

Working the Step: A 'how to' guide

"And Christ truly said unto our fathers: If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me." (Moroni 10:23)
We understand that overcoming an addiction is hard. We also know that the Lord loves all of us. We are not alone. He will help us overcome this challenge. As we make working the steps a priority we will be blessed with strength beyond our own, "therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you." (Alma 34:31)

Sometimes the biggest roadblock to working the Steps is not really understanding how to work them. Below is a simple set of guidelines that will help in doing so. And when we mean simple, we truly mean simple. In short, we simply read the question, reflect on it intellectually, spiritually and emotionally and journal what comes up for us. First and foremost, we are honest, for anything less will only slow our progression and inhibit our ability to heal. Additionally, we are encouraged to share our discoveries with our sponsor or other trusted recovery persons, for doing so helps answer questions that may arise as well as solidifies the truths we are learning.

Guidelines

As important as working each Step is, it is equally important that we pace ourselves; working deliberately rather than fast. In preparing ourselves for recovery, we remember that the quality of our work is more important than our speed.

- This is not a race. We do not need to answer all the questions in one sitting. And if we come across a question that we simply do not know the answer to, or do not connect with, we pause and reflect and give it the time it deserves. We can even decide to come back later or ask for clarification from our sponsor.
- This is a journey of discovery. In time, our recovery work will give us the "progressive victory over lust" that we seek.¹
- The Spirit will guide our learning for what we need in each individual moment. And when we revisit these questions in the future, our answers will be deeper as a result of the progress we have made. It is then that we will be given a glimpse of the growth that working the program of recovery has given us.
- We don't have to have all the answers right now. Recovery is a process where the grace of our Savior can impress upon our soul the truths that strengthen our recovery a little at a time, one day at a time.

Preparation

In an effort to nurture a prime atmosphere in which we can learn and grow, many have found help in some of the following suggestions for their Step work.

- Choose a time and location in which we feel safe, free from distraction and can be relatively un-interrupted.
- To make the work of Working the Steps as manageable as possible, we recommend pacing ourselves by simply working one subsection at a time. For instance, each Step section (i.e. Step 1 Section 1 - Our powerless and unmanageable life) has subsections consisting of 3-5 paragraphs. We recommend working one sub-section per day (give or take); which consists of reading, reflecting and journaling what we feel and learn.
- We prayerfully ask Heavenly Father for the guidance of the Spirit while opening our own hearts to hear what He has to teach us. It may also be helpful to just sit quietly in silent reflection as some of the most tender moments with the Lord happen when we simply sit with Him.
- It can also help to have peaceful hymns or other recovery related music playing in the background.
- When answering the questions found in this workbook, we write down whatever comes to our mind even if it leads you to something completely different. These questions are not meant to have a correct answer but to soften our hearts so the Spirit can teach us.

Reflection questions

Under each Step section can be found a set of reflection questions. These questions are simply meant to get us thinking about recovery; critically, reflectively and emotionally. Below are some addiction questions that can be asked about each subsection:

- What have I learned from this section?
- How does the material relate to me personally?

¹ Sexaholics Anonymous [also known as the White Book], 4. Copyright 1989, 2001 SA Literature.

- What feelings and emotions did I experience?
- In what ways can I implement the principles taught into my everyday life?
- How would I rate my current level of willingness to (fill in the blank)?
- What principles have I learned that I can turn into actions or changes that will increase the success of my recovery?

Truths and affirmations

One of the hardest aspects of recovery is learning to tell the difference between what we've believed about ourselves, God and our worth for so long, and what is actual truth regarding such matters. In order to bring ourselves into the light of truth, we practice identifying, acknowledging and believing the truths found in this workbook. We can then turn those truths into working positive affirmations in an effort to retrain our thinking, speaking and belief systems into positive patterns rooted in truth.

- An affirmation is a beginning point on the path to change. It is consciously choosing words that facilitate a progressive change in our life.
- Replacing unhealthy messages with healthy messages moves us from the addicted state we are in now, to the freedom that awaits us in our future.
- Writing our affirmations on sticky notes and placing them in a visible place (bathroom mirror, refrigerator, computer monitor, etc...), setting them as the background on our phone, or even recording them as personal voice notes is a great way to enhance the effectiveness of our affirmations. The key is to strive to visit them everyday.
- Examples of affirmations will be provided at the end of each *Working the Step* section. We can use those provided or write our own.

Inventories

Most of the step sections will also have one or more inventories associated with it. These inventories are key to the success of our recovery as they require that we journal the many different aspects of our addiction and recovery. They help us see our addiction for what it is and the damage it has caused. The truth will most likely be uncomfortable at first, but it will help bring the grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ, into our lives. Indeed, there is no better source of hope and healing for those afflicted.

Step One: Section 1 - Powerlessness and unmanageability

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Reflection questions

- What stresses or painful emotions have I tried to escape from by numbing out in my addiction?

Our common mistaken belief has been “We told ourselves that if we had tried harder, we could have stopped. But our experience has shown otherwise. No matter how many promises or resolutions we made, no matter how strong our efforts and our determination, the behaviors eventually returned, along with their painful consequences.”²

- What promises have I made to myself or others about never acting out again?
 - How frequently do I find myself making these promises?
 - What does that say about my powerlessness over being able to stop?
- If my addictive behavior has caused me to constantly isolate and indulge, followed by bouts of shame, self-loathing and despair, only to reset again—why do I think I continue to act out in it?
- What is the difference between using my *willpower* and admitting that I actually have *no power* over my addiction?
- What negative consequences have I already experienced as a result of my addiction?
 - What consequences do I fear might happen if I come clean about my struggle?
 - In what ways would it be worse if my secret were to be *discovered* rather than willingly *disclosed*?
- Think about the prospect of being free from the everyday torment of addiction. What would that look like? How would it feel?
- In what ways have I felt hope when hearing others share their stories and experiences?
 - Knowing that recovery is a journey in which others have traveled, endured, and then overcome, how does this change my perspective about me being able to heal as well?
- With whom and where can I reach for support in my recovery?
- How have I used lust to cope with my life?
- How do I believe Heavenly Father views me?
- How can I seek the Lord’s help in incorporating the Serenity Prayer into my life?

“The idea that I might be powerless over [my sexual] behavior was too hard for me to accept. . . . On the one hand, I prayed for help from God, while on the other, I clung insanely to the very poison that was destroying me spiritually. . . . The facts of my life bore witness to me of my powerlessness so plainly that I could not deny the truth in Step One when I heard it.”³

- How would I rate my current willingness to admit my powerless over my addiction?

² Sex Addicts Anonymous, (SAA) The Green Book (2014), 22.

³ Philip A. Harrison, Clean Hands, Pure Heart: Overcoming Addiction to Pornography Through the Redeeming Power of Jesus Christ. (Kindle Locations 1019-1021, 1087-1092,1161). Hearthaven Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Step One: Section 1 - Powerlessness and unmanageability

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

"I learned that admitting that I am powerless over my addiction did not mean that I was hopeless [or helpless]. It simply meant I could not overcome on my own. Admitting my powerlessness gave power to my Savior to act on my behalf. I simply faced Him, held my hands out to Him and said: Please help me. I am nothing without You."⁴

- What can I do to strengthen the belief that the Lord not only can, but actually wants to move mountains for me?
 - In what ways is the Lord already assuring me of the light to come?

The Parable of the Elephant

As a man was passing the elephants at the circus, he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg and a stake in the ground. There were no chains or cages and it was obvious that the elephants could, at any time, break away from their bonds; but for some reason they did not. He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. "Well," the trainer said, "when they are very young and much smaller we use the same size rope to tie them down. At that age, it's enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe that the rope can still hold them, so they don't even try to break free."

- In what ways have I held onto the belief that I cannot break free from my addiction simply because I haven't succeeded before?

Truths and affirmations

Although our Savior doesn't rescue us from our trials, He can lift and sustain us through them. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated that our "most crucial challenge, once [we] have recognized the seriousness of [our] mistakes, will be to believe that [we] can change, that [we] can be a different [person]. To disbelieve that is clearly a satanic device designed to discourage and defeat [us]."⁵ Elder Jon M. Huntsman reassured us that "God did not put us here to fail. . . . [We] are laying the foundation of a great work, and that great work is [our] life."⁶ Indeed, as Elder Vern P. Stanfill affirmed: "There is no darkness so dense, so menacing or so difficult that it cannot be overcome by light. . . . But [in order to be freed] we have . . . to choose belief over doubt."⁷

Daily affirmations:

- I am a son/daughter of God and he loves me
- I am willing to be honest with myself, God and others as I learn to walk the path.

⁴ Sidreis Keller Agla, *By the Light of Grace* (Kindle Locations 931-937).

⁵ Jeffrey R. Holland, "For Times of Trouble," *BYU Devotional*, March 18, 1980.

⁶ Jon M. Huntsman Sr., "God Did Not Put Us Here to Fail," *BYU Devotional*, Nov 10, 2009.

⁷ Vern P. Stanfill, "Choose the Light," *Ensign*, Nov. 2015

Step One: Section 1 - Unmanageability and consequences inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The purpose

A common pattern in every addiction is 'continued use in spite of adverse consequences.' Because addiction is cunning, baffling and powerful—using tools of justification, rationalization and denial—it is often difficult to actually see the unmanageability in our life and the consequences that impact us. This inventory helps us see just how deep addiction's reach really is. Look for patterns of unmanageability, as well as the consequential harm that has been caused to ourselves and others. It is here that we come to acknowledge the chaos and damage that addiction has created in our life.

The inventory

Physical consequences

- In what ways have I changed or altered my appearance in order to support my sexual addiction?
- In what ways have my behaviors caused me to have problems sleeping?
- In what ways do I experience depression and anxiety as a result of acting out in my addiction.
- Do I skip meals?
 - Or Binge or overeat?
- Have I also engaged in drug (prescription or illicit) or alcohol use with lasting physical consequences?
- How have my addictive behaviors put me at risk of sexually transmitted diseases?
 - What about unplanned pregnancies, children out of wedlock or abortions?

Legal consequences

- In what ways have I broken the law to support my addiction?
- Have I ever been arrested, prosecuted, jailed, imprisoned or placed on probation due to my addiction?
- Have I been court ordered to attend any inpatient, outpatient, or any other therapeutic or rehabilitative programs?
- Has my addiction led to my name being added to any sex offender registries?

Schooling or educational consequences

- How has my behavior affected my efforts for focused study?
- In what ways has my behavior affected my attendance?
- Have my grades also suffered?
- Have I lost or sabotaged opportunities for educational opportunities or advancements?
- Have I become apathetic toward or abandoned educational goals?
- Have I given in to my compulsions while at school? In what ways?

Employment consequences

- In what ways have I put my job or reputation at risk in the workplace?
- Have I viewed pornography or acted out in other ways while at work?
- Have I sexually harassed anyone at work?
- How has apathy caused me to lose motivation for success?
- Have I lost the chance for promotion or lost my job all together due to my addiction?
- In what instances have I been dismissed, demoted or fired because of my addiction?

Financial consequences

- How much money have I wasted in expenses associated with my addiction (think broadly of both direct and indirect expenses)?
- Am I in debt due to my addiction?
 - How much?

Step One: Section 1 - Unmanageability and consequences inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- Who is aware of the debt?
- Have I sought help from others to alleviate the debt?
- Have I applied for more credit in order to pay off current debtors?
- Considering the amount spent on my addiction, do I have anything of value to show for it?

Reputation consequences

- In what ways has my character come into question and my reputation been put at risk?
- Have any rumors about my addictive behavior been started? What has been said about me? Is there any truth to what has been said?
- What behaviors led to the tainting of my character?
- How has my own view of my character changed because of my addiction?

Relationship consequences

- Do I find it difficult to stay committed in personal romantic and emotionally intimate relationships?
- Is it difficult for me to emotionally connect with those close to me?
- In what ways has my addiction negatively affected my relationship with my family or friends?
- How has my addiction affected my relationships with coworkers and supervisors?
- Have I not been there for others because I was tuned-out, preoccupied, unworthy, ashamed, etc.?
- Have I ever chosen to act out in my addiction instead of spending time with friends or family?

Marital consequences

- In what ways has my addiction caused me to feel unworthy of marriage?
- In what ways has my addiction caused me to feel as if no one would ever want to marry me?
- Do I avoid emotional contact with my spouse?
- Has my sexual behavior caused contention in my relationship with my spouse?
- How have I experienced a loss (or threat of loss) of marriage or family?

Mental consequences

- How have my sexual compulsions intruded and interfered with my ability to concentrate?
- Have I experienced bouts of memory loss?
- Do I find my mind wandering when I need to concentrate?
- In what ways have I lost track of time, been late, or missed important appointments or engagements because I was otherwise consumed by my addiction?
 - What responsibilities have I shirked?
 - Who have I let down?
- In what ways has my addiction left me feeling disconnected from reality?
- Do I sometimes feel like two different people?

Emotional consequences

- Describe the impact of my addiction on my feelings of self-worth, self-esteem and self-compassion.
 - What were the payoffs for these behaviors?
 - Were they worth it?
- Describe instances and feelings associated with working with ecclesiastical leaders over the course of the addiction
 - What consequences were associated with these conversations?
- How did I feel when revealing my addictive behaviors to my spouse or significant other?
 - How did the revelation impact our relationship?

Step One: Section 1 - Unmanageability and consequences inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- What feelings of loneliness and isolation have I experienced because of my addiction?
- Do I find myself experiencing emotional pendulum swings (highs and lows)?
- In what ways have I ever felt abandoned by myself?
- Does my addiction truly make me happy?
- Why do I stay?

Self-worth Consequences

- In what ways have I felt deep remorse concerning my sexual behavior?
 - Has this remorse turned to shame and self-hate?
 - What feelings of hopelessness and despair have I dealt with?
 - How have these feelings affected my feelings of self-worth?
- In what ways do I feel disconnected from family, friends, or God?
- Have I ever experienced suicidal thoughts, considered possible attempts or even attempted?
 - If yes, what was my motivation and how did it relate to emotional pain?
- Have I participated in self-harm in any capacity, such as cutting, picking, hair pulling, eraser burns, cigarette burns, under/over eating, denying self care or any other form of self-harm?

Spiritual consequences

- How have I felt abandoned by God?
- What beliefs do I have that make me feel unworthy of my Savior's grace?
- How do I feel that my Heavenly Father views me?
- How has my faith or testimony been stunted or become weakened?
- What are my feelings of unworthiness?
 - How worthy do I feel to pray?
 - What excuses do I use for not reading (or even touching) my scriptures?
 - What emotions do I feel when attending church (or even stepping foot inside the building)?
 - What else do I feel unworthy to participate in?

Serenity consequences

- How often do I worry that my sexual behaviors will be discovered by others?
- What actions have I taken to hide my addictive behaviors?

Continued use in spite of consequences

- In what ways have I continued using in my addiction even though I was fully aware of potential or impending consequences?
 - How have I taken greater risks due to the heightened excitement from possibly being caught?
- What negative consequences have I accepted and even grown accustomed to in order to stay in my addiction?

Conclusion

This is not a 'do it once and forget about it' exercise. It is an ongoing project. Most people simply can't remember all of the positive and negative aspects of addiction and recovery at any one time. Others experience new consequences as time passes, sometimes because of continued addictive behavior or sometimes because of old behaviors that are still generating new consequences. Seeing the unmanageability of our life and its accompanying negative consequences of addiction listed in one place can be very powerful. In order for the utmost effectiveness, it is recommended to revisit this inventory throughout our lifetime work of recovery, for more is always revealed at future stages.

Step One: Section 1 - Unmanageability and consequences inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Step One: Section 1 - Powerlessness inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The purpose

One of the pillars of successful and effective long term recovery is maintaining the knowledge that we are powerless over our addiction. It provides the opportunity to recognize and acknowledge our limits; what we can and cannot do and control, and where we have power and where we don't. It is important that we pay special attention to detail regarding different types of behavior and frequencies; starting with our earliest memories of being powerless and concluding with our most recent.

The inventory

Emotions

- In what ways have I been unable to recognize and manage my emotions?
- Does it seem as if I am able to bounce between emotions at what seems like a drop of a hat?
- Do my emotions feel like a giant pendulum, swinging from one end of the spectrum to the other with little control on my part?
- In what ways do my circumstances control my emotions?
- How often have I tried to relieve my emotional pain through acting out in my addiction?
 - Were my attempts at relief successful?
 - If so, how long did that relief last?
- Have I sabotaged myself when I have positive emotions by acting out?
 - Am I afraid to feel at all?

Thoughts

- In what ways have I been so consumed with lust that I was no longer aware of my surroundings?
- How often do I find myself obsessing about acting out?
 - How frequently do these thoughts interrupt my daily life?
- What strategies have I implemented to control my thoughts (i.e. singing hymns, memorizing scriptures, etc.).
 - Do these strategies work? If so, for how long?
 - What limitations did I experience?

Compulsions

- How often do I find myself obsessing and fantasizing about acting out in my addiction despite previously committing not to do so?
- Do I have control over my compulsions or do my compulsions have control over me? Explain.
- In what ways have I crossed boundaries that I had previously set for myself?

Sexual behaviors

- In what instances have my sexual urges and cravings become more powerful than my ability to control them?
 - In what ways have they also become compulsive?
- Have I ever been successful at stopping my addictive behavior? How many times?
 - If I have experienced success at stopping, why didn't I stay stopped?
 - In what ways do my failed attempts at stopping (or staying stopped) demonstrate my powerlessness over them?

Dishonesty and inability to keep my word

- What promises have I made to myself that I found I couldn't keep?
 - What about promises made to my spouse, priesthood leaders, therapist, sponsor and even to God?
 - What has prevented me from keeping these promises?
- How often have I lied about, covered up, or minimized my behavior?
- In what ways have I overtly lied to others in order to cover up my addiction?

Step One: Section 1 - Powerlessness inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- Who have I lied to?
- What commitments have I broken as a result of my addiction?

Compromised values

- Whom have I associated with that, addiction free, I normally wouldn't have?
- What places or establishments have I gone that I would not have frequented otherwise?
- Have I ever committed to avoiding the people or places listed above, yet didn't?
 - Was my failure due to weakened resolve or due to something out of my control?
- Is there something other than my own agency running my life?

Conclusion

In order for God to move our mountains, we must first acknowledge that we are small. In order for the Lord to fight our Goliath, we must first acknowledge that we are weak. And in order for God to heal us, we must first acknowledge that we are sick. Elder Kim B. Clark assured: "None of us are perfect. Sometimes we get stuck. We get distracted or discouraged. We stumble. But if we look to Jesus Christ with a repentant heart, He will lift us up, cleanse us from sin, forgive us, and heal our hearts."⁸

⁸ Kim B. Clark, "Look Unto Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, May 2019.

Step One: Section 2 - The underlying truth about sexual addiction

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The Kiwi and the Golden Substance

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUnGlgGRJpo>

- In what ways did the Kiwi suffer physically?
 - What about emotionally?
 - Spiritually?
- In what ways can I relate to the physical cravings the Kiwi experienced?
 - What about the emotional torment?
 - What about the spiritual despair?

Reflection questions

- At what point in my life did my addictive behaviors begin to get out of control?
- How do I feel emotionally before acting out? How do I feel after acting out?
- How often do I use fantasy, masturbation or other sexual activity to cover up stress, shame and other emotions?
- How long and in what ways have I been leading a double life?

Arguably the most powerful human drive, “lust is what we get when we impose a distorted spiritual attitude upon a natural drive.”⁹ Indeed, “living in today’s sexually wicked world is like walking through a battlefield which Satan has heavily mined with [seductively hidden] traps . . . carefully [and] cleverly placed in today’s social structure to destroy the noble sons and daughters of God. . . . pornography consumes its victims with lust . . . [and] creates an unquenchable yearning for ever-increasing cycles of artificial stimulation. It is perhaps the most devastating, addicting weapon Satan has used in these last days.”¹⁰

- What is my first memory of lust, in any form, entering my life?
- What ‘healthy’ behaviors and substances have, at times, become the focus of my lust?
- In what ways do I now recognize that I’ve used lust as a coping mechanism?
 - How have I used sexual lust to reduce, numb or escape uncomfortable emotion?
- In what ways has my addiction disrupted my ability to emotionally connect with others?
- What extremes have I gone to in order to hide my addiction from others?
- In what ways have I felt robotic and trance-like in my addictive behavior?
 - How does this support the notion that I am powerless over my addiction?
- How have my cravings demanded more frequent and extreme addictive behavior over time?
- How can I better find the balance between being pleased with my efforts and taking credit for my efforts?
- What is my definition of love?
 - What about lust?
 - What is the same about the two?
 - What is different?
 - How is love an outward feeling?
 - How is lust an inward feeling?
- In what ways has my lust been selfish?

⁹ SA Step into Action 1, 2 and 3 p. 40

¹⁰ Steven A. Cramer, *Armed with Righteousness: Winning Your Battles with Satan*, Kindle locations 1989, 2075-2077

Step One: Section 2 - The underlying truth about sexual addiction

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- How is love an outward expression of selflessness?
- In what ways has Satan tricked me into thinking lust is love?

"I believed I needed to get married so that my lustful cravings would have an avenue to be relieved. Once I was married and able to have sex guilt free, my cravings didn't stop. Many times after I was intimate with my wife, I found myself craving pornography even more. I was amazed and frustrated at my own actions of sabotage. No matter how much my addiction told me, sex was never the answer."¹¹

- How has my addiction affected my view on marital intimacy?

"Based on the images I filled my brain with, I conditioned myself to . . . believe that the single one thing men wanted from me was my ability to perform in the bedroom. I grew to believe that that performance was what I was good for, what I was made for. Sexual intimacy became completely carnal and there was no love or peace or tenderness associated with it . . . I didn't know how to be intimate and feel the Spirit. I only knew what I'd been taught . . . Of course I'd heard people talking about having beautiful Spirit filled intimacy, but I thought they were either lying or it was just completely unattainable for me."¹²

- How have my previous experiences with lust and intimacy impacted the way I view intimacy with my current or future spouse?
- How do I feel about being wired to love and be loved, in so many aspects?
- How does it make me feel to know that the Savior is aware of hidden dangers and is willing to navigate me through them?
- How does it make me feel to realize that the Lord doesn't just wait for me to reach for Him, but also actively seeks me out?
- In what ways is the Savior's hand stretched out still toward me?

Truths and affirmations

Let us open up the doors to our isolated and secretive behavior and let the Lord's light shine on that which has been long hidden. For the fact is, there is no other armor so strong that will turn aside the shafts of iniquities as will simple unadorned truth. The doctrine of truth is one of the most powerful gifts bestowed upon us, as witnessed by President Marion G. Romney: "This doctrine . . . is true and is from the Almighty Himself. He has revealed to us in these latter days the principles by which we may . . . rise from the fallen condition in which we are to the condition we must reach in preparation for the return of the Redeemer to the world."¹³

¹¹ Name withheld

¹² <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/2012/11/clearing-swirling-fog-of-confused.html>

¹³ Marion G. Romney, "We Believe in Being Honest," *Ensign*, Nov 1976

Step One: Section 2 - The underlying truth about sexual addiction

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Daily Affirmations:

- I am worthy of connection.
- My past no longer has power over me.

Step One: Section 2 - Sexual Events Inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The purpose

We write a sexual events inventory in an effort to get honest by breaking free from our secrets and restoring our integrity. In this inventory we strictly list the sexual events that have occurred in our life thus far.

This Step often brings up uncomfortable feelings as we excavate memories we have long kept buried. It is common to be triggered by our past behavior written out in black and white, just as we are by almost any emotionally charged situation. In an effort to create a safe environment in which to work, we ought to prayerfully plead with our Father in Heaven to protect us during this process and strengthen us to resist our triggers. It is also especially important to give ourselves permission to take breaks when we feel overwhelmed and stay close to our recovery support network.

“I found it hard to let go of shame as I tried to write my inventory. Reviewing my actions allowed the thoughts in my head to scream louder; ‘See, this is who you are. You can’t change this!’ The shame was so suffocating that I found it harder and harder to pick the pen back up. After some advice from my sponsor, I started imagining doing my inventory like I was a clerk in a warehouse. Walking up and down the aisles, counting how many of each item I had and writing it down. As that clerk, I didn’t judge why I had an item or why there was so much of another item. I simply noted it and moved on. My goal in making an inventory was not to judge, but to record.”¹⁴

When writing our inventory, we may also be tempted to justify our behavior and blame it on others. We often do this to dull the pain of our memories and the accountability that healing requires. However, dwelling on whose ‘fault’ it is will only hinder our recovery. The facts of our life are just that—facts. Past actions just *are*. The purpose of this Step is not to judge whether we, our parents, or anyone else is right or wrong, it’s just to get us aligned in the right direction so that we can be successful in our recovery.

The ultimate purpose of this inventory is to help us honestly acknowledge to ourselves, and to another person, that we are powerless over our life as we have lived it, and that it is unmanageable by our thinking alone. A critical component to success of our recovery, writing this inventory is often the first time we realize just how much we really need our Savior’s help. For many of us, this is the first time we have stopped our activity and really taken stock of the wreckage of our past. Just like other wounds that need to be healed, we must first look honestly and thoroughly at our sickness. Hope blooms as we boldly face our past and surrender all that it holds unto our Father.

The Inventory

We write this inventory by detailing all our sexual experiences, whether in thought or in action, such as recurring fantasies, obsessions, objectifications or sexual thoughts which may interrupt our daily routine. We can organize our inventory any way we want; splitting it up by age, places lived, subject or earliest to most recent memory, however the following categories and questions can be used as a guide in this process:

Childhood

- What is my earliest recollection of anything sexual?
- Was there anything unusual about it?

¹⁴ Name withheld

Step One: Section 2 - Sexual Events Inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- How did it make me feel?
- What pre-puberty experiences have I had due to sexual curiosity?
 - What behaviors did it involve?
 - Did it involve other people? If so, in what ways?
- Did I receive any sexual education as a child, whether from parents, family members, friends or teachers?
 - What did I learn? Was it helpful or accurate?
 - Did what was taught contribute in any way to my curiosity or future acting out?
- At what age did I first become conscious of my appearance?
 - In what ways have I dressed to attract the attention of others?
 - How do I dress in order to attract such attention?
 - What kind of attention do I hope to gain by dressing this way?
 - What message am I sending by dressing this way?
 - In what ways do I dress to avoid the attention of others?
 - What message am I sending by dressing this way?
- What is my first memory of being affected by others' clothing emphasizing their bodies?
 - How has this evolved over time?
 - In what ways did this play a role in the development in *street lust*¹⁵?

Childhood sexual abuse

- Was I sexually abused as a child?
 - What did it involve?
 - Who was involved?

Self-inflicted sexual abuse

- In what ways have I sexually abused myself?
 - How does sexually abusing myself make me feel?
 - In what ways does it numb my pain?

