

# LivingIntegrated®

## FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

### 5 DEVELOP A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

#### IN THIS PRACTICE:

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- The Problem of Isolation
- Two Kinds of Community
- Primary Characteristics of Supportive Community
- Online Community
- Practice Five Assignment

Go to <https://youtu.be/eoRYzFrzjxc> now and watch the introductory video for this Practice.

#### THE PROBLEM OF ISOLATION

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Almost all compulsive people are isolated people. It is a huge challenge for us. By that I mean we keep a significant part of our lives hidden from others.

It's important you understand this isn't an accusation; it's a description of our reality. In every case we come by this honestly.

Many men and women have trouble developing significant friendships—meaning a trustworthy relationship. By trustworthy I mean a non-judging, accepting relationship in which we allow another person to know a lot about what we really think, what we think about, how we honestly feel and what we actually do with our time.

For whatever reasons, we've always had or learned very early this tendency to hide from others, to protect ourselves, to isolate. The difficulty so many people have in developing authentic, supportive, shame-free relationships is even more challenging for us.

And if that weren't enough, our compulsive behaviors result in shame, that often unspoken but pervasively felt notion that 'there's something wrong with me' and 'I'm not enough.' This shame makes our natural tendency to isolate much stronger.

Isolating ourselves makes our recovery very, very difficult, even improbable. Remember that struggling with compulsive sexual behavior is only a symptom of deeper issues. And one of those issues is intimacy disorder. We long for connection but we find it in unhealthy ways.

What has been hurt, distorted and malformed in us has to be healed, corrected and transformed in a similar way.

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*What gets hurt in relationship has to be healed in relationship.*

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For recovery to progress in a healthy way, there are two kinds of community we need to assemble.

## TWO KINDS OF COMMUNITY

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The *first kind of community* you need is a *group*. Maybe you already are in one or more groups. But most of us aren't, or if we're in a group, it's not the sort of group in which it's safe to talk about our compulsive sexual behavior.

Safety, trust and chemistry are absolutely essential for you to begin breaking down your walls of isolation. It's essential you carefully find the right group.

There is a scenario of sharing unwisely that I've seen happen time and again. A guy struggles with guilt and shame over his sexual behavior, trying over and over to stop. He gets some help and learns the actual nature of his struggle. Now he understands better what his real problem is. It has a name. It's not just him. He's not alone. There's a way forward.

He's learned a freeing truth, and in his relief, hope and enthusiasm he shares it with others. Good, right? He's looking for honest connection, he's trying to be real, he's breaking out of his isolation. But the reaction of others isn't what he'd hoped for.

People he'd hoped would be supportive instead turn away from him. He's hurt and his willingness to risk suffers a major setback.

Sex is so personal, so intimate—everyone has their own story about sexuality and it often entails disappointment, hurt or fear—that most people react in negative ways if we're too open with our struggles. That's why prudence is so important.

Most of us, however, have already learned we need to be very private. Maybe you're more like this. You're too private, no one really knows what you're struggling with. And the only way for you to feel safe is to keep it that way.

You'll need to work hard at developing intentional community. Remember, it's a non-negotiable. Whether a face-to-face group or an online community, you have to have others in your life who know you and share your desire for living a healthier, more integrated life.

Why? Because what's hurt in relationship has to be healed in relationship.

When I share with my trusted confidantes exactly what's going on in my head and my behaviors, and instead of judging me or rejecting me they lean in, they accept me, they express affection and support of me, my shame diminishes, my faulty core beliefs ('I'm a failure' and 'I don't have what it takes') begin to erode, my spirit is lifted and I want to keep pressing on.

It's most helpful to find a group of folks who are struggling with the same issues you are. The spirit of the group must be non-judging and supportive of changing compulsive patterns.

The *second kind of community* you need is a particular friendship or two where you are able to share who you truly are, more deeply than in a group setting and more often than once a week. You want to actively cultivate a few relationships—you may need to start with just one as your goal—in which you learn to trust, become more open and vulnerable. Picking the right person is very, very important.

