

LivingIntegrated®

FIFTEEN PRACTICES FOR LIVING THE LIFE YOU WANT

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Fifteen Practices. You are most probably here because you are experiencing unhealthy and unhappy consequences from the way you have been using your sexuality. Utilizing these Fifteen Practices can substantially help you pursue a path of recovery, healing and integration.

In making the decision to work through these Practices, you're taking a significant step towards dealing with some of your challenges and moving towards a healthier life, the life you want to live.

A WORD ABOUT “THE FOUR TASKS FOR GETTING YOUR LIFE BACK”

The Four Tasks resource package on our LivingIntegrated website is designed for folks who are aware they've got a problem with habitual sexual behaviors—often, but not exclusively, pornography and masturbation. It's designed to help folks who are in the early stages of their habitual struggle. If that's what your situation is, and if you've not looked at the Four Tasks yet, you might want to start there.

If you've worked through the Four Tasks and find that you need more assistance in your quest for altering your problematic sexual behavior, then you're ready for the Fifteen Practices. You might find a bit of overlap between the two; just review what you covered before, update your work and then move on.

THIS WORK IS A JOURNEY

For me, recovery has been a long, arduous, up-and-down journey. Most of us don't experience recovery from compulsive sexual behavior disorder in an even, consistent way. I don't think there is any such thing as a smooth recovery. The very nature of recovering from compulsive behavior is challenging.

So it's important not to get distressed by moments of frustration or seeming failure. Keep in view the goal of a more integrated life. And keep taking your next right step towards that goal.

Genuine recovery requires you to keep at it. Recovery will pay dividends you cannot now imagine if you keep working at it.

Some consequences from your compulsive behaviors are probably what have gotten your attention and motivated you to engage the Practices. These consequences can range from low-grade to extreme. Whatever they are, be grateful for them. They are alerting you to the fact that what you've been engaged in is hurting you. Now is the time to take action and change your course.

Whatever has brought you to this point, now I want you to focus on five important thoughts:

1. your sexual compulsive behaviors are hurting you and that is not good for you;
2. you do not have to continue on like this;
3. there is a way forward for you to health and healing;
4. you are worth recovering; and
5. you will need help.

ABOUT THESE PRACTICES

These Practices are essential steps to help you on the path towards a different life. They are based on the struggles, experiences, learning and hope from someone who's been at this for well over twenty-five years.

These are guidelines that I've come up with when a friend posed to me this question: "what would you suggest someone do if they have a problem compulsively using sex?"

Now let's be clear: I am not a counselor, psychologist, therapist or treatment provider. I am someone who has traveled this road and learned a great deal about recovery. I am someone still working at it.

I've experienced humiliating failures, uneven success and gratifying progress. My life today is radically different than it used to be. I'm not where I want to be but I'm not where I used to be. I'm calmer, more coherent and more useful. I'm humbled and grateful. And I can tell you from hard won personal experience that recovery works. If you work at it.

What I offer is spiritual direction integrated with recovery coaching for the purpose of helping folks like you live an increasingly integrated life.

These Practices are not meant to be a replacement for counseling, therapy or treatment. I am a firm believer in competent psychological help and in Practice Fourteen we'll discuss professional help in your journey.

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These Practices are a substantive guide towards a better life—the life you want.

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These are the Practices you will be working through:

1. Facing Reality—the Problem of Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder
2. Learn How Addiction Works
3. Do an Honest Self-Evaluation
4. Utilizing the Twelve Steps and Other Approaches to Recovery
5. Develop Your Community of Support
6. Put Safeguards in Place
7. Develop Healthy Boundaries
8. Identify and put into place Healthy Patterns to Reinforce Recovery

9. Identify Triggers and Maintenance Behaviors
10. Cultivate a Life of Self-Care
11. Utilize Spirituality and Prayer
12. Employ Mindfulness to Assist Your Focus
13. Develop Meditation to Deepen Your Connection
14. Evaluate and Utilize Professional Help
15. Identify and Use Recovery Resources (websites, blogs, podcasts, books)

Following these Fifteen Practices is a final pdf and video, “Where Do You Go From Here?”

