

# LivingIntegrated®

## FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

### 6 PUT SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE

#### IN THIS PRACTICE:

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Go to <https://youtu.be/qPOLwEk2UXA> now and watch the introductory video for this Practice.

#### WHY SAFEGUARDS?

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Safeguards are tools you utilize to support your efforts in making the necessary changes needed so you may live the life you want.

Think of it like this: when we teach children how to bowl, oftentimes the bowling alleys have padded gutter guards that can be placed over the gutters on each side of the bowling lane. When the child rolls the ball and it strays to the right or the left, the gutter guard keeps it on the lane and eventually the ball makes it way down to the pins where it will take down at least one or two. Success!

The child's bowling ball stays in play and they knock down a pin. They are rewarded for the effort and encouraged to do it again.

The goal is that if they repeatedly engage in bowling and experience some success, they will want to keep at it. They will learn to roll the ball toward the pins. Eventually they can bowl without the gutter guards.

That's what the right safeguard mechanisms do in recovery. They help us break unhealthy patterns until we establish healthy ones.

They help us stay out of the gutters of life so that we can learn how to handle our feelings, direct our thoughts and choose our behaviors in healthy, life-giving ways.

We utilize the safeguards we put in place so that we can work on changing how we're engaging life and making choices.

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*The goal is to get to genuine life-change that comes from a heart of love, not the threat of fear or the scourge of shame.*

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For so many of us, our struggle with compulsive sexual behaviors involves using technology for accessing porn, meeting others and electronic-based sexual activities. In these cases, some software safeguards may be quite helpful.

## SOFTWARE FILTERING PROGRAMS

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Filtering software limits what sites your device can go to. There are different programs and most come with varying levels of filtering. Look for those that have a feature of analyzing real time viewing. This is important because many of us have figured out how to access stimulating material within a website that may not trigger a block.

It's important to research and utilize the best programs available. Technology is changing rapidly so it's useful to stay up with the latest developments. A few resource sites are listed in the Assignments section of this Practice.

## SOFTWARE MONITORING PROGRAMS

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Monitoring software allows you to go to all sites, and sends reports of what sites you've visited to people you designate. This level of accountability is very useful in recovery. It's essential in the early stages.

## APPS

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There are apps for locking down apps, monitoring apps and we need all the help we can get. There's even an app for hiding apps. Which brings us right back to our motivation. Do we want to change our lives? If so, we bring to bear every resource at our disposal to block access to those avenues (think bowling gutters!)

## LOCATION PROGRAMS

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In the course of our addictive behavior, many of us have engaged in sexual behaviors that broke trust with our spouse or partner. When those trust-breaking behaviors have gone beyond porn viewing, installing a location tracking program on our phones can be a terrifically useful tool in rebuilding trust. Just as important, it's a very useful accountability tool to support our own efforts at breaking old patterns.

## TECHNOLOGY USE AND PATTERNS

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If using phones and other hardware is part of your unhealthy behavior, then you'll want to change your usage of them. To recover from this disease, you have to become willing to do whatever it takes to stop using technology in ways that hurt you.

It for sure means putting software protections on every screen you're using. You may want or need to go further than that. I have friends who've gone back to flip-phones because removing their access to smart phone technology is a healthy support of their recovery.

For so many of my friends we've had to learn to change *where* we use our devices. We don't take phones or pads or tablets into the bathroom, or into the bedroom.

Where is your usage of technology getting you into trouble? Analyze your troubling patterns and then go about systematically changing those patterns of usage.

## ENLIST SPECIFIC SUPPORT

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Besides technical support, you need relational support from others who are moving in the same direction and have the same goals you do.

In Practice Five we worked on developing a Community of Support. A really helpful safeguard—especially in early stages of changing your patterns—is using one safe friend to check in with every day and keep it up for at least ninety days. And maybe more than once a day.

