



A Look At Addiction

The essential difference, between having strong feelings about something (or someone) and being addicted to it, is freedom. When it is only strong feelings, not addiction, we remain free to choose the extent and the depth of our involvement. Addictions are compulsive, habitual behaviors that override our freedom to have healthy relationships with people and with God. Addiction is characterized by five essential characteristics. If evidence of all five of these characteristics is found, then the addiction is real.

SELF-DECEPTION - The tricks of the mind to invent ways to justify and perpetuate the addictive behavior. Some of the most common tricks are rationalization, denial, projection, and displacement. But there is an endless variety, making a list too long to record.

TOLERANCE - It's the need to have more of the addictive behavior, or object of attachment, in order to feel satisfied. What a person has or does is never quite enough.

LOSS OF WILLPOWER - This is very deceptive because the mind is asserting that you can control your behavior, when, in fact, you have lost the willpower to stop the behavior. A sign of the loss of willpower is when someone begins to say "I can handle it." "I can stop anytime I want to." "I can do without it."

ATTENTION DISTORTION - The inability of being able to give proper attention to healthy relationships because the addiction and its mind games have distorted and captured our attention. The addiction becomes a distortion in life of ultimate concern, even if the addiction is hidden from us by our mind.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS -When an addictive behavior is stopped, withdrawal symptoms will be experienced. There will be a stress reaction and it can be an experience, from mild uneasiness and irritability to extreme agitation, with overwhelming panic. Also, withdrawal symptoms can include a backlash reaction. This is where a person experiences symptoms that are the exact opposite of those caused by the addictive behavior.

To help expose addiction, the following questions are asked concerning each of the five essential characteristics of addiction:

SELF-DECEPTION:

1. Do you ever find yourself thinking, "I can take it or leave it." "I can handle it." or "I can stop anytime I want to." In relation to behavior that has been challenged?



2. Have companions suggested that they think you are attached to something more than you should be?
3. Do you ever find yourself making excuses, denials, rationalizations, or other mind games to justify a behavior?
4. Do you ever have trouble with personal reflection because you do not want to think about your condition?

LOSS OF WILL POWER:

1. Have you ever reached the point with any behavior when your feelings changed from a simple desire to a real compulsion, a need that seemed out of control?
2. When you've failed at keeping your resolve, have you ever felt like "What's the use?"
3. Have you ever reached the point with any behavior when your feelings changed from a simple desire to a real compulsion, a need that seemed out of control?

ATTENTION DISTORTION:

1. Have you ever found that your concern and attention to a certain behavior overshadows your attention and love for your family, for others, for yourself, or for God?
2. Have you ever noticed that you are preoccupied with a particular need and it has distorted your attention and the love for your family, for others, for yourself or for God?
3. Has anyone ever questioned your love for them, for others or for God because your lifestyle was focused elsewhere?

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS:

1. If you were to lose your possessions, or your position in life, or an important relationship, how would you feel?
2. Have you ever suffered such a loss in the past, and did you experience withdrawal symptoms, such as anxiety, physical agitation, irritability, panic and so on?
3. In any given week of your life, how much time, energy and worry do you put into holding on to your possessions, your position, or your relationships?
4. With any loss you've experienced, have you ever had the withdrawal reaction that it's the end of your world, or an experience of deep insecurity?



TOLERANCE:

1. Do you feel secure with the possessions you have, or do you feel that you really need more?
2. Do you feel secure with your position and place of power in life, or do you have a need for more?
3. Do you feel comfortable with the important people in your life that they are reliable, accepting and loving enough to you, or do you have a need for more, so you will feel secure?
4. Are you comfortable with God in your life, or do you need Him to give you more evidence that He cares for you?

STEP 1: At some point in our lives usually through a slow process, we become addicted to abusive behavior. We need to admit we are powerless over this compulsive behavior and that we have become powerless over our lives. To help with the insight, the following inquiries are given.

You may feel uncomfortable in writing down the answers to these inquiries, but it is necessary that you look at your relationships, so you can understand how you have been hurt and how you are being controlled. If you are not willing to take an honest detailed look at your life, you do not have a chance of getting healthy.