Early on in my recovery I was terribly reluctant to risk sharing my secrets with anyone. The therapist I was seeing at the time patiently worked with me to try and identify one person in my life I could risk trusting. I was slow and thoughtful about it.

Finally I picked one guy. He was not an addict, but I thought he understood brokenness and grace. I was right. He not only met me with kindness and understanding, he has actively supported me in the continuing pursuit of my recovery. He is still my very dear friend these many years later.

You must choose very carefully with whom you try to develop a genuine friendship. But this is an essential. No one recovers from this addiction alone.

Finally, a genuine friendship of support for you will only work if it is safe and if it is mutual. It won't work if you're the only one sharing.

## PRIMARY CHARACTERISTICS OF SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

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The primary characteristics in supportive relationships—really all healthy communities—are *transparency and supportive accountability*.

It'll be helpful to find those who share your *life perspective* to some degree. They're people who are more or less moving in the same direction, share the same goals, have the same ideas of what it means to be a successful or healthy or a good person.

Additionally, it'll be good if you and others share a certain level of *personal chemistry*. There are people you may share life values with, but you don't personally click with. Look for someone you think gets you, accepts you as you are and whom you like.

Talk regularly and honestly about your struggles, your program and your progress. Actively listen to the other person, too. Pray for each other.

Once you've found someone who can be this sort of friend to you, keep at it. Tend this relationship like a valuable plant in your favorite garden. Healthy friendships do not develop automatically or easily. Especially for people like us.

## ONLINE COMMUNITY

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For many of us it is going to be difficult to find a face-to-face community in our geographical sphere. More and more online support communities are being developed. If for whatever reason you are not able to find a group you can physically attend, utilize one of the good aspects of the Internet by looking for an online community.

### ASSIGNMENT FOR ENGAGING THE FIFTH PRACTICE – DEVELOP A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

*The following are suggestions of how to begin. By the time you are engaging this material, there will be other avenues of online support and some of the following may not be available. We'll do our best to continually update our resources and links sections at [livingintegrated.org](http://livingintegrated.org).*

1. Go to Sexaholics Anonymous' website at <http://www.sa.org>; familiarize yourself with the site; then click on the "meeting search" tab and note opportunities for three kinds of meetings offered: face-to-face, email and Phone/voice-over-Internet
2. Go to Sexual Compulsives Anonymous' website at <http://www.sca-recovery.org> and familiarize yourself with their site; click on the meetings tab and investigate your opportunities;
3. Go to the Sex and Love Addicts website at <http://www.slaafws.org> and familiarize yourself with their resources and meetings
4. Go to the Sex Addicts Anonymous website at <https://saa-recovery.org> and do the same
5. Go to the Sexual Recovery Anonymous website at <http://www.sexualrecovery.org> and do the same review and investigate possible meetings
6. Samson Society is a fellowship of Christian men who are seeking genuine spirituality and recovery; go to their website at <http://www.samsonociety.com>; they are not specific to sexual addiction, but are inclusive; check out all their resources, including their podcast (you can find me on a couple of old ones!); they have a great number of online meetings; in addition it's possible they have an in-person group in your area
7. Go to the XXXchurch website at <http://www.xxxchurch.com>; look over their resources and check out X3 groups
8. Go to the Celebrate Recovery website at <http://www.celebraterecovery.com>; check out their resources and look for CR groups in your area; they are not specific to compulsive sex practices, but larger CR groups will have groups for men with compulsive sex
9. Go to <https://sexandrelationshiphealing.com> and check out online support
10. Google sexual addiction recovery groups in your geographical area or online support communities

## TWO BIBLE TEXTS FOR DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

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“And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.’”

Mark 14:32-34

“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

## PRAYER

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*God, you have made us to need each other.  
Please help me find others with whom I may share my journey.  
Help me to find a friend. Teach me to be a good friend.  
Amen.*

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## IN THE NEXT PRACTICE,

we will explore safeguards to help support your recovery.