Adolescence to adulthood

- When did I first discover masturbation?
 - Did it progress over time; becoming compulsive and frequent?
 - How do I feel after I act out in this behavior?
 - In what ways have I hidden this behavior?
 - How frequently have I acted out in this behavior in the past?
 - What about currently?
 - How has the frequency of this behavior fluctuated?
- At what age was I first exposed to pornography?
 - What forms of pornography have I accessed?
 - How frequently do I indulge in viewing pornography?
 - In what ways have I hidden my pornography use?
 - How frequent is this behavior currently?
 - In what ways do I access pornography?
- Does my sexual compulsivity involve other people?
 - If so, who?

¹⁵ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

Step One: Section 2 - Sexual Events Inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- When did I first start entertaining sexually explicit media such as music, movies, TV Shows, books, websites etc.?
 - How often do I think about them?
 - How often do I actually access them?
 - What justifications and rationalizations do I use to allow this behavior to continue?
- At what age do I first remember getting lost in sexual fantasy?
 - What specific people, situations or behaviors have I fantasized about most?
 - In what ways have I hidden my fantasies?
 - How frequent is this behavior?

Consensual sexual relationships

- At what age do I first recollect having a consensual sexual encounter with another person?
 - In what ways did I use them for my own self-gratification?
 - In what ways have I hidden this behavior?
 - How frequent is this behavior?
- How many relationships have I been in?
 - Do I feel like I have to be in a relationship to feel valuable?
 - Do they progress quickly sexually?
- When a relationship ends, how long do I wait before I start seeking another?
 - Have I engaged in overlapping relationships?
- Is the anticipation of a new relationship more exciting than the relationship itself?
- Do I quickly become bored with new relationships?
- Why have these relationships ended?

Married life

- In what ways have I targeted my spouse with my lustful behavior?
 - Have I ever used lustful language toward my spouse?
 - Have I ever forced my spouse to have sex?
 - In what ways have I manipulated my spouse into participating in sexual behavior that they have resisted?
 - Have I ever had sex with my spouse while they were crying?
 - Have I ever heard any form of 'no' from my spouse, but continued anyway?
 - Have I ever engaged in fantasy during sexual relations with my spouse; thinking about or pretending to be with someone else?
- In what ways have I lusted after others outside of my marriage?
 - Have I ever used sexually suggestive language with others?
 - Have I ever tried to arouse others by the way I dress or act?
 - Have I engaged in extra-marital affairs?
 - Do they progress quickly sexually?
 - When an affair ends, how long do I wait before I start seeking another?
 - Have I engaged in overlapping affairs?
 - Is the anticipation of a new affair more exciting than the relationship itself?
 - Do I quickly become bored and begin anticipating new conquests?
- In what ways has my behavior damaged the trust my spouse has had in me?
 - In what ways has it damaged their trust in God?

Sexual behaviors relating to others

- In what ways have I physically harmed others?
 - What about sexually?

Step One: Section 2 - Sexual Events Inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- Emotionally?
- In what ways have I objectified others?
 - How have I participated in *street lust*¹⁶?
- Have I ever participated in exhibitionism or voyeurism?
- Have I ever entered sexually explicit chat rooms?
 - How often?
 - Do I engage or participate in any way while in these rooms?
- Have I communicated sexual content with anyone under the legal age of consent?
 - Even with those that may 'say' they are legal?
 - How have I hidden this behavior?
- Have I ever participated in phone sex?
 - What about *sexting*¹⁷?
- Have I ever placed—or responded to—a personal ad, either online or in a newspaper or magazine?
 - Have I hook-up with anyone as a result?
- Have I ever hired a prostitute or escort?
- Have I ever frequented a brothel or massage parlor for the purpose of sexual gratification?
- Have I put myself or others at risk of sexually transmitted diseases?
 - Have I been tested? Why or why not?
 - If positive, have I ever hidden those results from anyone I've had sex with?

Financial

- In what ways have I used essential income or stolen money to support my addiction?
- How have I risked my home or my job because of my addiction?
- How often have I neglected financial responsibility (paying bills on time, child care, child support, etc.) to continue my use?

"One branch of my addiction, an especially long branch, took me down the path of having an emotional affair with a man I met through a popular massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG). I spent most of my time online talking to this man while my husband was at work or sleeping. Eventually, talking online wasn't enough and I journeyed across three states to meet who I thought was the man of my dreams. What started as a fantasy ended in a nightmare disguised as a brief sexual encounter that led to devastating personal shame, marital distress and disfellowshipped from the church. Gratefully, all three have since recovered, and I am forever grateful for my Savior who saved me from it all, but that experience is proof that there is no such thing as 'I'd never do that' in addiction because I swore I would never cheat on my husband, and yet I did."¹⁸

Church membership

- How have I risked my standing or my membership in the church due to my addiction?
- In what ways have I lied or minimized my addiction to avoid church discipline?

¹⁶ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

¹⁷ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

¹⁸ Name withheld

Step One: Section 2 - Sexual Events Inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Legal

- In what ways have I broken the law in order to participate in my addiction?
- Have I ever been ticketed, arrested or served jail or prison time for my addictive behavior?
 - What about sexual solicitation?
 - Have I ever solicited a minor for sex?

Loose ends

- Is there anything in my life that I need to inventory that was not on this list?
 - Did I feel relief realizing it wasn't covered by this inventory?
- Take the time to add anything not covered by this inventory, remembering that honesty is the first step toward freedom.

Sharing our inventory

Sharing this inventory with our sponsor is a major step toward giving our past to the Savior; allowing Him to heal us through His Atonement and grace. The purpose of this inventory, as well as others in Step One, is to honestly acknowledge our powerlessness and unmanageability. Giving our past away through humble prayer enables the healing power of the atonement to begin to mend us spiritually, emotionally and physically.

As with all inventories, it is important to share our Sexual Events Inventory once it is written. An unshared inventory is much like a pile of freshly swept dirt left sitting on a clean floor waiting to be delivered to the trash can. Sharing our Sexual Events Inventory with our sponsor not only breaks us out of the shame and regret of the past, but the toxic isolation of our present. It also disallows shock value and victim thinking from muddying the purity of our accountability.

Conclusion

The adversary would have us believe that our situation is hopeless. However, we begin to experience tremendous relief as we come unto Christ and begin admitting what we have done and that we are powerless over our addiction. Such courage breaks us out of toxic isolation and casts the light of honesty and truth on the darkest parts of our life, as promised by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God . . . May we come unto him . . . and be healed . . . When the storms of life make this difficult, may we still . . . [keep] our eye fixed on him forever and single to his glory. In doing so we too will walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of life's difficulties and remain unterrified amid any rising winds of despair."¹⁹

¹⁹ Jeffrey R. Holland, "Come unto Me," BYU Devotional, March 2, 1997.

Step One: Section 3 - The medical research into sexual addiction

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Pleasure Unwoven

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFcAQdEwDhY>

- How does understanding the science behind an addiction change my view of myself?
- What things can I do to help my brain to heal from the damage done from addiction?

“Addiction is a special kind of disease that causes intense cravings which overpower thinking and judgment to such a degree that unhealthy behaviors take priority over moral beliefs and values. It is continually progressive and overwhelms the strength of those even with the strongest willpower.”²⁰

- How have my sexual addictive thoughts and behaviors opposed my moral standards and religious beliefs?
 - What feelings about myself has this conflict caused?
- In what ways have I viewed myself as having a ‘weak or defective’ moral character and judged myself incorrectly, not understanding the true nature of addiction?
- How does such newly revealed research help dispel beliefs I’ve had about myself?
- How does learning about the medical evidence that verifies addiction as a brain disease help me understand my powerlessness over my behavior?

“When I learned that there were medical reasons for my urges and actions, it made sense why my addiction became increasingly harder to resist the farther down the path I walked. This helped me realize how important everyday little things were in working my program. Much like having a food allergy, I would take precautions to avoid that food, and if exposure did happen, I would have a plan of action to help mitigate the consequences of said exposure. It is the same for my addiction. There are things I need to avoid and when exposed I need to treat it right away before I end up doing something I don’t want to do.”²¹

- If willpower alone is not enough to battle my brain disease and the adversary collectively, what else is needed?
- Read the plea of a father found in Mark 9:24.
 - In what ways can I reach out in similar humility to ask for help?

“We often start with the mindset; ‘I’ll never do that.’ And then the flaxen cord of addiction grasps us and leads us down a path that ends at; ‘I thought I’d never do that.’ The reality is, there is no such thing as ‘never’ in addiction, for it is corrosively progressive.”²²

²⁰ Healing Through Christ Recovery Workbook, Step One: Section 3

²¹ Name withheld

²² Name withheld

Step One: Section 3 - The medical research into sexual addiction

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- In what ways has my moral judgment and ability to choose right from wrong become compromised?
- In what ways can I relate to the idea that stopping my addictive behavior isn't the hard part, but rather, it's staying stopped?
- What does it mean to be responsible for my own recovery?
- How do I feel about the fact that healing my brain will require deliberate and consistent daily effort?
- In what ways can I relate Ether 12:27 to my addiction and God's willingness to rescue me?
- In what ways have the Lord's blessings poured out upon me so far in my recovery journey?
- Read Mosiah 24:10-15:
 - In what ways has the Lord instilled courage in me, strengthened me and sustained me already as I begin my recovery journey?

Truths and affirmations

Coming to understand the roots of our addiction is like ripping off our *scarlet letter*²³ and refusing to let it own and define us. We simply have a disease. Is it a serious disease? Yes. But, once diagnosed, we can turn completely to the source of healing – our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as if we had a form of 'spiritual diabetes', there are daily procedures that we have to adopt in order for the disease to progressively loosen its grip on us. As we continue to do so, the Lord will heal our wounds and make those areas stronger than they ever were before, as testified by Elder Orson F. Whitney: "No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted . . . All that we suffer and all that we endure . . . builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire."²⁴ Regardless of our having this disease, and perhaps even *because* we do, we can come to live a rich spiritual life and find the joy that is our divinely human birthright.

Daily affirmations:

- I will allow Christ to do what I cannot.
- I will find small things I can do today to turn my will over to God.

²³ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

²⁴ Orson F. Whitney, *Improvement Era*, March 1966, 211.

Step One: Section 3 - Obsession and compulsion inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The purpose

How many times have we acted out in our addiction, but can't seem to remember much afterward? Or experienced an insatiable drive to think or act in a way that we seem to have little to no control over? This war, as President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated, is "so bitter, so intense . . . [and] it has never ceased. It is the war between truth and error, between agency and compulsion The war goes on . . . It is waged in our own lives, day in and day out, in our homes, in our work, in our school associations; it is waged over questions of love and respect, of loyalty and fidelity, of obedience and integrity. We are all involved in it . . . each of us. [However], we are winning, and the future never looked brighter."²⁵

Although obsession and compulsion are very closely related, there are slight, yet distinct differences between the two. Obsession is a *mental* struggle; an internal drive that dominates our thoughts and feeds our compulsion. Compulsion is an irresistible *physical* impulse to physically *act* on our obsession.

The inventory

The power of obsessive thoughts

- Identify some instances when I find my thoughts wandering to things of a sexual nature without me even realizing it.
 - When and where does this usually happen?
- Do my thoughts ever turn sexual in unassuming or even 'holy' places such as school, work, church or even the Temple?
 - Why does this happen?
 - How does this make me feel?
- In what ways do I struggle with *street lust*²⁶?
 - Do I find myself looking at people out exercising when I'm driving down the street?
 - Do I find myself glancing/staring/ogling others when I'm driving down the street, visiting the beach, the gym or anywhere else?
 - What am I thinking about when observing these people?
 - In what ways do I justify street lust as something innocent or necessary?

The 'escape' thoughts

- What obsessive thoughts do I have that aren't necessarily sexual in nature, but still offer an escape from my current reality?
 - Do I fantasize being in someone else's family? What does that family look like?
 - Do I fantasize having a different job, living in a different location, having a different spouse... etc. What do these circumstances look like?
 - Why do I think I want to escape my current life so much that I seek these thoughts to feel comfort and happiness?
 - What emotions am I trying to cover up?

The pull of sexual compulsion

- Identify some instances in which I've found myself acting out and wondered 'how did I get here?'
- List times that I have found myself (intentionally or not) scheduling time to act out.
 - How long in advance do I plan them out?
 - What is the driving force behind these decisions?
- List sexual situations in which I felt compelled to be there without prior planning.

²⁵ Gordon B. Hinckley, "An Unending Conflict, a Victory Assured," *Ensign*, Jun 2007

²⁶ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

Step One: Section 3 - Obsession and compulsion inventory

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The relationship between the two

- In what ways do my obsessive thoughts and compulsion interact with and depend on each other?
- How often do my obsessive thoughts lead to compulsive behavior? List some examples.
- Could my compulsion survive without the root of obsession? Explain.

Conclusion

Listing out our obsessions and compulsions can be quite daunting and can even lead to feelings of hopelessness. We often relate our 'addiction' to just physically acting out, but when we come to understand that our addiction also thrives within our mind it can be extremely overwhelming. Elder Delbert L. Stapley reminds us that "free agency is an everlasting principle which has existed with God from all eternity. It is a gift from Him given with the hope that we will apply it wisely in the conduct of our personal lives."²⁷ However, our obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors undermine and even incapacitates the very agency we need to choose a different path. Let us continue in recovery and reclaim that which is divinely ours; our right to choose and act of our own free will.

²⁷ Delbert L. Stapley, "Using Our Free Agency," *Ensign*, May 1975

Step One: Section 4 - Exposing the cunning tactics of the adversary

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Reflection questions

- Why is it important to recognize Satan's influence in my life?
- In what ways does losing my agency leave me exposed and defenseless to the power of the adversary?

*We are beginning to recognize how often the adversary "whispers suggestions of defeat and hopelessness. 'There is no way out of these chains.' 'You are stuck.' 'It is your own fault that you are in this situation and there is no help.' 'You have no right to receive help.' 'There is no chance of escape.' When judged by our own limited powers, Satan's lies can seem very reasonable, but there is no situation beyond the reach of Christ's power of deliverance. If we would win our battles with Satan, we must never abandon our faith in Christ's power to rescue us because to do so is to surrender to the enemy and accept defeat."*²⁸

- In what ways has the adversary edged me over so slowly from the Light down into the Nothing much like the flaxen cord spoken of in the scriptures?²⁹
- How does feeling apathetic regarding the influence of the adversary set me up for failure?
- In what ways has the adversary convinced me that I am evil with no hope of ever changing?
- If Satan is devoid of integrity, why do I think I am so quick to believe him?
- In what ways has Satan enticed me to sin and then turned on me once I did?
- Take a moment to reflect on the internal thoughts I hear throughout the day. Are most of them of God, or of the adversary?

*"One of the most strategic maneuvers that the adversary employs is his sometimes flawless ability to keep his identity cloaked. He had me so convinced that every negative thought I had, entered my mind simply because it was true. I realized that in order to banish these thoughts and his power over me I had to turn to him and face him head on; look him in the eye and literally say to him 'I see you, I know this is you and I will no longer allow you to have power over me.' My bold recognition and acknowledgement of his influence over me greatly diminished that very power."*³⁰

- How can increased awareness of the tactics of the adversary strengthen my resolve?
- How can I recognize shame/negative self talk better?

²⁸ Steven A. Cramer, (2011-10-01). Putting on the Armor of God, Kindle Locations 3971-4013.

²⁹ See 2 Nephi 26:22

³⁰ Name withheld

Step One: Section 4 - Exposing the cunning tactics of the adversary

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

“Focus and perspective play a big part in my recovery. The adversary loves to have me focus on the problem rather than the solution. As I couldn’t overcome my addiction, I imagined a giant mountain of sin stretching so high that even Jesus couldn’t overcome it. This caused shame so deep that I knew there wasn’t a way out. I was looking through my own eyes and seeing no solution. I have learned to see myself from my Heavenly Father’s perspective which helps me dispel the lies. He sees hope, where I saw none. He sees love, where I saw judgment. He sees a solution, where I saw the problem. Seeing through his eyes allows me to see how I can access the atonement today. I don’t need to overcome the mountain today, just how can I move one step further down the path. Accessing the Savior’s atonement is something I need every day.”³¹

- In what ways can I build my foundation on my Redeemer so that the Devil’s mighty storm has no power over me?
- What does the nature of Satan’s lies teach me about his character?
- How can increased awareness of the lies of the adversary and turning to my Savior bring me peace, comfort, hope, sustenance and rest?
- How do I feel knowing that the Lord will help me recognize the influence of the adversary?
- How does it feel knowing the following:
 - That I can once again not only feel close to the Spirit, but be worthy of His presence?
 - That Christ not only can, but will, rebuke the adversary on my behalf?
 - That He will free me from the darkness that holds me captive?
 - That the Lord’s power to sustain is available to me personally?
 - That he will continually defend me; spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically?
- Reread **‘The spiritual promise of Step One: Section 4’** located in the *Healing Through Christ Recovery Workbook* and change the focus to first person; reading the entire section in the “I” voice.
 - What did I learn?
 - What promises were made to me?
 - How does it make me feel?

Truths and affirmations

It is comforting to know that “the primary reason [Christ] came to this earth was to rescue us from Satan’s power. . . [The deceiver] detracts us from the infinite power of the Savior’s love and Atonement, which will cleanse the repentant sinner from even the filthiest of sins, and then bring us back to the Father in spotless beauty and purity. . . Satan loves to catch us in that trap, but it is never too late to change . . . It is not difficult to believe in ourselves once we discover how much God believes in us.”³² Even though we may be powerless over the attacks of the adversary, we can—with the help of our Savior, who is mightier than all—reject his advances, as divinely promised: “Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that [we] must build [our] foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon [us], it shall have no power over [us] to drag [us] down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which [we] are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.”³³

Daily affirmations:

³¹ Name withheld

³² Steven A. Cramer, *Conquering Your Own Goliaths*, Cedar Fort, Inc., Kindle Location 81, 809-816, .

³³ The Book of Mormon, Helaman 5:12.

Step One: Section 4 - Exposing the cunning tactics of the adversary

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- In Christ I am protected, I can heal and I will overcome.
- I accept the grace of Christ's Infinite Atonement.

Step One: Section 4 - Inventory: Whisperings of the adversary

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The purpose

As we have discovered, the adversary is extremely cunning. And our addiction has left us especially susceptible to his influence. In an effort to recognize and acknowledge his lies, it is helpful to inventory them so that they are more easily recognizable in the future. Once recognized, we can counter them with truths and share them with others in an effort to make them more real in our minds and hearts. It takes a lot of time, courage, honesty, vulnerability and strength—all bestowed on us by our Heavenly Father—in order to decipher, dismantle and eventually disable these lies. But with His gentle encouragement we can expose them; illuminating them with His light of truth.

The inventory

The purpose of the following questions is to elicit awareness of the different, often very personal, ways the adversary influences our thoughts and behaviors. Each question is followed by a number of examples that we may or may not relate to. Either way, it is best to write a list for each question detailing each of the ways the adversary influences us in that category; allowing us to “*uncover, discover and discard*”³⁴ so that we may come to reject the many lies that are whispered to us.

(Although the examples are listed in the first person, they can also be heard in the second person [you, your, you’re], or even in the third person [they, them, their] when referring to lies that compare ourselves to how we “should” be or to others.)

- What lies have been spoken to me regarding my addiction?
 - I don’t really have an addiction. I just have a bad habit.
 - I can stop anytime I want to.
 - Only guys have this problem, you’re just a freak of nature.
 - Good members of the church don’t struggle with this.

“Satan is very sly about getting us isolated, and once we are alone, he pummels us with fiery whispers that we are dirty, horrible, worthless and hopeless and that we’ll never make it because we are so unworthy. And because we are isolated and alone those words are the only words we hear and we can’t help but believe them. And then we believe them for so long that suddenly that small seed that he planted with a whisper has now become absolute knowledge and he has us right where he wants us: locked and bound in blistering misery. But the truth, the real truth is infinitely opposite. So, let us rest there, for there we are found.”³⁵

- What lies have been spoken to me regarding shame?
 - I am dirty, broken and hopeless.
 - I deserve every bad thing that ever happens to me.
 - I am not worthy of love.
 - No one would ever love me if they knew the truth about me.

³⁴ Recovery Slogan

³⁵ Name withheld

Step One: Section 4 - Inventory: Whisperings of the adversary

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

“The adversary would play two parts in my head. Rationalization and Shame. I would hear things such as ‘You deserve it’ or ‘This isn’t that bad!’ only to be followed by ‘See you are a horrible person!’ or ‘You are not strong enough to overcome this!’ I can see now how these were all lies to manipulate me into continuing in my addiction. Hindsight is great, but I have had to learn how to see the truth in the moment. I sometimes have to ask myself, what is the source of this thought? If the source is something other than the Holy Spirit, I try to think of what God would want me to hear at this moment in time.”³⁶

- What lies have been told to me regarding my worthiness?
 - Carnal desires are ingrained in me, therefore I’m innately unworthy.
 - The Temple is so white; I’ll defile it if I go in there.
 - I am the runt of God’s children.
 - Because of what you have done, you deserve every bad thing that happens to you.
- What Lies have been spoken to me regarding my bishop?
 - If I tell the bishop, he’ll hate me and think I’m gross. He might even tell people.
 - If I told him, I’d only be wasting his time, and he won’t understand anyway.
 - I’m just a number, my problems aren’t that important.
 - It was just one little slip, I’ll just tell him if it happens again.
- What lies has he whispered regarding 12-Step support groups?
 - I’m not as bad as ‘those’ people.
 - I’m too far gone for some group to be able to help me.
 - I don’t need to attend meetings; I can do it on my own.
 - Surely, no one has done THAT.
- What lies have been told to me regarding my sponsor?
 - Getting a sponsor is a total waste of my time, and theirs.
 - If I tell my sponsor that I slipped, I’ll only let them down again.
 - If I’m honest with my sponsor they’ll know the real me and be disgusted
 - My sponsor cannot help me.
- What lies have been told to me regarding my current or future spouse?
 - You can’t tell anyone you date about your addiction, they’ll be disgusted by you.
 - I’m not worthy to marry anyone who treats me well, I deserve less than that.
 - I have to sexually perform for my spouse the way I’ve seen in pornography.
 - I love my spouse too much to tell them about my struggle because it will just hurt them.
- What lies have been told to me regarding God?
 - Heavenly Father and Jesus are so disappointed in me; I can’t imagine they love me, or that they are willing or even able to help me.
 - I’m not worthy to pray, and even if I did, God won’t listen anyway.
 - If I share my truth with Heavenly Father, He will only condemn me.
 - If I could only change, I know that God would forgive me. Too bad I can’t.

³⁶ Name withheld

Step One: Section 4 - Inventory: Whisperings of the adversary

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Once our inventory of lies is complete, take some time to go back over it, replacing each lie with a truth. Such truths may be difficult to recognize at first; requiring humble prayer and quiet meditation. List the truths on a separate piece of paper, titled 'My Truth List.' This list is to become our mantra. It is where we go when we feel shrouded in hopelessness and despair. We may even choose some of the truths to repeat as affirmations to help us to begin to believe them.

Reflection

- How did it feel listing all my lies?
 - In turn, how did it feel to list all of the opposing truths to each of the lies?
- What have I learned from this process?
- What can I do to help recognize Satan's lies as soon as they are spoken to me?
 - How can the power of my own belief aid me in this endeavor?
 - How can the promise and blessing to always remember the Savior help me turn away from the enticements of the adversary?

Conclusion

In order to shift our focus from believing lies to believing truths, we must counteract each lie with actual truth. President Uchtdorf testified: "God's light is real. It is available to all . . . The darkness will surely fade, because it cannot exist in the presence of light. As we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. And day by day, the hope of God's light will grow within us, 'brighter and brighter until the perfect day.' To all who feel they walk in darkness, I invite you to rely on this certain promise spoken by the Savior of mankind: 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"³⁷

³⁷ : Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Hope of God's Light," *Ensign*, May 2013, Holy Bible KJV John 8:12

Step One: Section 4 - Exposing the cunning tactics of the adversary

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Discerning the influence of the Spirit

1. We feel happy, calm and peaceful.
 2. We feel full of light.
 3. Our mind is clear.
 4. We feel a great love for God and our fellow man.
 5. We feel generous.
 6. We aren't easily offended.
 7. We feel forgiving and kind.
 8. We feel confident in what we do.
 9. We enjoy the company of others.
 10. We feel outgoing.
 11. We are glad when others succeed.
 12. We want others to be happy.
 13. We think and say the best things about others.
 14. We gladly and willingly perform church duties.
 15. We desire to pray and read the scriptures.
 16. We strive to keep all the Lord's commandments.
 17. We desire to help others, with no recognition.
 18. We recognize & surrender our shortcomings.
 19. We recognize the Lord's hand in our life often.
 20. We live in the moment.
 21. We embrace our current circumstances.
 22. We practice self love and charity towards others.
 23. We are open to feedback and change.
 24. We make our salvation a priority.
 25. We make self-care a priority.
 26. We are grateful for our blessings and the Lord's tender mercies.
1. We feel unhappy and depressed.
 2. We feel dark and heavy.
 3. Our mind is muddled and confused.
 4. We feel hard and cold inside.
 5. We feel selfish and possessive.
 6. We feel on edge and easily bothered.
 7. We feel defensive and resentful.
 8. We feel discouraged and not good enough.
 9. We isolate.
 10. We feel empty and hollow.
 11. We are envious of others' success.
 12. We despise and feel vengeful toward others.
 13. We are critical of others and tend to gossip.
 14. We feel resentful of church duties.
 15. We feel opposed to prayer and scripture study.
 16. We find the commandments restrictive.
 17. We seek recognition and benefit in all things.
 18. We minimize or hide our shortcomings.
 19. We question the Lord's influence in our life.
 20. We dwell on the past or the future.
 21. We envy what we don't have.
 22. We shame and criticize ourselves and others.
 23. We resist feedback and change.
 24. We avoid or obsess over thinking about heaven.
 25. We feel undeserving of self-care.
 26. We focus on all the bad things in our lives.

Discerning the influence of the Adversary

Step One: Section 5 – The many faces of denial

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Reflection questions

- How did it feel to read about all the different aspects and facets of denial?
 - Which aspects, at first glance, do I relate to the most?
- In what ways does living in denial keep me in isolation?
- How is living in denial actually giving my addiction permission to control me?

“Part of coming into my truth was acknowledging that the opposite of denial was allowance, or permission. That I would allow the truth to be told and the reality of my circumstance to sink in. That I would give permission for the consequences to fall where they may. In doing so I took my power back and reduced the hold that the adversary had over me. No longer was I blindfolded and cloaked.”³⁸

- Why would Satan strive to keep me in denial?

“Denial is what I do best as an addict. I don’t want to deal with my feelings or a difficult situation, so I ignore it and act out. The main reason that I want to deny something is that I am scared. I fear that I will be judged, or that I might lose something I love or that I may even die. Overcoming denial has helped me see that the truth is a lot less scary than anything I come up with in my head. I have found that God wants to replace the fear that drives my denial with peace, love and acceptance.”³⁹

- Why is my addiction dependent on denial?
- In what ways have I labeled my thoughts and behaviors as ‘stagnant’ in order to deny its progressive nature?
- How can seeing myself as a sick person trying to get better, rather than a bad person trying to be good, nurture my progression?
- What external people or circumstances have I used as an excuse to not work recovery?