- 1) Describe your home life as you were growing up. Include your relationships with both of your parents and any brother and/or sisters you have. Be specific in describing each relationship by using actual experiences.
- 2) Describe your present home life. If married, then describe your marriage home life. Include your present relationship to your parents. Again, be specific by describing specific incidents to illustrate your experiences clearly.
- 3) Pick out two of your most pleasant experiences in your life and share them. Describe the experiences in detail.
- 4) Pick out two of your most painful experiences in your life and share them. Again, be specific in describing them.
- 5) Describe when you first used abusive behavior to fix yourself from the feelings of discomfort. Include how you felt emotionally.
- 6) Describe what you abused (alcohol, drugs, excessive work, excessive activity, people, sexual activity, food, money, etc.)
- 7) Describe how you felt emotionally when you were not abusing these things.



- 8) When did you first see your abusive behavior as a serious problem? Did other people begin telling you they thought you had a problem? Who were they? Describe the events. How did you feel emotionally about it then and how do you feel emotionally about it now?
- 9) Describe when you first realized that you had become addicted to your abusive behavior. For example, describe when you did more than you planned. Also, how did you feel emotionally about it after it was over?
- 10) Describe the progression of your abuse, as it became addictive and more and more frequent. Did you increase your abuse during times of stress resulting from your job, family, or other personal problems? Be specific.
- 11) Describe how your addictive, abusive activity gained control of you and caused harmful family problems. This should include embarrassing moments in front of family and friends; promises that were broken to others and yourself; and physical abuse to others and yourself. How did you feel emotionally about each incident then, and how do you feel emotionally about them now?
- 12) Describe how your abusive behavior caused you social problems, such as loss of friends, legal problems, marriage problems, and loss of your job. Give your emotional feelings both then and now.
- 13) Describe how abusive behavior caused you to blame others for your problems. Also, list the excuses you have used for your behavior and illustrate with specific instances. Give your emotional feelings both then and now.
- 14) Describe the uncomfortable emotional feeling you have tried to manage with your abusive behavior. In what ways could you manage these feelings without the abusive behavior? Have any of these ways worked?
- 15) Describe how you have ignored or rejected your religious or moral values when you behave in your abusive ways. List some of the things you feel most guilty about now.
- 16) Why are you seeking help now? Have you sought help before? In what ways is this different now? How far are you willing to go for help and in what ways do you feel it will be most difficult?



STEP 2: I believe that God, in His Grace towards me, expressed through Jesus Christ, chooses to love me, even though I can't stop my _____ addiction and that He can, and will, restore me to health and wholeness, to sanity.

To help you become aware that God can and will help you, the following questions are given for you to answer:

- 1) Describe your earliest experience with God. What was it like? How were you affected?
- 2) Describe God as you see Him in your understanding. How does this description relate to you?
- 3) Who taught you what you know about God? (Teachers, parents?)
- 4) Does anyone in your family remind you of God? Does anyone outside of your family remind you of God? Why?
- 5) If you could be God, how would you save the world? What would you do with someone just like you, if you were God?
- 6) When God returns you to sanity, how will you be different?
- 7) Do you have any resentments toward God? If so, what are they? Can you forgive God?
- 8) List the times you have succeeded, and the times you have failed to break your addiction with your own will power.
- 9) Do you believe God can forgive you and that He can restore you to health and wholeness?

Here are some passages from the Bible for you to read and then discuss with someone concerning your relationship to God:

Verses that speak to me: Psalm 19

Psalm 23

Psalm 32

Psalm 51

Psalm 103

Psalm 139

John 3

John 10:1-30



STEP 3: It is important that you acknowledge that God can and wants to restore you to sanity, but it is also necessary to turn to Him and let Him restore you. The following statement is given to assist: I believe in God's Grace to me, so I believe that Jesus Christ died for me. I trust in Him as my personal Savior and I turn my life over to Him to live His life through me.

If you have already made such a decision, then just reaffirm your being available to God for Him to go ahead and change you. To assist you in this decision, the following questions are given:

- 1) What does it mean to you to believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
- 2) What does Romans 12:1-2 mean to you? Are you willing to begin putting these instructions to practice in your life?
- 3) Do you have any fears about presenting yourself to God and allowing Him to transform you? Explain.
- 4) In what ways will it be hard for you to make yourself available to God, so He can restore you?
- 5) Write a prayer letter to God expressing the following as it applies to you: For what are you thankful?

For what do you need forgiveness?

What are your fears?

How can He help you?