. In May 1972 the DEA and Georgia licensing board made me an offer; go to jail for prescription abuse or go to treatment. I chose treatment and went to Lexington, KY into the Public Health Hospital on a 6 month commitment with a 2 year follow up with groups and urine screens.

Alcohol was permissible, and from 1973 to 1979 I drank excessively to the point of blackouts. I again got divorced in 1975 primarily as a result of my continuing addiction. I thought I was in control of my chemical usage.

I did what I call the TITANIC SHUFFLE. I was rearranging chairs on a sinking ship. I would drink until those around me were worried about my drinking. Then I would stop drinking. But, I would start using drugs (any

drug that I could get easily) until I became worried about getting caught. I was thinking I was still in control, but I was only doing a dangerous dance and searching for relief from life in chemicals.

In 1978, I married Judith, my third wife. She expressed concern about my drinking, so I promised her I would quit when we got married. And, I did for 3 days. She offered me an annulment, which I considered, but turned down. In June 1979, Judith and my son Stephen (15 at the time) confronted me about my drinking.

My son told me about his horrible feelings when I was drinking into blackouts and being verbally abusive. I knew exactly how he felt, because that was how I had felt when I was his age. I had become what I had promised at age 15, what I would not be. I was a drunken Father who frightened his family and was not present emotionally. I made a commitment to find a solution for my drinking.

In September of 1979 I entered Ridgeview Institute for treatment of my alcoholism and drug addiction in a 29 day program. Emphasis was on continuing in a twelve step program after discharge. I started attending AA meetings, but did not get a sponsor or take the 12 Steps. I have heard that “meeting makers make it.” I was only able to “make it” for 6 months. I relapsed after 6 months despite attending many meetings on a regular basis.

I continued going to meetings for six months before getting honest about my relapse. On September 3, 1980 I picked up a “white chip” in Atlanta at the NABA clubhouse meeting. I had been going to meetings for 12 months, so I knew that the program would work for others. I did not yet believe it would work for me.

I made a decision that I would jump into the middle of the program. I immediately got a sponsor and began taking the 12 Steps. My sponsor said I needed to start praying immediately. Praying in the morning for help in staying sober that day. Praying at night with thanks for staying sober. I began to pray that night.

My sponsor told me I could begin practicing the 10<sup>th</sup> Step immediately, especially the “when we were wrong, promptly admitted it” part. This changed my behavior. I did not like to admit I was wrong, so I tried to improve my actions.

My experience with the steps:

1<sup>st</sup> Step: I had no problems with this step. I knew I was powerless and that my life was unmanageable.

2<sup>nd</sup> Step: After attending AA meetings for 12 months, I knew that the program of AA worked. I just was not sure it would work for me. I came, I came to, I came to believe in a power greater than myself (the power of the program).

3<sup>rd</sup> Step: I wasn't sure about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Step. First I did not believe or trust in a higher power. My sponsor told me I could use the AA group as my higher Power. ( See page 111, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*) Certainly a Group of Drunks (G.O.D.) were more powerful than me. I could accept that G.O.D. Next, I wanted to know what about the "fine print" in Step 3. Again my sponsor was helpful. I asked him what God's will was for me and he said that "that he wasn't sure. But since I was in AA, God probably wanted me to stay sober". (And, that is very, very true. Every sober member of AA wants the newcomer to stay sober.) So for me Step 3 was making a decision to stay sober. And how does one stay sober in AA. It is called taking Steps 4 to 12. So for me the decision in Step 3 was to do a Step 4 and continue with the A.A. program of recovery.

4<sup>th</sup> Step: I wrote my first 4<sup>th</sup> Step within the first 30 days of starting my recovery. I continued to repeat the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> steps every year for the next 8 years. The second 4<sup>th</sup> Step I wrote was what I call my "professional 4<sup>th</sup> Step." I did that 5<sup>th</sup> Step with a physician (Dr. Ed Waits, who had started the S&S at the AMW from the first in 1982); after this 5<sup>th</sup> Step, I finally began to feel okay as a physician. I had always judged myself by what knowledge I did not know. I now felt enough. I didn't know more, but I focused on what I knew and what were my limits.

**My relationship with my wife** changed in recovery. At 2 years sober I was still praying morning and night. But, I was doing it in secret. (The same way I had masturbated and used drugs) I would pray when my wife was asleep or out of the bedroom. At 2 years sober she caught me—praying. She asked me what I was doing on my knees beside the bed. I told her praying. She asked if she could join me. She told me that she had always wanted to pray with her husband. I did not know that. I was still too self-centered to know much about my wife. We prayed together that morning and continued twice daily for the next thirty years.

In February 1983, I attended my first AMW (the 3<sup>rd</sup>) and was drafted into the S&S program. I continued the S&S workshops at every workshop I attended (I have missed 3 workshops since, One when out of country (1985), another when my Mother-in-law died (1993) and the last time when I had major surgery (March 2016). My recovery has continued with active use of all the tools of the AA program.

I believe I have benefitted the most from the S&S workshops. The first time I shared (1983) I stumbled over the word “masturbation”, even when just quoting Kinsey’s studies. The last time (March 2017, for me the 66<sup>th</sup> AMW and S&S workshop) I was able to share without shame or guilt.

