

2. THE SIX DAILIES

Many years ago, on a sports radio show, a local golf pro described a typical lesson in a way that illustrates an important truth in recovery. He said something to the effect of:

The first thing I always do is have the person hit a few balls at the driving range. I tell him not to try too hard to make a perfect shot, but just hit the ball like he normally does. Usually, I notice something about his stance or his swing that needs some tweaking so I show him how to re-position his feet or turn his body a certain way and tell him to hit a few “my way.”

Invariably he will hit three or four strokes and turn back to me and say, “That really feels awkward, I think I like my old way better.”

To that, I always reply, “Were you happy with the results you were getting with your old way?”

He, of course, shakes his head “No” because after all, if he were happy with his results, he wouldn’t be paying me.

So I tell clients, “Anything new feels awkward at first. It will take time for your mind and body to adjust to your new ‘normal.’ However, once you have done it this new way long enough, it will feel natural and your old way will feel awkward and unnatural.”

The exact same principle applies to recovery. New behaviors always feel strange. However, the question you must ask yourself about your old ways is, “How are they really working for me?” If the answer is, “Not very well,” then it is time to try some new ways, even though they feel strange and unnatural. (See Smarter Every Day’s “Backwards Bicycle” video on YouTube for an amazing example of this principle.)

Position Yourself for Healing

If you are reading this second chapter, I trust you are moving towards committing to recovery. You have decided the cost of your path of addiction is greater than the price of recovery. I hope you have also heard God’s promise to walk with you every step of the way. But now, what do you do? What is your responsibility on the road of recovery? What can you do to participate in your own healing?

First, you must recognize recovery and healing are supernatural works. Ultimately, God is the healer and we must be totally dependent upon Him and yet actively pursuing our recovery at the same time. God wants to heal us, but He will not violate our free will and will not remove our sin without our permission. It is also rarely an instantaneous or even quick process. Yes, I have heard about some individuals who claim that God convicted them of their sexual sin and were “delivered” by simply confession and

prayer. However, in walking with men fighting this battle since the turn of the millennium, I have never seen it play out that way. I have also seen many men try countless prayers and other “magic bullet” short cuts without success. Therefore, I believe recovery is not about quick fixes but about hard work and deep dependence on a God who does heal but who is much more interested in transformation than sobriety.

So, how do we give God access to our hearts, and what can we do to participate in our healing? Again, I will go back to the cancer patient analogy. A good cancer patient makes all his doctor appointments, spends many hours each week receiving treatment and giving his body time to heal. The doctors and the drugs do the bulk of the treatment. However, if the patient doesn’t make himself available, the treatment is useless.

The same is true in your recovery; God will do the healing, but you must make yourself available to Him. One of the most basic ways of

making yourself available is to do what we call the six dailies: Pray, make phone calls, read & reflect, attend meetings, focus on appreciation and doing a formal “Check In.” This is not rocket science, and it does not require you to have a degree or even a highly trained set of skills. It simply requires you to do each activity every day. The men we have seen do these positive behaviors have consistently made huge strides in their recovery. The men who do them sparingly make minimal progress. Since they are so crucial, I will explain them in detail.

Six Dailies: #1 Pray (Morning and Night)

As obvious as prayer may be, many often overlook it. Trying to walk out of a sexual addiction without prayer is like trying to run a power tool without a power source. However, many men have felt alienated from God for so long that prayer seems artificial if not impossible. Don’t believe Satan’s lies. God is always “glad as glad can be” to be with you. (Remember, your sin is no longer a problem for God; on the cross, Jesus paid the price for every sin.) Therefore, even when it feels strange, even when it feels forced or artificial, begin every day in prayer asking God for the strength to walk in purity today. Many of our men have found their morning shower time to be a great time to pray. Others have committed not to get out of bed until they have asked for God’s strength for the day. Find a reminder that works for you and make your morning prayer an essential part of your day. Again, it doesn’t have to be complicated but can be as simple as the following:

Dear God, thank you for this day. Please give me the strength today to live according to your ways in all things but especially in the sexual arena. I know it will be a battle, and I know I cannot do it on my own. Please give me the strength to fight and to not return to my old ways of acting out. Please give me the tools and weapons I need as well as the courage to use them. Remind me you are by my side and you are more powerful than my enemy.

Beginning your day in prayer acknowledges your complete dependence upon God, sets a tone

for recovery and starts your feet moving in the right direction.

Then, at the end of your day, before you go to sleep at night, take a few moments to pray again. Like the Morning Prayer, it is a reminder you cannot travel this road without Divine assistance. If you made it through the day without acting out sexually or engaging in any deceptions, then it is an opportunity to thank God for giving you the strength to be sober for that day. If you had a sexual slip or a crash or any deceptions, it is an opportunity to confess your sin and experience God’s forgiveness. Either way, taking the time to talk with God at the end of your day is a crucial part of your recovery.

Six Dailies: #2 Make Phone Calls

While it is often the hardest recovery behavior for men to make into a habit, making phone calls is also one of the most essential. Phone calls are lifelines to men drowning in the sea of sexual addiction. In *Don’t Call It Love*, Dr. Patrick Carnes surveyed over 1500 individuals who had been in recovery for three or more years and one of the things they listed as common elements of those who had progressed was “learning to use the telephone.”⁵

Everyone seems intellectually to get the idea of making a phone call at “crisis times.” However, understanding the concept and actually making calls are two very different things. In addition, we have seen that men who wait until they are in “crisis” never make the call for two primary reasons. First, they can’t because by the time they realize they are in crisis, they are already too far into the ritual to stop as their attachment center has been hijacked by their drug of choice. (This will make more sense after reading later chapters.) Second, they can’t call because they haven’t made the relational connections that would empower them to reach out to someone.

Therefore, we encourage men to make a phone call *every single day*. Yes, we know it seems awkward at first. Yes, we know you do not really even know what to say. However, you can take a lesson from one of the men in our very first group. A few days after coming to his first meeting, he called and said: “You told me I needed to make phone calls, so I’m calling you.

⁵ Patrick Carnes. *Don’t Call It Love* p. 217.

I don't have any idea what to talk about so you'll have to coach me through it." This man is one who joined our groups and never had another major crash. If you want to get healthy, make a phone call every single day. (See Phone Call Tips later in this chapter.)

Six Dailies: #3 Read and Reflect

A third essential part of your recovery is taking the time to read and reflect on recovery materials. Spending time every day reading something will help focus your mind on recovery and give you insights into your real struggles. Many find doing this early in their day (like the Morning Prayer) helps set a tone for recovery. Some discover they are able to concentrate better in the evening while others use their lunch break. Just find a time that works for you!

It is also helpful to set realistic goals for time spent reading and reflecting. If you say you are going to read for an hour every morning and journal for an hour every night, odds are you will fail to meet your goal and shame will use that failure against you. However, if you do not set any goals, then you probably won't read or journal very much. Some get bogged down thinking if they don't have large chunks of time it isn't worth anything. While large chunks are invaluable, smaller bites are also helpful. One practice I encourage is to commit 10 minutes every morning to read, 10 minutes every night to journal and at least an hour block once or twice a week to dive into materials and longer times of journaling. The short times help you stay focused daily and the extended times help you work through significant portions of material in order to understand your struggle, your identity, and most importantly, God's heart towards you.

Find what works for you and carve that time out of your schedule. Again, if you wait until you have spare time, Satan will make certain you never have a moment to breathe, let alone time to read or reflect. You must make recovery work a priority or it will not happen on a consistent basis.

A second critical aspect of reading recovery material is that you desperately need to put new perspectives in your mind and heart. A man who truly wants to change will seek out materials written by people who have been changed. There is much you can learn from those who have traveled the road of recovery ahead of you. No, your path will not be identical to theirs, but it will

have more points of familiarity than you realize. Reading the personal stories of men like yourself—seeing both the glory and the depravity in their lives—will help you see both in your own life. You can learn from their failures and their victories and find both encouragement and positive challenges along the way. Men progressing in recovery will begin to build a library of materials that have been helpful. The reading list at the end of this chapter is part of my library of recovery. I would encourage you to always be reading something that guides you on your lifelong journey of recovery.

Often, men do okay with reading, but they don't take the time to reflect and journal about what they read. The problem with this approach is reading without reflecting makes it incredibly easy to keep recovery principles on an intellectual plane rather than allowing them to penetrate to your heart. Writing, whether it is in the form of journaling or even just answering questions like those in this manual, opens unique pathways in the mind and heart that often lead to tremendous breakthroughs.

One of the resource materials we use is John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart*. Over the years, I've known many men who have said they read the book and they got a few good things out of it. When I ask them if they did the *Field Manual* that goes with it, they often say, "Well, I bought it and I've looked at some of the questions, but I've never taken the time to write them out." To that, I usually say, "Then you haven't done *Wild at Heart*." I then understand why they only "got a few good things out of it." The men who have actually taken the time to wrestle with the questions in written form invariably speak of the tremendous life changing impact of the material. Yes, Eldredge asks good questions and addresses incredibly important themes, but part of the impact is that for the first time in many men's lives, they truly engage themselves in a meaningful dialogue.

