

LivingIntegrated®

FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

14 UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL HELP

IN THIS PRACTICE:

- Unfortunate Opposition to Therapeutic Help
- Indicators You Would Benefit from Professional Help
- Finding a Counselor or Therapist
- Treatment Programs and Intensives
- Practice Fourteen Assignment

Go to https://youtu.be/7Ldt_rEX7kE now and watch the introductory video for this Practice.

Like a lot of us who struggle with compulsive sexual behaviors, you will come to a point in your journey towards wholeness where you will need and greatly benefit from professional help.

You can utilize therapeutic help either by seeing a counselor, attending an intensive program or entering an inpatient or outpatient treatment program.

The truth is that nearly everyone—whether or not they're addicts—will benefit from professional counseling at one time or another.

The healthy adult life is one of continued development, insight, adjustment and integration of our personal values with our thoughts and behaviors. Competent, appropriate counseling gives us needed assistance when various factors inhibit our personal growth.

So, I think counseling—the right counseling with the right guide at the right time—can be helpful to most people. But if you are an addict, you are much more likely to need professional help to resolve some of the issues you have to deal with.

UNFORTUNATE OPPOSITION TO THERAPEUTIC HELP

Some religious people have an aversion to counseling. Sometimes our spiritual leaders and communities hold negative views and reinforce negative stereotypes about counseling.

Too often, for whatever reason, they promote an unhealthy and unfounded view that psychological help is oppositional to trust in God.

The thinking seems to be that truly spiritual people only need faith to deal with their problems. The Gospel of Jesus doesn't actually say or imply that. Actually, all healing is God's healing, however it comes to us.

“

All healing comes from our Creator, and our Creator uses others in helping us heal. In the Christian tradition, God creates us for community. It is in doing life with one another that we experience the reality and truth and power of the Gospel.

”

Rarely does God heal us apart from one another. Therapeutic practices, then, are important and valuable aspects of his community.

INDICATORS YOU WOULD BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONAL HELP

So, how do you know if you need professional help?

If you are beginning your work on compulsive sexual behaviors early in your life, and your sole entry point of experience is Internet porn, and if your upbringing has been relatively calm and healthy, use of a counselor or therapist may not be immediately necessary.

However, if any of the following are part of your journey then you should seek out a counselor or therapist:

- Early childhood participation in sexual activity
- You have difficulty concentrating
- You are often depressed and/or struggle with anxiety that you find difficult to manage
- You've been abused physically, emotionally, sexually or spiritually
- You have abused others physically, emotionally, sexually or spiritually
- You've engaged in sexual behaviors that have crossed lines of healthy sexual behaviors
- You've worked at recovery for a significant period of time—including fully participating in a Twelve Step recovery group or another recovery program—but can't get to sustained sobriety, struggle with related issues, feel you are stuck

This list isn't meant to be exhaustive; there are other factors that may also indicate the need for counseling.

FINDING A COUNSELOR OR THERAPIST

While I tend to use the terms “counseling” and “therapy” interchangeably, there is a difference. While there is overlap between the two, a counselor will help you solve problems you've identified and want help with. A therapist will help you dig deeper to explore root causes or discover and resolve hidden issues.

The deeper you go, the more you'll want to utilize therapy. The key is you want to find someone who can help you with what you need.

Finding the right counselor is challenging. Most of us have no idea how many different kinds of therapists there are. There are many different programs of training, kinds of credentials and approaches to psychology.

It might be insightful to look up and become somewhat familiar with the meaning of different credentials. For instance, a person with an MFT is a marriage and family therapist, while an LPC is a licensed professional counselor and a LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker. There are many other credentials, too.

Different counseling training programs have different emphases, different areas of strength.

There is an enormous amount of diversity in the therapeutic community. When I was doing my certification—I'm not a therapist; however I participated in an excellent therapeutic training program to expand my own knowledge and resourcing—I was surprised to learn just how many varied approaches to counseling there are. I was told someone had done a study identifying over four hundred different approaches to therapy just in North America!

Most counselors will have an online presence these days describing their credentials and areas of focus or expertise.

The thing you have to be aware of that simply listing "sex addiction" or "compulsive sexual behavior treatment" as one of their areas of expertise does not mean that they are certified in that area. It also doesn't mean they are particularly good at it.

It takes some time and work to find a good counselor. It's worth the trouble. And it's worth the cost. But you have to put in the effort to find them and then you have to put in the effort to work with them.

There are two guidelines for finding a good counselor, *competency* and *chemistry*.