We are as sick as our secrets.

“We all have sex problems. We’d hardly be human if we didn’t.” Page 69  
*Alcoholics Anonymous*

## Chapter 5

### *Shame and Secrets*

I continue to be amazed by the secrets that alcoholic men are carrying with tremendous loads of shame and guilt. Since no one ever talks about sexual anatomy or behavior, there is no yardstick to measure what is completely normal/average and that which could be considered unusual or aberrant.

Parents are eager to teach a child about his/her body except for the area between the naval and knees. A child is taught about his nose, ears, and eyes, but not his/her genital organs. It is natural for a child to be curious about this taboo subject which is so visible. Sometimes there have been actual put downs or abuse by parents or family members. And, above all, we are told to **not talk about sex**.

Shame and guilt are not the same. We feel guilty when we commit an offense, action, or crime. We can feel shame as a result of our actions, or just being a part of a dishonorable experience. We may be not guilty and still experience shame. This is especially true about childhood sexual experiences, with or without shaming parents or others.

Most men I have talked to have some “secrets” regarding past sexual activity, frequently involving activity in the formative years (8 to 18). These varied from “normal or average” sexual exploration involving other children of similar ages to actual incestuous and/or abusive situations from older family members, friends or strangers. Most frequently the man sharing was the victim of the sexual abuse. Rarely, the man was the perpetrator.

It is concerning to me the damage we continue to do to ourselves regarding situations that occurred many years ago. In an average small group of twelve men at the S&S, nine to ten will report some significant situation that occurred in their teens or earlier that continues to produce shame and guilt.

(Usually something never shared before, or shared minimally on a 5<sup>th</sup> Step.) True freedom comes from this honest sharing of one's "dark past secrets."

Our present society with its Victorian roots still is very ambivalent regarding sexual behavior. Sex is used in advertisements to sell everything from toothpaste to cars with messages that you get the perfect woman or man if you drive this car, drink this beer, or use this product. (Of course now we have ads for "erectile dysfunction" on TV, when most of these problems are psychological.)

On the other hand, children are rarely given adequate instruction about sexual behavior. When early sexual instruction is given by parents (who are mostly uncomfortable and have their own shame and guilt) these uncomfortable feelings are transmitted to the next generation. Men are rarely willing to talk about sexual situations and behavior, except in a bragging or dishonest manner.

As we have continued the S&S workshops over the past 35 years, the freedom of sharing honestly has become the predominate healing source for the men attending the workshops. Early (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> workshop), it became obvious that each workshop did not need to reinvent trust, honesty, and openness. Each workshop has built on the experience, strength and depth of the previous workshops. Men have returned to report putting into practice suggestions from prior sessions with benefit to their relationships.

Repeated sharing is extremely powerful. For many recovering men, the first sharing of secrets occurs in the 5<sup>th</sup> Step with a sponsor. Sharing this "secret" with 10 or 12 men in the small groups continues to strengthen the healing process. Being able to share with 100's of men in the larger groups, is a further chance to feel accepted by others and most importantly to feel comfortable with one's own life experiences.

Our goal is to be comfortable in our own skin, with our entire past life experiences, with our own present behavior and with faith in our future as honest, recovering men. It is the separation between our actions and our goals or values that causes us anxiety, discomfort and pain. Pain is a motivator, but only for a short distance. We must be able to see and pursue the solution that will set us free.

When we can share completely and without shame;  
We know we are healed.

“Seldom, or perhaps never, does a marriage develop into an individual relationship smoothly and without crises; there is no coming to consciousness without pain.” Carl Jung

## Chapter 6

### *Communication and Marriage Counseling*

True communication with anyone is difficult. One of the primary difficulties is that we usually don't listen for understanding, but rather listen to reply. In our addictions we do not communicate honestly with anyone, especially loved ones. Dishonesty leads to lack of trust, understanding, and intimacy.

I found in early recovery that my wife and I seemed to be speaking different languages in our attempt to communicate. She would say “It is raining now” and I would hear her complaining that I had not taken the garbage out yet. Fortunately, we were referred for marriage counseling early in my recovery. It took a few disappointing efforts to find a professional with whom we both were comfortable. It is very important to find someone who is a competent counselor and understands alcohol and drug addiction.

There is a great benefit in having a professional sitting in front of you and helping to translate her and your words. This miscommunication can be a problem with simple issues. With serious and difficult subjects (like sex, money and children) understanding is out of the question. To say I could have a rational emotional discussion with my wife was a contradiction in terms in early recovery. I found marriage counseling necessary and very beneficial. With guidance from the marriage counselor, my wife and I were able to heal the relationship. We made a commitment to never make the last appointment for counseling. This was to remind us we were continuing to work on our relationship. After 4 to 5 years, our appointments were three months apart and later 6 months apart.

Women in general just want us men to listen to them, not try to fix the problem. I always thought it was my job to fix the “problem.” I once took the dishwashing machine apart trying to fix it, even though I have no knowledge or experience in fixing machinery. Of course, I had to hire someone to come out and put the machine back together and to fix it in the end.