In order to be free from the denial that has smothered the truth of our addiction, we need to deliberately “shake off the awful chains by which [we] are bound.”⁴⁰ Indeed, as Elder Marvin J. Ashton taught: “Chains weigh heavily on troubled hearts and souls. They relegate us to lives of no purpose or light. They cause us to become confused and lose the spirit. . . . But none should feel hopeless. Lift those chains and fight back for personal dignity, peace, and purpose. . . . We must face

³⁸ Name withheld

³⁹ Name withheld

⁴⁰ The Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 1:13.

Step One: Section 5 – The many faces of denial

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

up to the hard reality of life that damaging chains are broken only by people of courage and commitment who are willing to struggle and weather the pain.”⁴¹

- How does knowing that my Savior embraces my imperfections help me also embrace them?
- In what ways is self-discovery and self-honesty a holy place?

Truths and affirmations

Living in denial creates its own special form of suffering. To become free from this suffering we must first admit we are trapped and recognize that we are using denial to escape the reality of our situation. To come out of denial, we must first stop denying. It can be scary at first, but when we come clean we no longer have need to hide; we have no need to deny. Elder Marvin J. Ashton further acknowledged that “a truly wise person will constantly move forward, striving for self-improvement . . . Those who are committed to improvement break chains by having the courage to try.”⁴² Elder Jeffrey R. Holland also encouraged: “Pray without ceasing. Ask for angels to help you. . . When . . . our souls are harrowed up with true pain, may we all echo the repentant Alma and utter his life-changing cry: ‘O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me.’”⁴³

Daily affirmations:

- Acknowledging my addiction and admitting I’m an addict gives me access to a diagnosis, prognosis and solution.
- The truth enables miracles in my life.

⁴¹ Marvin J. Ashton, “Shake Off the Chains with Which Ye Are Bound,” Ensign, November 1986.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Jeffrey R. Holland, “Place No More for the Enemy of my Soul,” Ensign, May 2010. See Alma 36:18

Step One: Section 5 - The many faces of denial

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

The purpose

When our addiction gets so out of control that there is potential for significant consequences, we naturally look for ways to protect ourselves. Some of these coping mechanisms are dysfunctional and self-destructive, leading us to avoid responsibility. In order to achieve true recovery, we need to come out from behind the many faces of denial we hide behind.

The inventory

In order to heal, we must first identify the denial patterns in our behavior that keep us bound in our addiction. When working this inventory, be sure to include all those we can identify as being affected by our denial—including ourselves.

(See Step 1 Section 5 in the Workbook for examples of each of the following)

Justification⁴⁴ *which excuses and defends my addictive behavior.*

- In what ways have I justified my addictive behavior?
- In what ways have I justified keeping secrets regarding my addiction?
- In what ways have I justified not seeking or engaging in recovery?

Rationalization⁴⁵ *which explains away my addictive behaviors.*

- In what ways have I rationalized my behavior?
- In what ways have I rationalized keeping secrets?
- Identify the times when I have rationalized not telling my spouse and bishop about my addiction.

Minimization⁴⁶ *which often incorporates comparison and downplays the magnitude of my addictive behavior.*

- In what ways do I minimize my addictive behavior?
- In what ways do I minimize my acting out when confessing to my bishop, spouse or sponsor?
- What comparisons have I made to others to make my addiction either look better than it actually is, or worse than it actually is?

Self-Deception⁴⁷ *which is lying and ignoring the reality of my addiction.*

- In what ways have I completely ignored the reality of my addiction?
- What lies have I told regarding my addiction?
 - To/about God?
 - To/about myself?
 - To/about my bishop?
 - To/about my spouse?
 - To/about my sponsor?
 - To/about my therapist?
 - To/about coworkers or bosses?
 - To/about anyone else?

Avoidance⁴⁸ *which sidesteps and delays facing the truth about my addiction.*

- What have I done to avoid telling the truth about my addiction?

⁴⁴ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

Step One: Section 5 - The many faces of denial

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

- What have I done to avoid my bishop, sponsor or support group?
- In what ways have I avoided engaging in recovery?

Blame⁴⁹ *which places the responsibility for my addictive behavior on another person or circumstance.*

- Who, and in what ways, have I blamed others for my addictive behavior?
- In what ways have I embellished experiences or circumstances in order to avoid consequences?
- Identify times when I have blamed others for the secrets I keep,

Deflection⁵⁰ *which incorporates “anger and indignation as an alternative to admitting [our] addictions.”*⁵¹

- In what ways have I displayed anger or rage toward others or God in order to avoid accountability for my addiction?
- Who have I physically or emotionally hurt due to acts of anger or rage?
- In what ways have I shifted responsibility for my actions to avoid detection?

Gaslighting⁵² *which is used in an effort to make others feel crazy; confusing them, and ultimately steering them away from detecting our secret.*

- In what ways have I attempted to make others feel crazy regarding my addiction?
- What phrases have I used?
- Identify the people that are most impacted by my attempts to gaslight? Why them?

Conclusion

Working on this inventory has likely been difficult; bringing up feelings of shame, hopelessness and unworthiness. Still, we must be gentle with ourselves as weakness can be defined as “the limitation on our wisdom, power, and holiness that comes with being human. As mortals we are born helpless and dependent, with various physical flaws and predispositions.”⁵³ Spending our time blaming ourselves for how ‘bad’ or ‘horrible’ we are avails nothing but sorrow, despair and stagnation. As we come to recognize that this inventory is a part of a greater plan for our healing, we will be able to go forward and keep moving in the right direction.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Roger Stark, *The Waterfall Concept a Blue Print for Addiction Recovery*, Kindle Location 794

⁵² See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

⁵³ Wendy Ulrich, “It Isn’t a Sin to Be Weak,” *Ensign*, Apr 2015

Step One: Section 6 - Finding freedom through transparency

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Reflection questions

- How do I feel about being transparent with those that I deem safe to hear my story?
- How is practicing transparency leaning into my fear and acting against it?

When we become willing to “talk about the addiction with someone else who knows and understands exactly what [we are] going through, the power of the addiction dissipates. [Our] resolve to stay sober increases. [Our] desires to act out [begin to] lose their compulsive power.”⁵⁴

- Why do I need to UN-cover in order to RE-cover?
- In what ways can disclosing willingly and honestly act as a healing balm and mend my wounds?
- How can partial disclosures or trickle truth be detrimental to my recovery?
- How can I move past any fears I may have in order to be open and honest?

“When I finally disclosed to my wife the nature and extent of my sexually acting out, she was devastated. She wanted to die. She was fortunate, however, to have a close friend who survived similar circumstances a few years before and had found recovery through S-Anon. In tears of despair, my wife cried that she just wanted someone to tell her that there was some hope. With quiet confidence, her friend told her that there most definitely was hope, that we could both recover together, and that our marriage and love for each other could achieve a strength, confidence and unity beyond anything we had known before. I lack words to express how right she was. Please don’t give up hope.”⁵⁵

- How would completing a voluntary disclosure nurture safety and trust with my spouse?

“I remember after attending my first addiction recovery support group meeting feeling like I’d found the gold at the end of the rainbow or the fountain of youth; that ever elusive treasure that we all seek but can’t seem to find. I was elated and wanted so desperately to share what I had found with my husband. Upon returning home I found him at his computer. I stood next to him and through tears expressed the love, connection and healing I’d experienced. He didn’t even look up at me, but just responded with well-timed courtesy nods. It was in that moment that I acknowledged and accepted that it couldn’t be about him, that it didn’t need

⁵⁴ Andrew Pipanne, *Sitting in a Rowboat Throwing Marbles at a Battleship: Essays of Hope about Recovery from Sex and Pornography Addiction from the LDS Perspective*. © 2011-12 Kindle location 424.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Kindle Location 454.

Step One: Section 6 - Finding freedom through transparency

Recognize and acknowledge that we are powerless over lust and that our lives have become unmanageable.

*to be about him and I didn't even need him to work my own recovery. That I needed, and deserved, to just do it for me. And so I did."*⁵⁶

- How can I better focus on my own recovery and leave my spouse's recovery (or lack thereof) to them?
- What are the benefits of maintaining my integrity over protecting my secrets?
- How does truth that I may have considered 'dark' or 'shameful' in the past actually help me grow closer to my Savior?
- Identify some instances in which the Lord has strengthened me when I've waived; acting as my guiding light in my darkness?

Truths and affirmations

Disclosure requires that we first acknowledge to ourselves that we are indeed powerless over our addiction. It is also important to secure a firm grasp on why we are disclosing. If we do not feel comfortable with the goal—restoring our integrity—then the disclosure will backfire. Let us rest in the fact that the Savior is pure truth; pure integrity. The stronger we lean into Him, the more we will absorb those strengths. Becoming ready and willing to do a humble and prayerful disclosure is the beginning of an ever increasing pattern of honesty and integrity into our lives which is essential to recovery. Elder Neil L. Andersen assured: "As you . . . make decisions that lift your personal integrity, I promise that you will have greater clarity come into your life. You will feel the grace of the Savior as He leads you along to ever greater honesty, assuring you of His love and approval."⁵⁷

Daily affirmations:

- Living in integrity will bring rewards that far surpass anything I have ever experienced.
- By revealing the truth about me, I can fully experience God's love for me.

⁵⁶ Name withheld

⁵⁷ Neil L. Andersen, "Honesty—The Heart of Spirituality," BYU Devotional, Sep 13, 2011.

Step Two: Section 1 - The sustaining power of hope

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

Reflection questions

- In what ways can I relate to the concepts of ‘first we *came*, next we came *to* and lastly we came to *believe*?’
- What hope do I currently have regarding healing from my addiction?
 - How has attending meetings contributed to that hope?

“Sharing my deepest shame but being loved anyway makes me feel connected and accepted, even though Satan and sometimes my very own brain would have me feel otherwise. It makes me feel like a real daughter of a real God and that I really matter. It helps me let go of shaming thoughts, like ‘I’m disgusting’ or ‘no one could love me if they really knew me’. When I share my shame and love is given, I know that I’m just a normal person with some extra heavy struggles and that I am worthy of love. Such knowledge allows me to open the door and let the positive affirmations back in: I’m good, I’m worthy, I’m awesome, I’m clean, I’m beautiful, I’m normal. I am loved.”⁵⁸

- How does the concept of sharing my deepest shame but being loved anyway (or even more because of it) feel?
- How does admitting my powerlessness actually increase my power to overcome?
- How does it feel knowing that the Lord not only can, but will and wants to love, cleanse and rescue me even after all that I’ve done?
- How can viewing myself through Heavenly Father’s eyes help me to begin to love myself?

As we consistently attend support group meetings “we learn from others what works and doesn’t work for them. We listen, and we try out new approaches. If we are teachable, we can discover the stirrings of hope within us and come to a belief in the possibility of recovery from our sexual addiction.”⁵⁹ The most essential part in finding hope, is developing a willingness to believe. It is from this “key of willingness,” the large doorway to a specific faith in a living God and a new life [will] swing open.”⁶⁰

- Why is it so important that I listen to the wisdom of others who have strong recovery?
- In what ways has my addiction been a form of insanity, or doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results?
- In what ways do I need the Savior?
- How does it feel acknowledging that I am ‘deity’?
- What parts of me do I wish God’s light would heal?

⁵⁸ Name withheld

⁵⁹ Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Green Book, 26.

⁶⁰ J. Keith Miller, A Hunger for Healing: The Twelve Steps as a Classic Model for Christian Spiritual Growth, Kindle Locations 713.

Step Two: Section 1 - The sustaining power of hope

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

*"I felt like the Lord couldn't or wouldn't help me in my life. Once I had hit rock bottom and finally admitted I was powerless I began to notice times when Heavenly Father was helping me. These tender mercies were always there, I just didn't notice. Most of them were little things: a prompting to not forget something, a lesson in church that was exactly what I needed or a compliment from a friend or coworker. As I began to recognize these, my hope grew. When I hit rough times, it helps to remember these small things and know that God cares for me, even in the small things. This gives me the hope I need during dark times to seek his help and guidance."*⁶¹

- How have I seen the power and influence of God in my life?
- What are small things that he does for me every day?
- How does recognizing these small tender mercies help my hope grow?

Truths and affirmations

Hope truly is one of the most powerful forces in our earthly existence. It fuels movement, progression and connection with our Heavenly Family. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has assured: "The things we hope in sustain us during our daily walk. They uphold us through trials, temptations, and sorrow. Everyone has experienced discouragement and difficulty. Indeed, there are times when the darkness may seem unbearable. It is in these times that the divine principles of the restored gospel we hope in can uphold us and carry us until, once again, we walk in the light. . . . This type of hope in God, His goodness, and His power refreshes us with courage during difficult challenges and gives strength to those who feel threatened by enclosing walls of fear, doubt, and despair. . . . The Lord has given us a reassuring message of hope: 'Fear not, little flock.'⁶² God will wait with 'open arms to receive'⁶³ those who give away their sins and continue in faith, hope, and charity. And to all who suffer—to all who feel discouraged, worried, or lonely—I say with love and deep concern for you, never give in. Never surrender. Never allow despair to overcome your spirit. Embrace and rely upon the Hope of Israel, for the love of the Son of God pierces all darkness, softens all sorrow, and gladdens every heart."⁶⁴

Example affirmations

- I have hope in the Lord's love for me and desire to heal me.
- I see tender mercies from Heavenly Father in my everyday life.

⁶¹ Name withheld

⁶² D&C 6:34

⁶³ Mormon 6:17

⁶⁴ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Infinite Power of Hope," *Ensign*, Nov 2008.

Step Two: Section 1 - The sustaining power of hope

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

My Healer⁶⁵

From the good I never wanted to part, yet I let the darkness take hold of my heart.
From the truth I went far astray, far from God's only chosen way.
And now my steps so readily falter, and now my fate I can't easily alter,
For change seems so hard to come by and good seems so far gone by,
That my soul is ready to break from sin and shame/s heavy weight,
And I often feel I've gone so far wrong, I don't know if I can ever come home.

Where is the right track? I just don't know; can I make it back? My hope's so low...
On my own, I just can't do it; on my own, there's too much to it.
My mind is clouded with fear and doubt; within me, the fire is burning out;
And I'm ready to give up, ready to give in, to abandon myself to the darkness within.

But in the quiet, a sound comes to my heart, and with it comes hope, dispelling the dark.
It is a song I know, for I am not alone—it is the voice of God, saying I am His own.
My cry turns to prayer, my prayer to psalm, for through Him, my healing has begun.

Oh, my Healer,
Thou art God, and does not lie,
And Thou can surely save me;
I now know I need not die.

Oh, my Healer,
Please help my doubts disappear;
Instill in me confidence,
Let Thy faith replace my fear.

Oh, my Healer,
Please bless me with Thy Spirit;
attune my heart to Thy word,
And help me always to hear it.

Oh, my Healer,
Please make me pure and whole;
Take from me the scar of sin,
Sanctify to Thee my soul.

Yes, my Healer,
My life Thou hast delivered;
through Jesus Christ my Savior,
I'm healed, now and forever.

⁶⁵ Mark W. Miner, June 5, 1994

Step Two: Section 2 - The patient and loving nature of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

Reflection questions

- What do I believe about how God feels about me?
 - Has that belief changed over time?
 - What has recovery taught me about God's love?
- How does it feel knowing that it truly *does not matter* how far from God I feel or how low I feel I've sunk, that the Savior's power and desire to save me remains steadfast and unshakeable?
- In what ways is it illogical that God would send me to this earth only to set up rules and commandments that would cause me to fail?
- What negative thoughts have I had regarding the nature of God, or how God feels about me, that might possibly be the voice of the adversary?

*"I felt so absolutely distant from God that I actually started referring to myself as the 'runt of God's children.' I was bound by the darkest despair and I wanted so desperately to just end my life. Still, I was scared to do even that, though, because I thought if I did it would only cause me to face God sooner, and I couldn't bear the thought of that. Gratefully, by the grace of God through working recovery I have been released from this lie and now know that I am beloved and cherished by Him and others."*⁶⁶

- Have there been times I have thought about harming myself or even ending my life?

*"Even in our darkest moments, when we are bound so tight by the flaxen cords of the adversary, there is one who fears not. One who will tread into the darkest places and face the most sinister tempters, all to save us. He has absolute power. He has absolute love. He will come for us . . . He will sit with us, nurture us, guide us, care for us, bandage us, tend to us, minister unto us, teach us, counsel us, love us, lead us, heal us and cleanse us . . . and He will never ever leave us."*⁶⁷

- In what ways is believing the adversary actually tying the knots of the very flaxen cords that bind me?
- In what ways can I relate to feeling as if I have to reach a certain level of enoughness or righteousness before I can approach my Savior for help?
- What, if any, experiences have I had in my mortal relationships have led to feelings of distrust in God?
- How can my actual worth remain intact and unchanged even when my worthiness changes?
- How does it feel knowing that the Savior is a seeking God?
- Identify five reasons the Savior wants to save me.
 - Write these reasons on post-it notes and place them in places I will see them daily.

⁶⁶ Name withheld

⁶⁷ <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/2013/01/let-us-let-him.html>

Step Two: Section 2 - The patient and loving nature of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

"I fully believed in Christ's Atonement. I knew that he suffered so that all people could return to live with him and Heavenly Father again. Forgiveness was achievable for all who sought it, except me. I felt that I had fallen outside the redemptive power of Christ and that Heavenly Father was disappointed and ashamed in me. Why couldn't I have been stronger? Others didn't have this problem and were following the commandments. I didn't realize that Heavenly Father wasn't waiting for me to turn my life around and stop sinning before helping me, but rather He was waiting for me to admit that I couldn't do it alone and needed his help daily."⁶⁸

- How are my actions different when I replace "I can't do it" with "With God I can"?
- What are some examples of how Heavenly Father helps me everyday?

Beliefs about God

Take some time to reflect on the negative thoughts we hear and believe regarding the nature of God to fill out our own version of the "Beliefs About God Worksheet". Likewise reflect on what planted, nurtured and grew these beliefs.

Logically, are these beliefs true? If not, what is the truth? How does it feel to acknowledge the truth? Consider revisiting Step One, Section Section 4's inventory 'The lies of the adversary' for this process.

Beliefs About God Worksheet (example)			
Powerful people / circumstances	What happened	What I learned then	The truth as I know it now
Dad	Rarely spent time with me. Only physical contact was punishment. Only said he loved me after 'pep talks'.	Dad's don't love their daughters. God doesn't love His daughters. God doesn't love me.	Regardless of how my mortal father treated me, God does love me. And even though He couldn't change my mortal father's behavior, He was there with me through it all.
Repentance	Multiple trips to the Bishop's office to repent for various forms of acting out.	Repentance doesn't work--and God is cruel for making me think it would work, but not making it work for me.	Repentance is only half of the equation. God does love me and has given me the gift of recovery so I can be free from the tormenting power of my addiction.

- In what ways did this process bring awareness to some fixed beliefs I have about God?
- How do I feel about God after completing this process?

⁶⁸ Name withheld

Step Two: Section 2 - The patient and loving nature of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

Truths and affirmations

The adversary is a master at lies and manipulation. He clouds our understanding, knowledge and belief of the true nature and purpose of God. However, the scriptures cut straight through to the truth: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”⁶⁹ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland bears profound witness that our Father in Heaven is “a personal, living God, who knows our names, hears and answers prayers, and cherishes us eternally as children of His spirit. I testify that amidst the wondrously complex tasks inherent in the universe, He seeks our individual happiness and safety above all other godly concerns.”⁷⁰

Example affirmations

- I am worthy to call on the grace of God.
- God loves me unconditionally

⁶⁹ John 3:16–17

⁷⁰ Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Grandeur of God,” Ensign, Nov 2003

Step Two: Section 2 - The patient and loving nature of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

The Rescue⁷¹

Once was lost, a daughter of God, wandering down a long path.
To a dark, scary and lonely place, where she didn't know how to get back.
The darkness beckoned and called to her, promising comfort and fun.
But once she partook of the forbidden fruit, she was left feeling empty and numb.

Bound by shadows in the dark one's lair, where tempests unceasingly tossed.
She'd given up hope of freedom, and felt eternally lost.
Then at the point of utter abandon, to the grasp of the dark one's grip.
She saw a small glimmer of light in the distance, and the glow of hope was lit.

But the dark one would not have this light in his lair, that threatened to release his hold.
For he'd worked with fury to ensnare her soul; to keep her bound and cold.
He knew, however, that the light was Grace, and he had aught fortune to test.
So rather than battle Grace head on, he did what he'd mastered best.

"Let the seduction begin," he thought, as he moved in close to his prey.
And in her ear he quietly whispered: "You will not see freedom this day."
She looked again in the distance, as fearful curiosity consumed her.
She observed a distant beautiful radiance, filling the dark and inky sphere.

"What is this?" she thought as the light grew closer: "Is it really who I think it might be?"
"My Savior clothed in all His Glory, come down *here* to rescue me!"
Realizing how bound she was, by the dark one's sticky grip.
She felt exhausted, suffocated and smothered, emotionally and spiritually stripped.

She longed for the touch of Grace's light, to be welcomed into His presence.
So she looked toward Him and took one step, regardless of the consequences.
Approaching Him with timid steps, she expected to beg and plead,
For acceptance back in to His fold; submissive, on bended knee.

But then He gently spoke her name, and her despair began to melt.
Her Spirit soared with recognition, His love for her she felt.
"Oh my sister, how I have missed you, from the moment you went away.
I have been searching everywhere; over mountain, canyon and pathway."

So tender were His words to her, so tender was His care.
No hint of accusatory reprimand, only deep concern for her welfare.
He knelt before her and looked in her eyes, asking: "May I tend your pain?"
Embarrassed she shied away from Him, afraid to show her stains.

"I am the great physician," He said, "Please do not be afraid."
"I want to heal you whole again, I can, with the price I have paid."
She listened to His promise, believing every word He said,

⁷¹ <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/p/my-recovery-poem.html> (edited from original by permission)

Step Two: Section 2 - The patient and loving nature of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

And surrendered to His graciousness; allowing His healing to spread.

The dark one stood idly by, as he watched her Savior heal;
She who he'd worked so hard to enslave, she who he'd worked to steal.
But he knew he had no power, over the Lord the Almighty Omniscient.
So he stood in his own shadows, incapacitated and silent.

Looking to her Savior inquisitively, she asked: "Which way do you think I should I go?"

And with radiating warmth in His eyes, He said: "This way, I know."

She is eternally grateful, to Her Brother, her Lord, her King.
For His perfectly undying love for her; for the rescue He did bring.

The price He paid for her was high, to save her helpless soul.
But one thing only He asks in return; to love Him, pure, and whole.
So this she does wholeheartedly, with bravery, heart and vigor.
To Keep diligent sight of Him and return with Him to Father.

Step Two: Section 2 - The patient and loving nature of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

Beliefs About God Worksheet

Powerful people / circumstances	What happened	What I learned then	The truth as I know it now

Step Two: Section 3 - Embracing the grace of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

Reflection questions

- What is my current understanding of grace?
- Identify some situations in which I felt I did not qualify for grace until I did 'all I could do'.
- Imagine a little child being required to do 'all they can do' to navigate life before they were 'worthy' or 'qualified' to access help:
 - How am I like a little child in relation to this concept?
- Take some time to rest and ponder the truth that the Savior doesn't just forgive multiple sins, but also the same sin committed multiple times; even if we are deliberate in that sin.
 - Why would the Savior offer such forgiveness?
 - How can I better nurture my belief in this truth?

"An essential part of the glory of God is light—or living, life-giving energy. In the scriptural sense, light is a capacitating power through which the righteous are given the faculty to receive truth . . . The grace of God plays a direct part in the reception of light and truth . . . Grace comes to all men freely, as it is the unmerited favor that God holds for all His children. Grace allows light to flow unto each person. Thus light, through grace, is freely manifest unto all . . . When [we] accept grace by accepting the light, [we] are capacitated to receive truth. As [we] continue from grace to grace . . . [we] receive more light and truth until they are eventually glorified in truth."⁷²

- How does it feel knowing that grace is not the reward at the end of my effort, but the power that fuels and sustains my effort?
- In what ways are my weaknesses actually a blessing?
 - What opportunities do my weaknesses provide for me?
 - What blessings have I received as a result of them?
- How does it feel knowing that the Savior has not only walked the very path I am on, but has felt and experienced all that I have; pain, darkness, shame and all?

"One of the most essential components to admitting my powerlessness was also admitting that I wasn't always right. In fact, I had to recognize and acknowledge that my current belief system was actually mostly wrong. I was able to figure that out by playing out my belief system--if I had a specific belief, I'd play it out in my head and see where it would lead me, and more times than not, it would lead me right back to my addictive behavior. In the end, phrases like 'I'm wrong' and 'I don't know' nurtured my teachability and opened me up to new learning and growth."⁷³

- In regards to feeling or believing I am worthless, even though I am not, how can the mantra 'just because I believe it doesn't make it true' help me progress?

⁷² https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/richard-d-draper_light-truth-and-grace-three-interrelated-principles-necessary-for-exaltation/

⁷³ Name withheld

Step Two: Section 3 - Embracing the grace of God

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

“As I found recovery and had some sobriety, I began to feel the grace of my Savior in my life. Then I slipped and told myself the lie that I hadn’t changed at all and that I was still a broken individual who couldn’t get better. Now, years later, I realize that grace comes in many forms. Sometimes it is in an instant that it provides relief. Other times grace is applied in measure as we are slowly molded into the person that the great Creator knows we are. Patience and compassion for myself helps me to continue the path that allows the Savior’s grace to impact my life on a daily basis.”⁷⁴

- What lies about the Savior’s grace and Atonement have I told myself after I have slipped?
 - How can I change that viewpoint to strengthen my belief that grace is always available to me?

Truths and affirmations

There is so much doubt and confusion surrounding the power of grace, but truly, grace is like air. We don’t have to be ‘worthy’ of it or ‘qualify’ for it. It is all around us every moment of every day, we just have to open up and inhale. “When all is said and done, when all of history is examined, when the deepest depths of the human mind have been explored, there is nothing so wonderful, so majestic, so tremendous as this act of grace.”⁷⁵ Let us rest in the truth that “the grace of Christ is sufficient - sufficient to cover our debt, sufficient to transform us, and sufficient to help us as long as that transformation process takes.”⁷⁶

Example affirmations

- I am enough, in this very moment, to call on the Lord’s grace.
- I am loved by God.

⁷⁴ Name withheld

⁷⁵ “First Presidency Extols Meaning of Christmas,” Ensign, Feb. 1995

⁷⁶ Brad Wilcox, “His Grace Is Sufficient,” *New Era*, Aug 2012

Step Two: Section 4 - The transforming power of gratitude

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

The Parable of the Hot Stove

What happens when we touch a hot stove? Not only does it immediately hurt but it has real potential to cause lasting pain and damage. Although there seems to be no purpose in that pain, there actually is.

