

Introduction

In S.A.A., each member honestly acknowledges for him or herself which sexual activities are part of the addictive cycle. For some of us, the internet was a place to act out sexually. Isolated in front of the computer screen, we spent hours looking for titillating images, making dates with potential sex partners, masturbating while online, or searching for new ways to act out. Unable to stop, we stayed at the computer looking for one more jolt of excitement. Some of us solicited sex from minors online and looked at child pornography.

We looked for ways to intensify the experience, forgetting that bigger highs eventually led to even greater suffering and unmanageability. Sometimes there were serious repercussions in our relationships with others, and sometimes the suffering was inside ourselves. We usually kept our behaviors a secret, hoping that our partners, our roommates, or our employers would never know the truth. Those of us who acted out in this way know that the consequences that can come from sitting alone at a computer can be just as great as those found in the world of prostitutes, adult bookstores, or anonymous encounters. We risked and sometimes lost our relationships, our jobs, and our sense of self.

We tried to rationalize the problem. In one moment, we told ourselves these behaviors were not a big deal, that we were free to do as we pleased. In the next, feeling total despair, we wondered how we got caught in the cycle once again. In spite of our best efforts to control and manage this behavior, we could not leave it alone. We always went back for more. Perhaps you have reached a point of desperation and are willing to try a different approach.

To recover from sexual addiction, we had to find a way to stop engaging in these behaviors. More importantly, we had to stay stopped. We have found a solution in the Twelve Steps and in the fellowship of SAA. They have worked where other methods have failed. The purpose of this pamphlet is to offer some of our experience with this problem. This is not an exhaustive list of ideas. Rather, these are some of the practical methods we have used to help us abstain from the behaviors one day at a time while we practice the program of recovery found in the Steps.

Contact

The Eugene SAA Intergroup, and the ISO of Sex Addicts Anonymous, are committed to reaching out to the sex addict who still suffers.

"Our primary purpose is to stay sexually healthy and to help other sex addicts achieve freedom from addictive sexual behavior."

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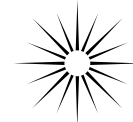
Eugene S.A.A. Intergroup

From Shame to Grace

The Eugene S.A.A. Intergroup is an autonomous registered fellowship composed of registered groups of recovering sex addicts who follow the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Sex Addicts Anonymous® (S.A.A.).

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Sexual Sobriety and the Internet



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Staying Offline

One of the simplest ways to stop this problem is simply not to use the internet at all. This may sound like an extreme solution to some, but we urge you to consider it if you continue to act out on the computer. Some of us resisted this idea, insisting that our lives could not function without the internet, or that they would not be as full and happy. For us, the opposite was often true. There can be relief in getting off the internet altogether.

Our experience is that sobriety and recovery are the answer. If you have found yourself in SAA and you are clear that you are a sex addict, you may have realized the seriousness of your condition. It has proved helpful to ask ourselves the question: Am I willing to go to any lengths to stay sober? Time and again, our experience has shown that making sexual sobriety the priority is a key element in preventing relapse.

Living without the internet need not be a permanent situation. Once we gained a significant amount of continuous sobriety from this kind of addictive behavior and had more experience with working the Twelve Steps, many of us found we were then able to use the technology for safe purposes.

Becoming Accountable

Some jobs require that people get on the internet. An SAA member might live with others who want to have an online account. For all kinds of reasons, sex addicts sometimes insist they need the internet. If such is the case, you may want to try staying abstinent while still having access to online services. Some of us found it helpful to become more accountable to a sober member of the fellowship. A member with continuous abstinence will see things differently and may be able to give you good feedback.

It is important to plan ahead. Don't assume you will make good decisions when the critical moment arrives. For some us, simply sitting in front of the computer terminal and debating whether or not

to get online was very mind-altering in itself. Our thinking was already unclear and full of subtle rationalization. If you, like us, are powerless over this behavior, you may not be able to get through these times alone.

One way to become accountable is to make simple agreements with other recovering addicts. Some people make a commitment, perhaps with a sponsor, to only go online for specific work-related tasks. In other words, we might agree not to hang out online looking for interesting websites. Part of this agreement would include getting honest about any behavior that violates the contract.

Others have used a technique called "bookending", in which we speak with another sober sex addict both before and after an activity that might be dangerous to do alone. One addict makes a call and says, for example: "I am nervous about being on the internet. So, I am going to go online, quickly get only the information I need, and then get offline. After that I will call you back and tell you I am finished." Following through with this kind of support can be just enough to help an addict who is on shaky ground.

We urge you to seek out people who have successfully stayed away from these kinds of behaviors and ask them for ideas. If you continue to act out, you may want to consider whether you really can handle access to the internet at this point in your life. Sobriety comes when we make it a priority over everything, be it job, family, friends, or anything else.

Other Ideas

There are many other suggestions people have used to keep away from these kinds of behaviors:

- Install software that blocks sex-related sites on the internet.
- Have a friend set up a password-key system that blocks the ability to "chat" online.
- Never go online alone.
- Tape a prayer to the computer monitor, and remember to use the prayer.
- Give the modem to your sponsor.
- Develop a sober, spiritual ritual for using the internet when you must get online.
- Use the computer to communicate with sober sex addicts.

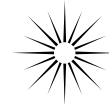
A number of websites relate to recovery from sexual addiction. SAA itself has a site that has a description of the fellowship, a list of SAA meetings by area, an online bookstore, and other relevant information. There are also meetings online, which you may find helpful, especially if you are housebound or live in areas where there are no meetings.

However, we cannot fool ourselves about acting out. If you try to use the computer as a tool for recovery and yet continue to relapse, we strongly suggest that you let go of the internet technology until you have some sobriety under your belt. Remember that people had satisfying lives before the internet arrived.

Conclusion

These ideas are stop-gap measures. They were particularly helpful when we were in early sobriety. In the long run, the solution to maintaining abstinence lies in practicing the Twelve Steps and participating in the S.A.A. fellowship. As active addicts, we often felt pulled into this kind of sex. If the thought crossed our minds or if we saw a certain image, we eventually had to act out. If an opportunity availed itself, we had to take it. We have found a way to diffuse this addiction mechanism. By staying abstinent from our addictive behaviors and by working the Twelve Steps, we have escaped the pull to act out, and we are living a happier and more satisfying life.

Contributed by John H.



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