It may be helpful at this point to understand a little about the right/left division of our



brain.⁶ The left side of our brain is the file cabinet that holds everything we know through verbal logic. The right side of our brain is experiential. A simple analogy to use is the idea of a dog. The left side of our brain has a file that contains everything we know intellectually about dogs. It knows names of different breeds of dogs, what they eat, what they do, etc. The right side of our brain contains the information we know by experience. The right side of your brain remembers the soft silky feel of petting your neighbor's dog, the joy of playing with a litter of beagle puppies and the warmth of snuggling next to your collie on the floor. It especially remembers any fearful or painful encounters. For example, if a pit bull attacked when you were five, then even the sound of distant barking brings right brain feelings and memories to the surface. What is important about this distinction is left-brain "knowledge" is completely inaccessible to us when the right side of your brain malfunctions. The brain is a five-stage hierarchal system and the left side is level five. Therefore, if something goes wrong in levels one through four, (which reside in the right side of our brain) we lose our ability to access information in the file cabinet.⁷ That explains why a pastor or other dedicated Christian who knows countless scriptural reasons not to act out sexually seems to forget everything he knows when he is under stress, afraid or dealing with attachment pain. (We will look more closely at attachment pain in future chapters but for now just think of it is the deep ache in your soul that you often feel but for which you don't know the source.)

Reflection through journaling is one of the most effective ways to engage the experiential, right side of your brain. Thinking about your thinking, especially through the discipline of journaling, opens unique pathways. Reading only puts information in the left side of your brain. However, taking the time to write out answers to reflection questions, journaling and practicing other forms of self-attunement, builds

⁶ The hemispheric descriptions of the brain in this manual are oversimplifications as both sides are involved in many processes. However, understanding the difference between informational knowledge and experiential knowledge is incredibly helpful.

pathways that begin to make information available when you most need it.

As I stated in the very first chapter, reading a manual but not answering the questions is like reading about exercise. You might learn a few tidbits about running, but you will not get in shape unless you get off the couch. Even if school was difficult for you, even if you think you cannot write and make any sense, force yourself to write. Don't worry about spelling, grammar or punctuation. Don't even worry if what you write makes sense to anyone other than you. Just write. Try different methods. Some find using a pen and paper allows their thoughts to flow more naturally. Others do much better at a computer or even on their phone. Do whatever works best for you, just find a way to both read and reflect. Then, trust that God will use the process to move you forward on your journey.

Six Dailies: #4 Attend Group Meetings

Doug Weiss puts it very well in *The Final Freedom*: "In AA there is an old expression that says, 'There are three times when you should go to a meeting: when you don't feel like going to a meeting, when you do feel like going to a meeting and at 8 o'clock.' It is not a matter of how you feel about it. It is how you behave about it."⁸ *Missing group meetings and progressing in your recovery are inherently contradictory.* You cannot walk out of your addiction alone. You tried isolation for years with little to no success. Therefore, you must concede that you desperately need connection with others who understand your struggle. Phone calls are great, but face-to-face interactions are even better. In fact, face-to-face connections can provide the "joy strength" you need to literally grow the control center of your brain. This control center is the part of your brain that has veto power over your impulses. (See Chapter 5 "The Fellowship of the Forgiven" for more on this crucial part of your recovery.)

Group meetings provide opportunities for the honest face-to-face connections that are crucial to the recovery process. They are also

⁷ Ed Khouri & Jim Wilder "Thrive Tract 4 Conference On Addiction and Recovery" July 31, 2007.

⁸ Doug Weiss: *Final Freedom* p. 52.

opportunities for you to see others on the path with you. Think of it in terms of climbing a mountain. You may be in the bottom of a valley and not able to see your next landmark. However, if you can look on the trail ahead of you and see other men on the same journey, you can look to them for encouragement. You may even be able to call out to one of them and ask, “Can you see it?” He may not be able to see it either, but in a good group, he will be able to call out to others in front of him until someone can see the landmark and relay the message, “We are on the right trail.” There are also times where you don’t believe you can take another step. However, having someone walk beside you and offer his support often empowers you to keep trekking upward. That is part of why mountain climbers do not ascend alone. They understand how important it is to have others on the journey with them. The same thing is true in recovery. You desperately need others in front, behind and beside you on the way.

What does that mean on a practical level? It means if you want to get healthy, *at the very least*, you need to attend one group every week. Many of the men in our groups who made the greatest strides attended multiple groups during their first year of recovery. In early recovery, it would be ideal to attend a meeting every day. While this may seem impossible, it is doable. Because of Covid19 many groups, including New Hope’s, went to online video formats. While in-person groups certainly have the greatest opportunity for connection, online video groups can provide daily opportunities to connect with brothers in recovery. For information on New Hope’s online groups go to www.newhope4si.com and click on the “Online Meetings” box.

You can also create “mini-groups.” For example, partner with someone and meet once a week outside of group for lunch, breakfast or whenever you can to share the struggles of life and pray for and with each other. These connections will not replace your primary meetings, but they can go a long ways in supplementing your meetings and building the joy strength you need to overcome your addiction. If you want to get healthy, you must make group meetings a priority. (For a description of our group meetings, see “Sexual Integrity Meeting Agenda” later in this chapter.)

Six Dailies: #5 Appreciation

Focus on appreciation. Appreciation is a powerful tool that can help us out of our “funky places.” I first learned this many years ago when I told my kids, “Tomorrow we will all share something we appreciate before dinner.” After all, why should that be a Thanksgiving only kind of tradition. Well, the next day, I was in a foul mood. My brain was just off, and I wanted to get dinner over with, get the kids to bed and put an end to a difficult day. As we sat down to dinner, I remembered my proclamation of the previous day. Ugh! Appreciation was the last thing I

Appreciation Exercise

1. **Ask** the Father to show you something you can appreciate.
2. **Spend** 2-3 minutes talking with Him about whatever comes to mind.
3. **Name** It (Three words or less)
4. **Write** the name on your Appreciation Wall
5. If possible **Tell** someone about it.

wanted to do in that moment. However, I knew my then 11-year-old daughter would remember I said it, and not doing it would come back to haunt me. So, I asked if anyone had any appreciations they wanted to share. Of course, there was no response, so I knew I had to go first. My appreciation was incredibly lame, merely a rote, going through the motions, kind of thing. No one else came up with anything, but at least I had done what I said I would do! Now here is the interesting part. About ten minutes later, I noticed we were enjoying our dinner. My “funk” left, and I enjoyed being with my wife and kids again. What made the difference? Simply talking about something I appreciate. The same principle holds true even as we are sliding down the silicone funnel of our addiction.

I know it is difficult to do when you are in your “funk,” however, ask the Father to show you something you appreciate. Seriously, just throw up a quick prayer, then talk out loud to God about whatever comes to your mind, and finally give it a name. For example, now I can call the experience above “appreciation dinner” and even without telling the whole story, I can think of the name, and appreciation begins to grow. If possible, you can

strengthen the appreciation even more by calling someone and telling them your appreciation story. Make sure you tell them the name you gave it as that will give them something to remind you of easily when you talk to them in the future. The process of thinking about appreciation, talking about it and naming it will have a dramatic effect. It may not always kick in immediately, but it will make a difference. The reports I receive from the men in my groups about this little exercise are amazing. It is also a basic Biblical concept. Think how many times scripture uses the phrase “Give thanks” or something similar. In Philippians 4:8, Paul says “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” Bottom line: *Appreciation works!*

Six Dailies: #6 “Check In”

Finally, the last, but certainly not least of the six dailies, is to do a formal check in with someone. This can overlap with attending a group, making a phone call, or meeting with someone one-on-one. What is important is for you to go through the complete “Check in” process as outlined on the “Sexual Integrity Group Meeting Agenda” page in the “Handouts & Worksheets” section at the end of this chapter. Doing a good check in every single day will help keep you on track and possibly do more for your recovery than almost anything else you can do.

Choose a sponsor

Using a sponsor can be one of the most helpful ingredients in your recovery. While you are the only one who can be responsible for your recovery, a sponsor can help direct you and give you support in your journey. Many times men honestly don’t know how to pick or what to do with a sponsor. In order to help you choose the right sponsor, see the “Sponsor Guidelines” handout in the “Handouts and Worksheets” at the end of this chapter.

Mistakes and Failures Are to Be Expected

The reality of the road to recovery is that it is generally fraught with many failures. No, this does not mean that everyone in recovery gets a free pass to act out occasionally. However, it

means that making mistakes, even if they include acting out, does not mean you are a failure and doomed to live the rest of your life in your addiction. This is often a revelation to those in recovery as they have generally lived under the oppression of the lie that all failure is catastrophic. We learned as small children that whenever others discovered our failures, severe consequences and toxic shame quickly followed. Ironically, God’s design is just the opposite. His plan is for our parents to help us learn that failure is a crucial part of life. Jim Wilder describes this process in *Living With Men*:

***Making Mistakes.** Around Dad things are always going wrong. The boy learns that Dad smiles when he tries and misses. Together they laugh at mistakes. Together they test the limits to see what is possible today. Together the boy learns to stretch his limits but also how to set limits as well. He can clearly see the difference in power between himself and his dad. He can’t do everything Dad can--not yet.*

Because his father cares, a boy can see that his efforts mean something, even when they fail. It will come as no surprise to the reader that men are failure prone in most of their efforts. For a baby boy to grow up into a man, he must also get good at failure. One of the essential ingredients of a good childhood is the opportunity to fail without being penalized. Freedom to fail is a big part of preventing sexual addictions. When a boy grows up with freedom to fail he will allow real relationships to nurture his soul instead of living in fantasy or self-generated sexuality.⁹

It is important to point out the difference between recovery and sobriety. Many times, men are on the road to recovery but continue to stumble with sobriety. However, it is essential we recognize that some individuals require a significant amount of recovery and healing before finding sobriety. Be encouraged: God is at work, even when we fall

Consistency is the Key

As simple as these positive behaviors are, they will feel strange and “unnatural” at first. Remember the golf lesson analogy in the beginning of the chapter? Or did you watch “The

⁹ Wilder. *Living With Men* p. 75

Backwards Bicycle?” Do not allow the strangeness of new behaviors to deter you. It is essential you don't give up on these new behaviors before they have time to sink in. Real change in our brains is possible, but it requires consistent and focused effort. **Commit to doing the six dailies for the first 90 days of your recovery and see what a difference they make in your life.** Put the checklist at the end of this chapter up in a prominent place and check each of them off every day. You will be amazed at the results. Also, if you have slips or crashes, make a mark in the margin. What many of my men

have seen is their slips and crashes usually occur on, or shortly after, times where they have boxes without check marks. They will do great for a week or ten days and then start missing phone calls and then not read and before they know it, they have two or three days without doing anything and the next thing they know, they return to old acting-out behaviors. The six dailies will not magically prevent you from acting out or heal you. However, like taking medical treatments, they put you in a place to receive the healing you desperately need.