- *It teaches us that the stove is dangerous to our wellbeing and to be very cautious around it.*
- *It reminds us that we are human and have weakness, and to be self-aware regarding our vulnerability to harmful things.*
- *It requires that when we do get hurt, we need to take special measures to care for ourselves in order to heal.*

Reflection questions

- What can the pain of my addiction teach me?
- In what ways can I find gratitude for my addiction, even though it has previously harmed me?
 - What are the benefits in finding such gratitude?
- What are some things I can pray for to allow Heavenly Father to help me find their purpose?
- Why is it so important for me to find meaning in my affliction?
- How does it feel knowing that I don't have to like or enjoy my trials in order to be grateful for them?
- What blessings have I received as a result of my addiction?
- How can the darkness of my addiction keep me facing my Savior?
- What tender mercies have I received that I can identify as being a deliberate gift to me from God?
- In what ways am I resilient?

“One of the things that really increased my gratitude was eliminating ‘good luck’ and ‘karma’ from my thought processes and vocabulary. Instead, I began giving the credit for everyday wins like waking up refreshed, catching a green light or being patient with my kids to God. Every single good thing that happened to me I would look heavenward and say ‘thank you for that, thank you for loving me enough to make that happen.’ In doing so it opened my mind and heart up to just how involved God really is in my everyday life. He truly does care about every single moment of my existence.”⁷⁷

- How can this exercise help me find gratitude for my addiction?

Different Minds

*SOME murmur when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy,
gild The darkness of their night.”⁷⁸*

Starting a gratitude journal

⁷⁷ Name withheld

⁷⁸ Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–1886)

Step Two: Section 4 - The transforming power of gratitude

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

One of the most powerful tools in increasing our gratitude is to start a daily gratitude journal. President Spencer W. Kimball promised that “those who keep a book of remembrance are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives.”⁷⁹ It is important that we adopt this practice into our daily lives in order for our gratitude to grow.

- How does it feel knowing that I can learn from and actually find gratitude for hardships in my life that I brought upon myself, including my addictive behavior?
- In what ways is practicing gratitude a form of touching heaven?
- List all that has been a light to me in dark places when all other lights have gone out:
 - What did I discover about my list?
 - In what ways am I grateful for each item on my list?

“I find that gratitude is a game changer for me. If I am having a down day, if I’m feeling the pull of lust, if I’m feeling sorry for myself, recognizing a little gratitude gives me great relief. It doesn’t matter how big or small the thing is. This simple act turns me to God. As I find those things I am grateful for that the Lord has given me, I feel his love for me. I have the strength to move on. In those moments I feel his grace enfold me.”⁸⁰

- What am I grateful for at this moment?

Truths and affirmations

Gratitude is a gateway to blessings greater than we can comprehend, as promised by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf: “Gratitude to our Father in Heaven broadens our perception and clears our vision. It inspires humility and fosters empathy toward our fellowmen and all of God’s creation.”⁸¹ The power of gratitude is greater than we can ever imagine, although we often think that gratitude is something we give to God, more so it is something He gives to us, as Elder Robert D. Hales testified: “In some quiet way, the expression and feelings of gratitude have a wonderful cleansing or healing nature. Gratitude brings warmth to the giver and the receiver alike. Gratitude expressed to our Heavenly Father in prayer for what we have brings a calming peace—a peace which allows us to not canker our souls for what we don’t have.”⁸²

Example affirmations

- My life is abundant with goodness, blessings and love.
- The Lord blesses me everyday.

⁷⁹ The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982, p. 349.

⁸⁰ Name withheld

⁸¹ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” *Ensign*, May 2014

⁸² Robert D. Hales, “Gratitude for the Goodness of God,” *Ensign*, May 1992

Step Two: Section 4 - The transforming power of gratitude

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

What is a gratitude Jar and why do we need one?

Often times we wake up in the morning and our first thoughts are reflective of the emotional disparity we live in:

- 'I didn't get enough sleep'
- 'The house is such a mess'
- 'I'm such a terrible mother'

And then we've set ourselves up to have similar experiences throughout the rest of the day:

- 'My car is such a junker.'
- 'I wish I had more_____'
- 'I'm such a terrible provider.'

We spend so much of our everyday moments saturating ourselves in negative thinking; about earthly possessions, our emotions, our everyday circumstances, our relationships and especially about ourselves. We have become experts at internalizing life's disappointments; linking them to our very worth.

We spend our lives living in a self-defeating cycle comparing what we have to what others have in order to determine how much we don't have and need to get. Similar to the cycle of addiction, the sum of our calculations ultimately never, never changes: we never *have enough* and we never *are enough*.

Creating and maintaining a gratitude jar is a stunningly simple exercise that can have profound effects on our wellbeing and outlook on life. Adding to it on a daily basis helps us live in abundance by recognizing what we do have, rather than living in disparity which is what we are often used to.

What is needed to create my gratitude jar?

- A jar, box, or other container that can hold small slips of paper.
- Any items with which we want to decorate our jar (markers, colored paper, stickers etc.)
- Small slips of paper, a pen or pencil for writing, and of course; gratitude!

What do I do once I have created my gratitude jar?

Identify at least three things throughout our day for which we are grateful. They can be the simplest of things, such as getting a good night's sleep, access to a hot shower or hitting green lights as we drive to work. Or they can be as grand as the love of family and friends, the grace of God or knowledge of our purpose on earth. It's good practice to, in addition to 'things', incorporate feelings, circumstances and relationships when considering what we have.

Every day we strive to identify different things we are grateful for, write them down on a slip of paper and add them to our jar. Over time, we will have a jar full of things, feelings, circumstances and relationships that we are grateful for; changing the polarity of our brain to recognize our lives as full rather than lacking. And in those dark moments when we are feeling shame or despair, we can sift through our gratitude jar and realize that even then we have plenty.

Gratitude exercise

Sometimes it is difficult to find gratitude for *anything*, let alone for the difficulties in our lives. In order to crack open gratitude in our sometimes hardened hearts, it is helpful to first find gratitude in our

everyday surroundings. We do this by stopping right in the moment and looking around and finding gratitude in things we can identify with our five senses:

- What can I see that I am grateful for?

Step Two: Section 4 - The transforming power of gratitude

Come to believe that through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our sanity and serenity can be restored.

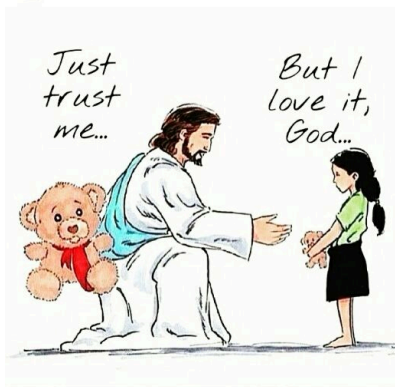
- What about smell?
- Taste?
- Hear?
- Touch?
- What did I discover gratitude for, where gratitude had not previously existed?

Step Three: Section 1 - Surrendering our addiction to God

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- In what ways have I come to an understanding of my powerlessness and accepted that I am in need of the Savior's help to get better?
- How do I feel about surrendering my entire addiction over to God?
 - What fears do I have about this process?
 - What about it am I looking forward to?
- Why is it so important to my Savior that I *choose* to surrender to Him, rather than forcing me to?
- How does it feel knowing that working recovery helps form a sacred alliance with the Lord?



- If the Lord is asking me to surrender my addiction, what bigger things might He have in store for me instead?
- Why does He require me to give up my addiction before He gives me the reward on the other side?

*"My big-picture goal, always and forever, is to come unto Jesus, and trust God in all things, at all times, and in all places. Easy to say, but learning to actually do this in this great learning laboratory we call life is a moment-to-moment, hour-to-hour, day-to-day challenge. Trusting God is composed of hundreds of individual choices each and every day, and if I'm being completely honest and aware, I falter often amidst the distractions, temptations, afflictions, challenges, noise, and plain busy-ness of daily living. Of course there are many daily moments in which I am not aligned with God. But God, I've learned, is actually okay with this--in fact, He anticipated it, for which of His children has learned to walk without first learning to crawl, and then stumbling many, many times along the way? Who has my heart? What do I truly want? Who do I really trust? Only One, only Jesus! I remember my big-picture goal, and continually strive to turn to Him, having my eyes on Him, yielding my heart to Him, praying for willingness, and having faith that His grace will eventually build my trust ever-stronger in God."*⁸³

- Why is the direction I'm facing, or the quality of my surrender, more important than my current location or circumstance?

⁸³ Name withheld

Step Three: Section 1 - Surrendering our addiction to God

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

“In order to surrender each temptation as they came I had to be willing to actually talk about them. I would reach my thoughts—or voice if I was in a place I could openly speak—heavenward and tell my Father in Heaven about it: ‘Heavenly Father! That is so tempting! I wish I hadn’t seen that! Please help

me get through this temptation and help me forget the things I saw.’ Additionally, the more people I tell about it, the less power it has over me.”⁸⁴

- What steps do I need to take in order to surrender each of my temptations as they arise?
- How can the *Serenity Prayer*⁸⁵ help me in my daily recovery?
- How does it feel knowing I never have to be alone in my struggle again?
- How would it feel to hear the Savior say “well done” and be able to actually believe Him?

Truths and affirmations

Surrendering to God is a beautiful process; one that connects us with the greatest rewards we will ever hope to experience, as promised by Elder Neal A. Maxwell: “Spiritual submissiveness means... community and communion as the mind and the heart become settled. . . . Sometimes, our holding back occurs because we lack faith or we are too entangled with the cares of the world. Other times, there is in us an understandable tremulousness which slows our yielding . . . Yet we need to break free of our old selves—the provincial, constraining, and complaining selves—and become susceptible to the shaping of the Lord. . . . It is only by yielding to God that we can begin to realize His will for us. And if we truly trust God, why not yield to His loving omniscience? After all, He knows us and our possibilities much better than do we.”⁸⁶

Daily affirmations

- I am safe when I surrender to the Lord.
- I trust the Lord to guide me safely home.

⁸⁴ Name withheld

⁸⁵ See Glossary, Appendix A of the Recovery Workbook

⁸⁶ Neal A. Maxwell, “Willing to Submit,” *Ensign*, May 1985

Step Three: Section 1 - Creating a daily recovery checklist

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

The checklist

It is important to start implementing the practice of '*doing our dailies*' early on in recovery. Because recovery has not been an active element in our lives, it is highly beneficial to cultivate the habit of remembering and touching recovery principles every day. A helpful tool to facilitate this is creating a dailies checklist; an ever-evolving list of recovery practices that we want to get better at.

It is important to start by setting 1-3 *easy achievable* goals, such as:

- Reading 10 verses of scripture
- Expressing gratitude to God for one thing
- Checking in with our sponsor

We start small in order to set ourselves up for the best success, but as we gain traction in one daily item we may increase the amount or duration associated with it, or switch it out with a different one we want to strengthen. Using the following chart can help in this endeavor:

Daily Recovery Checklist							
Remember: God lives and loves me!!	Date:						
	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
Have I read 10 verses of scripture today?							
Have I expressed gratitude to God for one thing today?							
Have I checked in with my sponsor today?							

Remember, the goal here is to create habits, which are choices we deliberately make but eventually stop thinking about only to continue doing anyway. Adopting this mindset into our recovery life: We first learn recovery principles, but before they can become automatic, we must deliberately implement them into our daily routine. We can do this by utilizing the Daily Recovery Checklist.

The Lord seeks momentum over perfection. Elder Holland taught us "With the gift of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the strength of heaven to help us, we *can* improve, and the great thing about the gospel is we get credit for *trying*, even if we don't always succeed."⁸⁷ Our steps toward recovery, no matter how small, will bless us.

⁸⁷ Jeffrey R. Holland, "Tomorrow the Lord Will Do Wonders among You," *Ensign*, May 2016

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Daily Recovery Checklist

[illegible]

Step Three: Section 2 - Aligning our will with God's will

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- What extremes have I gone to in order to get the Lord to remove my addiction?
- In what ways have my motives in getting sober been focused on my own solution?
- Why won't God guide my footsteps if I'm not willing to move my feet?

*"My most profound gratitude is reserved for the one individual without whom there would be nothing to write about: my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has indeed rescued me from a hell of my own making and has made me clean once more. He has done this with such love and tenderness that I am moved to tears just to think of Him. He has become more than my Savior—He has become my very best Friend. Without Him I am nothing."*⁸⁸

- In what ways can I give my heart to the Lord?
- How can I strengthen my trust in the Lord if it sometimes seems as if He isn't listening?
- In what ways is the process of recovery much like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon?
- What are some benefits that can come from embracing my struggle?

*"One of the biggest misconceptions that I had regarding praying was thinking I constantly had to use oldschool language like 'thee' and 'thou'. But using that language in my personal prayers to God just left me feeling distant from Him. Like He was some unreachable being up in the clouds that 'might' hear my prayers 'if I was worthy and penitent enough. It never occurred to me that I could talk to him like a normal person, like someone right next to me. Once I started communicating to Him like a trusted friend and confidant, as if He was right next to me, that's when my relationship with Him really began to change. I grew close to Him when I poured my heart out to Him in my language; and it was in doing so that I learned that my language is His language, too."*⁸⁹

- How does it feel knowing the Lord doesn't care so much 'how' I pray, but just that I communicate with Him?
- How does the truth of the 'Will of God' poem resonate with me?
 - Which line(s) do I connect with the most? Why?
- How does it feel knowing the Lord shares all my emotions and weeps with me when I weep?

Truths and affirmations

Many of us worry about what God would make us do if we truly and personally trusted and followed Him. Yet, Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: "It is only by yielding to God that we can begin to realize His will for us. And if we truly trust God, why not yield to His loving omniscience? After all, He knows us and our possibilities much better than do we . . . While bearing our sins, our infirmities, our sicknesses, and bringing to pass the Atonement, Jesus became the perfect Shepherd . . . Indeed, we are in His hands, and what hallowed hands!"⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Harrison, Philip. Clean Hands, Pure Heart: Overcoming Addiction to Pornography Through the Redeeming Power of Jesus Christ . Hearthaven Publishing. Kindle Location. 126

⁸⁹ Name withheld

⁹⁰ Neal A. Maxwell, "Willing to Submit," *Ensign*, May 1985

Step Three: Section 2 - Aligning our will with God's will

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Truly, we are safe in His hands, as Elder Kyle S. McKay has promised: "I bear witness that Jesus Christ is the Great Deliverer, and in His name, I promise that as you turn to Him with real intent and full purpose of heart, He will deliver you from everything that threatens to diminish or destroy your life or joy. That deliverance may take longer than you would like....So, to give you comfort, courage, and hope, to sustain and strengthen you to that day of ultimate deliverance, I commend to you and testify of *the immediate goodness of God*."⁹¹

Daily affirmations:

- I humbly embrace God's will for me.
- I am gladly and graciously giving my heart to the Lord.

⁹¹ Kyle S. McKay, "The Immediate Goodness of God," *Ensign*, May 2019

Step Three: Section 3 - The path to sobriety

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- In what ways have I attempted to control my addiction through sheer willpower alone?

“We will fall over and over and over if all we strive for is to not act out. We must focus our energy and time on healthy behaviors, activities, habits and coping mechanisms . . . We must trust that the Lord is with us every step of the way through this gut-wrenching process. All He asks is that we give an all-in, concerted effort and He will do the rest. He wants us to succeed. He desires for us to get healthy and He will not leave us unaided . . . It is hard - but He knows that; He has felt it, carried it, and atoned for it. He has endured the very same cravings that we have . . . We have our own chariots of fire on the hill, ready and waiting to defend at the first rally [cry]. . . . With recovery, our cravings diminish, as well as our shame. We begin to see Satan for who he is; the enemy of our soul . . . In recovery, we are made whole. We are freed from sins of the past and find hope for our sins of the present and future.”⁹²

- In what ways have my previous attempts at overcoming my addiction been more reflective of trying to be abstinent rather than striving for sobriety?

“Prior to recovery my acting out would lead me to cry out in desperation to the Lord to take my addiction from me. I would absolutely beg Him to free me of my affliction. And when He wouldn’t, I would feel unseen, unheard and ultimately unloved. However, recovery has taught me that by shifting my perspective my desperation will actually bring me closer to my father as I let it lead me down the path of humility, surrender and willingness to do whatever it takes to heal. I now know that the desperation I feel really is a gift; for it is a beautiful heartfelt soul-cry directed heavenward asking my God to cloak me in His celestial divinity called grace.”⁹³

- How can the desperation I sometimes feel be an actual gift?
- Why is it so important to avoid making any major life changes in the first year of recovery?
- In what ways have I experienced grief or sadness over giving up my addiction?
 - How does it feel knowing the grief I feel is simply a temporary symptom of withdrawal?
- Write a ‘goodbye letter’ to my addiction (sample letter located in this same section).
- In what ways has switch-hitting manifested in my life.
- How does it feel knowing that *no matter what*, there is hope for me?

“Although there are still fleeting thoughts and moments when I briefly romanticize my addiction, I now recognize these temptations for what they are and turn them

⁹² <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/2013/10/sobriety-vs-recovery-focus-endure-and.html>

⁹³ Name withheld

Step Three: Section 3 - The path to sobriety

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

over to the Lord. This process of turning things over to God took focus and practice at first, but has become much easier over time for two fundamental reasons: First, I now fully recognize that the pleasures, fantasies, and momentary happiness associated with all forms of my addiction were truly based on illusions and lies. Even the temporary gratification that initially seemed to work eventually fades into hollow memories and absolute emptiness. My addiction and all its associated experiences are as a horrible memory of a stale, cold, junk food meal of the worst sort, compared with the fresh, living, bounteous, never-ending feast of Christ. As I have worked the Steps and learned to turn things over to my Savior, I have been delivered from the shame and bondage of my past, and filled with a profound love, freedom, and joy that is so much greater than anything I have ever experienced or could have imagined!”⁹⁴

- What benefits of sobriety do I look forward to most?

Truths and affirmations

Although we most often attribute sobriety to the absence of acting out in any particular addiction, in reality, it is much more than that, as affirmed in the following scripture: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour . . . But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that which ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”⁹⁵ Indeed we can be free, as President Dieter F. Uchtdorf testified: “With the Savior’s help, you can break free from addiction. It may be a long, difficult path, but the Lord will not give up on you. He loves you. Jesus Christ suffered the Atonement to help you change . . . The most important thing is to keep trying . . . So don’t give up. Don’t lose faith. Keep your heart close to the Lord, and He will give you the power of deliverance. He will make you free.”⁹⁶

Daily affirmations

- I am gratefully living in sobriety every day.
- I am growing in trust and faith.

⁹⁴ Name withheld

⁹⁵ 1 Peter 5:8, 10

⁹⁶ <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2014/04/are-you-sleeping-through-the-restoration?lang=eng&query=pornography>

Step Three: Section 3 - Inventory - Switch-hitting

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

The purpose

As we strive for sobriety and try to break free from our sexual addiction, we need to be aware that our addictive personality makes us susceptible to what we call *Switch Hitting*. The fact is, “a person can switch an addictive relationship from object to object and event to event. Switching from object to object helps create the illusion that the ‘problem has been taken care of,’ when in reality one addictive relationship has replaced another.”⁹⁷ This gives us a sense of relief from our primary addiction, but keeps the undercurrents of our addictive personality alive and thriving, ready and waiting to re-engage our sexual addiction at the next moment of weakness.

Once we begin striving for sobriety, If we don’t also dig deep to identify and acknowledge our switch-hitting tendencies we may develop additional addictive relationships with other substances or behaviors such as food, shopping, social media, self-harm, gambling, gaming, alcohol, drugs. And then there are times we don’t physically act out, but instead act out emotionally in addictive personality traits, treating everyone the same as they did when physically acting out. In order to recover from the illness of addiction, also known as dry drunk behavior. We keep secrets, are irritable, selfish and manipulate.

“Like any other major illness, addiction is an experience that changes people in permanent ways. This is why it’s so important that people in recovery attend Twelve Step and other self-help meetings on a regular basis; the addictive logic remains deep inside of them and looks for an opportunity to reassert itself in the same or a different form. Recovering addicts must continue to go to meetings and work the program because they continue to be addicts. Recovery is the continued acceptance of addiction and the continuous monitoring of the addictive personality in whatever form it may take.”

The inventory

Within addiction replacement, a new addiction takes the place of a previously addictive behavior to produce the same feeling or high. As we begin to find distance from our addiction, temptations can arise to find replacements for us to use in coping. Being aware and honest with ourselves can help us to prevent these bad habits from becoming something worse. Once we have identified where we are most vulnerable, share this with your sponsor or others in your support group so you can come up with a plan to avoid switch hitting.

- Do I find myself seeking to cope in other ways besides lust that could result in an addiction? (Drugs, alcohol, gambling, shopping, working, eating, video games and other forms of escape)
 - What about in other ways that aren’t normally considered addictions? (anger/resentment, codependency, blame, procrastination, etc...)
- When I’m feeling irritable and am able to withstand the pull of lust, where do my thoughts go on how I can relieve the tension?
- Do I find myself obsessively thinking about things besides lust?
 - How are they inhibiting me?
- What am I addicted to?
 - How is this different from how I act out?
- Why do I seek to cope?
 - What am I running from or towards?
- What emotions am I feeling when the pull of lust is especially strong?
- What is my ultimate goal in recovery?
 - What emotions are related to this?

⁹⁷ Nakken, Craig. The Addictive Personality: Understanding the Addictive Process and Compulsive Behavior . Hazelden Publishing. Kindle location 329

Step Three: Section 3 - Goodbye letter (example)

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Dear Addiction,

You have been a lifeline throughout my life. You were there for me when I was overwhelmed. You brought me momentary comfort in difficult times. But I wish I would have known that it came at a price that was bigger than I could have ever imagined.

You have owned me for far too long and I am done.

Although on some level you seemed to always be there for me, the truth is all you did was take from me. You lied to me! And when I questioned you, you made *me* sound crazy! I don't know how many times you told me that 'just once wouldn't hurt anything,' that 'it was in my nature to want what you were offering me,' that 'God didn't love me.' I have wasted so much time and energy believing you.

But now, I *see* you.

I see you for what you really are. The mask has been removed and I see you there lurking in the shadows, afraid to come into the light where you will be exposed. You are a dirty player.

In the past I thought that if I ever gave you up, I would miss you. On some level I feel that it takes a pretty sick individual to miss something so destructive. But gratefully I have learned that admitting I am sick isn't a weakness, but actually a strength. Admitting I am weak has allowed me to find refuge in my Savior, Jesus Christ. I will forever rest in His presence, for He takes absolutely nothing from me, but He gives me life.

With absolute sincerity,

Me

Step Three: Section 4 - The challenges and rewards of withdrawal

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- In what ways can I relate to the symptoms of withdrawal listed?
- How does it feel knowing withdrawal is a normal biological consequence of abstinence?
- Why might some level of white-knuckling be necessary to endure the process of withdrawal?
- Why might the Lord permit the early stages of abstinence to be so difficult?
 - What are some benefits of this difficulty?

“One thing that I really struggled with during my detox process was extreme swinging emotions. I would be really happy and excited about recovery one moment and the next, full of despair and on the verge of giving up. I felt crazy, and in fact, I called these mood swings my ‘crazy waves’. Because of these swings I had a real fear that others would think I was crazy, too, and so I really struggled to reach out for help because I felt so irrational. To combat this, I actually told my support network how I was feeling and that I feared reaching out to them. But I also told them that I was going to continue to reach out to them and just trust that they will tell me if I was being extreme, irrational or just flat out crazy. Guess what? They never did.”⁹⁸

- What are some tools I can utilize to bolster my odds of success through my withdrawal?

“I’ve learned that almost everything about my recovery has to do with my connection to God, but what about those moments when I don’t feel connected to Him? Whether because of the noise of the world, or the noise in my head, it happens. In these unconnected moments I have learned to reach out to my support network. And whether it’s by going to a meeting, or by talking with my sponsor or other friends in recovery, usually within a few minutes I find everything slowing and calming down. My thoughts stop racing, my anxiety lessens, my head becomes right-sized, my heart becomes open, the Spirit begins to flow, and I begin to hear and feel God again. Serenity returns, letting me know that I’m not alone, and can now proceed in peace with God in my day.”⁹⁹

- In what ways can relying on my support network aid in my efforts to stay sober?
- How do I feel about sharing specifically the exact nature of my cravings with God?
 - What are the benefits of this level of intimate communication with Him?
- In what ways is enduring withdrawal like my own personal Gethsemane?
 - In what ways is my Savior perfectly equipped to help me through this process?

Truths and affirmations

One of the greatest favors we can do for ourselves going into the detox process is to acknowledge and accept that the Lord will not just take our symptoms from us, but will instead support us through it, as affirmed by Elder David A. Bednar: “Sometimes we may ask God for success, and He gives us physical and mental stamina. We might plead for prosperity,

⁹⁸ Name withheld

⁹⁹ Name withheld

Step Three: Section 4 - The challenges and rewards of withdrawal

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

and we receive enlarged perspective and increased patience, or we petition for growth and are blessed with the gift of grace. He may bestow upon us conviction and confidence as we strive to achieve worthy goals. And when we plead for relief from physical, mental, and spiritual difficulties, He may increase our resolve and resilience.”¹⁰⁰ But no matter what our affliction is, God will always give us what we need, especially when it seems extremely heavy, such as enduring the symptoms of withdrawal.

Daily affirmations:

- I am incredibly resilient.
- I have a healthy brain.

¹⁰⁰ David A. Bednar, “The Windows of Heaven,” *Ensign*, Nov 2013

Step Three: Section 5 - Triggers and Danger Zones

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- Why is starting recovery not as hard as staying in recovery?
- Why is it so important to use countermeasures against my triggers rather than just enduring them?

“I’ve learned that I have an incredibly wide range of triggers, whether emotional, physical, or triggers that directly relate to my addiction. Although they are completely different, they all have one thing in common: If I don’t resolve or surrender them they will lead me to acting out. So even though the trigger itself may not seem like a big deal, it will eventually lead to behaviors that are, so I have to give them all up in order to succeed. If I allow myself to hold on to even one it will erode my ability and desire to maintain recovery and I will eventually act out in my addiction.”¹⁰¹

- Why is it important that I forsake triggers, even if the triggers themselves aren’t actually considered a sin?
- In what ways would a media fast benefit me?
- Have I ever felt that God wanted me to be strong enough to withstand temptation on my own?
 - In what ways is this not even possible?
- In my own words, explain the difference between reacting and responding.
 - What are the benefits of responding?
- How can the slogan “Name it to tame it” help me when I am triggered?

“In my experience, temptations and triggers often occur at the least convenient times like in the middle of the night, at church, at work and even at meetings. Working my recovery taught me the importance of setting and maintaining boundaries and that I needed to establish my support network well in advance of those trials or I would almost always give in to my temptation. Gratefully, those inconvenient temptations have actually strengthened my recovery because they’ve taught me to be aware and vigil at all times and in all things and in all places.”¹⁰²

- Since addiction is a 24-hour disease, why is it so important that my recovery also be a 24-hour solution?
- How can the Lord’s divine level of compassion help my willingness to identify my triggers and danger zones?
- How can I turn temptations and triggers into a way to strengthen my recovery?