Three C's for successful relationships (including spouses, sponsors, and sponsees)

1. **Commitment:** First there has to be a commitment to continuing the relationship, no matter what happens.
2. **Communication:** Is extremely important. Without good communication there can be no on-going relationship of any value. It took extensive marriage counseling for me to learn to communicate with my wife. I wanted to “fix her”; not listen to her. “**We mainly listen to reply, not to understand.**” (See Appendix II: Listen To Me)
3. **Compromise:** Being willing to make compromises will ensure the relationship has a chance of survival. In any relationship, there will be disagreements over decisions, activities, and a host of life issues. This is where Tradition 2 comes into importance: “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God...” No one is in charge of the marriage or the relationship. Being willing to compromise is an essential ingredient of a growing and lasting relationship.

**Relationships are not 50-50%.** There must be 100% commitment for any hope of continued growth. That is why my sponsor had told me that I needed to give 110% to my present marriage as part of my 9<sup>th</sup> Step “amends” to my prior relationships.

Love is patient and kind.  
Love is not jealous or boastful.  
It is not arrogant or rude.  
Love does not insist on its own way.

We spend **Time** with those things in life that we care about. It is important to take time with the people in our life that we cherish and love. This means scheduling time. (See Appendix VI: Timeless Time)

Some relationships are so toxic that there is no way to establish a sane and healthy relationship. The toxic relationship may be due to addictions (see next chapter) or due to toxic personalities. Remember, we can only change ourselves. If you find yourself in such a harmful relationship, you might consider all of your options---counseling, leaving, or just accepting your powerlessness.

See [Appendix V: Toxic Personalities](#).

## Chapter 7

### *Sex, drugs and relationships*

**State-dependent learning:** Multiple studies have shown that the “chemical state” of the brain at the time of education and experiences can affect the ability to remember and retrieve material. That is, if you are on drugs (including caffeine and nicotine) when you take an educational course or are otherwise studying for an exam or, to relate it to the subject matter hand, developing your dating” and relationship skills you will remember the information and/or the experiences better if you are on the same chemical mixture. For some of us this meant a lot of relearning in sobriety.

Having relationships and sex sober may be like doing this for the first time. This is especially true for many men who began their sexual experiences and alcohol/drug use in their teens. I have heard many men say, “I never dated or had sex sober.”

**Dating sober:** This is frequently a completely “new” experience for alcoholics in early recovery. This is one of the reasons that we suggest that no serious relationship be entered the first year of sobriety. Of course this advice is rarely taken, with frequent dire results. Finding a “relationship sponsor” is extremely important. This should be a man who shares your code of conduct and can be available, almost on a daily basis, to give suggestions on how to proceed with “dating sober.” This will feel uncomfortable, like any activity done for the first time in a sober condition.

**Alcohol/drugs effect on sexuality:** Many drugs and alcohol have the reputation of being aphrodisiacs and sex stimulants. You may have heard the old saying “Candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker.” Depressants have the reputation of stimulating sexual behavior because they block inhibitions. Many times (especially for the alcoholic) they block function as well. Shakespeare recognized this when he said: “Alcohol heightens the desire, but dampens the performance.”

Some of the stimulants do prolong erections and are used for that purpose. Many prescribed drugs can have a negative effect on sexual performance.

## **A short list of common drugs affecting sexual function:**

Over the counter drugs: some antihistamines and decongestants can cause erectile dysfunction and problems with ejaculation.

Prescribed medications

Antidepressants: Tricyclic antidepressants, including amitriptyline (Elavil), doxepin (Sinequan), imipramine (Tofranil), and nortriptyline (Aventyl, Pamelor)

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), including phenelzine (Nardil), and tranylcypromine (Parnate)

Anti-psychotic medications, including thioridazine (Mellaril), thiothixene (Navane) and haloperidol (Haldol)

Anti-mania medications such as lithium carbonate (Eskalith, Lithobid)

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as fluoxetine (Prozac), sertraline (Zoloft) and paroxetine (Paxil).

Other medications that can cause erectile dysfunction

Anti-hypertensive medications (used to treat high blood pressure) Diuretics, including spironolactone (Aldactone), and the thiazides (Diuril, Naturetin and others)

Centrally acting agents, including methyldopa (Aldomet) and reserpine (Serpasil, Raudixin)

A-Adrenergic blockers, including prazosin (Minipress) and terazosin (Hytrin) b-adrenergic (beta) blockers, including propranolol (Inderal), and metoprolol (Lopressor)

Medications that may decrease sexual desire—

Hormones, Leuprolide (Lupron), Goserelin (Zoladex)

All sedatives: benzodiazepines (Valium, Librium, Xanax. Etc.), sleeping aids

If you are having problems with sexual performance, it is important to check all medication you are taking and discuss this problem with your physician.

A good web-site for further information:

<http://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/medications-that-affect-sexual-function>

## ***Relationships and active drinking or using***

We have previously mentioned that, honesty is the foundation and cornerstone of any true relationship. With active addiction there is a minimal chance of honest communication. Trust becomes a primary issue. (See Chapter 4, TRUST).