Cherry Cobbler, Desire, Temptation, Lust

When I was growing up I loved my grandmother's cherry cobbler that she made in her special "cobbler pan." I don't know how often she made it, but I know it was never "too much." I have fond memories of sitting at her table eating hot cherry cobbler with vanilla ice cream. To this day, I can't say I've found any dessert I'd rather eat.

When I married my wife, Debbie, she noticed that we never saw my grandmother, up until she physically wasn't able, that she didn't have a cherry cobbler waiting for me.

When she passed, Debbie acquired the cobbler pan and set out to replicate Grandma Tate's cherry cobbler. I can't tell you for sure if it is exactly the same, but I can tell you there is still nothing I'd rather have for dessert than my grandmother's, and now Debbie's, cherry cobbler with vanilla ice cream.

Now I want you to think about what happens in my brain when I discover cherry cobbler is on the menu. If I come home from work and have no idea Debbie has made a cobbler, I guarantee you that as soon as I walk in the door (or more likely even while still in the garage) my olfactory system would recognize the smell and before I cognitively realize the smell is cherry cobbler, my brain will have already started releasing dopamine in my reward/pleasure center.

I wouldn't have had to ask for it. I wouldn't have had to be looking for it or even anticipating it. The instant I got my first whiff, my desire would start building. If you think about it, it hits on multiple levels. First, it hits my palate because I love the taste as sugar, fat and the tart cherries are an almost perfect combination for my taste's arousal template. But second, it would also have a powerful pull because of the fact it brings back fond memories of attachment connections with my grandmother.

Now, what in the world does this have to do with the age-old battle of lust? A great deal, because the operation involved in the brain is remarkably similar. I'll explain more shortly but first I need to flesh out what I see as a huge problem in the Christian community and especially in Christian sexual addiction recovery circles.

Years ago, I was at a large gathering of men seeking information and tools on how to "win the battle with lust" when one of the keynote speakers, a prominent voice in Christian recovery at the time, pointed to the exit signs in the auditorium and said something to the effect of:

"You see those signs above the doors? That is how you need to see every woman you encounter who is not your wife. Every woman other than your wife is nothing but trouble for you and you need to move away from her as quickly as possible. You need to exit the situation."

I remember cringing in the moment as God had used a number of women in my life as part of my healing journey. I understood where he was coming from, but experientially knew it was wrong.

So where does that admonition come from? I can't say for sure in his life, however, it falls right in line with the very popular "discipline" taught to Christian men of "bouncing their eyes."

In *Every Man's Battle*, the authors give the following instruction "You can win this battle by training your eyes to 'bounce away' from sights of pretty women and sensual images. If you 'bounce your eyes' for six weeks, you can win this war."¹⁰

Now for men fighting with addictions to pornography and the constant objectification and lusting after women, that sounds like an amazing solution. However, it is way too simplistic, assumes the problem is just one of

¹⁰ Arterburn, Stoeker and Yorkey, 2000. P. 125.

habit and completely misses the humanity of women.

I acknowledge there are times, especially in early recovery and challenging situations, where it is a necessary practice. However, does it really solve the problem of lust? And even if it does, what are the unintended ramifications?

Sheila Gregoire, in her fabulous book, *The Great Sex Rescue*, includes the following story from a young woman in her critique of the practice:

I was on a Christian-based tour, and my sister and I got into the elevator with two other couples from the group. We said hi and smiled; we didn't know the couples, but we did know one thing. The men were both pastors. So it was a bit more pointed when each of them offered up a short, formal "hello" before physically turning their heads and refusing to look at me. No eye contact. Barely an acknowledgment. I was wearing a floor length sleeveless jumpsuit with a square neckline. Not tight, not low-cut. But I don't think it would have mattered either way. I wasn't a person, a human, a woman, a sister in that elevator. I was a potential stumbling block, an object. I was a walking, talking collection of tempting body parts. I was the enemy. It was dehumanization at its finest.¹¹

One inherent ramification of "bouncing your eyes" is that it makes all women the enemy. It objectifies them—just in a different way. It says, "Your presence is dangerous to me and nothing good can come from my seeing or being around you." Again, it paints all women as "Exit signs."

The other problem is that it puts men, committed to faithfulness, in a constant state of fear in their encounters with fifty percent of earth's population. Guess what happens when

we operate in "fear mode?" We lose access to the control center of our brain. In fact, just imagine you are deathly afraid of spiders. What happens if a spider is just over your left shoulder, and someone assures you it is a harmless spider and tells you that if you don't look at it you will be okay? Even if you trust the person and think their advice is good, how long do you think you will be able to not look at it?

Surely that isn't what God intended when he created Eve as a representative of Himself and as a partner for Adam. (FYI, the word translated as "helpmeet" by many translations is an incredibly rich word that Scripture uses in reference to God more than it does to women. Maybe that should tell us something!) I would encourage each of you to do some study on the Hebrew word, *Ezer Kenegdo*.

So how does a man honor his wife and deal well with his own desires when in and amongst the opposite sex? Well, let's go back to the cherry cobbler. I think one of the reasons this subject has become so problematic in Christian (and especially Christian recovery circles) is because we don't have a healthy understanding of natural human desire.

God created each one of us with "wanters." I know my former English teachers would likely cringe at that "non-word," but I think it's helpful. God created us to want. He created us to desire. Yes, our wants and our desires, when unchecked and not handled well, have gotten all of us in trouble at various points.

However, desire—wanting is not evil. In fact, I believe our desires are part of what God uses to draw us back to him. Without realizing it, what we most deeply desire is intimacy with God himself and all other desires fall short of providing complete satisfaction. Again, I could write much more here but back to cherry cobbler and how men see women.

¹¹ Gregoire, Sheila Wray; Gregoire Lindenbach, Rebecca; Sawatsky, Joanna. *The Great Sex Rescue* (p. 92). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

When I walk into my house and catch the wonderful aroma of cherry cobbler, my brain goes through the following pathway:

1. **Noticing.** I recognize the house smells differently than usual and without even consciously thinking about it, I know what that smell means.
2. **Desiring** or wanting. Because of my love of cherry cobbler and the attachment it provides me to my grandmother and now my wife, I cannot help but want to dive in. But here is the critical part.
3. **Decision:** As much as I love her cherry cobbler, I could still walk into the kitchen and tell my lovely bride, “Oh wow, that smells so good, I am sure I could eat the whole pan. I appreciate you making that for me, but I’m committed to watching my calories and avoiding sugar so as much as it pains me, I’m going to have to pass and let you save it for our company instead.”

Now, my wife would tell you that she isn’t sure I could make that choice and while I will tell you it would be incredibly hard, I know (in part because of having lost over 50 pounds in the past few years) that when I set my mind to it, I can even resist the temptation of cherry cobbler.

So, now I hope you are seeing where I am going. Yes, a similar process is at play whenever we face a temptation to lust or seek sexual dopamine hits from anyone other than our spouse. (Side note here: While men tend to be more visually stimulated than women, attraction—via visual or other pathways—isn’t a struggle limited to those with a Y chromosome and the same principles hold true when feeling the pull regardless whether stimuli is visual, emotional or comes in other forms.)

I think it can be helpful to slow the process down to see how it plays out in our brain. (For simplicity’s sake, I’ll describe it from the perspective of a heterosexual man with a history of sexual objectification of women.) First, a man notices a woman that hits his

arousal template. It is important to see that the noticing has already started activating the brain’s reward center even before he is consciously aware that he is noticing. Then second, his “wanter” begins to engage just before he enters conscious awareness of his noticing, and he then begins to feel the pull of attraction.

I believe these two steps are below the waterline of conscious awareness and are out of his “control.” It might help to picture steps coming out of a swimming pool. Noticing is the bottom step, and the initial pull of attraction is the second step—just below the surface.

What comes next, however, is what I believe is the critical place of decision that determines whether we go down the path of objectification and lust or the path of personhood, respect and honoring every person as a unique image bearer.

Unfortunately, many men, especially those who have devoured pornography and other forms of objectifying women, believe they have no choice but to continue onward down the path of lust. I personally believe this is an extremely low and even animalistic view of man. We are humans, we are not beasts. God made us different than the animals, and one way he made us different is that we are capable of not pursuing every desire.

In twenty plus years of walking with men in their struggles with lust, I have had many say something very similar to what a 55-year-old man said in group one night: “I don’t believe it’s possible for me to look at a pretty woman and not go to lust.” I knew he had two grown daughters, so I began probing:

“Are your daughters attractive?”

He responded, “Of course, they are beautiful.”

I continued, “Do they have the female body parts you struggle with objectifying on other women?”

“Well, yes, of course they do,” he reluctantly replied.

“Do you lust after and objectify them?” I asked gently.

“Of course not!” he replied defiantly as he started to take offense.

“Why not?”

Quite agitated he replied, “Because they are my daughters!”

At that point, I smiled and said something to the effect of, “See you can look at a woman, even a beautiful woman, and see her as a person to be known and loved rather than an object to be consumed. You are a human. You are not a beast.”