Truths and affirmations

We cannot ask the Lord to protect and deliver us from temptation while leaving the door cracked open just enough for us to sneak peeks and little nibbles; giving Satan free access to tempt us. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf counseled that “we would do well to slow down a little, proceed at the optimum speed for our circumstances, focus on the significant, lift up our eyes, and truly see the things that matter most. . . . Strength comes not from frantic activity but from being settled

¹⁰¹ Name withheld

¹⁰² Name withheld

Step Three: Section 5 - Triggers and Danger Zones

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

on a firm foundation of truth and light. It comes from placing our attention and efforts on the basics of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes from paying attention to the divine things that matter most.”¹⁰³

Daily affirmations:

- I am strong in my recovery.
- I am physically and spiritually resilient.

¹⁰³ <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/10/of-things-that-matter-most?lang=eng>

Step Three: Section 5 - Inventory - Triggers and Danger Zones

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

The Purpose

It is extremely important that we take the time to inventory as many of our triggers and danger zones as possible. There are likely many triggers in our life that we don't even recognize, and won't recognize until we take the time to seriously ponder them. The Spirit has the power to reveal these mechanisms to us. Remember a trigger is something that sparks in us a desire to use, but the trigger itself doesn't have to be sexual in nature. It can be as unassuming as a smell, a sound or a memory. Surprising to some, even happiness can be a trigger, because happiness can trigger shame, which can lead to acting out in order to numb the pain.

The inventory

Take the time to list any triggers or danger zones that relate to the following categories:

Emotions

- What emotions trigger my desire to act out, whether overtly or inadvertently?
 - Be sure to include 'light' emotions such as happiness, connection, empathy as well as dark emotions such as shame or fear. (Reviewing the emotions list found in Step 4 Section 3 is recommended).

Movies

- Are there specific genres of movies that consistently trigger me?
- What about overly emotional movies?
- Do I find myself justifying movies that have minimal triggers just so I can watch them?

Music

- What music genres, artists or songs do I listen to that trigger me?
- In what ways have I justified listening to this music despite their effect on me?

People

- What people or relationships trigger me?
 - Friends?
 - Family members?
 - Coworkers?
 - Who else?

Places

- What places trigger me?
 - Do these places trigger me because of their specific content (clubs, beaches etc.) or is it because they are emotionally charged with a triggering memory?
- What places currently trigger me that I have to frequent (job, church etc.)
 - What steps can I take to either adjust my dependence on the location or disable the trigger?

Smells (usually trigger a nostalgic memory)

- What smells trigger me?

Sounds

- What sounds trigger me?

Other

- What else triggers me that was not covered by this inventory?

Conclusion

The process of seeking out and identifying our triggers and danger zones can be overwhelming, in fact, this process in and of itself can actually become a trigger as we come into a deeper awareness of just how far our addiction reaches.

Step Three: Section 5 - Inventory - Triggers and Danger Zones

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

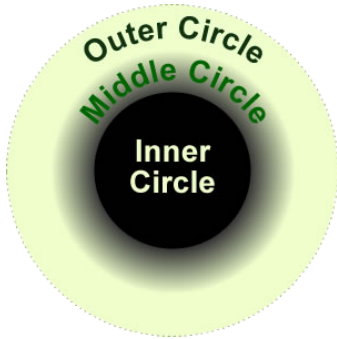
However, this process is absolutely necessary to clear our vision and identify the landmines that threaten our recovery. In order to remain safe, we can reach out to our support network, attend meetings, practice positive self-talk, do something physical such as exercising or cleaning, and foster a healthy recollection of the negative consequences of acting out. Understanding triggers and how they impact our addiction cycle can help us avoid returning to our addiction.

Step Three: Section 5 - The three circles

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

The three circles of SAA is a tool used to help identify triggers and danger zones in an effort to support and sustain sobriety. The greater our awareness, the greater our safety.

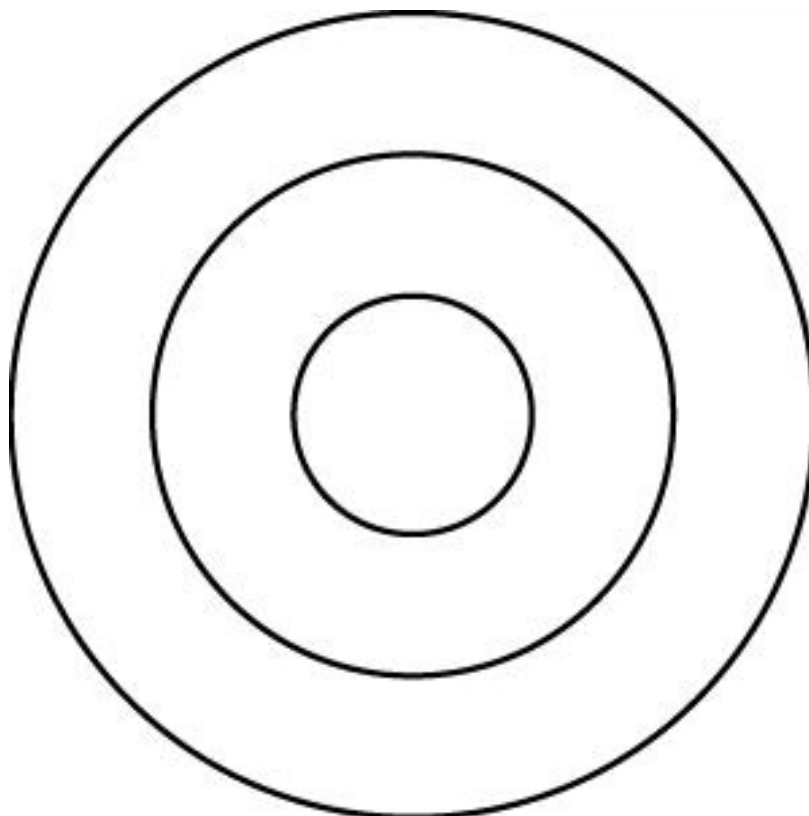


The process

Inner Circle: Write down each compulsive sexual behavior that we must avoid and abstain from.

Middle Circle: Write down the destructive cycles that cause us to fall back into the inner circle. Such as unrealistic expectations, perfection, hopelessness, shame, resentment, fear and isolation. Crossing boundaries may also involve danger zones, triggers, rituals, and slippery behaviors that lead to using.

Outer Circle: Write down behaviors that help us move away from addictive behavior into the emotionally connective world, such as attending meetings, reaching out to our support network, practicing gratitude, serving others, implementing boundaries and practicing mindful selfcare.



Step Three: Section 6 - The cycles and rituals of addiction

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- The Cycle of Addiction Phase 1: *Acting out* - In what ways do I act out?
 - How long does this phase usually last?
- The Cycle of Addiction Phase 2: *Guilt/Shame* - What commitments and promises do I make during this phase; to myself, others or God?
 - How long does this phase usually last?

*"When I first went into recovery, I read everything I could get on the subject of addiction. One of my favorite books was *The Addictive Personality* by Craig Nakken . . . I was floored to see myself in those pages describing an addict. The perfect strangers who wrote those books knew me better than I knew myself . . . I [learned that] one of the biggest challenges with the addictive cycle [is] addictive logic. The addict in us can and will make the components of [our] addiction seem not only harmless but necessary to our life & survival. I have seen women in sex addiction rationalize dancing, dating, cell phones, internet, gym memberships, relationships, and even marriages in order to continue acting out."*¹⁰⁴

- The Cycle of Addiction Phase 3 & 4: *Trigger/Craving/Ritual*
 - What triggers and danger zones tend to move me into the phase 3 & 4?
 - How long does this phase usually last?
- In what ways does my addictive cycle mirror the Chapter short story located in the *Mapping cycles* subsection of Step 3 Section 6 of the *Recovery Workbook*?
 - How can I progress my cycles through each chapter to finally be able to choose a completely different street?

*"Turning to the Lord and learning to surrender my trials and struggles to Him helped me shed the shame that kept me bound in my addictive cycle. Once the shame was shed and I was able to live in honesty and integrity, there was no longer a need for me to act out in my addiction. This process gave me, and continues to give me such hope for my future."*¹⁰⁵

- In what ways can I turn to the Lord and lay down the burden of my addictive cycle?
 - In what ways can he relieve me of this burden?

Mapping cycles

It is important to put into practice the method of mapping our cycles every single time we act out. Although the actions we do leading up to our slip might be different, the cycle remains the same. The more we practice mapping our cycles the better we will be able to identify the cycle while we are in it and eventually before we even enter it. This is the process of breaking our addictive cycle. So it is important that every single time we partially slip, slip or relapse that we identify the following, starting with the craving/ritual because it is important to identify how we got to the acting out phase. Being honest with ourselves will allow the Lord to help us uncover how we can break these cycles:

¹⁰⁴ Name withheld

¹⁰⁵ Name withheld

Step Three: Section 6 - The cycles and rituals of addiction

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

1. Create a timeline of what I actually did the few days to a week prior to acting out, even moments before acting out.
 - a. What was I feeling?
 - b. Do the acronyms H.A.L.T or B.L.A.S.T.E.D. come into play?
 - c. Did something more specific happen?
 - d. What steps did I take to 'prepare' to act out?
 - e. What boundaries did I forget/ignore/break down?
 - f. What rationalizations did I use?
 - g. What situations did I put myself in so I didn't have to take responsibility for losing control?
 - h. What did I understand in the moment of where I was headed?
 - i. How were my dailies affected during this cycle?
 - j. What contact did I have with God or others in my support circle to ask for help?
2. In what ways did I act out?
 - a. In what ways is my go-to method of acting out part of my cycle?
 - b. What emotional 'needs' did acting out fulfill? (i.e. feeling attractive, wanted, powerful, accepted etc.)
3. How soon does shame manifest after I act out?
 - a. What shaming statements do I hear about myself? (i.e. 'you are disgusting, no one could ever love you' etc.)
 - b. What specific promises or commitments did I make to ensure I'd never act out this way again? Who did I make them to?

At this point many of us begin to feel overwhelmed by the powerlessness we experienced. We may feel immense shame over what we did and why we couldn't stop it. The adversary wants us to feel immobilized by the enormity of what we have yet to overcome. The Lord desires us in these depths of humility to improve what we can. Say a prayer for help to learn what the Lord wants you to from this.

- What did I learn from mapping my cycles?
 - What new patterns emerged?
 - In what ways do I better recognize my pitfalls?
 - What are some of the decisions along the path that could have led me to a different conclusion?
 - How could I change some of my boundaries, or add new ones, to help me?
 - What changes to my dailies could I make?
 - What beliefs about myself do I need help overcoming?
- How does it feel knowing that God is for me and that He is never against me?

We may identify many things that we could have done differently. We can ask in prayer for help. Identify the easiest one and make a commitment to change that. Then do that for the next one. Keep doing it without getting to a place where it feels overwhelming. Meaningful small changes will have a more powerful impact on our recovery than wholesale changes that are unattainable. Like Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said "so while in mortality let's strive for steady improvement without obsessing over what behavioral scientists call 'toxic perfectionism.'"¹⁰⁶ Be patient with ourselves and the Lord will increase our capacity measure by measure.

Examples of small meaningful changes we can do:

- Boundaries
 - No electronics in private spaces with me
 - Only access potential triggering websites when someone else is around
 - Stand up and walk out of the room when triggered

¹⁰⁶ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "Be Ye Therefore Perfect – Eventually" Ensign May 2017

Step Three: Section 6 - The cycles and rituals of addiction

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

- Contact
 - Reach out to support network when recognizing the pull of lust
 - Daily contact with support network
 - Set a reminder to say a prayer at regular intervals
- Dailies
 - Start each day with a prayer asking for help to be willing throughout the day
 - Begin journaling
 - Express gratitude vocally throughout the day
 - Use music to invite the Spirit into my day

Truths and affirmations

Every aspect of our lives truly are “alive with patterns. Think about it: We are surrounded by patterns. In a sense we live our lives in discovering, identifying, tracing, or following patterns. We awaken in the morning to the sun’s diurnal pattern; our bodies function and malfunction in patterns suggested by our patterned DNA. Our education consists of learning and testing patterns. Our sciences and mathematics are centered in formulaic patterns, as are our works of art, drama, music, dance, and literature. Our games, from hopscotch and Monopoly to football, are patterned play. . . . Seeking and finding the Lord’s ‘pattern in all things’ can be, then, a rewarding and important spiritual discipline on the way to becoming, as Christ charged us to be, ‘even as I am’¹⁰⁷ . . . We learn that discipline by . . . discovering more and more divine patterns through knowing and following that other grand pattern: ‘He that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day’¹⁰⁸. ”¹⁰⁹

Daily affirmations:

- I am freely using my divine agency.
- I am greater than my body.

¹⁰⁷ 3 Nephi 27:27

¹⁰⁸ D&C 50:24

¹⁰⁹ Richard H. Cracroft, “Divine Designs: Tracing the Lord’s ‘Pattern in All things’”, BYU Devotional December 10, 1996, see: https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/richard-h-cracroft_divine-designs-tracing-lords-pattern-things/

Step Three: Section 6 - Inventory - Cycles and Rituals

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

The Purpose

As we begin to recognize our triggers and danger zones from the previous section, we can also become aware of what rituals and cycles we employ that lead us to acting out. It will take effort to see some of our subconscious rituals. We may rationalize those we find as no big deal. If we are to make progress, we need to recognize every type of ritual and be honest about how it affects us. Coming to understand our cycles and rituals will help us to take steps to put boundaries in place to avoid them and to recognize more quickly when we are in one and reach out for help.

The inventory

Rituals

- What rituals do I use that lead me to acting out?
- What am I telling myself during these rituals?
- What does my logical brain say during these rituals?
 - What is my mental state?
 - What about my emotional side?

Emotions

- What emotions lead me to beginning one of my rituals?
 - Am I in a trance-like state?
 - Do I experience tunnel vision?
- What emotions do I feel when I'm in the midst of a ritual?
- What lies do I tell myself during a ritual?

Boundaries

- Do I do anything that might 'accidentally' get me a lust hit?
- What excuses have I used to not set boundaries to prevent rituals?
- What boundary can I set for just today to help me avoid any rituals?
 - How does this help me be closer to God?
- What else works to help me turn this over to God?

Healthy Patterns

- What can I do when I find myself in the midst of a ritual?
- What positive patterns do I have in my life?
- What patterns can I add to replace the rituals I want to remove?

Conclusion

President Russell M. Nelson reminded us of the power of momentum, "So I ask, what can ignite *spiritual momentum*? We have seen examples of both positive and negative momentum. We know followers of Jesus Christ who became converted and grew in their faith. But we also know of once-committed believers who fell away. Momentum can swing either way. We have never needed *positive* spiritual momentum more than we do now, to counteract the speed with which evil and the darker signs of the times are intensifying."¹¹⁰ Rituals, both positive and negative, provide momentum in our spiritual lives. Health patterns can help replace negative cycles and rituals and provide the spiritual momentum we need in our recovery.

¹¹⁰ President Russell M. Nelson, "The Power of Spiritual Momentum" Ensign May 2022

Step Three: Section 7 - Disabling the dominating pull of fantasy

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- What people, places or things are the focus of my obsessive thoughts?

“Sometimes I couldn’t figure out why I ended up acting out. I would be seemingly fine and the next thing I knew, I had slipped. However, as I really became honest with myself I began to recognize and acknowledge the steps that led to that intense craving; acknowledging the flaxen cords¹¹¹ being used to lead me into darkness. I then surrendered to God and set up boundaries to guard against things that would lead me to acting out. Gaining traction in these first few steps changed the direction of my current state before I found myself hanging from a cliff’s edge with the inevitable about to happen.”¹¹²

- Identify instances in which a seemingly innocent thought led me down a path that ended in addictive behavior?
 - Why is it so important to identify such patterns?
- What dry drunk behaviors do I exhibit?
- In what ways have user dreams plagued my sleep?
 - What patterns can I identify when I have them about their potency and consistency?
- How can I limit the shame I feel for having user dreams?

“It seems so backwards now, but early in recovery I refused to get internet protection software on my laptop because of my fixed core belief that God wanted me to be strong enough to withstand the temptation of viewing pornography on my own. I know now that this was a lie of the adversary attempting to keep me trapped because he knew that I couldn’t withstand the temptation. It wasn’t until I finally surrendered to the Lord, raising my white flag of surrender and accepting defeat that things really started to change. I also learned that it was less about ‘couldn’t’ and more about ‘didn’t have to’ do it on my own. The Lord truly was and is on my side, I just have to do my part to unlock the awaiting miracle. When I finally put internet protection software on my laptop I became protected. My drug was locked up and I was safe from it.”¹¹³

- List all forms of access to visual pornography and create a plan of action to limit my access to each.
- In what ways can the practice of mindfulness aid me in my recovery efforts?
- In what ways have I come to know Christ in the depths of my despair?

Truths and affirmations

Although we may not always have control over whether or not a thought enters our mind, we have more agency over whether it stays than we may think, as President Ezra Taft Benson affirmed: “The mind has been compared to a stage on which only one act at a time can be performed. From one side of the wings the Lord, who loves [us], is trying to put on the stage of [our] mind that which will bless [us]. From the other side of the wings the devil, who hates [us], is trying to

¹¹¹ See 2 Nephi 26:22

¹¹² Name withheld

¹¹³ Name withheld

Step Three: Section 7 - Disabling the dominating pull of fantasy

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

put on the stage of [our] mind that which will curse [us]. [We] are the stage manager—[we] are the one who decides which thought will occupy the stage.”¹¹⁴

Daily affirmations

- My thoughts are clean and whole.
- I am protected and safe when I sleep.

¹¹⁴ Ezra Taft Benson, “Think on Christ,” *Ensign*, Mar 1989

Step Three: Section 7 - Inventory - Fantasy

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

The Purpose

Fantasy can be all consuming in our lives. It feeds the pull of lust, releases chemicals in our brain, and weakens our resolve to resist the urge to act out. In addition, it takes our focus off our Savior, by whose grace we may become free. Because we have become conditioned to fantasy, it is hard to identify it in our lives. Switching to a higher level of honesty in that our problem is around lust, which is fed by fantasy, rather than pornography allows us access to a higher level of recovery. We can enable the help of the Lord to disable the power that lust has over us.

The inventory

Truth

- How do my actions help feed my fantasies?
- How does fantasy feed my lust?
- How have I rationalized fantasy?
- What hole am I trying to fill inside myself when I fantasize?
- How is fantasy a precursor to acting out?
- What is my focus when I'm fantasizing?
- How have I allowed fantasy to lead me into manipulating others?
- What can trigger my entering fantasy?
 - Places?
 - Websites?
 - TV Shows/Movies?
 - People?
 - Sounds?
 - Smells?
 - Emotions?

User Dreams

- How do I feel after I've had a user dream?
- What lies have I told myself when I've had a user dream?
- Have I prayed about when I've had a user dream?
 - What does God say?
- What can I do to release shame and other false beliefs after experiencing a user dream?

Mindfulness

- What does surrendering fantasy look like?
- What boundaries can I set up to help me from fantasizing?
- What can I do to be more mindful of when I'm fantasizing?
- What can I do to quickly turn it over to God?
- What can I do to prevent shame from dominating my thoughts once I'm aware I'm fantasizing?
- Read the section "Tools that effectively disable fantasy"
 - Which of these tools speak to me?
 - How can I incorporate them into my recovery?
- What can I learn after I find myself fantasizing?
- What can I do to invite the spirit to overcome lust in my daily life?

Conclusion

Step Three: Section 7 - Inventory - Fantasy

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

We can feel overwhelmed when attempting to dispel fantasy and the hold it has over us. Seek out others who have walked this path and they will provide strength. Most importantly, seek the help of the Lord. We have been promised that we will receive the help we need. “Another element of God’s grace is the opening of the windows of heaven, through which God pours out blessings of power and strength, enabling us to achieve things that otherwise would be far beyond our reach. It is by God’s amazing grace that His children can overcome the undercurrents and quicksands of the deceiver, rise above sin, and ‘be perfect[ed] in Christ.’ Though we all have weaknesses, we can overcome them. **Indeed it is by the grace of God that, if we humble ourselves and have faith, weak things can become strong.**”¹¹⁵ The Lord loves us and will be there in our time of need if we turn to him.

¹¹⁵ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Gift of Grace”, *Ensign* May 2015

Step Three: Section 8 - Guarding against the snares of slips and relapses

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- In learning the differences between a slip, relapse & binge; which has been the most prevalent in my addiction cycle?

*"I had struggled for so many years and fallen so many times that turning to the Savior for help seemed like an exercise in futility. Why would He help me? I felt like an absolute lost cause. Gratefully, I now know that it was all a lie; that there is no such thing as a 'lost cause'. My brother, Jesus Christ is always with me and always will be. I just have to keep remembering that and continually turn to Him."*¹¹⁶

- In what ways do my feelings of unworthiness keep me from calling on the Savior for help?
- Why is it that in order to *be* clean I must first *come* clean?
- In what ways can slips be used to identify weak spots in my recovery armor?
- How can shifting from a perfectionist to a progressive perspective set me up for better success?

*"Before I started recovery, any effort to overcome my addiction was spent looking for a 'unicorn' solution. I felt that if I could just find the right medication, the right therapist, the right group of friends, the right book or the right anything for that matter, I would be fixed. I spent so much time and energy looking for the magic pill that would offer relief with as little effort as possible on my part. But I soon learned that anything easy and fast only leads me back to my addictive behavior. That substantial recovery required hard work and sacrifice. We may tend to think that it's cruel of God to make recovery hard, but anything less wouldn't adequately prepare and strengthen us to face the challenges that lay ahead, addiction related or not. The qualities of character we gain from a hardworking recovery program prepares me to meet my Savior."*¹¹⁷

- Why does thinking that recovery is easy actually put me at risk?
- What lies of the adversary have I believed regarding slips and relapses?
- In what ways have I felt beyond the reach of the Savior?
- Read D&C 128:22
 - In what ways does this scripture bring me hope?
 - What about this gives me courage?

Truths and affirmations

Although the perfectionist in us would like to never sin again, especially *this* sin, it serves us better to focus not on the sin itself, but the power of Jesus Christ that ultimately guards us against such sin, as expressed by Elder Hugo Montoya: "Remember that the Son of the Highest descended below all and took upon Him our offenses, sins, transgressions, sicknesses, pains, afflictions, and loneliness . . . It does not matter what our personal struggles are—whether they are

¹¹⁶ Name withheld

¹¹⁷ Name withheld

Step Three: Section 8 - Guarding against the snares of slips and relapses

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

disease or prolonged loneliness or suffering the temptations and tests of the adversary—the Good Shepherd is there. He calls us by name and says, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’¹¹⁸¹¹⁹

Daily affirmations

- I live in truth and integrity.
- I am destined for joyous success.

¹¹⁸ Matthew 11:28.

¹¹⁹ Hugo Montoya, “Tested and Tempted – but Helped,” *Ensign*, Nov 2015

Step Three: Section 8 - Guarding against the snares of slips and relapses

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Getting Up After a Slip

Although it is always better to not slip, all is not lost if we do. Mistakes are a part of the plan, but they do not define us. The decisions that we make after the slip are what mold us. Do we get up? Or do we give up? Do we take the opportunity to learn valuable lessons that will keep us safe in the future? Or do we listen to the adversary tell us that our efforts are futile? I learned an invaluable lesson after one such slip. I learned how to get back up, to not stay on the ground, but to get up and keep going.

The day of the slip was overcast by shadow. I not only touched darkness, but I invited him in. I fell incredibly hard, and in the wake of that fall, I was left wrought with heartache, despondency and self doubt. Still, through all the dark feelings, a small glimmer of humility flickered, allowing the following revelatory scene to unfold:

I imagined myself in a giant track-and-field arena, a lone runner on a path of endless hurdles. Each hurdle represented challenges that I currently faced. My goal was to jump each one without knocking it over and smoothly transition to the next one. I found that the further into recovery I moved the more confident I grew and the more hurdles were left standing. With every hurdle I jumped, the crowd in the stands off to the side roared with support and encouragement. Their energy was exhilarating!

My race was running smoothly, when all of a sudden I lost my footing. My rhythm was gone, my balance became tilted and I began to stumble. My senses piqued and I became keenly aware that I was going to miss the next hurdle. Sure enough, my foot clipped the top and I crashed to the ground. I was stunned. I looked at my hands and knees and noticed they were raw and bloody. My heart threatened to pound out of my chest. I did not understand what happened. I was so confused.

Then I heard them. The crowd. They were no longer cheering for me, but were now laughing at me, mocking me, telling me I was a failure and that I was stupid for even thinking I had a chance to be a worthy runner on this track of life. Their volume was deafening. I felt sick. I felt my body go limp as I began to resign to the weight of defeat.

But just when failure had nearly consumed me, I heard a fervent voice in my ear. Every cell in my entire body heard that voice and knew that voice. It was the voice of my dear Brother, my Savior. His voice was quiet and tender, yet fervent and commanding: "Get up," He said. I was stunned. 'Get up' was not what I expected to hear. Incredulously, I asked, "Get up? What do you mean? Do you not see what I have done? Do you not see that I have failed? If I get up, I'll just fail—again. I'll just disappoint you—again."

His response, unwavering, reverberated even louder: "Get UP!" I felt Him kneeling down right beside me, injecting all of His will and energy into me. His eyes were trained intently on me. He spoke again, with ardent fervor that only a God could possess: "GET UP!! You are *not* a failure. You are *my* success! You can do this. I love you, and only want you to stand; to keep moving. *Just...stand...up.*"

Step Three: Section 8 - Guarding against the snares of slips and relapses

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

I felt such love in His voice. So much so, that I could not deny Him. He was down on the ground in all the muck with me; right next to me. Fire stirred within me and I slowly began to rise. My knees were skinned up, my body hurt and my head spun, but I was not broken beyond repair as Satan would have me believe. I planted my hands solidly on the ground and positioned my knees beneath me and with one final breath I pushed upward and stood straight up. I looked at my Brother as He held tight to my arm, gently steadying me while my wobbly knees threatened to give out. His smile beamed brightly upon me: “We got this.”

I faced forward once again, full of determination, and began running. I was terrified that I was going to fall again and relive the previous nightmare, but I refused to focus on that fear. My Savior again took His place at my side; encouraging me with every step. Further down the track I afforded myself one glance back, looking for the fallen hurdle I’d knocked over. But as much as I searched, I could not see it. I had since completed so many jumps that the one hurdle I’d missed had disappeared among the sea of hurdles left standing. *It was as if my slip had never happened.*

When I reflect back on how I had fallen I realize the cycle had started many hurdles prior to the one I’d missed. I was so consumed by the accomplishment of jumping so many that I’d begun to take credit for my progression instead of giving the glory to God. I also determined that I had wasted precious time mourning the loss of the fallen hurdle, for there was no way to restore that hurdle to its upright position. However, as much as I could not pick the *hurdle* up, I could pick *myself* up. And I did just that.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Sidreis Keller Agla, By the Light of Grace, Chapter on ‘resilience.’ Paraphrased by permission.