**“Act like a married man!”**

### ***Acting like a married man***

This statement makes the assumption that a man will know “how to act.” This is the fallacy that we see over and over with men at the workshop. Frequently we alcoholics have lived in very dysfunctional families where there was an absence of love and respect that is necessary in a loving functional relationship. Men are very good at being loving, nice and considerate when they are horny and want sex. When we say act like a married man, we are saying for 365 days of the year to be loving, kind, and considerate of your wife or partner, 24/7.

Mike reported in 1998 that for eight years he had followed this instruction and his marriage had completely turned around. He gives his wife what she wants, despite the fact he doesn’t want to give it. Often this is simply emotional support, listening, and being present without trying to fix her. (See appendix II, Listen to me)

Randy had been sober for over 20 years and continued to complain that his wife was “cold” to him in the bedroom. From his sharing I knew that he was having affairs frequently when out of town. One night at the workshop I asked him “When will you start acting like a married man?”

He took this to heart and started being faithful to his wife. At the workshop the following year, Randy reported that his wife had changed her sexual behavior toward him, as he had become more honest in his behavior.

As men we spend our days “fixing” things (cars, machines, other men or women) it is difficult to come home to an upset wife and get out of the “let me fix it” mode of thinking and behavior. Our wives don’t expect or want us to fix them. To start with, they are not broken. They just are upset about some part of their lives, either internal (pain, fears or anxiety) or external (children, work, or even the dishwasher not functioning as she would like.)

## **Being Right or Happy**

Men frequently argue with their wives and spend time trying to prove they are “right.” In any relationship, there are different viewpoints. As has been said: There are at least three views of any situation, my view, your view and the “correct” view. Attempting to change your partner’s viewpoint (or reality) will be both a struggle and unsuccessful. Compromise and withdrawing from this struggle usually makes for a “happier” situation.

The question: “Do you want to be right or be happy?” is often a difficult decision for men to make.

Communication in relationship is not about debating viewpoints, but about sharing feelings and ideas. This idea can also apply to other relationships, with colleagues at work, family members, sponsees, even people in the “real world”. Only in a true emergency situation, where you have expertise that someone else does not have, does pushing for your viewpoint have any value. Pushing to prove you are “right” may feed your ego, but this transaction never results in an improved relationship at any level.

This approach to communication does not mean you will be a doormat and agreeing with the “other” (whoever the “other” is in the situation at hand). You can always express the truth as you see it, but finish with the caveat “YOU MAY BE RIGHT” or even stronger “I MAY BE WRONG.” The idea that we may be wrong is often difficult to accept, but is extremely important in recovery if we want to be “happy, joyous, and free.”

Do we want to be RIGHT or to be HAPPY? We do have a choice in our attitude of how we approach life and all relationships.

A corollary question is: How has your previous behavior in recovery been working for you?

**IF YOU KEEP DOING WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DOING,  
YOU WILL KEEP GETTING WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN GETTING.  
IF NOTHING CHANGES—NOTHING CHANGES**

See Appendix II: “Listen to me”

## Chapter 8

### *Sexual addiction and Dysfunction*

A frequent question by men at the AMW S&S is “Am I a sexual addict?” As with alcoholism, we do not make this diagnosis, but we do try to give direction. The length of sobriety and the taking of the Steps are to be considered in any answer to this question. If early in the program with minimal experience with the Steps, we suggest that the man do a thorough 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Step (after completing Steps 1, 2, and 3 of course) with special focus on the sexual inventory. And, later, with the help of a sponsor to establish you own “sexual ideal” (see page 69 AA.)

Attempt to practice this ideal and the principles of the Steps for a year. Frequently the chemical addiction is the primary problem with our sexual behavior. For many, once the drugs and alcohol are removed there is less of a problem with our sexual behavior. If after taking and living the Steps, you find that you continue undesired behavior despite adverse consequences, then you might consider attending a sexual 12 Step program. We know men that have achieved sexual sobriety in the sexual recovery programs based on the 12 Steps. These men have been extremely helpful on this issue at the S&S workshops.

#### **Internet pornography**

Internet pornography is one of the fastest growing addictions for men. We continue to hear from men with significant sobriety who are having problems in this arena. Pornography is by its very nature injurious to sexual relationships. It is difficult for pornography to have a beneficial place in a committed relationship. There is no way that a real woman can compete with the fantasies of the Internet. I have had men state that they are no longer interested in their spouses. When asked: “How often are you masturbating?” they will say 4 to 5 times a week. Not surprising, there is no interest in reality.

Click on these titles for additional info

1. [Why Watching Porn Is An Escalating Behavior](#)
2. [How Porn Can Become Addictive](#)
3. [How Porn Changes The Brain](#)
4. [How Porn Affects The Brain Like A Drug](#)

## 5. [How Porn Affects Your Sexual Tastes](#)

12 Step meetings for sex addicts:

1. Sex addicts (SA)
2. Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLA)
3. Sex addicts anonymous (SAA)

There are other programs in the United States. These three above are the most popular.

## Sexual Dysfunction

This subject is addressed in *Alcoholics Anonymous* on page 134. “A word about sex relations. Alcohol is so stimulating to some men that they have over-indulged. Couples are occasionally dismayed to find that when drinking is stopped the man tends to be impotent. Unless the reason is understood, there may be an emotional upset. Some of us had this experience, only to enjoy, in a few months, a finer intimacy than ever. There should be no hesitancy in consulting a doctor or psychologist if the condition persists. We do know of many cases where this difficulty lasted long.”