I believe God created our minds with the ability to create healthy categories for the women in our lives. We see this in I Timothy 5:1-2 where Paul tells a young Timothy, “Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, *with absolute purity.*” (Emphasis mine) I truly believe if Paul were writing to my 55-year-old group member he would have said, “Treat older women as mothers, women close to your age as sisters, and younger women as daughters, *with absolute purity.*”

We have the ability, as Godly men, to train our brains to see every woman we encounter as either a mother, a sister, a daughter, or a wife. Now obviously the last category is a category of one. A faithful man can have many mothers, many sisters, many daughters, but only one wife.

Categorization in this way empowers a man to offer a simple prayer whenever he notices the beauty of a woman:

“Jesus, who is she to me? Is she a mother, a sister, a daughter, or a wife?”

Assuming he’s married, I’m quite confident the answer he will sense will always be “a mother,” “a sister,” or “a daughter.” Once he has a sense of who she is to him, then he can pray, “Jesus, show me how to be this (mother’s, sister’s, daughter’s) protector and not go down the road of consuming her like a predator.”

Thinking and praying this way reminds us that we have two very different pathways available in our brains. We have a protector pathway, and we have a predatory pathway. (See *The Pandora Problem* by Dr. Jim Wilder

for more on these two pathways) The predatory pathway is the one most of us learned from our earliest days from other men, boys and of course the media. That pathway says a woman’s beauty is something for our devouring, our consumption. This pathway also teaches us to put women into categories, only the predatory categories are “hot or not,” and “vulnerable or not.”

We have been conditioned that it is normal and even expected as men to “ogle” women. Many observed their father and other male role models gawking, whistling, and even making rude and demeaning comments about and to women. One man recently told me his father often said, “If she didn’t want this kind of attention, she wouldn’t dress that way.” We have all seen countless scenes in movies, television and other media normalizing such entitlement behaviors. When anyone, especially a woman, complains, the response is typically, “Don’t be a prude” or “Come on, boys will be boys” and other justifications. The result is a conditioning of our brains to believe the objectification of women is both normal and acceptable.

However, the good news is there is a better pathway that we can train our brains to use—the pathway of the protector. The protector pathway is one where we invite Immanuel (Jesus’ name meaning “God with us”) to empower us to make the conscious effort to see each woman, and especially anyone we are tempted to objectify, as a whole person, in the proper category of: mother, sister, or daughter. One way to access the protector pathway is to offer up the simple prayer, “Jesus, who is she to me? Followed by “What does it mean for me to be her protector?”

I believe this deliberate, prayerful action helps a man move out of the pathway of consumption and objectification, the pathway of seeing a woman as body parts, into the protective pathway of seeing her as a unique and real person. However, it takes focused and deliberate attention to train the pathways of the brain to go down this route because we previously trained them for the predatory pathway. It doesn’t just happen because you

read this material and decide, “I want to do that.”

The reality is that you have been on the other pathway so many times that it is like a six-lane freeway that your brain takes without even noticing. The neglected protector pathway, however, is currently just a footpath through tall grass that must be consciously looked for and chosen. Therefore, it is going to take focused, committed effort to retrain the brain. I also believe that men must be in community with other men where they regularly share their struggles and victories in this arena to make this transition. It’s one more reason that daily check ins, by phone, in group, and in online check in groups, etc. are critical.

The answer to the problem of consumptive objectification is not the avoidance of all women or even the bouncing of our eyes. The answer is the purposeful training of our brains so that we see the true beauty and humanity of every woman as we acknowledge and appreciate who she is to me. Because a man can see the beauty of his daughter and thank God for making her a beautiful woman, he can also learn to see other women in the same light. I am quite confident every man can learn this skill, but learning it requires hard work and brothers in recovery who are also committed to learning together.

It is also critical to address the difficult reality that some men have struggled with seeing their own daughters through sexual and objective lenses: I believe this struggle is still a struggle of not seeing clearly who she is. Because of his wounding, his early sexual conditioning, and other factors, he fails to see her as a daughter to protect, but instead as an object to consume. It is a struggle—almost always going back to childhood trauma that included confusing sexual boundaries, experiences, etc.—that individuals must address directly and learn the pathway of what does it mean to be a protective father who sees his daughter correctly.

¹² The 1 Timothy 2:9 verse often used to tell women to “dress modestly” is about not dressing in a way that

Therefore, just as I have learned that I can even choose to pass on cherry cobbler, I have also learned that I can see a beautiful woman, even one who many might say is dressed “immodestly,”¹² and see her as a mother, sister, or daughter, and most importantly, as a daughter of my Heavenly Father and humanize her rather than objectify her.

Now, this is understandably terrifying for the wives of men who have hurt them deeply through their objectification and consumption of female beauty after promising to “forsake all others.”

Because of this reality, I need to write this next section first to wives and secondly to husbands:

Ladies, when your husband chose to seek and indulge in sexual pleasure through the images, thoughts, fantasies, and even actual interactions with others, he harmed you in the deepest way imaginable. The attachment center of our brain is the core on which God designed our brain. We have even learned that babies need attachment more than they need food. When you married your husband, he became your primary attachment as you moved away from your mother and your father and bonded to your husband. The sexual intimacy you enjoyed together helped seal that attachment as a form of “super glue.” In fact, the Greek word Paul uses in Ephesians 5:31 is *Kallao* which means “glued together.”

The reason his looking at porn, having affairs and/or objectifying women hurts so badly is because your brain and your body bonded to him and believed his words when he promised to “forsake all others” on your wedding day. Your discovery of his choosing of others—and the layer upon layer of deceptions that usually go with that discovery, created a deep primary attachment trauma in your mind, body and heart. I know I cannot begin to imagine how deep that pain goes, and unfortunately, even genuinely broken husbands are limited in their ability to see that pain. In my trainings with Dr. Omar Minwalla,

flaunts wealth or position rather than about sexual modesty.

I have often heard him say “The hardest thing for the human psyche to do is to honestly see the harm we have caused to someone we love.” The tendency of the human heart is to look away from harm, not look towards. Sitting alone in this reality is an excruciatingly lonely and painful place for most women who have been harmed this way.

My prayer for you in this place is that you will experience what Hagar discovered when she ran away from Sarah. I pray you will experience the God who sees you. (Genesis 16:13)

Jesus certainly understands what it feels like to be betrayed by someone close to him, and while myself and others can only get a glimpse of your pain, I hope you can experience God seeing you in this place. I also pray that your husband will begin to see you here as well. No, he will never understand fully, but I pray he will gain greater insight that will break his heart in ways that bring deep repentance.

Now, back to the difficult reality of your husband’s noticing, feeling the pull of arousal and then the choice between seeing women as “mothers, sisters or daughters, i.e., human” or objects for his lusts and sexual gratification.

The reason I believe it is important for you to understand this process is to help protect your heart from the enemy’s lies. Let’s say you see a beautiful woman. What happens to you inside? Do you start comparing yourself or feel “less than?” Now let’s say your husband is with you when you see the beautiful woman. What do you feel on those occasions? The enemy loves to hit us with toxic shame. He would love for you to see your husband notice the woman and for you to instantly believe it’s further proof that he doesn’t want or care about you. This is an incredibly common and painful struggle that is a result of your primary attachment trauma (his choosing others through pornography, fantasy, and even possibly emotional and/or physical affairs). For some, it also taps into core childhood beliefs and experiences of not being chosen, not being beautiful and/or not “being enough.”

If the enemy can convince you that your husband even noticing or feeling a pull of

attraction to another person is more proof that he doesn’t really want you, then the pain you will experience in everyday life will be much greater than if you understand the natural pull of attraction. It also prevents you from seeing how your husband’s choosing to see women as human beings rather than sexual objects is a form of choosing you.

Husbands: We must have great compassion for the pain our struggles have caused our wives and ask Jesus for the strength to “hold space for their pain” in these places. We must accept and understand that the concepts above are extremely difficult for many to accept. However, you must commit to a process of change that honors your commitment to your wife to “forsake all others.” She is your bride. She is the one you have chosen. She is the one you promised your Heavenly Father that you would “love, honor and protect.”

Although you created this pain in your wife’s heart, you cannot heal this place. Her healing is something she is going to have to find in and through God’s comfort. Yes, your faithfulness can certainly be part of what God uses, however, her pain is too deep for you to fix. Your primary jobs are to attune, validate and hold space for her pain, pray for her and of course not pour additional salt in her wounds by continuing down the paths of lust, objectification and/or deception or any other predatory actions towards women.

Unfortunately, you cannot avoid the paths of lust, objectification, and deception by simply bouncing your eyes and/or avoiding the entire female population. You must remember, noticing, even feeling the initial pull of attraction, is not lusting but a normal part of being human. However, the next steps are critical: You must, in every encounter with every “tempting” person in your life, ask Jesus “Who is she to me?” and “How can I be her protector?” Allow Him to remind you who you are, without making any agreements with the enemy’s lies that say you are a “pervert” because you noticed. You are going to notice, but you are not a beast, and you can choose the path of the protector rather than the predator.

Application & Journaling Questions

1. Describe a time in your life where you have cried out to God asking him to take away the burden of your sexual struggles. What was/is good about that cry? What was/is inherently missing?
2. Of the “Six Dailies,” which ones seem the most difficult for you? Why?
3. How do you feel about approaching God every morning? Does that sound like an easy thing to do, Do you think, “I get to have a conversation with my loving Father” or does it sound difficult, i.e. “How can I talk to him after all I have done or the many ways I think He has let me down?”
4. What is your conviction about why you need the “Morning Prayer” time?
5. At what stage of your morning routine do you need to commit to keeping your Morning Prayer time?
6. List any legitimate reasons for not praying in the morning:
7. List your most likely “lame excuses” for not praying in the morning.
8. How many “check in” phone calls are you currently making each week? How many do you believe you need to make?