Step Three: Section 8 - 100 tools for sobriety

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

1. Send a prayer heavenward.
2. Avoid triggers and danger zones.
3. Attend a meeting, and share.
4. Adopt the one-day-at-a-time mindset.
5. Create and use a sobriety plan of action.
6. Get plenty of rest.
7. Eat regularly and healthily.
8. Contact our sponsor.
9. Contact other friends in recovery.
10. Get up. Do something physically active.
11. Engage the Serenity Prayer.
12. Change old routines and patterns.
13. Emotionally connect with others.
14. Practice service.
15. Be good to myself, I deserve it.
16. Remember, easy does it.
17. Remember how I feel after I slip.
18. Call on the power of grace.
19. Get out of the 'what-if' trap.
20. Be aware of my emotions.
21. Help others in their recovery.
22. Process my emotions as they come.
23. Turn my will over to God.
24. Walk barefoot in the grass.
25. Avoid all forms of switch-hitting.
26. Start an anonymous recovery blog.
27. Let go of old ideas.
28. Foster healthy relationships.
29. Find a new recovery resource.
30. Avoid victim thinking.
31. Be a seeker of knowledge.
32. Practice gratitude in all things.
33. Acknowledge my powerlessness.
34. Let go and let God.
35. Practice mindfulness.
36. Avoid codependency.
37. Search the scriptures for hope.
38. Be willing to make necessary changes.
39. Avoid white-knuckling.
40. Live today, in the moment.
41. Identify and avoid the drama triangle.
42. Avoid big changes within the first year.
43. Never minimize the power of addiction.
44. Air my anger and resentment.
45. Celebrate my new found manageability.
46. Practice humility.
47. Pay it forward.
48. Acknowledge the growth I've gained.
49. Reprioritize my life.
50. Strive for deep REM sleep.
51. Stay sober for me, not anyone else.
52. Practice rigorous honesty.
53. Progress, not perfection.
54. Think: 'What would my sponsor do?'
55. A problem shared is already 1/2 solved.
56. When in doubt, ask questions.
57. Practice meditation.
58. Maintain balance in all things.
59. Take daily inventory.
60. Acknowledge gateway surfing behavior.
61. Vigilantly watch for red flags.
62. Embrace my imperfection.
63. Write and repeat positive affirmations.
64. Be kind and compassionate with myself.
65. If I'm going through hell, keep going!
66. Identify and resolve dry drunk behavior.
67. Remember, recovery always comes first.
68. Practice vulnerability.
69. Breathe out, breathe in.
70. Remember, I am not alone.
71. Willingly do whatever it takes.
72. Repeat: "My future is clean and bright."
73. Call on the ministering of angels.
74. Research my family history.
75. Stay out of my own way.
76. Slow down, there is no rush.
77. Listen, not just hear.
78. Practice 'just for today' meditations.
79. Lean into the discomfort.
80. Handle what I can and leave the rest.
81. Lead with integrity.
82. Identify and do the next best thing.
83. Engage in good clean humor.
84. Keep a daily journal.
85. Read a new recovery book.
86. Connect with nature.
87. Write a gratitude list.
88. Walk around Temple grounds.
89. Express gratitude to those close to me.
90. Remember God loves me, always.
91. Be patient with myself.
92. Pray for willingness.
93. Take a few deep breaths.
94. Work on a personal goal.
95. Listen to uplifting music.
96. Read a conference talk.
97. Recognize tender mercies today.
98. Serve someone else.
99. Show appreciation.
100. One day at a time.

Step Three: Section 9 - A Summary of Steps One, Two and Three

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

- Take some time to journal my thoughts, feelings and experiences with working Steps One, Two And Three.
 - In what areas has my understanding deepened?
 - What false beliefs about myself, recovery and God have been revealed?
 - What fears have I overcome?
- What do I feel my part is in God's plan for me?
- In what ways has the quality of my recovery developed since starting to work the Steps?
 - In what ways is this quality dependent on my surrender and willingness to follow the directive of God, the program and my sponsor?

*"Prior to recovery I couldn't even look my family in the eye because I was filled with so much shame. I could barely make it a minute without sexual thoughts of some kind entering my mind. I honestly thought that would never be able to change. But I worked at it. I attended meetings, relied on my support network and surrendered to God, and eventually the miracle took place and I began to change. He has changed me in ways I never could have imagined, let alone thought possible. And I think one of the most beautiful aspects of God's ability to change us is that He does it without wrapping us up in all the details of how that change occurs, but one day we just feel it. We feel free. I feel free."*¹²¹

- In what ways has my progression actually been greater than I could have ever imagined?
- Why is the submission of my will really the only thing I can give to the Lord?
- In what ways is being humble enough to work recovery one of the greatest ways I can use my agency?

*"I've learned that almost everything about my recovery has to do with my connection to God, but what about those moments when I don't feel connected to Him? Whether because of the noise of the world, or the noise in my head, it happens. So in these unconnected moments, I have learned to reach out to my support network, go to a meeting or study my Steps. When I do this, my thoughts slow down, I don't feel as anxious, my head becomes right-sized, my heart becomes open, the Spirit begins to flow, and I begin to hear and feel God again. Serenity returns, letting me know that I'm not alone, and can now proceed in peace with God in my day."*¹²²

- What can I do to connect with God in those moments when I don't *feel* connected to Him?
- What fears do I have in letting go of my 'old' self?
 - What about my 'new' self am I most excited about?
- What points of pride, fear or other feelings are still limiting my trust in God?

Truths and affirmations

¹²¹ Name withheld

¹²² Name withheld

Step Three: Section 9 - A Summary of Steps One, Two and Three

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

It doesn't take much searching to discover reasons and excuses to be dishonest, distrustful and despairing, yet if we focus on our agency and our belief in God, He will help us overcome all, as promised by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf: "When we choose to believe, exercise faith unto repentance, and follow our Savior, Jesus Christ, we open our spiritual eyes to splendors we can scarcely imagine.

Thus our belief and faith will grow stronger, and we will see even more . . . For in belief, we discover the dawn of light. We will discover truth. We will find peace. Because of our belief, we will never hunger, never thirst. The gifts of God's grace will enable us to be true to our faith and will fill our soul like 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life.'¹²³ We will experience true and lasting joy. Therefore, my dear friends . . . Have courage to believe. Be not afraid, only believe."¹²⁴

Daily affirmations

- I am full of hope and capable of trust.
- I am willingly doing the work of recovery.

¹²³ John 4:14.

¹²⁴ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Be Not Afraid, Only Believe," *Ensign*, Nov 2015

Step Three: Section 9 - A leap of faith: Moving on to Step Four

Decide to surrender our will, our addiction and our life over to the care of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

A leap of faith: Moving on to Step 4

“Those of us working recovery have found that moving on to Step Four as soon as possible after finishing our Step 3 was one of the most important ‘keep going’ moments in our recovery journey. It was here that we moved from the school of learning to the work of doing, by putting into action all the knowledge we had gained over the course of the previous three Steps. To not move on to Step Four would have been sorely detrimental to the recovery progress we had made thus far. Although we experienced varying levels of fear regarding moving on to Step Four, we acknowledged that it mostly derived from the unknown what-ifs that threatened to drown our thoughts. However, once we dove in, those unknowns began to dissipate and we gratefully entered the realm of deeper more meaningful self-discovery, healing and joy.”¹²⁵

Moving on to Step 4 can be one of the biggest challenges in our recovery. It is the first of the *cleansing*, or *action*, Steps in which we get to put into practice all that we have learned in Steps 1, 2 and 3. It’s true, it can be scary, but so long as we remember that our bravery only needs to be slightly bigger than our fear, we can continue to move forward.

We can increase our bravery by first taking some time to inventory the pros and cons of moving on to Step 4 and 5:

- What fears come up for me?
- Follow the outcome of each path:
 - If I choose to *not* move on to Step 4, how will that affect my recovery?
 - What lies might the adversary be telling me regarding moving on to Step 4?
 - If I choose to move on to Step 4, what benefits can I expect?
- Take some time to reflect and journal my willingness to move on to Step 4 and share these thoughts and feelings with my sponsor and with God.

“The more I come to know my Heavenly Father, the more I see how He inspires and leads His children. He is not angry, vengeful, or retaliatory. His very purpose—His work and His glory—is to mentor us, exalt us, and lead us to His fullness . . . Our Father in Heaven’s love for us, His children, surpasses by far our ability to comprehend. Does this mean that God condones or overlooks behaviors that run contrary to His commands? No, definitely not! But He wants to change more than just our behaviors. He wants to change our very natures. He wants to change our hearts. He wants us to reach out and take firm hold of the iron rod, confront our fears, and bravely step forward and upward . . . He wants this for us because He loves us and because this is the way to happiness.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Names withheld

¹²⁶ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2017/04/perfect-love-casteth-out-fear?lang=eng>

Step Four: Section 1 - Acknowledging the truth about ourselves

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- What preconceived ideas and notions do I currently have about Step 4?
 - What fears do I have?
 - What am I looking forward to?
- How do I feel about the journey of self discovery that is required to continue in my healing?

“I credit my willingness to be honest with myself as coming from what I learned in Step’s One, Two and Three. The Steps are definitely in order for a reason. I had finally accepted that I couldn’t do it on my own and truly believed that God could. I not only acknowledged but fully embraced that my part was to put all my cards on the table and be totally honest. If I hadn’t thoroughly worked the first three Steps, I wouldn’t have had much success moving on.”¹²⁷

- How can I prepare myself to be absolutely honest in each of my inventories?
- When writing my inventories, how can I keep the ‘perfection whispers’ at bay and focus more on my progression instead?
- Why can comparing my inventory process to other’s actually be detrimental to my progression and healing?
- Why does healing require that I delve into my emotional foxholes on a journey of self-discovery?
- What does the phrase “Be curious, but be kind” mean to you?
- How does knowing that God already knows everything and won’t be surprised by anything you inventory help you to be honest?

“Inventorying the Lord’s tender mercies and my positive qualities will help me be able to see myself as a good person, as an innately good person. I truly believe that as I ask for and gain a testimony of my Christlike attributes that they will be revealed to me and will strengthen my sense of self worth. I will gain a stronger understanding of God’s love for me and be able to see myself as He sees me. Still it is difficult to actually write good things about myself, so I decided to approach it a little differently than just making a list of positive words. Knowing my Christ-like attributes are gifts from God, and that they have been given to me for specific purposes, I decided to pray and ask Him to impress upon me what those purposes actually are. I decided to preface each attribute with ‘God gave me the gift of_____’ because they really are all gifts. I also prayed to know what God would have me do with the Christlike attributes He gave me, for if He gave them to me, there must be a purpose in which I am to use them.”¹²⁸

- Why is it important to first inventory the Lord’s tender mercies and my positive qualities prior to delving into those that may be more difficult?
 - What fears do I have in discovering more about each of these?
 - In what ways am I excited?

¹²⁷ Name withheld

¹²⁸ <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/2013/01/tapping-into-our-god-given-supah-powahs.html>, paraphrased by permission.

Step Four: Section 1 - Acknowledging the truth about ourselves

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- How can the phrase “if you’re going through hell, keep going” actually aid me in completing all that Step 4 requires of me?

Truths and affirmations

The journey of self-discovery and God-healing we are currently on is one of the greatest of our mortal life as affirmed by Elder Neil L. Anderson: “With this commitment to who we can become, the spiritual doors swing open. There is a new freedom to feel and to know, a freedom to become. Individual inspiration blossoms, and. . . as [we] peel off the layers . . . even a little at a time, [we] will feel the

loving kindness of our Eternal Savior. Even when [we] are “yet a great way off,” he will reach out to [us], bringing a peace that surpasses understanding. He will heal [us] and . . . wash [us] clean.”¹²⁹

Daily affirmations

- I am intelligent and teachable.
- My wounds are healing.

¹²⁹ Neil A. Andersen, “The Joy of Becoming Clean,” *Ensign*, Apr 1995

Step Four: Section 1 - Inventory: Tender mercies

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

The purpose of this inventory is to connect us with the truth that God most assuredly has not forgotten us, but that He is with us, not only in the darkest of times, but *all* the time. Even though sometimes unrecognizable, his tender mercies have been, are currently and always will be all around us, we only need to look for them, as promised by Elder David A. Bednar: “Each of us can have eyes to see clearly and ears to hear distinctly the tender mercies of the Lord as they strengthen and assist us in these latter days.”¹³⁰ Truly, in *all* our moments of need, the Lord takes the most direct approach to us, striding out across the storm tossed waves of life to save us both in the most subtle of ways, as well as those more obvious.

Because we have spent so much of our lives deep in our addiction; the subsequent feelings of shame have left us feeling distant from God, unloved, forgotten and alone. We may have even believed Satan’s lie that He no longer loved us and had completely forsaken us. An amazing testament regarding the Savior’s love for us comes from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland: “After Jesus had fed the multitude [of five thousand], he . . . put his disciples into a fishing boat to cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee . . . It was toward evening, and certainly it was a night of storm. The winds must have been ferocious from the start . . . Somewhere between three and six in the morning—they had gone only a few miles. By then the ship was caught up in a truly violent storm . . . But, as always, Christ was watching over them . . . Seeing their difficulty, the Savior simply took the most direct approach to their boat, striding out across the waves to help them, walking on the water as surely as he had walked upon the land. In their moment of great extremity, the disciples looked and saw in the darkness this wonder in a fluttering robe coming toward them on the ridges of the sea . . . Then, through the storm and darkness—when the ocean seems so great and little boats seem so small—there came the ultimate and reassuring voice of peace from their Master. ‘It is I,’ he said, ‘be not afraid.’”^{131//132}

In order to discover these very personal tender mercies given to us, we are to think back over our entire lives searching the dormant recesses of our memory to identify instances in which the Lord has been with us. It is good to list the obvious ones, of course, but it is more important to recognize the ones we weren’t previously aware of, for the goal is to discover that the Lord has truly been at our side our entire journey, even in the moments when we thought we were all but lost and forgotten.

The inventory

Identify tender mercies in the following age categories:

- Early childhood
- Adolescence
- Teen years
- Young adult
- Adult

Identify tender mercies in the following life circumstance categories:

- Elementary, middle & high school
- College
- Specific employment
- Mission
- Marriage
- Family vacations
- Car trouble

¹³⁰ David A. Bednar, “The Tender Mercies of the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 2005

¹³¹ Matthew 14:27

¹³² Jeffrey R. Holland, “Come unto Me,” *BYU Devotional*, March 2, 1997 See: speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland_come-unto/

Step Four: Section 1 - Inventory: Tender mercies

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- Financial trouble

Identify tender mercies in the following emotion based categories:

- Fear
- Resentment
- Sadness
- Being bullied
- Peer pressure
- Births
- Premature deaths
- Abuse (all forms)
- Suicidality

Conclusion

It cannot be said enough, that God the Father, His son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are with us always, even in times when we least expect it, as President George Q. Cannon assured: “No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, [God] will never desert us. He never has, and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not His character [to do so]. He is an unchangeable being; the same yesterday, the same today, and He will be the same throughout the eternal ages to come. We have found that God. We have made Him our friend . . . and He will stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; but we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trials and difficulties the better and purer for them, if we only trust in our God.”¹³³

¹³³ “Freedom of the Saints,” in *Collected Discourses*, comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy, 5 vols. (Burbank, California: B.H.S. Publishing, 1987–92), 2:185

Step Four: Section 2 - Discovering the roots of our addictive behavior

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- How do I feel about discovering my damaged emotional and spiritual roots?
 - What might scare me about this process?
 - In thinking about these fears, what is the absolute worst that could happen?
 - What am I most looking forward to?
- How can shifting my focus and energy to healing my damaged roots rather than fretting about the ‘symptoms’ of my damaged roots (acting out) accelerate my progression?

“By God’s grace [we] don’t have to fall into [our] old patterns of thinking. The Twelve Steps do work, but we have to want them to work.”¹³⁴

- *What can I do to have the willingness to work the steps?*
- *What have I tried, without success, to overcome my addiction?*
 - *How can the Lord help me change this?*

“For so long my goal has simply been to just refrain from acting out, but I’ve since learned that acting out is simply a symptom of a much deeper problem: lust. And even more recently I’ve decided that I don’t want to just be sober. I want to be clean; on the outside, yes, but especially on the inside. I liken my thoughts to pesky mosquitoes. For so long I would lay limp and let them attach to me and suck me dry. Now, I actively swat at them as they come for me; as they threaten my peace of mind. But I refuse to believe that I am destined to swat mosquitoes for the rest of my life. I don’t want my recovery to be small defensive battles but, instead, I want it to be an all-out war. I want to gather as many tools and resources as I can and ROAR in the face of the corrosive lust within me and give it to God; allowing Him to cleanse and heal me from within.”¹³⁵

- In what ways does my life relate to the analogy of the fruit trees?
- Why is overcoming my addiction dependent on first discovering the roots of my addictive behavior?
 - How do I feel about this process of discovery?
- In what ways can I identify ‘lust’ as being just a symptom of deeper emotional damage?
- Why is it so important to avoid isolation and strive to connect with my support network through our Step 4?

“I have always thought of my Step 4 as the puzzle of my life. I had given pieces of that puzzle to countless bishops and leaders over the years but it was only when I viewed my entire history in one process that I was able to see many of the patterns I had been stuck in. And no matter what fears I may have experienced beforehand, everything was absolutely worth it in the end.”¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Sex Addicts Anonymous: 3rd Edition Conference Approved. Health Communications Inc. Kindle Locations 4864.

¹³⁵ Name withheld

¹³⁶ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 2 - Discovering the roots of our addictive behavior

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- Remembering that the Lord is the “spirit of truth” and delights in my honesty, why is it beneficial to see the ‘truth of my life’ no matter how dark that truth may be?¹³⁷
- How does it feel knowing that recovery can turn my grief to hope, worthlessness to worthiness and shame to affirmation?
 - What other emotional transformations do I hope for?
- What do I hope to discover as I walk toward the hope of God’s light?

Truths and affirmations

Taking a strong look at our willingness to truly discover the roots of our addiction is key to the quality of our success, as affirmed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland: “If we stop chopping at the branches of this problem and strike more directly at the root of the tree, not surprisingly we find lust lurking furtively there. Lust is an unsavory word, and it is certainly an unsavory topic for me to address, but there is good reason why in some traditions it is known as the most deadly of the seven deadly sins.”¹³⁸

Daily affirmations

- I am gratefully discovering the roots of my addiction.
- I am exactly where I need to be on my journey.

¹³⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 93:9

¹³⁸ Jeffrey R. Holland, “Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul,” *Ensign*, May 2010

Step Four: Section 2 - Inventory - Personal history

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

Given that we have spent so much of our lives avoiding accountability, it is often difficult to remember all that is required to complete an in-depth moral inventory. It is for this reason that completing a personal history inventory first can be very beneficial. A timeline of sorts, this inventory is not meant for us to actually *process* through events or emotions, but simply to get our memory wheels greased and moving.

In an effort to understand the purpose and power of this inventory, it is recommended that we take time to invite the Spirit of the Lord to be with us as we purposefully ponder and reflect on the following questions:

- Why did God give me the gift of memory?
- How can remembering my past help me heal from it?
- How is opening the door to remembrance an act of surrender to my Savior?

The inventory

There are multiple ways to outline this inventory, we simply must discover the method that works best for us. Some have split their timeline up by age, others by places lived. Some have even taped pieces of paper together and created an actual timeline of their life. No matter what our timeline 'looks' like, however, its purpose still remains the same; simply to help us remember. That said, it is recommended that we not only inventory the actual events, but the feelings and people associated with each event. Doing so brings us back to that time period which can open additional memory doors.

It is well to be aware that we will inevitably bump up against painful memories that we will need to inventory more in-depth at a later time. When this occurs, we simply write down a few key words to help us remember the event, but no more than that. Remember, we have asked the Lord to bring to remembrance that which will aid us in our recovery; therefore, it is important that we not stuff, reject, deny or minimize any memories that do come up.

Furthermore, there are sure to be times when recalling memories and the associated emotions can trigger us to act out. Talking to our sponsor, as well as praying and surrendering any temptations to God anytime during the inventory process can decrease or even prevent memories from triggering us to act out. If we feel a trigger is too strong, then we stop. Acknowledging that a trigger is too much for us to manage is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength. When such temptation occurs, it is important to surrender it to God and resume our personal history at a later time when peace and emotional stability has again returned. This is a journey of sacred self-discovery. Even though there will be times when we experience pain, sorrow and regret, there will also be times when the Lord allows us to float in the clouds of sweet serenity.

Some thought-points to consider when writing our timeline:

- What is my earliest memory?
- What memories do I have from pre-kindergarten?
 - Who did I live with?
 - Where did I live?
 - (repeat for different ages/grades)
- What schools did I attend?
- How long did I attend each of them?
- Did I receive any special certificates or awards while attending?
- What school or community activities/groups was I involved in?
- Were there any events that strengthened or harmed my self-image or my confidence?
- Did I have any accidents, injuries or surgeries?
- What events made me aware of other's expectations of me?
 - What expectations did I have of myself?
- What peer relationships did I have?

Step Four: Section 2 - Inventory - Personal history

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- What did I do to survive difficult times?
 - Did I have a safe place to go?
 - Who were my safe people?
- Are there periods of my life that I can't remember?

Conclusion

Memories of our past can be difficult to work through. We may be tempted to only write down those things that are bad, either done by us or by others, but it is important that we write everything we can remember down. Even in our darkest days Heavenly Father was there and we can look for it and be grateful.

Bishop Henry B Eyring declared, "To find gratitude and generosity when you could reasonably find hurt and resentment will surprise you. It will be so surprising because you will see so much of the opposite: people who have much more than others yet who react with anger when one advantage is lost or with resentment when an added gift is denied. A poem describes that contrast: it is called "How Different."

*Some murmur when the sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue:
And some with thankful love are filled,
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night."*¹³⁹

Finding hope and light amidst what we may perceive as a vast darkness of our past will help us as we move forward in our lives to find God on a daily basis.

¹³⁹ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1989/10/remembrance-and-gratitude>

Step Four: Section 3 - Learning to identify, feel and process each emotion

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- In what ways have I used my addiction to numb my emotions?

“Intuitively, we all know that it’s better to feel than not to feel. Beyond their energizing subjective charge, emotions have crucial survival value. They orient us, interpret the world for us, and offer us vital information. They tell us what is dangerous and what is benign, what threatens our existence and what will nurture our growth. Imagine how disabled we would be if we could not see or hear or taste or sense heat or cold or physical pain. Emotional shutdown is similar. Our emotions are an indispensable part of our sensory apparatus and an essential part of who we are. They make life worthwhile, exciting, challenging, beautiful, and meaningful.”¹⁴⁰

- What consequences come from being emotionally disconnected?
- How do I feel about engaging with my emotions?

“As a result of the shame I felt from my addiction I doubted that anyone cared about me; I felt that no one loved me and that I had no purpose or value in this life . . . For as long as I can remember I trudged through life, day after day, keeping a pasted smile on my face so no one would know the real pain that ruled every aspect of my life. I was not happy, I was merely surviving . . . [However, once I started attending meetings I began to feel so much hope, and that hope] is what has kept me going back week after week . . . Through this journey hope has been essential to my recovery process and I am so grateful for it.”¹⁴¹

- What are the most prevalent emotions I felt while deep in my addiction?
 - What about in these early stages of recovery?

“It isn’t possible to connect and be open with others when I am stuck in pride and selfishness; when I am drowning in shame for my very existence. For me, connecting with others had to be a deliberate choice. I had to choose to put others first and serve others and reach out for help when I was struggling. I had to make an effort to connect even in the most simplest of ways; inviting the very process into my comfort zone. It was the only way to break my cycle.”¹⁴²

- In what ways has my isolation from others affected my ability to emotionally connect?
- How do I feel about eventually being able to identify, feel and process each of my emotions?
 - Why is this process so important?

¹⁴⁰ Gabor Mate, MD, In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, Kindle location 877

¹⁴¹ <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/2012/08/touched-by-light-of-grace-my-story.html>

¹⁴² Name withheld

Step Four: Section 3 - Learning to identify, feel and process each emotion

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- In what ways can I relate to my emotional development being stunted at the age my addiction began?
- In what ways can I relate to the grieving process when it comes to giving up my addiction?
- How can being mindful of the differences between reacting and responding help me better process my emotions?

Truths and affirmations

A significant part of our recovery is being able to recognize and process our emotions. “Seeking out answers to our questions and finding solutions to our problems with His help is what will help us ultimately become like Him. With this in mind, we can ask Him to show us how we can become more balanced emotionally instead of simply asking Him to make us better.”¹⁴³ As we seek the Lord’s help he will guide us and we will begin to learn that each emotion helps to understand ourselves better.

Daily affirmations

- I am gratefully embracing each emotion.
- I am emotionally mature.

¹⁴³ Valerie Durrant “Teach Me to Fly: Achieving Emotional Self-Reliance in the Lord’s Way”, *Ensign*, January 2019

Step Four: Section 3 - Inventory - Emotions

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

The purpose of the emotions inventory, combined with practicing mindfulness, is to reflect on how the experiences of our life have affected the way we feel. Developing an awareness and understanding of our emotions can be complicated since we've spent so much of our lives numbing our emotions. Just like most skills in life, with deliberate daily practice, our ability to recognize, manage and embrace our emotions will improve. Increased emotional self-awareness is key to achieving success in our recovery, as well as every other aspect of our lives. The deeper our self reflection, the more energy we will free up to focus on healing in our mind, emotions and our body. Although tapping into our dormant emotions can be uncomfortable, there is no need to feel shame, guilt or regret, for they are simply a natural product of life's experiences.

- *Family of origin - the family we grew up with or other parental figure)*
- *Although the family of origin questions are asked in the past tense, the question also refers to any lingering beliefs, attitudes and expectations they may still have of us.*
- *Make the effort to connect what I felt as a child to what I feel today.*

The inventory

Familial expectations

- What types of expectations (perceived or otherwise) did my family of origin have for my place in the family?
 - What roles did they expect me to fill?
 - Did they send the message that I needed to be tough, strong, hold back my feelings, that it wasn't okay to express what I wanted or that I needed to maintain control or be perfect in some way?
 - What would happen if I lived up to or actually challenged any of these beliefs?
 - In what ways have these messages affected my core beliefs about myself?
 - What about my life as a whole?
- What kinds of attitudes, beliefs and expectations did my family of origin have about life?
- What core beliefs did they have about what it means to be a good or successful person?
 - What similarities do I have in my own beliefs?
 - What expectations have been placed on me that I have not met regarding success in life?
 - How has that made me feel?
- What behaviors or attitudes were unacceptable in my family of origin?
 - What expressions or lifestyle choices made my family uncomfortable?
 - Was it okay to cry, get angry, feel sad, joyful or hurt?
 - Was it okay to sing, dance, laugh and celebrate life?
 - If acceptable forms of expression were challenged, what was the response?
 - How did that response make me feel?
 - What similarities do I notice in my own attitudes regarding what is acceptable forms of expression?
- How did my family of origin deal with anger?
 - How did they express their anger?
 - Did they yell?
 - Shut down?
 - Manipulate?
 - Passive aggressive punishment?
 - Give the cold shoulder?
 - Guilt trip?
 - Did they get violent?
 - What similarities or differences are there in the way I experience and process anger?
- What current situations do I find myself annoyed, frustrated, angry, or upset over?
 - Write down what triggers these negative states within myself.

