

# LivingIntegrated®

## FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

### 8 IDENTIFY AND PUT INTO PLACE HEALTHY PATTERNS TO REINFORCE RECOVERY

#### IN THIS PRACTICE:

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- Habits and Patterns
- The Three Circles
- Review Often and Update as Needed
- Practice Eight Assignment

Go to <https://youtu.be/Z2OKtDEYEbl> now and watch the introductory video for this Practice.

#### HABITS AND PATTERNS

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We humans are creatures of habit. Habits turn into patterns. And patterns are the repeated behaviors we fall into often without making a conscious choice.

Sex addiction, also known as compulsive sexual behavior disorder, is a lifestyle of unhealthy, destructive patterns of sexual thoughts and behaviors that have become second nature. It's like a software program always running in our unconscious and semi-conscious mind.

Unlike a software program, it can't simply be identified and deleted. We have to override it with a new program.

One strategy to help us live a healthier life is identifying the patterns of three kinds of behaviors: those that are harmful, questionable and healthful.

One of the old recovery slogans is "take the action and the feelings will follow." Developing a new pattern of behaviors can have significant impact on what we think and how we feel.

This approach alone won't solve everything, for sure, and as we move further down the road of recovery deeper work will be required of us.

But in the early stages—and the restart stages—it's crucial to identify the patterns of behavior that are absolutely toxic to us, the patterns that aren't particularly helpful and the patterns that are healthy.

Healthy patterns make it possible for us to stabilize our lives, change our thinking and take significant steps in living the life we truly want.

One way to go about this is utilizing the “Three Circles” tool developed by Sex Addicts Anonymous, one of the earliest Twelve Step sex addiction recovery groups.

## THE THREE CIRCLES

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Into three concentric circles you will put the behaviors you want to avoid, be careful of and implement.

**Inner circle** these are the behaviors that are part of your addiction or compulsive behavior. Abstaining from these behaviors or thought patterns are your definition of sobriety.

**Middle circle** these behaviors—and thought patterns too—oftentimes lead you to your addictive behaviors. Engaging in these behaviors and thought patterns works against your recovery.

**Outer circle** these are the behaviors and thinking patterns which help you live the life you want. It’s important to keep in mind that healthy sobriety (avoiding items in your inner circle and exercising caution regarding items in your middle circle) is embracing life, not denying it. These are thought patterns and behaviors which nurture sobriety, emotional, physical and mental health and appropriate, life-sharing intimacy with others.

## REVIEW OFTEN AND UPDATE AS NEEDED

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Keep this work handy. Refer to it often. Update it as time goes by.

The items in each of your circles may need to be changed over time. You may add items to any of your three circles, and, as your recovery deepens, you may find there are some items you can remove from your inner or middle circles.

It will be useful for you to process your circle exercise with a sponsor if you have one, or a fellow recovery partner whom you trust. This exercise is most helpful when it’s shared in appropriate and healthy community. If we keep it to ourselves, we’ll miss the input, support and accountability that can make this exercise most beneficial.

### ASSIGNMENT FOR ENGAGING THE EIGHTH PRACTICE— DEVELOP HEALTHY PATTERNS

1. Review the work you did in Practice Three (an honest self-evaluation) to help identify items for the inner circle.
2. Think back over times when you’ve engaged in inner circle behavior: what was going on either in behaviors or thoughts that led up to that behavior? These thought patterns and behaviors are your middle circle items.

3. What are activities that represent your best self? What are you doing when you feel best about your use of time? What nurtures your spirit? What recreational behaviors nurture you physically, emotionally and spiritually? These are your outer circle behaviors.
4. Using a three-circle drawing, fill in the inner, middle and outer circles with the items you've identified.
5. Online go to [saa-recovery.org/literature](http://saa-recovery.org/literature) and go to "Three Circles—Defining Sexual Sobriety in SAA" for more information.

### THREE BIBLE TEXTS FOR IDENTIFYING AND PUTTING INTO PLACE HEALTHY PATTERNS THAT REINFORCE RECOVERY

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"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Matthew 7:24-27

"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these....But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...."

Galatians 5:19-23

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

Philippians 4:8-9

### PRAYER

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*O Gracious and loving God, Jesus teaches us that you are like a generous Father who loves to give good things to those who ask him. I ask for your help so that I may make the changes in my life which will free me from my old addictive behaviors and allow me to fully live as your loved child. Amen.*

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### IN THE NEXT PRACTICE,

we will explore triggers and maintenance behaviors to our old patterns.