9. When is the best time during most weekdays for you to make a check in call? Weekends?

10. List any legitimate reasons you have for not making a phone call on any given day.

11. List your most likely “lame excuses” for not making a phone call on any given day.

12. Where do you keep the phone numbers of the men in your group? If they aren’t programmed into your cell phone, why aren’t they?

13. Have you experienced a time where you called someone when you were struggling and felt stronger after the call? If yes, what do you remember about your decision to make the call, the conversation and its impact?

14. List two people ahead of you in recovery you feel most comfortable calling, two people at a similar place and two people behind you.

15. How do you think your week would be different if you talked to all six of these individuals once a week?

16. Have you made any phone calls where you felt dismissed, rejected or tolerated? (Or maybe multiple phone calls and only got voice mail.) What lies did Satan throw at you in the wake of those calls?

17. Who are the “night owls” in your group? Who would you feel the least uncomfortable calling at midnight? Who are the “early birds?” Who would you feel the least uncomfortable calling at 6 AM?

18. Do you need to make any changes to your cell phone plan? What changes will you commit to make?

19. Which is harder for you: allowing a call from a group member to go to your voice mail because it isn't a good time for you or answering a call when you just don't feel like having a "recovery conversation?" Why?

20. When is the best time during a normal weekday for you to read recovery material? When is the best time to reflect by writing? How about on the weekends?

21. Many men have found it helpful to commit to not doing something they enjoy if they haven't been in their recovery materials for the day/week. Examples include: "I won't watch any TV if I haven't done my recovery work for the day." Or, "I won't play golf on Saturday unless I had a good week in my materials." Is there anything you are ready to commit to along these lines? Who are you going to tell about that commitment?

22. List any legitimate reasons you have for not reading and reflecting on any given day.

23. List your most likely "lame excuses" for not reading and reflecting on any given day.

24. Why is it a good idea for you to go to a group meeting when you do not feel like going?

25. How difficult is it (or would it be) for you to go to group after a slip or a crash? Why? What truths do you need to remind yourself of, if and when, you are in that situation?

26. How can you relate the mountain climbing illustration in the section on attending meetings to your experience to this point? Who can you see in front of you giving you hope? When have you experienced someone coming back for you or coming along side you when you were discouraged?
27. Realistically, how many group meetings can you attend in most weeks? What is your bare minimum: “I need to be at _____ groups each week to survive?” What is your maximized thinking: “I will thrive and do my best in recovery if I attend _____ groups each week?”
28. Practice appreciation right now: Try the following simple prayer and then write down any appreciation Jesus brings to your mind.

Dear Jesus, Please bring to my mind something I can appreciate. Remind me of a time when I felt your presence or a gift you have given me or anything else I can focus my mind on and experience genuine appreciation.

Now give a name to your appreciation story: _____

Now write a “Thank You” to Jesus about what the appreciation He has given you.

Dear Jesus, Thank you for . . .

Finally, write a response from Jesus to you about your “Thank You.”

29. In what ways does the “this doesn’t feel very natural” response of the golfer fit how you feel about your new recovery behaviors?
29. How well has your “old way” worked for you in the battle for your sexuality?

30. How do you relate to Darrell's "Cherry Cobbler" story?

31. When and how have you received the message that women are "dangerous?"

32. If you have tried to use the "bouncing your eyes" method of avoiding lust, how well has that worked for you? When has it helped and when has it not helped?

33. What does Sheila Gregoire's story about the young women in the elevator raise in your heart for the women?

34. How has the fear of beautiful people affected you? What happens inside you when you see someone you find attractive?

35. What are your thoughts about the statement "God created each one of us with "wanters."

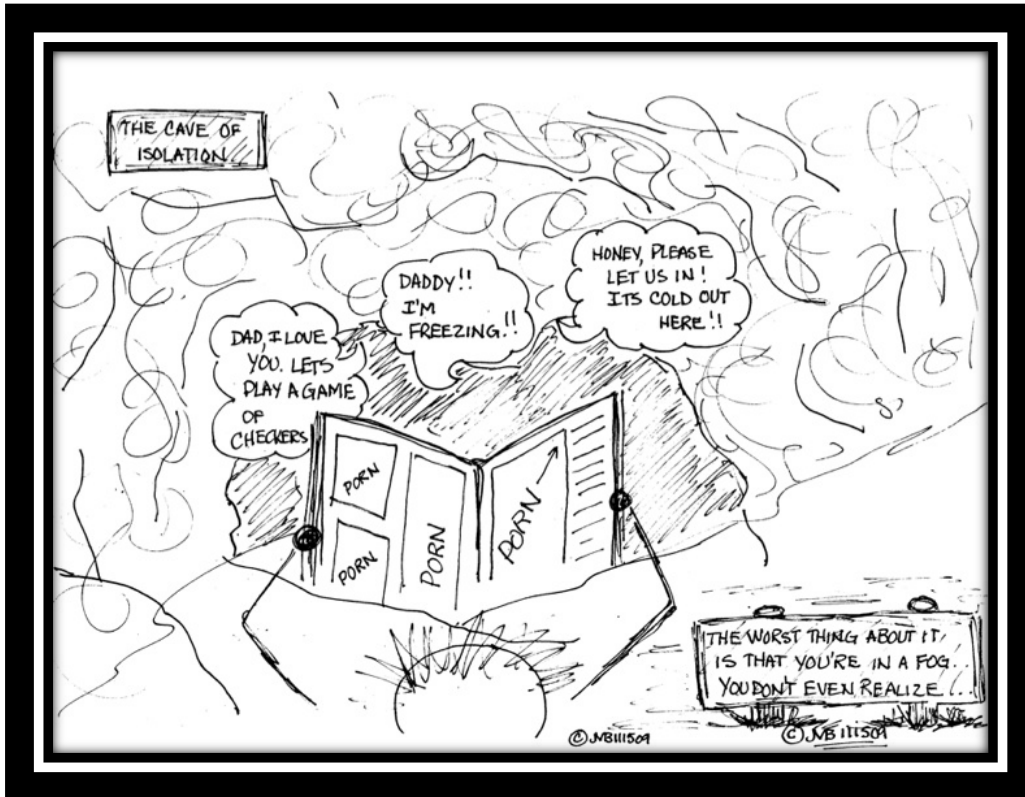
36. What does the three steps of "Noticing, Desiring, Decision" speak to you in your struggle with lust?

37. How can you relate to the man who said, "I don't believe it's possible for me to look at a pretty woman and not go to lust."

38. What are your initial thoughts about the "Who is she to me?" concept?

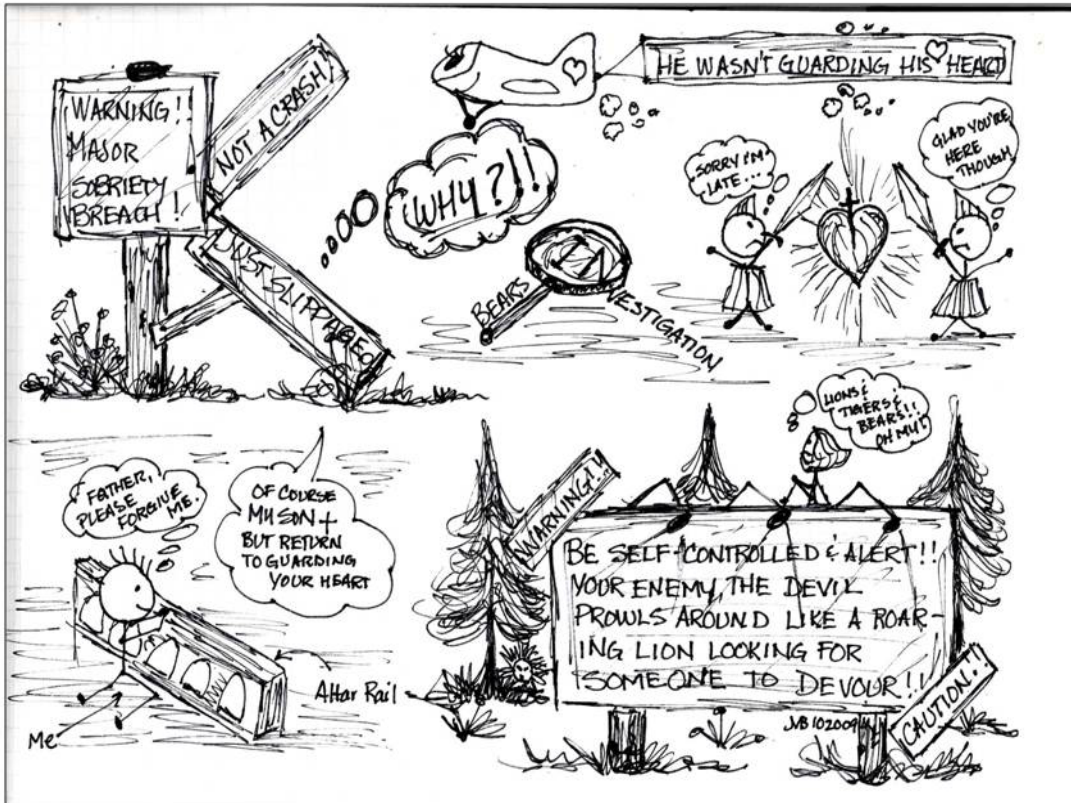
- 39 Describe times when others modeled that it is normal or even expected for men to ogle women?
- 40 Think of a woman, whom you have struggled to objectify, and then take a minute to pray, asking Jesus, “Who is she to me?” Write whatever you sense him saying? Then ask him, “What would it mean for me to be a protector of this mother, sister, or daughter?” Again, use the space below to write whatever comes to your mind as you ask Jesus about her.
- 41 Repeat previous questions with a second woman.
- 42 Repeat with a third. (Yes, we are working on training your brain to notice and take the pathway through the tall grass rather than the highway. The more your practice, the easier it will become to notice the turn off and to start taking it.
- 43 How do you think your wife will respond to these concepts?
- 44 What will help you attune to her very natural fears of you seeing a beautiful woman? (Not how can I fix it, but how can I understand her fear and the pain she experiences in light of my past consumption of women?)
- 45 How have you seen Dr. Minwalla’s statement “The hardest thing for the human psyche to do is to honestly see the harm we have caused to someone we love” play out in your own life?
- 46 What is it like for you to recognize that you cannot heal the pain you have caused your wife?
- 47 What does it mean for you that “You are going to notice, but you are not a beast, and you can choose the path of the protector rather than the predator?”

