



Rapha's

**Step Studies for Overcoming**  
**Sexual Addiction**

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## INTRODUCTION

Compulsive attachments to food, drugs or alcohol, work, relationships, and sex have much in common. At the root, all are attempts to meet valid and pressing needs such as affirmation, rest, freedom of choice, escape from pain, etc. Though the needs are valid, even God-given, the strategies chosen to meet these needs are not. Sadly, the results are inevitably the opposite of the desired outcome. Instead of rest, freedom, and escape from pain, we experience bondage, isolation, fear, anxiety, and shame.

While addictive processes and patterns are similar, regardless of the object of addiction, sexual addiction is perhaps the most shame-based of all. As a rule, people simply do not talk about aberrant sexual thoughts or behavior. This unwritten rule, this code of silence, probably perpetuates the addiction more than anything else. The addict can receive much needed help in a safe environment which is characterized by trust and acceptance.

The theorized causes of sexual addiction (i.e., sexual abuse, rigidly religious family environment, learned response to pain, etc.) influence Christians and non-Christians alike. The resources Christ provides, however, make the probability of recovery far greater for believers. Though feelings of corruption and unworthiness dominate thoughts and actions, the addict, by experiencing God's grace, can come to feel worthy of the help and healing He wants to provide.

Regardless of the severity of sexual dysfunction, whether it consists of exhibitionism or voyeurism, compulsive masturbation or involvement with pornography, incest, child molestation or rape, the sexual addict needs help. For the individual who wants to break the pattern, there is help. How can the process for effective, lasting change begin? The answer begins with the following six components:

- A** Admit
- N** New Stan
- S** Support Group
- W** Willingness
- E** Education
- R** Relapse Prevention



## **ADMIT**

Admitting powerlessness over the sexual compulsion is the first crucial step of recovery. Why? Because we're not apt to invest ourselves fully in something we don't believe in, and breaking the sexual addiction pattern requires the kind of energy that must be backed by conviction.

As necessary as it is and as obvious as it may seem to others, an admission of addiction usually comes slowly for the dependent person. Defense mechanisms such as denial and repression sabotage decisions to acknowledge the problem. You are obviously entering recovery because you (or someone else) think you need to. Be patient with yourself. It takes time to develop objectivity and an open-minded attitude about something which has been perceived as necessary for your well-being.

## **NEWSTART**

As we attempt to break free from an unacceptable habit, we have the opportunity for a new start in life. Developing some new, constructive habits in place of those that have proven to be self-defeating enhances our self-esteem. In addition, we may need to seek out a more accurate concept of God and place ourselves in situations where we can experience His love, forgiveness, and strength.

## **SUPPORT GROUPS**

Personal reflection and application are most effective in an environment of affirmation and encouragement. This may include individual therapy, but you also need the support of others who have gone through (or are going through) this program of healing. This is especially important! It is extremely difficult—if not impossible—to overcome the painful causes and effects of addiction alone. Those who have been where you are now understand. Let them help you!

## **WILLINGNESS**

If your recovery is dependent on anything, it may be the degree of your willingness to do whatever it takes to break the pattern of addiction. This attitude in action is one which says, *I'll do anything*, and then does just that.

In recovery, *anything* might be working through a 12-Step program, attending a support group meeting, or admitting yourself to a structured inpatient or outpatient treatment program. Anything may mean gradually allowing other people to become involved in your life, being completely honest with yourself and others, and considering a personal relationship with God.



Of course, you may be entering recovery completely against your will. You may have no desire to deal with your addiction because you have yet to see the need to do so. Give yourself some time. More importantly, give yourself an opportunity to cultivate the kind of willingness that will do anything to get better by investing yourself in a program of recovery.

## **EDUCATION**

In many ways, recovery is simply a learning process about life and how to live it. To choose "real life" is to choose the experiences of joy and sorrow, love and grief, need and want, contentment and peace, victory and defeat.

If you're new to recovery, chances are that you know little about living "real life." Learning how to respond to life in a healthy way requires some education about your addiction. How it started, how it has affected you and others, what triggers it—answers to these and other questions are of immediate value in helping you to live "real life."

As you grow in recovery, you will have opportunities to discover your emotions. It may now be difficult for you to differentiate between anger and grief or love and affection. In time, however, you will gain a better understanding of your feelings and a greater appreciation for them.

With recovery comes an almost immediate awareness of needing people as never before. In time, you will be able to embrace what you need to learn about building and enjoying healthy relationships.

Gradually, you also will learn that you choose your behaviors, and that every choice you make produces either a positive or a negative result.

As you grow, you will learn how to assume responsibility for your behavior, rather than allowing yourself to be controlled by something or someone else.

Living in reality, you also will have an opportunity to learn more about God and to compare your new knowledge with your old conceptions about Him.

Of course, none of this can be learned in a day, or a week, or even a year. Perhaps one of the most valuable things you can begin teaching yourself right now is to be patient while you're learning. Again, all of recovery is a learning process...it will take time to educate yourself about productive ways of living and how to put that knowledge into practice.



## RELAPSE PREVENTION

Studies show that many of those who enter recovery may relapse soon thereafter. This is primarily because people in recovery fail to develop new strategies for handling life's problems. Recognizing the warning signs of relapse, making yourself accountable to others, and not giving up are ways to prevent relapse.

Recovery is a process. Lasting change won't occur overnight. You may experience flashes of insight occasionally, but the process of real growth is long, slow, and steady. Be patient. Growth and health will come. ***Rapha's Step Studies for Overcoming Sexual Addiction*** is designed to facilitate this growth and health. These steps contain questions and studies to help you understand why you think and act as you do. Based on our experience with others, we are convinced that a deep application of biblical truth over a period of time can bring profound and lasting change to your life. For this reason, we refer to the steps outlined here as steps of progress. Progress is our goal in recovery, not perfection.

As you practice these "steps of progress," your behavior will gradually begin to change. But more importantly, your understanding of yourself, your concept of God, and your relationships with others will improve, providing a strong foundation for a lasting recovery and a healthy, productive life.

God be with you.

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