So this person needs to be safe, someone who understands what you're trying to do. In Twelve Step experience we're talking about a sponsor. You very well may not have someone like that yet. You'll have to look for someone you will try this with.

You talk about what's going on, what you're thinking, what you're feeling, if you're being tempted and what steps you're taking to take care of yourself and live in a healthy, self-respectful way.

The person or persons you choose need to be safe. They need to be someone with whom you've got a sense of personal trust.

You need to be honest and self-disclosing about your behaviors. Hiding slips will not help you get where you want to go.

It may be that you start a supportive relationship with someone but on down the road discover your interpersonal chemistry isn't working. You're holding back, or not sharing. You have an increasing sense they don't get you. You are losing trust or dreading interacting with them. If this becomes the case, kindly but firmly bring the arrangement to a close. This applies to sponsors, too.

Do not, however, decide you need to, have to or get to go it alone. We already have a tendency to isolate. Don't go there. *You need others to recover.* Look for someone else. Never let one failed attempt stop you. You need support.

Ideally these supportive relationships will be with someone in your geographic area. But that is not always possible. Here you can use the Internet to find a supportive friendship or two, a concept we introduced in Practice Five.

In this Practice I'm suggesting a *specific period of intensive support for breaking your patterns and reinforcing healthy choices.*

Practice Five, on the other hand, is an ongoing lifestyle of developing and utilizing your community support.

## NINETY DAYS

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Right now, to break the hold compulsive behaviors have on your life, you need to engage in specific support that helps you change your daily patterns.

If you are using Internet porn, for instance, stopping the usage of that for ninety days begins a healing in your brain and thought patterns. For some of us maybe we see changes in less than ninety days. For many of us, it takes more than that. Ninety days is a guideline.

But how do you get to ninety days? It's not easy or you would have already done it.

One thing you have to do is stop. Another thing you have to do is stay stopped. Then you need to replace what you were doing with something better.

It helps to talk about this every day—sometimes several times a day—to get out of your head, break your isolating patterns, discover what you're really feeling and hear someone else tell you that you can do this, it will get better, you're worth the work of recovering.

The purpose of utilizing safeguards is not to make you feel ashamed or weak. Quite the contrary!

“ *Weakness is never fighting back, never trying to extricate yourself from an affliction that makes you comfortable, distracted and psychically miserable all while it inexorably takes life from you.* ”

It takes courage and determination to use safeguards. This is how you get your life back.

### ASSIGNMENT FOR ENGAGING THE SIXTH PRACTICE — PUT SAFEGAURDS IN PLACE

*The following is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Technology is constantly changing so you'll want to stay current with what's available. And we'll do our best to update our resources and links sections at [livingintegrated.org](http://livingintegrated.org).*

1. Go to <http://www.covenanteyes.com> and look at screen accountability resources
2. Do the same at <http://www.xxxchurch.com>
3. And investigate <https://www.accountable2you.com>
4. Another great resource to bookmark and explore is <https://sexandrelationshiphealing.com/resources/>
5. Identify a person to be your supportive partner; connect with them, discuss what you're looking for and explore making a mutual agreement to talk with them at least one time a day for a minimum of ninety days; after that you'll reevaluate and renegotiate how often you will connect with each other and you'll keep doing this as long as you need or as long as it's mutually beneficial
6. If you cannot find anyone in your current network of friends, review your work in Practice Five and begin looking for a safe individual through online support
7. Ask God to help you find the person who will be good for you and for whom you will be supportive, too

### THREE BIBLE TEXTS FOR PUTTING SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE

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“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Mark 13:34-35

“...the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

James 3:17-18

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

James 5:16

### PRAYER

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*God, you have made us social creatures. You created us for community. I need the help of others. And I want to be helpful, too. Help me to find a spiritual, recovery friend. Use our relationship for mutual blessing so that we may all do Your will. Amen.*

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### IN THE NEXT PRACTICE,

we will explore healthy boundaries to help support your recovery.