A FEW GUIDELINES FOR WORKING THE FIFTEEN PRACTICES

Each Practice has its own corresponding video and the link will be at the beginning of the Practice. After the teaching material, each Practice has a list of assignments to work through.

It's important for you to get a copy of *Ashamed No More: A Pastor's Journey Through Sex Addiction* (2012, InterVarsity Press). You can find it through InterVarsity's website, Amazon, Barnes and Noble or through your local bookseller. The book is available in both paperback and Kindle version.

Some of the assignments involve reading portions of *Ashamed No More* so get a copy as soon as possible.

Work through the Practices thoughtfully. Find the pace that works for you. You want to integrate what you're learning into your daily thinking and practice. The point is to genuinely think about your life, what you're dealing with and what steps you need to take. Work through these at the pace that helps you do what you need to do.

Make notes and keep them to go back and review. This is an important discipline to develop. It will help you integrate into your life what you're discovering. These notes are for yourself and no one else. Put them where no one else will see them.

At the end of the assignments of each Practice is a prayer you can use each day if you so choose. If you don't think of yourself as spiritual, please don't be put off by the practice. I recommend you still try it or use your own prayer. However you can, use your spirituality as part of this work.

As you work through the assignments keep in mind your goal isn't simply checking things off a to-do list. You want a truly recovered, integrated life. So you want to incorporate these Practices into how you're living.

After you've worked through the Fifteen Practices, schedule a *quarterly review* with yourself of your notes and insights from all Fifteen Practices. This will reinforce and add new insights to what you're learning. This is how you can thoroughly recalibrate your perspective, thoughts and behaviors.

RECOVERY AND CONNECTION

One of the most influential people in my recovery is Dr. Patrick Carnes. In a certification training module, I remember him saying that *“the opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection.”*

Remember that: healthy, appropriate connection is central to recovering our lives for meaningful existence.

I think that the connection we need to restore is three-fold: within ourselves; between us and our Creator; and between us and others.

As you engage the material and assignments of these Practices, think about and work towards reestablishing healthy connections between you and your Creator, you and others and within yourself.

SPIRITUALITY AND RECOVERY

Honestly, spirituality can mean different things to different people. My personal history and convictions revolve around trying to be a good student and faithful follower of Jesus of Nazareth.

So my spirituality guide points will be Christian in orientation. But my strong conviction is that the God of Christ is the God of recovery and any sincere seeker of living a life of personal freedom and responsibility can call on the Creator of the Universe for help.

Therefore, utilizing spirituality in thinking of recovery and connection consider these words of Jesus, “Abide in me and I in you.”

Abide: reside, make your home in, find your true identity in God, the Creator and Lover of our souls. Do you seek to live your life in a healthy, integrated way? Our Creator desires that you do just that. So there is spiritual help available if you will call on it.

THIS IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

You’re engaging in a process which will help you make positive changes in your life. You will encounter some resistance. Don’t be dismayed or put off by it. Expect it. You can work through it.

There are Fifteen Practices in this program plus this introduction and then a final piece. By working through this introduction to the Fifteen Practices, you’ve already taken a very important step!

You are demonstrating that your life matters to you and you want a life you enjoy, feel good about and can respect. You are on your way.

If you haven’t done it yet, now would be a good time to watch the companion video to this Introduction to the “Fifteen Practices for Living the Life You Want” which you can find on our website, livingintegrated.org, or go directly to <https://youtu.be/n113gcFDaM0>.

None of us decide we want to get well and then simply stay decided. We have to keep coming back to it over and over and over again as we continue to travel the road of recovery. As we truly work at it, we will begin to find hope and peace and joy.

Welcome to the journey of a life truly worth living!