One professional comment: Alcohol is stimulating to some men, because it releases inhibitions. Alcohol is a depressant and can interfere with erections as most alcoholics know.

If the impotency (now called ED, erectile dysfunction) persists a specialist in this field should be consulted. Many times the problem lies in the lack of communication between partners. The problem is frequently psychological rather than physical. Fear of continued impotency can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There are other forms of sexual dysfunction. The most common one heard at the S&S is a seemingly complete lack of desire by a partner; or at least a significant difference in the sexual desire of the partners. This is usually best addressed with a third person, marriage counselor or professional once organic (physical) causes are excluded.

## Chapter 9

### *Amends to ex-wives, ex-girlfriends or ex-partners*

All 8<sup>th</sup> Step lists by men will have exes (ex-wives, ex-girlfriends, ex-boyfriends, ex-partners, ex-relationships, etc.) on their list. Before trying to make amends (Step 9), it is important for us to confer with our sponsor regarding exactly how to proceed by reviewing our 8<sup>th</sup> Step list.

My first sponsor was very clear with me on how to proceed with my 9<sup>th</sup> Step amends. I had 2 ex-wives and a present wife on my 8<sup>th</sup> Step list. My sponsor told me if I had any financial or property amends owed to my ex-wives; I should make the amends as soon as possible. If the amends I owed to my ex-wives was related to emotional, mental, physical, and/or spiritual abuse; then I should **not** attempt any contact regarding the harms I had caused.

There were two reasons for this suggestion:

1. The 9<sup>th</sup> step states “except when to do so would injure them or others” Approaching someone we have harmed (and now not related to them), could reopen old wounds and cause new harm. Simply saying “I am sorry” is not amends. Attempting to cure your guilt and hurting someone else at the same time is inappropriate and against the basic principle of Step 8, which is love and consideration of others.
2. Since I was presently married, approaching an ex-wife could give mixed messages to all involved, especially my present wife.

My sponsor said that the way to make amends to all prior relationships was to give 110% to my present wife in all areas, emotional, mental and spiritual. This was a very wise suggestion. I could make amends for past misdeeds, and at the same time improve my present marriage.

## Chapter 10

### *Closing remarks*

Much information has been presented and many suggestions have been made in this writing. Becoming aware of solutions is only the initial small step in true recovery from our hidden past. If we want different results we must change our behavior.

If you keep doing what you are doing,  
You will keep getting what you are getting.  
If you want something different,  
You have to do something different.

Personal stories have been given to show the benefit of practicing “these principles in all our affairs.” Different lists have been made to show the “principle” behind each step. I want to pass one list along; you can make your own.

#### Principles of the 12 Steps

1. Honesty
2. Hope
3. Faith
4. Courage
5. Integrity
6. Willingness
7. Humility
8. Love
9. Self-Discipline
10. Perseverance
11. Awareness of God
12. Service

There is no intention on telling you how to practice your program. Your sponsor and higher power can do that. I can only share what I have done and continue to do. The following suggestions are a summary of what we can do to improve our relationships. Of course first we need to:

1. Not drink or use
2. Go to meetings (Focusing on Men's and Step study meetings)
3. Get a sponsor and call and see him on a regular schedule
4. Take and continue to live the principles of the 12 Steps
5. Be of service and "pass it on" (this means the entire program)

While doing the above you can add the following:

- Read a meditation book for men daily
- Ask your wife (significant person in your life) to pray with you in the morning and evening.
- Spend time with your wife (or significant other) on a daily basis, sharing all experiences. No secrets.
- Meet with another man or men on a regular basis (weekly is ideal) to discuss your life with emphasis on relationships (can include wives, significant others, children, parents and sponsors).
- Continue to share all of your secrets with other men.

If you find that you are unable to live up to your chosen "ideal" (page 69, AA) and continue to feel ashamed and feel guilty about your actions, I would suggest you consider a repeat 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Step with concentration on the sexual inventory. If all of the above does not help, consider attending a 12 Step program for sexual addiction.

In closing, I would like to quote from A.A.'s two primary books:

"A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which if practiced as a way of life can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole."

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions page 12

"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us....

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you—until then."

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 164

# Appendix I

## *Definitions*

Accept: (verb) 1. To take (something offered); receive with favor or acquiescence; accede or assent to; also, to receive as to meaning; understand.

2. To accept a gift, proposal, invitation, suggestion.

Acceptably (adverb)--Acceptance (noun): The act of accepting, or the state of being accepted.

Approval: (noun) The act of approving, or the fact of being approved; sanction; favoring judgment.

Approve (verb): To speak or think favorably; regarded with favor.

Accept (verb): 1. To take (something offered);

Addiction—Compulsive behavior which continues despite repeated adverse consequences

Amends—compensation for a loss, damage, or injury of any kind

Arbiter—a person empowered to decide matters at issue; judge; umpire

Bewail—to express deep sorrow for; lament

Guilt—the fact of having committed an offense, crime, or wrong

Ideal—a standard in perfection or excellence

Imperious—dominating in a haughty manner; dictatorial

Loathe—feeling disgust or intense aversion for someone

Shame---the painful feeling of having done or experienced something dishonorable improper, or foolish.