Choose Your Reality: A Life Of Addiction, Or A Life Of Recovery



Handouts and Worksheets

Guard Your Heart



Appreciation Wall

Write down the name of your daily appreciations. Once you have a list created, see what happens to your frame of mind when you read through it out loud and/or in conversation with the Father.

1.	_____	25.	_____
2.	_____	26.	_____
3.	_____	27.	_____
4.	_____	28.	_____
5.	_____	29.	_____
6.	_____	30.	_____
7.	_____	31.	_____
8.	_____	32.	_____
9.	_____	33.	_____
10.	_____	34.	_____
11.	_____	35.	_____
12.	_____	36.	_____
13.	_____	37.	_____
14.	_____	38.	_____
15.	_____	39.	_____
16.	_____	40.	_____
17.	_____	41.	_____
18.	_____	42.	_____
19.	_____	43.	_____
20.	_____	44.	_____
21.	_____	45.	_____
22.	_____	46.	_____
23.	_____	47.	_____
24.	_____	48.	_____

Phone Call Tips & Procedures

Making Calls

1. **Keep group phone numbers with you at all times.** Don't be bashful. Ask for what you need. Ask men in your group if they are willing to share their number with you and offer yours to them. The best thing is to enter group members' numbers into your phone so you always have them on hand. Most men look for any excuse not to make a call so eliminating the need to find a number helps tremendously.
2. **Always ask if the person answering has time and is in a place where they can talk.** If you know you have a difficult issue you need to wrestle with, be up front from the beginning and let the person know it may take a while. If all you need to do is "check in" then communicate that so they will know it will be a relatively short phone call.
3. **The most important thing is to break out of your isolation.** Sometimes the person on the other end of the call may have some very important or insightful things to tell you; sometimes he may say little or nothing of significance. Regardless of his response, God will use your openness as a pathway to healing. A number of years ago, I had a friend who was a computer specialist so whenever I had problems I would call him up for advice. It got to be funny as I went through a stretch where I called him on at least five or six straight occasions where, as I explained the problem to him, I discovered my own solution. I'd always thank him for his help and he would laugh and say something to the effect of, "I didn't do anything." Yet, the reality is I would have still been stuck if I had not of picked up the phone and called him. The exact same thing happens in many of our interactions with one another. We often discover things about ourselves as we attempt to describe our struggles to someone else. Many times, what gives us clarity is simply breaking out of isolation and talking outside our own head. We also experience a taste of community simply by knowing someone cares enough to listen.
4. **Check In On Deception & Entitlement.** It is critical that you check in daily on how you are doing with these two areas. Have you followed up and done what you said you were going to do? Have you shaded the truth in interactions with your wife, co-workers or even strangers in any way? Have you bought yourself something or skipped out of work early because you "deserved it?" Have you resented your wife because she isn't responding in ways you believe you are entitled to have her respond? Entitlement and deception are huge parts of our acting-out cycles, and addressing them at every point they surface will pay great dividends.
5. **Share your core emotions.** One of the most significant things we can do each day is identify and then share with at least one other person our core feelings. Because we haven't learned how to handle our emotions, we have turned to addictive things, i.e. porn, sex, food, etc. to help us artificially regulate our emotions. Initially, many don't have a clue what they are feeling. However, forcing ourselves to look at a list of core feelings and choosing one or two helps us begin the process of identifying them which in turn helps us learn how to manage them and even to discover what incredible gifts they are for us. We suggest using the following: **Anger, Fear, Hurt, Sad, Lonely, Shame, Guilt & Joy.**
6. **Share any and all deceptions & IAB's** (See p. 248). Whether you have told a "white lie" to your boss or looked your wife in her eyes and lied to her or even just deceived through omission, you must bring it into the light. Deception is a core issue for almost every man in this struggle. Bringing every deception into the light is an essential part of the process of healing.
7. **Call whenever the thought hits you.** If you think you should make a call, do not talk yourself out of it. At one point in my struggle to find deeper healing in my marriage, I noticed I would often have a passing thought of, "Maybe I should call someone." Many times, I talked myself out

of the call. “No, I’ll be OK. I can handle it.” Every time I chose not to make a call, I ended up in a fight with my wife or in a bad place later that day. Finally, I made a commitment that whenever I even a passing thought to call someone I would. I was honestly shocked at what a difference it made. Do not ignore these promptings.

8. **Realize you will get different reactions, responses and results with every person you call.** We encourage men to call three different types of people. Calling someone who is ahead of you in recovery will help you see a glimpse of the path. It also has the greatest potential for giving you the insights you need right now. Calling someone who is in a similar place as you are gives you someone with whom you can commiserate and with whom you know understands your pain. Calling someone behind you often gives you a glimpse of where you have come from and a greater appreciation of what God is doing in your life. Realize also that you will “connect” with some men better than you will others. As you make phone calls and share in group times, you will find men with whom you feel safe and from whom you find great support. You will also find men who are unable to connect over the phone (some are unable to connect in any context, but especially over the phone). Do not take it personally—just call someone else. You may catch them at a bad time or on a bad day or it just may be their nature. It may even be they aren’t really in recovery, but just going through the motions to appease their spouse or others. Regardless, don’t buy the lie that their response is justification for you to not call.
9. **Don’t take unanswered calls personally.** Because of the sheer number of men in the groups most must set healthy boundaries around their phones. If you call at a time when they can talk, they will answer. If it is not a good time, they will let it go to voicemail. If you leave a message, most will return your call when they can. If you do not leave a message, they will trust you were making a daily call and found someone else with whom you could “check in.” If your call is a crisis call, do not hesitate to leave messages with many men. Someone will eventually call back and the act of leaving messages may help you break out of your isolation.
10. **Make phone call appointments.** One of the most common excuses for not making calls is, “I don’t want to bother anyone.” Much of this fear can be alleviated by asking in group meetings who would be willing to make a phone appointment at a good time for you. For example, simply saying, “I’d like to schedule a phone call at 7:15 AM on Mondays and Thursdays. Is that a good time for anyone?” is likely to get you several options. In fact, it might connect you with someone else who is struggling to make phone calls and become a mutually beneficial relationship. Men also find appointments beneficial because they end up having consistent conversations with the same individuals, which builds relationship and aids in accountability.
11. **Learn other’s schedules:** Find out who are the “night owls” and “early birds” in your group. For many men, late at night and early in the morning are the most common times of struggle. They will often tell me, I knew I needed to talk to someone, but I did not want to wake anyone. Sometimes, you just must run the risk. However, if you know Jeff from group is single and rarely goes to bed before midnight, it will be much easier to call him late, and if you know Gary gets up at 4AM for his commute then calling him at five doesn’t seem daunting anymore.
12. **Use Texts To Set Up Phone Calls, But Not To Replace Them.** Texting is a great way to find a phone call when you need one right now. I.e. you have been hit with a trigger or temptation and know you need a connection but don’t know who is available. A “I really need a phone call right now, who is available?” text sent to five or more of your guys will likely get a quick response. However, it is important to remember that texting while providing some connection doesn’t provide as much as hearing a voice and talking to someone on the other end, so don’t try to skimp on your connection by trying to just use text when you really need a call.

Receiving Calls

1. **Assess the situation quickly.** Remember, the person calling may simply want to check in or they may be calling at a crisis point. Understanding the difference early in the call will help you respond appropriately so don't be afraid to ask the nature of their call.
2. **Be honest about your availability to talk.** If you only have ten minutes, say so up front. If it is not a good time, ask them if you can call them back. Sometimes you may be in a place where you can listen, but not really give much feedback. For example, I've received calls while traveling in the car with my wife and children. Obviously, that isn't a time for me to talk about some of the specifics of sexual sins, temptations and struggles. Therefore, I have often said, "I can listen (on my headset) but can't say much." Many times, this is what a person really needs. They simply need to break out of their isolation by sharing what is going on inside of them.
3. **Learn to use caller ID.** You do not have to answer every call you receive. If you are not in a good place to talk, let your voicemail take the call. If the person needs to talk, it is his responsibility to leave a message and/or call someone else.
4. **Return calls at your first opportunity.** When someone leaves you a message, understand how difficult that may be for him and call him back as soon as you can. Remember, you and the men in your recovery group are in a battle against a horrific enemy and you desperately need to remain connected with them. They need you and you need them.
5. **Use distinctive ring tones.** If your phone has the capability, enter a special ring tone for guys in your group so you will know, without looking at your phone, if the call is coming from one of your brothers in the battle. (It's also helpful to give your wife her own ringtone)
6. **Turn off the phone** at the appropriate times. You do not have to live in bondage to your cell phones, and it is inconsiderate to answer them during group meetings, church services etc. You do not have to be available at every moment. (No, this does not apply if your wife is pregnant and about ready to deliver or if your child is home alone. You can, however, keep your phone on vibrate or so the ringer does not disturb others.)
7. **Help the caller focus on appreciation.** If someone calls who is struggling, one of the best things you can do is to help him reflect on something for which he is grateful (see daily #5 above). Make sure you listen first and don't immediately ask him what he appreciates as he will feel dismissed and unheard if you jump too quickly to appreciation. However, if you can help him find something he appreciates, talk about it and name it, you will help him tremendously.
8. **Ask the caller what core feelings they are experiencing.** Identifying feelings of anger, sadness, loneliness, fear, shame, guilt, hurt and joy helps us to begin to accept that we are emotional beings and that our emotions are God given and therefore good. It also helps us to see we aren't alone in our emotions. Your asking him about his emotions validates them and also provides an opportunity for him to experience someone attuning to him and his emotions.