Competency is the expertise a counselor has in their profession and how that matches up with your needs.

Today more and more counselors are adding to their credentials certification in treating sex addiction. There are several different organizations offering their own certification, and they're not the same. For those of us not familiar with psychological training and certification, it can be confusing, so do your research.

When looking for a counselor, then, check out their credentials, references, areas of expertise, training and certifications. Use referring resources from other folks in recovery, and online resources.

Chemistry is the nature of the personal interaction you have with your counselor. It will take several sessions with a counselor to discover if you have personal chemistry; this is important because you won't do the hard work you need to do if you don't trust the person you're meeting with.

Do you feel like they get you? Do you trust them? Does the way they come across with you in person match up with their credentials and advertised skills?

Don't be afraid to make a change. If it's not working don't waste your time, effort and money. And a healthy counselor doesn't want to work with someone they're not connecting with or who's not willing to do the work. You'd be wasting their time and effort, too. So make the change if it's indicated.

It takes time and effort to find the right counselor or therapist, and the search is well worth it.

The financial cost of competent counseling can be an issue. Maybe you don't have insurance coverage. Even if you do, you might not want your reason for the counseling in your personnel file. I really understand that.

What you have to weigh is the cost to the need/benefit.

What is it costing you *not* to get help?

If you are seriously ill physically, don't you do whatever necessary to get help, get well? You want to give the same effort to care for your emotional and psychological well-being.

TREATMENT PROGRAMS AND INTENSIVES

Now let's think about *treatment*. If your compulsive patterns are deeply entrenched or have wrought a significant amount of damage in your life, utilizing a treatment program may be the very best way to break up your compulsive patterns and replace them with healthy ways of thinking and behaving.

Using *inpatient treatment* is an intensive period of work for several weeks or months. Treatment can put you on a much swifter pace of self-discovery and therapeutic integration. And in some of our situations, we have suffered or engaged in such extreme experiences (either in specific episodes or over long periods of time) that treatment really is the very best way to get the help we need.

Another form of treatment is an *outpatient treatment program* which is different from inpatient in that it is not residential. At night you either go home or to a more open residential situation.

Treatment centers and treatment programs are not equal. Some specialize in some addictions but not others. Not all deal with sexual addiction. Some have more therapeutic elements and integrative practices than others. Costs vary.

And just like with therapists, some use one approach, some another.

Intensive programs are another option for specialized, focused work. Intensives tend to run from three or four day sessions to fourteen days. The right intensive can be extremely helpful in getting a very solid start to recovery or getting your recovery moving forward when you're stuck.

There are some very good intensive programs available now. The approach and quality of intensives varies, so again, do your homework in researching them.

Usually, your counselor or therapist is the best guide for you to determine if you need to go to treatment and if so, how to find the treatment facility and program that best suits your needs.

If you need treatment, do whatever you can to pursue it. Competent treatment offers the possibility of saving you (and those around you) a great deal of unnecessary pain and suffering.

Keep in mind that treatment or intensives alone won't change your life; you have to do the work of putting into practice the new life you want to live when you've finished the program.

ASSIGNMENT FOR ENGAGING THE FOURTEENTH PRACTICE— PROFESSIONAL HELP

1. Think over your background, context and experiences regarding counseling and treatment; do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of counseling? What is your view of treatment?
2. Review the bullet point elements in this Practice; do any of them apply to you?
3. Read pp 121-128 in *Ashamed No More*, from the beginning of chapter seven through the section "Therapy and My Search for Healing"
4. Do you think you'd benefit in your recovery by utilizing counseling, therapy or treatment?
5. My favorite go to for professional resourcing is the International Institute for Trauma Addiction Professionals; full disclosure, that's where I did my certification as a Pastoral Sex Addiction Professional; go to one of their websites, sexhelp.com, and you'll find a plethora of resources, including how to find one of their certified sex addiction therapists (CSAT)
6. We will do our best to keep our "resources" page up to date on the livingintegrated.org website; this site will never be exhaustive, but it will include some of the treatment programs and intensive programs we hear about that we think are really good

THREE BIBLE TEXTS FOR EXPLORING PROFESSIONAL HELP

"That evening they brought to [Jesus] many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 'He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.'"

Matthew 8:16-17

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.... Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:1-2

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

James 1:17

PRAYER

God, all healing comes from You. Help me to understand if the path of healing You have me on includes professional help. Open my heart to what is best for my healing and help me with the obstacles that are in the way. Amen

IN THE NEXT PRACTICE,

we will look at identifying and utilizing recovery resources.