Shaming—to cause someone to feel guilty or disgrace

Tyrannize—to treat oppressively

For a more detailed and extensive dictionary go to:

The Little Big Book Dictionary

The Little 12 and 12 Dictionary

[bigbookdictionary.com](http://bigbookdictionary.com)

## Appendix II

### *Listen to me*

When I ask you to listen to me,

And you start giving advice; you have not done as I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me,

And you tell me why I shouldn't feel that way; you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me; and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem, you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I have asked was that your listen—not talk, or do—just hear me.

Advice is cheap. Fifty cents will get me both Dear Abby and Billy Graham in the newspaper.

All I can do is do for myself: I am not helpless, may be discouraged, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,

You contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But, when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you, and get about this business of understanding what is behind this irrational feeling.

When that is clear, the answers are obvious, and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that is why prayer works, sometimes, for some people, because God is mute.

He doesn't give advice or try to fix you.

He just listens, and lets you work it out for yourself.

So please listen and hear me.

If you want to talk, just wait a minute for your turn, and I will listen to you.

-- Author unknown

## Appendix III

### *Feelings*

(See Father Martin's CD on feelings)

Feelings are universal. We all experience both positive (based on love) and negative (based on hatred) feelings all of the time. We cannot be responsible for our initial feelings' they come uninvited on an hourly basis. But, we are responsible for our 2nd thought and first action. Where do we allow our thoughts and actions to spread? We say "He made me angry, sad, happy, etc." No one can make us do anything, short of having a gun to our heads.

See also Dr. Paul O.'s book: *You can't make me Angry*.

Are we self-centered or other centered?

Do we attract or repel other people?

What is our conversation about?

## **Appendix IV**

### ***What is great sex?***

GREAT SEX takes place between two individuals who are equals.

GREAT SEX goes beyond mechanics.

GREAT SEX is involved with total pleasure—physical, emotional and spiritual.

GREAT SEX is free of anxiety and fear of performance.

GREAT SEX is between two people, not just two bodies.

GREAT SEX is understanding the other person.

GREAT SEX is intense, passionate and magical.

GREAT SEX is above all, sex with love and romance.

GREAT SEX always uses your most important sex organ—THE BRAIN!

“Great Sex”

By Alexandra Penney

## Appendix V

### ***TOXIC PERSONALITIES***

We can all behave in manipulative, unpleasant and even destructive ways at times. But some people seem to hurt others more often than not. They live by their own rules, on their own schedule with little concern for the well-being of others. They are toxic personalities.

These people have a distinctive thinking pattern. They tend to believe that:

- Having power and control gives them excitement in life, and they are always seeking excitement. They are unique. They see themselves as smarter, more creative and more important than ordinary people. They are narcissistic (self-centered) and grandiose (self-important).
- They are never wrong. When they don't get what they want, or are caught in dishonest or manipulative behavior, they complain that they have been victimized, misunderstood or mistreated. They are good people, despite their manipulative, exploitative or otherwise harmful behavior.
- Caring equals using. They believe that if you care about them, you will let them manipulate and take advantage of you. People who work hard just aren't clever enough to attain their goals through easier and quicker means such as scheming and manipulation.
- They are entitled to have what they want regardless of the consequences for themselves or others. They can rationalize the use of any means in the pursuit of their goals.

Toxic personalities don't set out to hurt others. They just do whatever they want to do whenever they wish without concern for the inconvenience or problems their behavior may cause for others. When confronted with the emotional fallout of their thoughtlessness, they deny responsibility and try to shift the blame onto circumstances or other people. Because their own emotions are shallow and superficial, they have difficulty understanding the pain they cause for other people. They are bulls in the interpersonal china cabinet.

Most of the time, toxic personalities' behavior is simply irritating, frustrating or confusing, but remains within the bounds of social convention and the law. However, when they break the law or cause physical harm or severe

psychological damage to others without regret or remorse, we call these people sociopaths, psychopaths or criminal personalities. What makes these people different is that they have no conscience. When they say they're sorry for something they've done, they don't mean they regret having harmed you, but that they're upset at having been caught.

**Are You an Easy Target?** Toxic personalities seem to have special radar that homes in on people whose naiveté, self-doubt and low self-esteem make them particularly easy to manipulate.

You may be an easy target if you are...

- Gullible, naive or idealistic about human nature
- Distrustful of your perceptions and constantly seeking approval from others
- Insecure and easily hurt by criticism or disapproval

Toxic people instinctively know what such people need most and play upon their insecurities to get what they want. However, toxic personalities are made vulnerable by a fatal flaw of their own: their grandiosity. They truly believe in their schemes and inflated self-image; it never occurs to them that they could be wrong or that their plans might be flawed. Thus, they are betrayed by their own overconfidence and self-deception. Being alert to manipulative tactics can help you hold onto your self-confidence, self-esteem and even your sanity.