Sexual Integrity Group Meeting Agenda

Big Group Time: (60 minutes)

Open Sharing: Time for group members to ask questions or share things they have read, learned or experienced during the previous week. Sharing should focus on scripture and recovery materials used in our ministry. Outside materials are OK on occasions but should not be brought up continually unless the specific materials have been encouraged by group leaders.

Group Leader Sharing: Usually one of the group leaders will have something to share in the light of recovery or will lead a discussion of a section of this manual or other recovery material.

Personal stories: When someone comes to their first group, we generally have two or three individuals “tell their story,” i.e. tell their history of addiction, how they ended up in the group and about God’s work in their life to lead them to freedom. We then allow the new person to tell as much of his story as he feels safe to share. If a leader asks you to tell your story, please try to keep it to ten minutes or less. (Writing out your story can be very helpful for getting the critical elements and can also be an incredibly valuable recovery exercise.)

Check in Time (45-60 minutes)

Break up into groups of three or four men.

Each person shares the following:

1. **What is my “take home point”** from the big group discussion. One of the incredibly valuable things about being in a group is putting yourself out there by sharing your thoughts, struggles, etc. However, in the big group, that is often very difficult for many. However, in a group of three or four, you can have greater courage and your sharing will be beneficial both for you and for the others in your group.
2. **Current struggles:** where are you really at today? What emotions, frustrations and difficult situations are you currently facing? For Example: “My wife and I have been in a huge fight and I’m really angry” or “Work has been incredibly stressful this week and my boss has been all over me” or “I’ve had the best day of my life.”
3. **Core Feelings:** Check in on what you are feeling right now and/or during your day. While there are many good feeling lists, we think it’s helpful to use one of these eight feeling words: Angry, Hurt, Lonely, Sad, Afraid, Shame, Guilt or Joy.
4. **What recovery work have you done in the past week?** How did you do on the “Six Dailies” this week? For example: “I worked through chapters 3 & 4 in this manual, made a phone call every day and this is my second group meeting this week.”
5. **Any sin that needs to be confessed,** both sexual sins and non-sexual sins as all sin has a way of “entangling” and leading us into isolation from God and from others. You must address sexual slips or crashes from the previous week directly. While it seems safer just to say, “I crashed on Tuesday night,” we believe specific confessions, (“I surfed porn online for three hours and masturbated four times” or “I woke up from a sexually explicit dream, continued the fantasy and masturbated”) opens our hearts to experience real fellowship and the healing God offers. “But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:7-9). “Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).
6. **Are there any sexual sins, deceptions or other IAB’s** (Integrity Abuse Behaviors. See p. 248) I need to bring into the light? (Especially “Am I clean with my wife?” or “Am I holding any secrets?”). **If I have been deceptive in any way,** what I have done (or will I commit to do) to correct any deceptions? This includes direct deceptions through lying or indirect deceptions through omission. This applies to all relationships but especially in your marriage.
7. **Where has “entitlement”** thinking, crept into my words, attitudes or actions since my last check in?

8. **How did I do with last week's goals and what are my recovery goals for the coming week?** For example: "I hope to complete Chapter 6 in the *Wild At Heart Field Manual*, make a phone call every day and go to group on Thursday and again on Sunday."
9. **What is one thing I have read, learned or experienced** this week that has been helpful to me. (Yes that does require reading and learning. You need it for your journey, but you also need it so you will have something to contribute to your group meeting.)
10. **Close by praying together**, allowing each person who wishes to pray for the other men in the group and for his own needs.

Daily Check In: One of the most powerful things you can do for your recovery is make a commitment and then follow through by doing a daily check in using the points above. Whether that check in is done in an in-person group, a zoom group or a phone call will depend on your specific circumstance. However, daily checking in on these critical matters will help you find your path to freedom.

Three Circles Plan

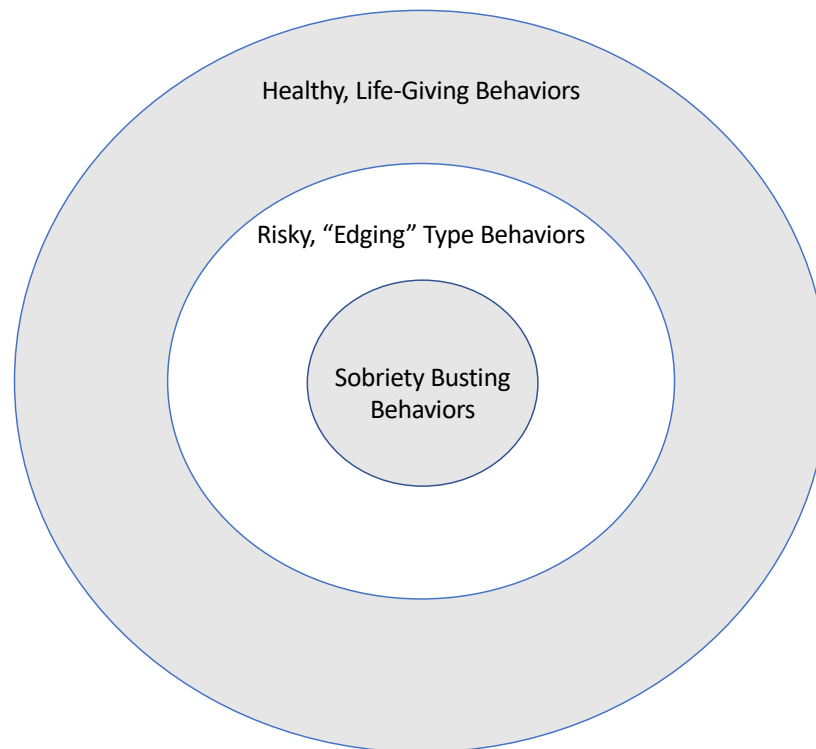
Even very early in the recovery process, it is essential clearly identify what you are wanting to avoid as well as what is helpful and good for you. One tool that many in different schools of recovery have found helpful is the “Three Circle Plan.”

Step One of this plan is an exercise using three concentric circles. The innermost circle contains your “Red” acting-out behaviors that you have identified as your core sobriety behaviors. I.e. if I do any of these things, then I will acknowledge that I have lost my sobriety and also need to start my “day count” over.

The next circle, think of yellow for warning, consists of things that, while I don’t consider “sobriety busters,” I know they are wrong, and/or have me on a dangerous path towards relapse. These could include things such as staying up too late, mindlessly channel surfing on your television, or exploring sports or news sites, social media, click bait, etc. You will also find it helpful to list things that aren’t necessarily wrong or even in your control but that bring added temptation to you. I.e. encountering provocative women in public.

The outermost circle, i.e. green areas, are the good and healthy things I do. I.e. Keeping my six dailies, exercise, walks with my wife, playing games with my children, working in my recovery materials, going to counseling, journaling, etc.

Take some time now to create your own personal “Three Circles Worksheet” by drawing three circles on a large piece of paper and then writing your own examples in the circles. Identify as many specifics as you can but recognize this is a dynamic document that you will come back to often and especially when writing your “Personal Recovery Plan.” (In chapter 8)



If you know you struggle with multiple areas of compulsivity, you can also certainly add those items in your inner circles. Many, however, find it helpful to do a separate plan for each struggle. I.e. one for sexual acting out, one for gambling, one for alcohol, one for spending, etc.

Step two of your “Three Circles Plan” is to create action plans for what you will do if you participate in or experience any behaviors you listed in either of the inner circles. In other words what is my plan if I recognize I have done or encountered something from my “yellow” circle. What are the specific steps I will take regarding with whom I will share, when I will share, and what I will do to learn how to not repeat that specific behavior. You will need a separate plan for your inner most circle that will require stronger actions. (Chapter 8 of the personal plan will be helpful here.)

Once you are done with your plan--both steps, share it with your sponsor and your counselor and ask them to help you see other specifics you may have missed. Once you have received their input and made your own adjustments, share it with your wife as she will likely have insights into you and your areas of struggles that even your sponsor and counselor will not have. (FYI many couples will need a couples’ session with a skilled counselor for this discussion)

Please note, it is important in this process that your plan remain YOUR plan. What that means is your sponsor, counselor and even your wife will have helpful input, however, they are consultants for you. It must remain your plan. Otherwise, if you put things in your plan out of appeasement, you will either give yourself unspoken permission to cheat on those aspects or you will resent the person who suggested them which will lead to other issues.

Many will find this to be a difficult conversation with their wife. I.e. if she believes you need to have “Reading Sports Websites” in your second circle because there are often inappropriate ads, pictures, etc. but you believe you can read articles about your favorite teams without going down those rabbit holes, then you will be in a quandary. “Do I put that in my plan so that she feels better, or do I risk having a fight with her because I don’t include it?”

Our suggestion would be keep your plan as “Your Plan,” however, do another list of things you are willing to give up, (at least for a time) not because you believe you have to in order to stay safe, but because you understand these things bring up a lot of fear for her. This will allow you to serve her in love by giving up certain activities as a consideration. Voluntarily giving things up that scare her will help build trust and show that you are committed to loving her as Jesus loved the church. When you chose to voluntarily give things up out of love, you will be much less likely to move into resentment than if you see them as unnecessary boundaries imposed by her. The chart on the next page will be helpful in seeing this distinction clearly.