Step Four: Section 3 - Inventory - Emotions

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Familial affection

- Reflect back on times when I needed comfort, affection and love from my parents but didn't receive it:
 - How did that make me feel?
- Was physical affection (hugging, leaning into, non-sexual touching) acceptable?
- In what ways has what I've learned about affection affected the way I express it to my spouse and/or children?

Familial discipline

- What forms of discipline did I receive as a child?
 - Did I get spanked, hit or receive more extreme forms of physical discipline?
 - How did that make me feel?
 - Was I forced to stand in a corner for extended periods of time?
 - How did that make me feel?
 - Was I forced to wear or hold embarrassing items?
 - What about being forced to consume food or drink that I didn't want to?
 - How did that make me feel?
- How have the punishments I have received as a child affected my feelings of self-worth?
 - Did I feel such discipline was given out of love or something else?
 - Did the "punishments fit the crime" so to say?
- In what ways have such measures affected how I feel I should or do discipline my spouse?
 - What about my children?

Familial judgment

- What judgments, criticisms, or comparisons did I receive from my family as a child?
 - What current judgments, criticisms, or comparisons do I find myself making (whether about myself or others) throughout my day?
 - What behaviors (in others or myself) elicit these feelings?

Linking the past to the present

- When I think about my family and childhood now, what sensations and thoughts come up for me?

Conclusion

"Emotions can be confusing, especially for teens and children, whose brains are still developing and whose experience with certain emotions is limited."¹⁴⁴ Because of our addiction, many of us have never matured emotionally. The Lord will help us recognize and begin to process many of these emotions left unchecked. As we notice these feelings, show empathy and understanding for the still grieving child in ourselves. Compassion and Patience for our past selves is required to heal from these traumas.

¹⁴⁴ "Helping Children Understand Their Emotions," *Ensign*, September 2019

Step Four: Section 3 - Practicing mindfulness

“What day is it?” asked Pooh. “It’s today,” squeaked Piglet. “My favourite day,” said Pooh.

The purpose

Mindfulness is the practice of being aware of what is happening *right now* without wishing it were different. We do this by enjoying the pleasantness of life without fear of it changing, and willingly sitting with the unpleasant without fear that it won’t change. Every day we are engaged in the miracle of life, but it tends to pass us by because we are so consumed with regret and worry. Mindfulness pulls us into the present where we can experience the fullness that life has to offer.

The practice of mindfulness

Relax

Mindfulness is all about slowing down and mentally and physically relaxing into the current moment. In doing so, we release ourselves from the gripping regret, depression and despair of the past and from the worry, anxiety and fear of the future, whether minutes, hours, days or years in either direction.

Breathe

Breath work is one of the most powerful tools we can utilize to alter how we feel, accounting for a significant variance in feelings such as stress, anxiety and depression. Like the breath, troubling thoughts and feelings come and go, they come and then they go. Meditative breathing teaches our mind and body to also let go. As we learn to quiet our mind by paying attention to our breathing, distractions lose their power to disrupt our focus and steal our serenity.

Sense & experience

Mindfulness also incorporates tapping into our five senses—touch, sound, sight, smell and taste—and experiencing the world around us in the present moment. This is something we can literally do at any moment of any day. Simply setting a reminder to ‘sense’ a few times throughout the day on that which we do experience will nurture our ability to be mindful and present in our everyday experiences.

Reflect & express gratitude

Reflection is important to mindfulness because it increases the depth of our learning. It often gives us the ‘why’ behind what we experience and the emotions that follow. Reflection also gives us the opportunity to identify the Lord’s hand in our lives; those intimate tender mercies that connect us with God. Expressing gratitude for those tender mercies opens our heart doors even wider to His love, grace and divine rescue and healing awaiting each of us.

Engaging mindfulness through the 5 senses

A simple 5-minutes of mindfulness has the power to slow our breathing and heart rate, releasing us from the debilitating grip of stress and anxiety. Although mindful living won’t actually solve the problems we face, it refines and strengthens our coping skills; better preparing us to face them.

1. *Relax*: We sit in a comfortable upright open position with our feet planted flat on the ground and our arms uncrossed and hands open and resting upright on our thighs or next to us.
2. *Breathe*: Just breathe. Deep, refreshing, stabilizing breaths; inhaling deeply and exhaling fully.
3. *Experience*: One at a time, we consciously connect with each of our 5 senses, for at least one minute each; discovering how each sense is being activated right in that very moment.

Smell:

- Close my eyes and focus on the smells in my environment.
- Do I smell fresh air? Something cooking? Fresh flowers? Perfume or cologne? What else?
- In what ways am I grateful for these smells?

Step Four: Section 3 - Practicing mindfulness

Hearing:

- Focus on all of the sounds around me; accepting that they are not good or bad, they just are.
- Do I hear people talking? Children playing? Music or TV? Birds chirping? What else?
- In what ways am I grateful for these sounds?

Taste:

- Focus on all of the flavors and textures in my mouth, whether there is food or not.
- Is my mouth dry or moist? Is my tongue comfortable? What do my teeth feel like? What else?
- In what ways am I grateful for these tastes?

Touch:

- Focus on the different parts of my body and what they are touching.
- Is it fabric? Soft? Rough? Pleasing? Uncomfortable? Do I feel my heart beating? What else?
- In what ways am I grateful for these tangible touches?

Sight:

- Open my eyes and focus on the colors, shapes and textures of my surroundings.
- What colors do I notice? Do I see anything moving? Does anything hold memories? What else?
- In what ways am I grateful for what I see?

Now stand up and bring our focus to the sensations in all parts of our body all at once. Let the sensations tingle through us from each finger to each toe and everything in between. Let all negative energy flow out of our fingers and toes.

Come back to being consciously present

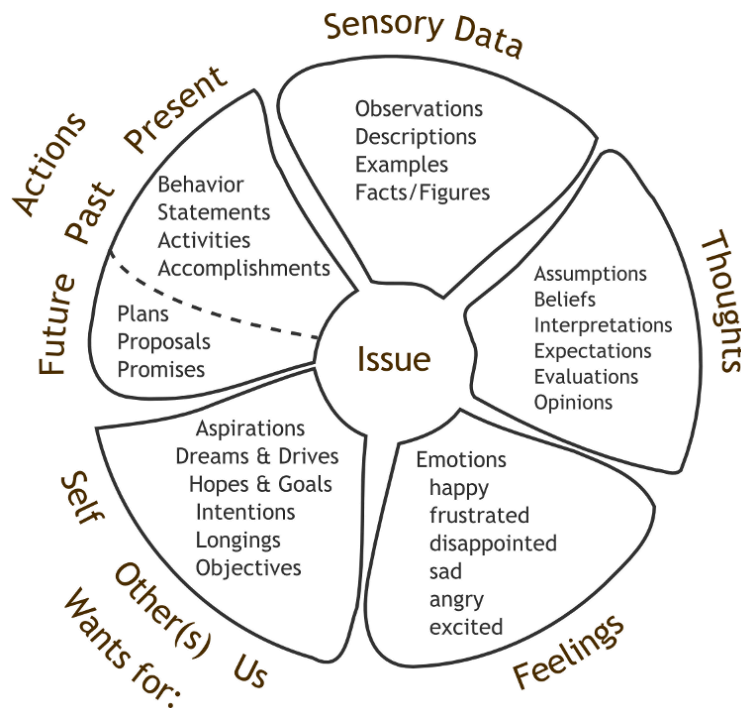
- How do I feel?
- How do I feel now compared to how I felt before I started this exercise?
 - What has changed?

Awareness Wheel

Additionally, employing the Awareness Wheel to specific situations that involve depression and/or anxiety can help us access and remain in a state of mindfulness. We list the issue (something we are worried about, fear, regret or any other issue) in the middle and then catalog the sensory data, our thoughts & feelings, our desires and most importantly, our action plan. Getting it down on paper helps us take the liberating first step to releasing ourselves from it.

Step Four: Section 3 - Practicing mindfulness

Awareness Wheel



Conclusion

It is important that when practicing mindfulness that we reflect and express gratitude for the beauty we discover, the connections we make and the serenity we feel. Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf has affirmed that “we can choose to be grateful, no matter what. This type of gratitude transcends whatever is happening around us. It surpasses disappointment, discouragement, and despair. It blooms just as beautifully in the icy landscape of winter as it does in the pleasant warmth of summer. When we are grateful to God *in* our circumstances, we can experience gentle peace in the midst of tribulation . . . In the cold of bitter sorrow, we can experience the closeness and warmth of heaven’s embrace.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Grateful in Any Circumstances,” *Ensign*, May 2014

Step Four: Section 3 - Inventory - Emotions

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Emotion Vocabulary

SADNESS, DEPRESSION & DESPAIR

Sadness

Contemplative - Disappointed - Distracted - Down - Drained - Heavy - Low - Regretful - Wistful - Discouraged -
Dispirited - Distraught - Forlorn - Gloomy - Grieving - Heartbroken - Melancholy - Mournful - Weepy -
World-weary

Depression

Anguished - Apathetic - Bereaved - Bleak - Crushed - Dejected - Depressed - Despondent - Disinterested -
Empty - Hopeless - Inconsolable - Listless - Miserable - Morose - Overwhelmed - Passionless - Pleasureless -
Sullen - Withdrawn

Despair

Agonized - Anguished - Death-seeking - Desolate - Desperate - Devastated - Doomed - Fatalistic - Gutted -
Isolated - Morbid - Nihilistic - Numbed - Reckless - Self-destructive - Suicidal - Tormented - Tortured

APATHY, ANGER & HATE

Apathy

Aggravated - Annoyed - Apathetic - Bored - Bugged - Cold - Crabby - Cranky - Critical - Detached - Displeased
- Frustrated - Impatient - Indifferent - Irked - Irritated - Miffed - Peeved

Anger

Angry - Antagonistic - Arrogant - Bothered - Bristled - Defensive - Exasperated - Indignant - Mad - Offended -
Riled up - Sarcastic - Snarky

Hate

Aggressive - Appalled - Belligerent - Bitter - Disgusted - Furious - Hateful - Hostile - Livid - Menacing -
Outraged - Seething - Resentful - Spiteful - Vengeful - Vicious - Vindictive - Violent

GUILT, EMBARRASSMENT & SHAME

Guilt

Abashed - Apologetic - Awkward - Contrite - Flushed - Flustered - Hesitant - Humble - Penitent - Regretful -
Remorseful - Sorry - Speechless

Step Four: Section 3 - Inventory - Emotions

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Embarrassment

Chagrined - Embarrassed - Intimidated - Nervous - Rueful - Self-conscious - Sheepish - Uncomfortable - Withdrawn

Shame

Ashamed - Belittled - Broken - Degraded - Demeaned - Dirty - Corrupt – Honor less - Humiliated - Mortified - Ostracized - Reproachful - Self-condemning - Shamefaced - Stigmatized

ANXIETY, FEAR & TERROR

Anxiety

Alert - Anxious - Apprehensive - Aware - Cautious - Concerned - Confused - Disoriented - Doubtful - Fidgety - Hesitant - Indecisive - Insecure - Leery - Pensive - Timid - Uneasy

Fear

Afraid - Alarmed - Distrustful - Fearful - Jumpy - Nervous - Rattled - Shaky - Startled - Suspicious - Unnerved - Unsettled - Wary - Worried

Terror

Dread - Horrified - Panicked - Paralyzed - Petrified - Phobic - Shocked - Terrified - Terrorized - Trepidation

JEALOUSY, ENVY & COVETING

Jealousy

Disbelieving - Distrustful - Insecure - Protective - Suspicious - Wary

Envy

Demanding - Desirous - Envious - Greedy - Selfish - Threatened

Coveting

Avaricious - Covetous - Gluttonous - Grasping - Insatiable - Manic - Possessive - Predatory - Rapacious - Resentful

CONTENTMENT, HAPPINESS & JOY

Contentment

Amused - Calm - Contented - Encouraged - Friendly - Glad - Hopeful - Inspired - Jovial - Open - Peaceful - Pleased - Satisfied - Smiling - Upbeat

Happiness

Step Four: Section 3 - Inventory - Emotions

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Cheerful - Delighted - Emotionally healthy - Enough - Excited - Fulfilled - Gratified - Happy - Lively - Merry - Optimistic - Playful - Rejuvenated

Joy

Awe filled - Blissful - Connected - Ecstatic - Elated - Enthralled - Exhilarated - Giddy - Joyful - Jubilant - Overjoyed - Radiant - Thrilled

Step Four: Section 4 - Uncovering patterns of codependency

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- At first glance, in what ways can I relate to the concept of codependency?
 - Do I see these patterns more in myself or others?
- In what ways am I driven by people-pleasing, whether subtle or overtly?
- In what ways do I engage in rescuing and enabling behaviors?
 - What about controlling behaviors?
- In what ways do I blame others for my addiction?
 - What circumstances do I blame?

“Learning about the drama triangle was one of the most profound moments in my recovery journey. It was like a giant light bulb turned on and illuminated all the different ways in which I interacted with others. I realized I was pretty good at playing all the different roles in the triangle: I was the rescuer of my mom, who was the victim of my sister-in-law, who was the persecutor of my mom. On the flip side, I was the victim of my boss, who was the persecutor of me, resulting in me expecting my coworker to be the rescuer. The drama triangle was abundant in my life! However, with this new found awareness I willingly set boundaries that kept me from engaging in the drama. Over time I learned new, healthier patterns of engagement and, for the most part, I’m now drama triangle free.”¹⁴⁶

- How have the different aspects of the drama triangle manifested in my life?
 - What primary role do I play with family members?
 - What about work colleagues?
 - What are some boundaries I can implement in order to disengage from active drama triangles in my life?
 - What fears do I have in setting these boundaries?
- Identify familial relationships, whether with my spouse, parents or others, in which boundaries are necessary to heal codependent interactions.
 - Write an action boundary and response action plan for each of these relationships.
 - What fears do I have regarding setting these boundaries?
 - What do I hope to gain from them?

“Do I love and respect the Lord? Am I sincere and humble as I approach Him, and do I earnestly and patiently listen? Do I hold Him in the highest regard, and always strive to appreciate and cherish Him? Do I always remember Him? Yes, while I often fall short, these truly are my ideals; and just as He is my role model for whom I want to become, my relationship with Him is my model for all of my earthly relationships. The two great commandments--to love the Lord with all my heart, mind, and strength; and to love my neighbor as myself--are the guiding principles of the Gospel and recovery, as I see it. And the Golden Rule--to treat others as I would be treated--is ultimately the greatest way to live.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Name withheld

¹⁴⁷ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 4 - Uncovering patterns of codependency

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- In what ways is my relationship with the Lord a good example of the healthy relationships I want to develop with others?
- How can I call on the Lord to help me unravel my codependent relationships?

Truths and affirmations

One of the most effective measures we can take to improve our relationships with others is to strengthen our relationship with ourselves and with God, as expressed by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf: “It may seem odd to think of having a relationship with ourselves, but we do . . . May I suggest that you reduce the rush and take a little extra time to get to know yourself better . . . Learn to see yourself as Heavenly Father sees you—as His precious daughter or son with divine potential.”¹⁴⁸ Over time, and with plenty of practice and patience, we will learn to treat ourselves with the compassion, respect and forgiveness that we truly deserve.

Daily affirmations

- I engage with others in a healthy manner.
- I am emotionally secure in who I am.

¹⁴⁸ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Of Things That Matter Most,” Ensign, Nov 2010

Step Four: Section 4 - Inventory – Uncovering patterns of codependency

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

Because the concept of codependency can be so confusing, it is often difficult to recognize. The purpose of the following inventory is simply to help open up our minds and hearts to hidden codependent behavioral patterns in our relationships.

The inventory

- In what ways do I sacrifice myself in order to make my spouse happy?
 - What about other family members?
 - Friends?
 - Boss or coworkers?
 - Others?
- In what way do I seek validation outside of myself?
 - From whom or what do I seek this validation?
- In what ways do I put other people's needs ahead of my own?
 - What needs am I sacrificing?
- In what ways do I take care of others with the belief that they should then take care of me?
 - How do I expect them to take care of me?
 - How do I feel when this expectation isn't met?
- How does it feel in my body when I feel obligated to take care of someone else?
 - Do I experience physical symptoms of anxiety?
 - What about the weight of depression?
- Is there a relationship between codependent behavior and my energy levels?
 - How does this affect my daily life?
- What dreams and goals have I sacrificed because I felt I had to take care of others?
- What goals or dreams have I sacrificed because I feared others would no longer approve of, accept or love me?
- Do I feel people take advantage of me?
 - Do I have a hard time saying no to people?
 - Do I find myself resenting those that ask me to do things I don't really want to do?
 - Do I resent myself as well?
 - When I do things for others do I anticipate or expect them to compliment my efforts?
- Do I find it difficult to make enough time to do things for myself?
 - What am I filling that time with instead?
- How do I feel when someone hurts my feelings or disrespects me?
 - Do I stick up for myself in these instances?
- In what ways do I hide my emotions on account of others?
- Do I feel like I need the advice of others before I make decisions?
- In what ways is it difficult to ask for things that I want?
- Do I find myself saying sorry for things I haven't done wrong?
 - Do I sometimes feel like apologizing for my very existence?
- Do I tend to think of others more than I think of myself?
- Do I feel like my relationships would crumble if I didn't give so much to them?

Conclusion

"But it's important to understand that behaviors we often label as "codependent" or "enabling" are motivated by fear, not by some personality flaw."¹⁴⁹ As we are curious about our unhealthy codependent behaviors we will uncover much of the fear we have about ourselves and others that drives these actions. Bringing these into the light is the first step in preventing codependency and providing healing in our relationships.

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2020/10/young-adults/helping-loved-ones-through-addiction-without-enabling>

Step Four: Section 4 - Inventory - The drama triangle

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

Consisting of three dramatic roles—the victim, persecutor and rescuer—the drama triangle is a common, distressing, repetitive, often subconscious behavior that is rooted in some sort of trauma. When we are stuck in the drama triangle, we don't actually resolve any problems, but continually repeat them. In order to break free from this destructive cycle, we must first take the time to evaluate each of our relationships to determine how the triangle is manifesting in each of them. It doesn't matter if it's family, friends, coworkers, school peers, neighbors or even acquaintances, drama can manifest in all of them. We can even get so good at playing each of the roles that we can switch between them mid-interaction.

The inventory

Victim

Victims feel as if the world is out to get them. They act helpless; denying responsibility and accountability for the negativity in their life. They are passive aggressive, won't stand up for themselves and are overly sensitive. They engage the drama triangle by seeking rescuers to save them from real or perceived persecutors.

Reflection questions:

- Do I feel consumed by hopelessness, finding it difficult to identify positivity in my life?
- Do I feel that life is making decisions for me, rather than me making decisions for my life?
- Do I feel as if I am incapable of caring for myself, whether physically, emotionally, psychologically or spiritually?
- Do I feel broken beyond repair?
- Do I feel stuck in circumstances or behavior without escape?
- Do I feel that others are out to get me?
- Do I feel as if my circumstances or behavior are the fault of someone or something else?
- Do I wish others would make decisions for me so I don't have to make them myself?
- Do I often get offended by what others say?
- Do I obsess about what others think, feel or say about me?
- Do I find myself saying things like:
 - "Life just hates me."
 - "This *always* happens."
 - "Why me?"

Rescuer

Rescuers put others' needs over their own, while neglecting themselves. They are enablers and caretakers, and always looking for the next opportunity to "help" someone. They need to be needed, and because of this they are constantly exhausted: emotionally and physically. They harbor deep resentment toward others for 'sucking them dry'. They manipulate others by guilt-tripping to get their way. They engage the drama triangle by seeking victims to save from real or perceived persecutors.

Reflection questions:

- Do I have a strong desire to solve other peoples' problems?
- Do I obsess about helping others, even to the point of neglecting my own needs?
- Do I engage in issues where it really isn't any of my business?
- Do I like it when people are dependent upon me?
- Do I need to be needed?
- Do I have difficulty saying no to others?
- Do I want to save others from the natural consequences of their actions?
- Do I expect others to be grateful for what I do for them?
- Do I feel worthless if others don't ask me for help, or if I am unable to help them?

Step Four: Section 4 - Inventory - The drama triangle

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- Do I feel stretched too thin and on the verge of exhaustion?
- Do I find myself saying things like:
 - “I can do it for you.”
 - “You should have just listened to me.”
 - “I’ll figure it out for you.”

Persecutor

Persecutors blame others for real or perceived injustices without taking accountability or offering solutions for the underlying problem. They are critical, unpleasant and good at finding fault in others. Their outward hostility is rooted in feelings of low self worth and inadequacy. They control others with threats, criticism and rigidity. They engage the drama triangle by seeking out victims they can control.

Reflection questions:

- Do I avoid accountability for life’s circumstances?
- Do I overtly express my frustration with others?
- Do I feel as if I am better than others in any capacity?
- Am I impatient and critical of others?
- Do I find it difficult to feel compassion or empathy, or consider others feelings?
- Am I verbally, emotionally, psychologically, physically or spiritually abusive?
- Do I rage in anger?
- Do I resent or hate others?
- Do I manipulate others to get what I want?
- Am I bossy?
- Do I find myself saying things like:
 - “It’s all your fault.”
 - “You’re wrong.”
 - “It doesn’t matter how you feel.”

After diving deeper into how I relate to each of the drama triangle roles, it’s now time to relate to this to each of my relationships:

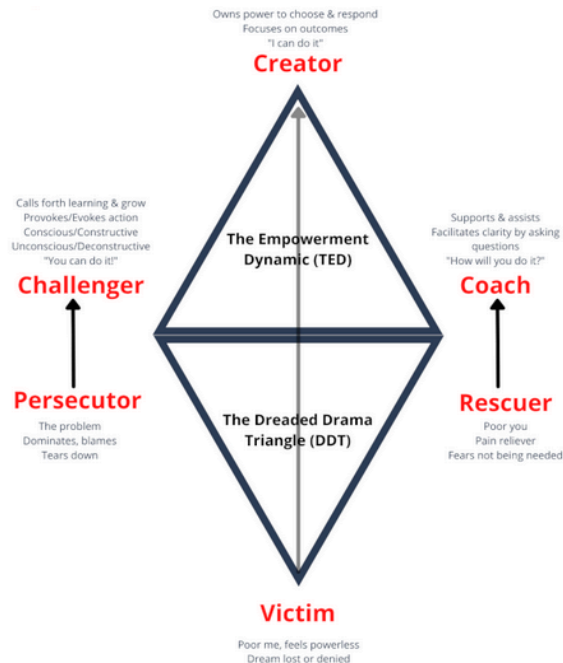
- Write down all of the people I interact with on any given day. How often I see them, or whether or not I like or love them is not a factor. List them all. (It may help to split them up into categories such as home, work, church etc.)
- Ask myself the following questions regarding each of these relationships:
 - Which drama triangle role do I engage in most with this person?
 - What personal qualities make me vulnerable to falling into this role?
 - What behaviors in others trigger me to engage in this role?
 - How am I going to disengage from the drama triangle with this person?

The empowerment triangle

The empowerment triangle is a concept that helps to flip the script on the three dramatic roles—the victim, persecutor and rescuer—to provide a healthier way to interact when we find ourselves caught up in the drama triangle. The new roles—the Creator, Challenger and Coach—can help us find peace in turmoil driven relationships.

Step Four: Section 4 - Inventory - The drama triangle

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.



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The empowerment triangle roles

Creator

The Creator is the replacement for the Victim. Instead of feeling that the world is out to get them they choose their responses to life's challenges and become focused on solutions rather than the problems. They act from a place of gratitude and inspiration.

Reflection questions:

- What can I do to see positivity when I'm feeling like the victim?
- How can I focus on the solution rather than the problem?
- How could being grateful in my relationship challenges help me to change from a Victim to a Creator?

Coach

The Coach is an important distinction from a Rescuer. Where the Rescuer will provide "help" that promotes victimhood and strengthens codependency, the Coach will provide support without entanglement. A Coach realizes that they cannot solve others problems. They can listen. They can ask questions that support curiosity in finding a solution that is done by the Creator's discovering what is best for themselves.

Reflection questions:

- Do I give my advice before listening to the problem?
- What questions can I ask that help others stay away from the victim mentality?
- How can I switch from giving 'you should' advice to 'I have found' self experience?

Challenger

Like the Persecutor, the Challenger is about being a "truth-teller". Unlike the Persecutor, the Challenger doesn't assign blame to others but chooses to build others up, challenging them to grow.

¹⁵⁰ <https://theprofitrecipe.com/blog/drama-triangle-and-empowerment-dynamic>

Step Four: Section 4 - Inventory - The drama triangle

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions:

- Am I actively looking for someone to blame or attempting to grow myself?
- How are the words I choose going to be interpreted?

Conclusion

President Russel M. Nelson pleaded for us to end personal conflicts in our lives, “We are followers of the Prince of Peace. Now more than ever, we need the peace only He can bring. How can we expect peace to exist in the world when we are not *individually* seeking peace and harmony? Brothers and sisters, I know what I’m suggesting is not easy. But followers of Jesus Christ should set the example for all the world to follow. I plead with you to do all you can to end *personal* conflicts that are currently raging in your hearts and in your lives.”¹⁵¹ As we seek the guidance of the spirit, the Lord will help guide our actions to do our part in our conflicts.

¹⁵¹ Russel M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum, April 2022

Step Four: Section 5 - Improving our codependent relationships

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- What fears do I have regarding the healing of my codependent relationships?
 - What hopes do I have?
- What are some positive attributes of healthy self-esteem?
 - What about these attributes do I already have as well as look forward to having?
- At this point, how would I rate my ability to communicate in a healthy manner, clearly and without drama?
- In what ways do I react rather than respond when communicating with others?

“Being open and honest just feels good. Isolation caused by my addiction led to severe loneliness and depression. Getting outside myself and connecting with others in healthy ways helps me feel part of something bigger than myself. It helps me feel worthwhile and like I have something to contribute. It helps me feel connected in an organically authentic way.”¹⁵²

- In what ways can healthy communication actually improve my feelings of self-worth?
- In what ways do I want others to stand up for me?
 - How can standing up for myself, or setting boundaries, actually improve my feelings of self-worth?
- Identify relationships in my life in which detaching with love would benefit me:
 - Why would it be beneficial?
 - What fears do I have about implementing these boundaries?