Watch for red flags, such as:

- Arguments that promote self-doubt (You're just too sensitive.)
- Too-good-to-be-true scenarios (I'll give you a really good deal.)
- Assurances of trustworthiness, you can trust me.)
- Disproportionate anger at confrontation (Are you accusing me of lying to you?)

**Detoxifying yourself** As you can imagine (or remember), people suffer many negative emotions at the hands of toxic personalities: confusion, anger, impotence, betrayal, depression, anxiety, fear.

Sometimes toxics tell victims outright that they are to blame for their own pain and suffering. Some manipulate their victims into believing that somehow they have hurt the toxic. Others don't hang around long enough for victims to know what's hit them. In any case, victims are often left

holding a bag of negative emotions that will contaminate their feelings about themselves and others.

Because these poisonous people play on already existing insecurities, they can cause considerable damage to their victims' self-esteem and self-confidence. Victims pay for their trust and emotional openness with cynicism, self-recrimination and pervasive self-doubt. Not only will they be less likely to trust others after a run-in with a toxic personality, they are often less self-assured and more reluctant to form new relationships.

Toxic personalities often give their victims no opportunity to vent their feelings. Even if they do, they aren't likely to understand how the victim feels or to care. Nevertheless, it's important that victims get these feelings out so that their mental and physical health doesn't suffer. (Stress expert Dr. Hans Selye considered the stress caused by the behavior of another person to be the most damaging and potentially lethal of all stressors.)

If you have been victimized by a toxic personality, don't be afraid to seek a therapist for help. Because toxic personalities excel at creating confusion and self-doubt, identifying the manipulations of a toxic personality often takes the help of an objective professional.

**Enter new relationships of any kind with open eyes.** Listen to your intuition when it tells you that things are not quite right, and don't hesitate to ask questions that may seem rude or untrusting. It could save you from deepening a relationship that could leave you emotionally, physically or even financially devastated.

They may seem to offer what you want most, but are more likely to be obliging you to get what they want. Demand to be treated fairly, honestly and respectfully. Make it clear that you will not tolerate dishonesty, manipulation, and inconsiderate behavior, and, most importantly, don't.

Once you set and consistently enforce limits, a toxic personality will reduce attempts to manipulate you. Don't blame yourself for the behavior of a toxic personality. Toxics will always try to shift blame and/or responsibility to anyone who is willing to accept it. Don't take it. Never think that you can change a toxic personality. You can only change your responses to them. Because they aren't hurt by their behavior, toxic personalities are highly unlikely to seek or accept counseling. If you are or have been involved with a toxic personality, you may need to seek professional help to repair your damaged self-esteem and betrayed trust.

## Appendix VI

### ***TIMELESS TIME***

“Timeless Time” is time a couple sets aside to allow spontaneity to occur. Timeless Time has no agenda. It allows thoughts to flow freely. It allows feelings to surface and it gives each person the opportunity to be able to recapture a sense of being carefree and spontaneously responsive to each other. We recommend:

One hour a day  
One day a week  
One weekend a month  
One week each six months

*Coupleship* by Sharon W. Cruise

## Appendix VII

### *Practicing the Traditions In your relationships*

Numerous sources have suggested for Alcoholics to practice The Twelve Traditions in their marriages and relationships. This can be done in various ways. The initial step is to look at how the Traditions work with individuals in AA. This is my guide to using the Twelve Traditions as a guide for looking at family dynamics.

**Tradition One:** “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.”

The welfare of the relationship should come first, ahead of the individual’s needs or desires. The relationship is primary and supports the individual.

**Tradition Two:** “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” No one but a loving God is the authority in the relationship. Frequent “group consciences” are held to discuss issues. We are all equals.

**Tradition Three:** “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

The only requirement for membership in the relationship is a desire and commitment to be in the relationship.

**Tradition Four:** “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A. A. as a whole.”

The relationship (the marriage and family) should be autonomous and not dependent on or subservient to any outside group. Our home is “our home.”

**Tradition Five:** “Each group has one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

The relationship is primary and can determine “its message.” Its message could be to be an example of spiritual, mental, emotional and physical growth as outlined on page 117 of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

**Tradition Six:** “An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”  
The family group should always be primary. The family name should not be tarnished by outside enterprises. The family financial stability must be preserved.

**Tradition Seven:** “Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”  
The family should be self-supporting. “It’s always easier to spend less, than to make more.” Do not live beyond your means (income).

**Tradition Eight:** “Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”  
Our family takes care of its own business. We have our chores and take care of our home. We may employ maids, gardeners, and accountants etc. to handle special activities.

**Tradition Nine:** “A.A. as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”  
Our family is not to be overly organized. We may have individuals who have certain responsibilities.

**Tradition Ten:** “Alcoholic Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A. A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”  
Any outside issues will be resolved within the family. We will not let our individual opinions on outside issues (politics, religion etc.) create division within the family.

**Tradition Eleven:** “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.”  
We do nothing that would harm the home.

**Tradition Twelve:** “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”  
Anonymity is the foundation of the home, marriage, and relationship. “Principles” always comes before personalities.