What I need to do (or not do) for my sanity and sobriety	What I'm willing to do (or not do) to help her feel safe and to rebuild trust

Recovery Goals

(In recommended order though everyone's path is slightly different)

Date _____
Completed _____

- _____ Establish a specific time for recovery work. Write that time down here _____
(20 min. per day recommended **minimum**)
- _____ Develop habit of keeping the 6 dailies (see Chapter 2)
- _____ Create a "3 Circles Initial Recovery Plan." (See chapter 2)
- _____ Complete the sexual history inventory and go over it with a counselor or someone with the training and experience to handle it well (see end of Chapter 3)
- _____ Read the text of *New Hope For Sexual Integrity* by Darrell Brazell.
- _____ Watch to "Protector or Predator: Addressing the Harms of Deceptive Sexuality"
www.newhope4si.com.
- _____ Choose a sponsor and check in **at least** twice a week. (See "Sponsor Guidelines" next page)
- _____ Have your "Full Disclosure Meeting" with your wife. (See "Disclosure" pages at www.newhope4si.com)
- _____ Work through the application questions in *New Hope For Sexual Integrity*
- _____ 90 days of sobriety. (Date God empowered you to make 90 day mark)
- _____ Create and use a Personal Recovery Plan (See Chapter 8)
- _____ Listen to Darrell's "Power of Joy" series. (<http://newhope4si.com/poj>)
- _____ Read *Unwanted* by Jay Stringer
- _____ Read *Pure Desire* by Ted Roberts
- _____ Read *Joyful Journeys* by Dr. Jim Wilder et al. and begin using the Immanuel Journaling method on a consistent basis.
- _____ Read *The Life Model: Living From The Heart Jesus Gave You*
- _____ Read *Going Deeper* by Eddie Capparucci
- _____ Listen to Darrell's series "POJ2--Maturity 101" available at www.newhope4si.com/poj
- _____ Develop and implement a Couple's Recovery Plan (See Chapter 18)
- _____ Do *Wild At Heart Field Manual*¹³ by John Eldredge. If you have read the book but not done the workbook, you have no idea what incredible insights you are missing
- _____ Write your life story (See chapter 12, question 23)
- _____ Do *The Way Of The Wild Heart/Fathered By God* workbook by John Eldredge. (2 versions of same book but titled differently)
- _____ Read *Intimate Deception* by Dr. Sheri Keffer
- _____ Listen to Darrell's series "POJ3--Attachment" series available at www.newhope4si.com/poj
- _____ If there is any possibility of childhood sexual abuse read *The Wounded Heart* by Dan Allender and work through the companion workbook. It would also be good to see a counselor regularly who is both gifted and trained to help you deal with your trauma. (This is also true for everyone in recovery as a good counselor is worth his or her weight in gold.)

¹³ **Critical note:** While I highly recommend watching the movies Eldridge recommends as part of the workbook, you need to prioritize honoring your boundaries and likely watch the movies with someone so that you will skip nudity and sexual scenes. Two of the movies he recommends, "Legends of the Fall" and "Titanic" are ones I suggest skipping entirely due to the sexual content.

Sponsor Guidelines

Learning to use a sponsor can be one of the most helpful ingredients in your recovery. While you are the only one who can be truly responsible for your recovery, a sponsor can help direct you and give you support in your journey. Many times, men honestly do not know how to pick or what to do with a sponsor so here are some guidelines:

Choosing a sponsor

- 1) Choose someone who has at least 6 months of sobriety. (One year is preferable; however, sometimes that is difficult.) If there are a lot of new people in your group you may need to find someone to “partner with” as sponsors may not be available.
- 2) Choose someone with whom you “connect” at least on some levels. The addict in you may object saying you don’t connect with anyone. That may seem to be true; however, as you get to know others and begin lowering your defenses, you will find connections.
- 3) Ask if he would commit to being your sponsor for the next three months.
- 4) Ask for a convenient time for you to call on at least twice a week: I.e. make a recurring appointment for Tuesdays & Fridays at 11:30 for a 20-minute phone call or meet somewhere for coffee. Remember, if he is a sponsor for multiple people, he will have others who need him, so you will need to respect his time and his schedule.
- 5) Many have found it helpful to do a daily check-in call with their sponsor. While your sponsor may not be able to answer a call every day, many have found it helpful to leave their daily check-in on their voicemail.
- 6) Always remember it is your responsibility to be honest and address the issues you need to address. A sponsor is not an “interrogator” whose job it is to drag the necessary information out of you. It is your responsibility to share what you need to share. Don’t use the cop-out excuse of, “Well, he didn’t ask about . . .”

Check In

- 1) Share where you are now: i.e. how your week is going, joys, triumphs, struggles, etc.
- 2) Confess any slips or crashes you had during the previous week.
- 3) Share any “close calls,” and places where you feel the “pull” to return to addictive behavior.
- 4) Share any and all deceptions.
- 5) Share what you have read, worked through, etc. during the previous week.
- 6) Share any goals you have for the coming week, i.e. “I plan on working through Chapter 3 in the *New Hope for Sexual Integrity Manual*.”
- 7) Do a “Feelings Check” with the core feelings of Anger, Fear, Hurt, Sad, Lonely, Shame, Guilt and Joy.
- 8) Share how you did with your goals from the previous week.
- 9) Share any pitfalls you see in front of you, i.e. “My wife is going out of town for the weekend, so I will be home alone from Friday until Monday.”
- 10) Share any prayer needs you might have.
- 11) Ask your sponsor what you can pray about for him. (Remember, sponsors have needs also and praying for him helps you by getting you out of your isolation.)

Additional Resources For Pornography & Sexual Addictions

Unwanted by Jay Stringer.

Pure Desire by Dr. Ted Roberts.

Wild At Heart Field Manual by John Eldredge. Not about pornography specifically, but a powerful book to help men understand who they are in Christ. (**Critical note:** While I recommend watching the movies as part of the work, you need to watch the R rated movies with someone so that you will skip nudity and sexual scenes. Two of the movies, “Legends of the Fall” and “Titanic” I suggest skipping completely as the sexual content is too much for most men in recovery.)

The Life Model: Living From the Heart Jesus Gave You by Jim Wilder et al. is a great introduction to recovery and the stages of maturity. It is compact but loaded with rich insights.

Joyful Journey by Dr. Jim Wilder et al. Fantastic little book that will introduce you to a form of Journaling that will transform your relationship with Jesus and provide great help in your recovery.

Scarcity Brain by Michael Easter. Not about sexual addiction but a very informative and entertaining look at the way our brains get hijacked by reward loops. His *Comfort Crisis* book is also a great read.

Body Keeps The Score by Bessel A. van der Kolk. An amazing book that helps us understand how our traumas and neglect from our past affect our present and some methodologies that have been found to help resolve the traumas and the neglect.

The Way Of The Wild Heart book and workbook by John Eldredge. (Thomas Nelson 2006). A continuation of the work of *Wild at Heart*. His stages of life for a man are remarkably similar to those laid out in the *Life Model*. *Fathered By God* is essentially the same book with some edits and retitled.

Going Deeper by Eddie Capparucci. Excellent look at the different types of inner child within us that drive our struggles.

Healing The Wounds Of Sexual Addiction by Mark Laaser. (Previously titled *Faithful & True*) One of the first books on sexual addiction from a Christian perspective. Excellent introduction to sexual addiction and to some of the basic principles of recovery.

The Road To Grace by Mark Genung.

The Betrayal Bind by Michelle Mays is an excellent book for understanding more of our wife’s experience as well as providing insights into our own struggles.

Intimate Deception by Dr. Sheri Keffer is a painful, but essential read for any man seeking to understand the real impact his deceptions and acting out has had on his wife.

Resilient by John Eldredge. Chapter 5, “The Assurance of Abundance” is worth the price of the book and the rest is good as well.

Don’t Call It Love: Recovery From Sexual Addiction by Patrick Carnes. Insights gleaned from surveying 1500 sexual addicts who had at least 3 years of recovery. The reflections of those walking in freedom are powerful and compelling.

Dopamine Nation by Anna Lembke is a great read with tremendous implications for recovery.

Out of the Shadows by Patrick Carnes. Secular book, but the first major book on sexual addiction.

In The Shadows Of The Net by Patrick Carnes et al. Takes many of the principles from *Out of the Shadows* and updates and applies them to the internet. Excellent resource!

The Pornography Trap by Ralph Earle Jr. & Mark R. Laaser. (Beacon Hill, 2002). Good basic introduction to the dynamics of sexual addiction with an emphasis on its effects on clergy.

The Wounded Heart by Dan Allender. If there is any possibility of sexual abuse in your background, this book is a “must read.” He also has a workbook many have found to be incredibly helpful.

In recovery, you will want to read everything you can to understand your addiction and to understand what you must do to stay clean and to continue to heal and grow into the man God intended when He created you.

90 Day Check List

Day	Pray	R&R	Call	Meet	Appr	C.I. ¹⁴
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
21						
22						
23						
24						
25						
26						
27						
28						
29						
30						
31						
32						
33						
34						
35						
36						
37						
38						
39						
40						
41						
42						
43						
44						
45						

Day	Pray	R&R	Call	Meet	Appr	C.I.
46						
47						
48						
49						
50						
51						
52						
53						
54						
55						
56						
57						
58						
59						
60						
61						
62						
63						
64						
65						
66						
67						
68						
69						
70						
71						
72						
73						
74						
75						
76						
77						
78						
79						
80						
81						
82						
83						
84						
85						
86						
87						
88						
89						
90						

¹⁴ C.I. stands for a “Formal Check In” as outlined on page 49.