## Charles' Story

“My greatest fear has always been that others would judge me as I judge myself. For as long as I can remember, I had always felt different from everyone else. I wasn't good enough. I didn't measure up. I was inadequate or deficient in some way. Everyone around me seemed to know something that I did not. It was as if I had missed some essential instruction or explanation about life. Of course, I didn't want anyone to know how I felt so I kept those fears and insecurities to myself. My secrets, in turn, made me feel like a fraud. I was convinced that if you really knew me, the 'real' me, you wouldn't be willing to accept me any more than I was willing to accept myself.

The first Sex in Sobriety meeting I attended was in October of 1987. My biggest sex secret at the time was that I was gay. Though it seems absurd in retrospect how fearful I was to admit that simple truth, it really was a secret that I had thought I could never share.

I had previously admitted my sexuality only to my sponsor and one other friend in recovery. I was attending the Atlanta Men's Workshop among hundreds of other men at a 4-H camp in rural Georgia. It was neither an environment nor crowd in which I felt any comfort or confidence. Yet there I sat, expected to share my most deeply held secret with a group of complete strangers. I was terrified.

I grew up in a family and community steeped in political and religious conservatism. Sexuality in general was rarely acknowledged, much less openly discussed. If matters of sex were mentioned at all, it was only in the most clinical and necessary of terms and circumstances. As a result, what I believed about homosexuality was informed entirely by what I gleaned from my family's faith community on the subject: that homosexuality was immoral; a grave sin; an abomination in the eyes of God.

It is no surprise then, as I entered puberty and began adolescence, that the growing awareness of my own developing sexuality was met with confusion, frustration, and agonizing shame. I quickly concluded that my sexuality had been the reason I always felt different from everyone else. I also believed

that it justified the judgment and rejection I had always feared. So I resolved to keep it a secret; to never let anyone know my truth.

Secrets, we are told, keep us sick. Mine certainly did. Keeping my sexuality a secret required me to keep a safe emotional distance from anyone and everyone. I had to pretend, always, to be someone and something that I was not. Depression and desperate loneliness – even when surrounded by family and friends – enveloped me. I felt alone, convinced that no one knew or could ever understand how I felt.

I was wrong, of course. The men who sat in a circle with me that night knew exactly how I felt. They had their own secrets – truths that they, too, had determined never to reveal. They, too, had convinced themselves that no one knew or could ever understand how they felt. The stories were as varied as the men in the room. For some, the secrets were relatively benign sexual fetishes or proclivities that had seemed too embarrassing ever to admit. For others, the secrets related to marital infidelities that they feared would surely destroy their families. For many, the secrets revealed a history of abuse and molestation.

Whatever our secrets, we had all come to that meeting carrying a sense of shame about ourselves; a belief that we had to hide, not just a part of our past, but a part of ourselves from others. Sharing our sexual secrets, the personal stories and truths that we had kept buried for so long and had vowed never to reveal, brought about a relief as wondrous as it was unexpected. Being convinced for so long that our secrets could only be met with contempt and condemnation; we were amazed to find others who had felt the same feelings, thought the same thoughts, experienced the same experiences. Instead of judgment, we had found a path to freedom – a path away from shame and loneliness; a path toward healing and community.

Over the years I have attended other sex in sobriety meetings; often with new secrets to share. Each time, I experience a profound sense of relief as though a physical load has been lifted from my shoulders. I have also discovered though that simply sharing my sexual secrets does not solve my sex problems. That's because my sex secrets and my sex problems are not the same. While my sex secrets may conceal harms or wrongs for which amends are appropriate or required, the exact nature of my sex problems are the same defects of character that underlie all my problems – the various manifestations of self; particularly selfishness and self-centeredness.

So, revealing my sex secrets is not an end unto itself. It is not an act of penitence or confession from which I receive relief or absolution. Though essential to my recovery, it is only an initial step toward healing. It is the point from which healing can begin; a demonstration of my willingness to be honest with myself and others. Recovery from alcoholism is possible only if I am first willing to acknowledge and admit the truth of my drinking. So it is with sex in sobriety. I cannot begin to heal sexually until I am willing to disclose my sex secrets. Only then can I be free of the guilt and shame that fueled those secrets.

My first Sex in Sobriety meeting changed my life because it changed my recovery. It allowed me to face my fear of judgment by creating an environment that was free of judgment. In giving me a space in which to reveal the secrets that had always separated me from others; it opened the door for me to true fellowship.

## **Paul's Story**

### **My journey through Sexual Addiction and Recovery**

At an early age, though I did not realize it at the time, I became very obsessed with sex. Masturbation became quite frequent around the age of 10. I came from a good moral family.

After sex, I always felt guilt and shame. This continued for years. A friend showed me pornography and I became very obsessed with it.

During high school, I did my best to keep secret my sexual lust, never feeling I belonged, and always different.

My lust obsessions became very dark.

When in college in the mid 1950's selling of pornography was illegal. That did not stop me. Guilt and shame increased. Lust took me to places that I never thought I would go—harmful paces both mental and physical.

In 1984, God took my drinking problem away but my sexual activity increased. I was desperate.

In 1987, God gave me the gift of “sexual desperation” and brought me to a 12 Step sexual recovery group.

Today, I am free one day at a time of consuming lust.

For many years I have attended the Atlanta Men's Workshop, Sex and Sobriety sessions and benefitted from recovery shared there.

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