“The serenity prayer allows me to change the way I view people and situations. If the person or situation isn’t safe for my physical, emotional, and mental health I know I need to walk away and not stay to ‘fix’ things. It also helps me feel comforted knowing that I’m not, nor do I have to be in control of everything. It’s helped me to trust that God will take care of others, just as He has taken care of me, and gives me the courage to do what is best for me without feeling bad about it. It reminded me to ask God to show me the difference between the things I could control and the things I could not. It reminded me that I only have to have the courage to do the things I can.”¹⁵³

- How can adopting the serenity prayer as a mantra help me with setting and maintaining boundaries?
- How do I feel about saying “no” when people ask me to do things I don’t have time to do, feel stressed about doing or simply don’t want to do?
 - Do I feel obligated to say yes? If so, why?
 - What do I fear will happen if I say no?
 - If I do say no, do I feel a compulsion to offer a reason or excuse for my decision?
- How can I remain physically present while still detaching with love emotionally with those that are close to me?
- How is setting a boundary a barrier around me in which others ought not cross rather than a barrier around them?

¹⁵² Name withheld

¹⁵³ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 5 - Improving our codependent relationships

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- Why is it so important to employ consequences for boundaries that are crossed?
 - Why is it important to make such consequences manageable?
 - Why is it important to enact those consequences if boundaries are crossed?
 - What strength does a boundary have if there are no accompanying consequences?
- Although setting boundaries most often leads to healing relationships, in some cases people refuse to change, which can then lead to the relationship dissolving.
 - How would I rate my willingness to set these boundaries not knowing how others will react?
- In what ways can I replace my codependency with divine dependency?

Truths and affirmations

Codependent relationships bring a lot of turmoil into our lives. As we detach and implement boundaries we can rely on the Savior to help us feel the peace that we sorely need. “Jesus Christ is also the source of *peace*. He invites us to “lean on [His] ample arm” and promises the “peace ... which passeth all understanding,” a feeling that comes when His Spirit “speak[s] peace to our souls” no matter what challenges surround us. Whether they are personal struggles, family troubles, or community crises, peace will come as we trust that God’s Only Begotten Son has power to soothe our aching souls.”¹⁵⁴

Daily affirmations

- I am confident when I communicate with others.
- I enjoy talking to other people.

¹⁵⁴ Jean B. Bingham, “That Your Joy Might Be Full” *Ensign* Nov 2017

Step Four: Section 5 - Inventory - Modifying expectations

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

Life is full of expectations, some of which are not only unhealthy but actually detrimental to our recovery and ultimate happiness. We have expectations of God, of others, of society and of ourselves. And on top of that, we often harness ourselves with meeting the expectations, whether real or perceived, that others have of us. Sometimes we don't realize that what very often leads to our feelings of resentment is our own expectations. People themselves don't disappoint us, it's how we expect them to act or respond that does. Modifying our expectations by detaching ourselves from specific desired outcomes reinvigorates our ability to engage our own agency; inviting a deeper level of personal satisfaction, contentment and serenity into our lives.

The inventory

It is important that we evaluate our expectations in every aspect of our lives. We do this by making a list of areas in which we have recognizable or potential expectations, such as our relationships, feelings of self-worth, professional life, spirituality or recovery (just to name a few). Once our list is complete, we ask the following questions in order to identify our expectations and make appropriate adjustments:

Note: Additional words associated with expectation can include: hope, predict, assume, anticipate, believe, conclude, what-if, should.

Identifying expectations:

- What do I expect will happen in this situation?
 - How would I rate my belief that this will happen?
- What emotions surround or feed this expectation?
- How do I expect people to act or react?
- Do I overestimate the likelihood that bad things will happen or exaggerate how bad they will be?
- Do I under or overestimate my ability to deal with things if they don't go well?
- Where did I learn these expectations?
- What conclusions am I making based on all these expectations?
- What expectations do I place on those closest to me?
 - What story am I telling myself when they fail to meet those expectations?

Challenging our belief system

- What evidence do I have for my expectations?
 - What evidence is there that counteracts my expectations?
- On a scale of 1-100, how realistic is it that what I am expecting will actually happen?
- What is the worst that could happen?
 - What is the best that could happen?
 - What is the middle ground between the two?
 - What is the most likely thing that will happen?
- How does it affect me when I expect the worst?
- If the worst did happen, what could I do to cope?
- How often are my expectations based on what others can, should or will do?
 - How can shifting my perspective to focusing on that which I can control help me resolve my unmet expectations?

Step Four: Section 5 - Inventory - Modifying expectations

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Conclusion

Since expectation involves focusing on an unpredictable future, the practice of mindfulness¹⁵⁵ plays an important role in modifying our belief system. When we notice a codependent thought, feeling, or behavior, we take a moment to stop and take a deep, conscious breath. We then exhale heavenward the weighty expectations that consume our mind. It is through this process of refocusing inward that disrupts the cycle of anxiety in our body and replaces it with a deeper awareness of our inner self and of God. In doing so, we become re-energized, giving us the ability to keep focused on what is important in our lives. Sister Eubank shared, 'When expectations overwhelm us, we can step back and ask Heavenly Father what to let go of. Part of our life experience is learning what not to do. But even so, sometimes life can be exhausting. Jesus assures us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."' ¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ See Working the Steps *Step Four: Section 3 - Practicing mindfulness*

¹⁵⁶ Sharon Eubank "Christ: The Light That shines in Darkness" *Ensign* May 2019

Step Four: Section 6 - Breaking free from shame

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- What role has shame played in my life?

“When I was deep in my addiction, I was very discouraged by the fact that I couldn't stop acting out. I began to believe that the Lord was ashamed and disappointed in me. It seemed to me that no other man had the problems I had. I still believed in God but had convinced myself that I was outside the bounds of the atonement, that I had gone so far that Christ could no longer save me. The adversary used this shame and negative self-talk to keep me from reaching out to my Heavenly Father. When I did finally reach out, I found him already extending his love and support to me.”¹⁵⁷

- In what ways has the adversary used shame to separate me from God?
- How has shame eroded my ability to feel guilt or Godly sorrow?
 - How can I nurture my ability to feel guilt or Godly sorry for my mistakes, rather than shame?
- How does it feel knowing *everyone* struggles with feeling shame?
- What behaviors do I exhibit that bind me to shame?

“When I was deep in my addiction, I felt so much shame. I thought I was the only one and that I must be a freak of nature to be female and have this addiction. It drove me to cut myself off from others and fall deeper into isolation. When I finally met other women who shared my struggle, the shame finally started to lift. The more I shared about myself and my addiction, the more I felt loved and accepted.”¹⁵⁸

- How has sharing my struggle with others alleviated my shame?

Pros & Cons

Write a list of pros and cons about being vulnerable.

- What fears do I have about being vulnerable?
- What benefits do I look forward to most?
- What are some practices I can adopt to increase my shame resilience?
- How will relying on the Lord help dispel my shame?
 - In turn, how will the dispelling of my shame bring me closer to God?

The role of Gratitude in alleviating Shame

When we are in the midst of a strong shame cycle, it can feel like we are in a small space that is getting smaller by the minute. While shame is internally focused, gratitude is focused beyond ourselves. While shame looks at how we're bad, gratitude looks at what's good in our lives.

It's not just a shift from seeing bad things to seeing good things. It's a change in perspective and focus. We can begin to see things from our Heavenly Father's eyes instead of our own, allowing us to be honest with

¹⁵⁷ Name withheld

¹⁵⁸ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 6 - Breaking free from shame

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

compassion. When we express gratitude, it ultimately changes our focus to Christ, as through the atonement he gave us everything. When gripped in the clutches of shame expressing gratitude can be a way out.

- What can I be grateful for at this very moment?
- What is something I can be grateful for that happened (or didn't happen) today?
- How have I seen the Lord bless me recently?
- Whom am I grateful for in my life?

If we are finding it hard to be grateful, begin with something very simple. Once we have listed out a few, we will find it becomes easier to think of things. Because gratitude is an outward expression, sharing it with others allows it to have an even bigger impact on us. Reach out to someone in our support network and just express gratitude. It will also brighten their day as gratitude can be infectious.

Truths and affirmations

Although vulnerability and gratitude are actions we can take to counteract our shame, our ultimate protection from its toxicity is Jesus Christ, as affirmed by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf: “Those who find a way to truly behold the Man find the doorway to life’s greatest joys and the balm to life’s most demanding despairs. So, when [we] are encompassed by sorrows and grief, behold the Man. When [we] feel lost or forgotten, behold the Man. When [we] are despairing, deserted, doubting, damaged, or defeated, behold the Man. He will comfort [us]. He will heal [us] and give meaning to [our] journey . . . His refining light saturates our souls. His grace uplifts us. Our burdens are lightened, our peace deepened . . . As [we] accept His sacrifice, become His disciple, and finally reach the end of [our] earthly journey, what will become of the sorrows [we] have endured in this life? They will be gone. The disappointments, betrayals, persecutions [we] have faced? Gone. The suffering, heartache, guilt, shame, and anguish [we] have passed through? Gone. Forgotten.”¹⁵⁹

Daily affirmations

- I am grateful for how the Lord blesses me everyday..
- I am worthy of love and forgiveness.

¹⁵⁹ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Behold the Man!,” *Ensign*, May 2018

Step Four: Section 6 - Shame Inventory

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

Shame is arguably the most toxic opponent to self-worth, recovery and our relationship with God as a whole. Because the shame we feel runs so deep—at times learned almost from birth—we must unravel it in layers. Just like anything else in recovery, there is no such thing as perfection, but awareness and acknowledgement remain the first steps toward healing. We identify our shame, acknowledge it, bring it out into the open and let the light burn it off, releasing it heavenward to God.

The inventory

Because we feel shame for so many things, it will be impossible to identify it all at once. It must be done in layers. Of course, the first layer will likely be the most work. The first time we acknowledge our shame is most often the most painful. Just like the physical treatment of a wound, exposing our emotional wounds to the great healer is sometimes somewhat painful.

So, in an effort to take one bite of this giant emotional cleansing pie at a time, it is recommended that we identify and cleanse pockets of shame one at a time. The following is one recommended method:

Use a notebook (or copies of the following page) to make six columns, labeling each column as follows:

The Shame Inventory					
The shame I feel (feeling, thought, behavior or event)	What event or experience caused this shame?	How has this shame affected different aspects of my life?	What does God want me to be instead of carrying this shame?	On a scale of 1-10, rate my current willingness to let go of this shame.	Why this number?

It is important to remember that we are working with emotions, and human emotions are complicated, sometimes messy and often have a mind of their own. Be deliberate but more so, patient and gentle. There is no rush. The key is to process through one shame pocket at a time simply so we can move on to the next.

The conclusion

Being patient and compassionate with ourselves are important elements in not only freeing us from the shackles of our shame, but sustaining us in our continued recovery work as well. Elder David A. Bednar affirmed: “We will not attain a state of perfection in this life, but we can and should press forward with faith in Christ along the straight and narrow path and make steady progress toward our eternal destiny ... Small, steady, incremental spiritual improvements are the steps the Lord would have us take. Preparing to walk guiltless before God is one of the primary purposes of mortality and the pursuit of a lifetime; it does not result from sporadic spurts of intense spiritual activity. I witness that the Savior will strengthen and assist us to make sustained, paced progress.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ David A. Bednar, “Clean Hands and a Pure Heart,” *Ensign*, Nov 2007

Step Four: Section 6 - Shame Inventory

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The Shame Inventory

The shame I feel (feeling, thought, behavior or event)	What event of experience caused this shame?	How has this shame affected different aspects of my life?	What does God want me to be instead of carrying this shame?	On a scale of 1-10, rate my current willingness to let go of this shame.	Why this number?

Step Four: Section 7 - Accessing the power to conquer our fears

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- How has the grip of fear affected my desire and ability to get help for my addiction?
- What forms of 'what-if' fears do I have?
 - In what ways can putting 'so what' in front of them dispel their power?
- In what ways does understanding that I can still be courageous even in the face of fear actually increase my courage?
- How does practicing courage actually increase my courage?
- Why does talking about and processing through fears as they arise decrease their power over me?

"Before I started recovery I feared that if anyone found out, they would be disgusted and appalled. This fear was backed by my own disgust at my addiction, thinking that others would feel the same way about me that I felt about myself. It drove me into deep isolation and made reaching out for any sort of help nearly impossible. Although at this point I've been in recovery for an extended period of time, I still struggle with having an internal dialogue about what others are thinking and saying about me. I think because I have negative ideas about myself, I automatically think others are thinking the same thing. And it starts to become real. It's like 'negative-others-talk' on top of my own 'negative-self-talk.' In the end, I've realized that I tend to do a lot of self-sabotaging and negative fortune-telling. I automatically react with fear to things that haven't even happened yet, but it feels so real in the moment I'm experiencing it. But the more I recognize these self-sabotaging thinking patterns, the less power they have over me. And I am learning to trust myself and others, and to see myself as God sees me."¹⁶¹

- In what ways are my fears 'false evidence appearing real'?
- How can understanding that fear is reactionary rather than responsive help me better move through it?
- What attitudes and behaviors do I have that feed my fear?
 - What can I change to help dispel them?
- In what ways can I deliberately act against my fear?
- What little acts of everyday courage can I adopt to fight against my fear?

"Hymns have been so influential in my ability to feel peace and connection with God and with myself. A few of the more memorable hymns that have lead me through dark times of self-will, rebellion, and resultant despair are Lead, Kindly Light; into much needed gratitude, Because I Have Been Given Much; and into stronger connection with God and personal appreciation for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I Stand All Amazed. I am so grateful for the power of music and praise through lyrical poetry in my life."¹⁶²

- What hymns bring me courage?

¹⁶¹ Name withheld

¹⁶² Name withheld

Step Four: Section 7 - Accessing the power to conquer our fears

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Truths and affirmations

We can take comfort in the reassuring words of President M. Russell Ballard: “No matter how difficult the trail, and regardless of how heavy our load, we can take comfort in knowing that others before us have borne life’s most grievous trials and tragedies by looking to heaven for peace, comfort, and hopeful assurance. We can know as they knew that God is our Father, that He cares about us individually and collectively, and that as long as we continue to exercise our faith and trust in Him there is nothing to fear in the journey . . . Life isn’t always easy. At some point in our journey we may feel much as the pioneers did . . . up to our knees in mud, forced to bury some of our dreams along the way. We all face rocky ridges, with the wind in our face and winter coming on too soon. Sometimes it seems as though there is no end to the dust that stings our eyes and clouds our vision. Sharp edges of despair and discouragement jut out of the terrain to slow our passage . . . Let us remember that the Savior is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and there can be no greater promise than to know that if we are faithful and true, we will one day be safely encircled in the arms of His love. He is always there to give encouragement, to forgive, and to rescue. Therefore, as we exercise faith and are diligent in keeping the commandments, we have nothing to fear from the journey.”¹⁶³

Daily affirmations

- I am courageous, secure and connected with myself and with God.
- I am loved and accepted by those surrounding me.

¹⁶³ M. Russell Ballard, “You Have Nothing to Fear from the Journey,” *Ensign*, May 1997

Step Four: Section 7 - Inventory - fear

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

Fear, alongside shame, is one of the most debilitating emotions we can feel. It hinders our sense of self-worth, our progression, our connection with God and with ourselves, and at its core, it erodes our will to live. The first step to escaping the grasp of this paralyzing emotion is to bring awareness to it. Still, it's impossible to avoid fear, and even if we could, doing so would be resisting the very nature of being human. There would be no feeling, learning or growth. The goal isn't to eliminate fear, but to recognize, understand and process through it. By accepting that fear will be a part of our lives we can reach the level of curiosity required to allow it to teach us. And by moving into fear with faith, we will find the help the Savior provides.

The inventory

In order to release ourselves from our fear, we inventory each fear we have, ask the following questions about it and then share it with our sponsor:

- Name a fear, whether it be emotionally, physically, spiritually or circumstantially based.
 - What triggers this fear?
 - Am I more afraid of the process or the potential outcome?
 - Am I actually not equipped to handle the outcome or do I just feel inadequate?
 - Does what I'm afraid of involve fearing what other people think or feel about me?
- Am I scared that I may make or have made a mistake?
 - Do I allow myself to make mistakes?
- Am I scared of being wrong?
 - Is my self-worth tied to being right?
 - Can I allow myself to be wrong?
- What feelings am I scared of?
 - Can I allow myself to feel an overwhelming feeling and know that it will pass?
- In what ways do I fear failure?
 - Am I putting all my eggs in one basket and pressuring myself to succeed on the first attempt?
 - Is there a way to diversify my efforts?
- In what ways does what others' opinion of me dictate my everyday life?
- When was the last time I felt this fear?
 - How old was I when this fear manifested?
 - How often do I feel it?
- In what ways does this fear affect my feelings of self-worth?
- As I sit with each of these questions and answer them from a place of honesty, integrity and compassion: how do I feel?

Conclusion

Elder Larry S. Kacher shared, 'The simple faith we have in Jesus Christ as we first begin to learn about Him can remain in our hearts as we confront life's challenges. Our faith in Him can and will guide us through the complexities of life. Indeed, we will find that there is simplicity on the other side of life's complexities as we remain "[steadfast] in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope."¹⁶⁴ The phrase "Fear not" is used over 80 times in the scriptures. We find that replacing the words "Fear not" with "Have faith" keeps the same intent of these phrases. Our faith can provide the conduit to allow the Lord to provide us relief in our moments of trial.

¹⁶⁴ Larry S. Kacher, "Ladder of Faith" *Ensign*, May 2022

Step Four: Section 7 - Inventory - fear

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

'As he walked toward the Savior, Peter was frightened by the wind and began to sink. But when Peter realized what was happening, he did not try to tread water on his own or swim back to the ship. Rather than let go of his faith in Christ, he held on more tightly, crying, "Lord, save me."

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him."

All of us face boisterous winds that can shake our faith and cause us to sink. When this happens, please remember that Heavenly Father's plan of happiness has another name—the plan of redemption. The plan was not for us to glide easily through life, never stumbling, never sinking, with a smile always on our face. Heavenly Father knew that we would need to be redeemed. This is why He prepared the plan of redemption. This is why He sent a Redeemer. When we struggle—for any reason—that does not mean the plan isn't working. That is when we need the plan the most! In those moments, follow the example of Peter. Turn to the Savior right away.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Elder Adrián Ochoa, "Is the Plan Working?" *Ensign*, May 2022

Step Four: Section 8 - Moving from negative self-talk to positive affirmation

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- In what ways has negative self-talk been a part of my everyday dialogue?
 - Is it something I recognize myself doing?
 - When do I do it most often?
- What do I gain from hating myself?
- In what ways has shame contributed to my negative self-talk?
 - What about vice versa?

“Guilt is a necessary emotion that comes as a consequence to something we did wrong. It’s a red flag, a caution or a warning. Just as the pain we experience when we touch a hot burner tells us ‘don’t do that, it will harm you,’ so does guilt give us similar warning when we do something that is emotionally or spiritually harmful. It is a warning to keep us on track. I see it as a consequential gift to deter us from dark and painful paths. Although it doesn’t feel good to experience guilt, it is actually a gift. Without it, there would be no motivation to stay on the right track or repentance when we do stray.”¹⁶⁶

- How does it feel knowing that ‘guilt’ is actually a positive emotion?
- In what ways has negative self-talk contributed to my victim mentality?
 - Vice versa?
- How has victim thinking contributed to my shame?
 - Vice versa?
- How has attention seeking manifested in my life?
- Why does Satan want me to remain stuck in negative self-talk and all its accompanying thought patterns and behaviors?
- Out of all the negative talk tracks in my mind, at a core level, how much of it is actually true?
- In what ways can I counter my negative self-talk?
- When I’m vulnerable to someone I trust about my negative self-talk, how does that affect it?

“My therapist suggested that I stand in front of the mirror every morning and repeat positive affirmations. I told him that I didn’t think it would work and he asked me to try it anyway for thirty days. The first two weeks were very awkward. As I stood in front of the mirror and looked at myself, I felt foolish. I didn’t think this was going to work because I didn’t believe what I was saying. However, after two weeks of this daily routine I found my attitude towards myself changing and now after a month I have noticed a big difference. I know that positive affirmations help.”¹⁶⁷

- Why is it important to continue to speak positively about myself even though I may not yet believe it?
- How can changing my attitude about my attitude set me up for success?
- How would I rate my willingness to implement positive affirmations?

¹⁶⁶ Name withheld

¹⁶⁷ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 8 - Moving from negative self-talk to positive affirmation

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- In what ways would talking with Heavenly Father and listening to the Spirit bolster my affirmations?

Truths and affirmations

Although it often seems that the quality of our self-worth, and even life as a whole, is dependent on our circumstances, our perception holds the most sway, as affirmed by President Thomas S. Monson: “So much in life depends on our attitude. The way we choose to see things and respond to others makes all the difference. To do the best we can and then to choose to be happy about our circumstances, whatever they may be, can bring peace and contentment. . . . We can’t direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails. For maximum happiness, peace, and contentment, may we *choose* a positive attitude.”¹⁶⁸

Daily affirmations

- I am a happy, healthy, wholesome, beautiful, positive, prosperous person.
- I am resilient to negativity and boldly rise above my troubles.

¹⁶⁸ President Thomas S. Monson, “Living the Abundant Life,” Ensign, Jan. 2012

Step Four: Section 8 - Positive affirmations 101

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

What are positive affirmations?

Simple, positive statements that declare specific goals in their completed states are to the mind what exercise is to the body. Although it may seem as if a few words wouldn't have much of an influence on our outcomes, these empowering mantras profoundly affect both our conscious and subconscious mind.

Why are positive affirmations important?

The importance of implementing positive self-talk into our daily recovery routine cannot be expressed enough for we spend so much of our time judging ourselves and believing we are not worthy, nor good enough. As a result, our motivation diminishes and we lose all hope that we can ever change. Positive affirmations help to remove some of the roadblocks that keep us bound to our addiction. They remind us to focus on our goals; targeting the solutions rather than the challenges and obstacles that get in the way of our recovery. Even greater, positive affirmations create essential connections with gratitude, joy and serenity.

How to create effective positive affirmations

Although we may think positive affirmations are simply a positive statement, there is actually much more to it. Even minor variations in wording can make a huge difference in the results:

- We start with the words "I am," for not only are these two of the most powerful words in the universe, but they also signify the only real thing we have the power to change: ourselves.
 - "*I am* in recovery."
- We begin our affirmation in the present tense by identifying the goal and declaring it true:
 - "*I am in* recovery."
- We state what we want, rather than what we don't, and avoid using the word 'not' in our affirmation, for doing so affirms a negative. Instead, we project positivity by shining a light on what we do want:
 - "*I am in recovery.*"
- The shorter our affirmation, the better, for those with fewer words are easier to remember, especially in times of stress. Additionally, affirmations that rhyme are even easier to recall:
 - "*I am in recovery, so recovery is in me.*"
- We affirm ourselves as an action oriented person:
 - "*I am working on* recovery, so recovery is *living* in me."
- We include words that represent a positive outcome and dynamic emotion:
 - "*I love* working recovery, and recovery is living in me."

Using affirmations once written

Although writing affirmations is incredibly important, it is only half of the equation. We must also use them, by daily repeating them aloud, in order for them to work in our life. Failing to do so is much like making dinner but then never eating it. Whether it be morning and night, or some other schedule, it is important that we commit to practicing our affirmations at specific times throughout our day. Furthermore, the power of affirmations lies in repeating them to ourselves multiple times a day. It is also very helpful to use our positive affirmations as soon as we are met with dark thoughts or negative behaviors. Ultimately, we need to align our thinking and speaking into positive patterns if we want to significantly change our lives.

Step Four: Section 8 - Inventory: Christlike attributes

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

Our Addiction has destroyed most, if not all, feelings of self-worth we may have left, as a brother shared: “I thought of myself only as a hypocritical sinner. Any good thoughts I had about myself were fleeting at best. I was sure that if anyone really knew of my struggle that they wouldn’t see anything good either.”¹⁶⁹ For this reason, it is important to complete a Christ-like inventory prior to completing the future inventories that will help us delve into the pain, shame and regret of our past.

Step Four isn’t just about inventorying all that we have done wrong, or feel negatively about, but is also about learning to claim our goodness and the divine qualities we were born with, which can actually sustain us through the more difficult areas of self-discovery. This inventory will help us with that, to be able to see ourselves as the good person we are. As we ask the Lord to reveal to us our Christlike attributes, our countenance will begin to change and our sense of self-worth will be strengthened. We will gain a stronger understanding of God’s love for us and be able to see ourselves as He does; reshaping any distortions we have about ourselves.

The Inventory

In an effort to gain perspective and appreciation for the strengths God has given us, our Step Four inventory process should also include our good qualities. This process is not to create feelings of pride or self-righteousness, but to enhance those of purpose and value. Acknowledging our positive traits affirms the truth that we are children of God with qualities worth appreciating, which will help us maintain balance when it is time to honestly recognize and acknowledge our weaknesses. It is less about performance-based accomplishments and more about personal virtues. Examples of positive personal attributes and strengths might include being loving, kind, compassionate, empathetic, forgiving, confident, courageous, persevering, diligent, honest, loyal and humble. As we embark on this personal journey of self-discovery Heavenly Father will reveal these attributes unto us; those innate gifts we never knew about ourselves. He will illuminate the path ahead and open our eyes to see our unknown and perhaps unimagined qualities.

Some questions that may help us recognize our Christ-like attributes include, but are not limited to:

- What positive qualities have I begun to recognize in myself?
 - List instances when I did something brave, compassionate, selfless.
 - List instances when I forgave someone for hurting me.
 - List instances when I was kind when I didn’t have to be.
 - List times when I was honest about something difficult.
 - List instances when I was loyal to someone in spite of negative repercussions.
- How have my positive traits blessed my life?
- How does this inventory affect how I feel about myself right now?
- Can I identify any additional positive traits by reflecting back on my timeline inventory?

Asking others for their input

It can often be difficult to see the good in ourselves, so it can be helpful to call on those closest to us and ask what Christlike attributes they see in us. Not only is it important that we seek out those we feel safe with, but also those who we will actually *believe*. Such people might include our sponsor, designated priesthood leader, family member or friend.

Turning the inventory into self-affirmation

Knowing these Christlike attributes are gifts from God, and that they have been given to us for specific purposes, it is helpful to ask Heavenly Father to impress upon us what those purposes actually are. We can then list our Christlike

¹⁶⁹ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 8 - Inventory: Christlike attributes

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

attributes, express gratitude for them by acknowledging them as gifts, and define their purpose, all in one statement: i.e. "God gave me the gift of compassion so that I can connect with and help others as He would help them."

Conclusion

Once we have written our own list and gathered feedback from those closest to us, we combine the lists into one, study it, and start the process of identifying and acknowledging our innate divinity. Doing so not only helps to counteract the shame we have accumulated over the years, but will strengthen our relationship with our Father in Heaven.

It allows us to tap into the very strength in Jesus Christ that we need to persevere, as promised by Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf: "Christlike attributes are the basics. They are the fundamental principles that will create 'the wind beneath our wings.' As we develop Christlike attributes in our own lives, step-by-step, they will 'bear [us] up as on eagles' wings'.¹⁷⁰ Our faith in Jesus Christ will provide power and a strong forward thrust; our unwavering and active hope will provide a powerful upward lift. Both faith and hope will carry us across oceans of temptations, over mountains of afflictions, and bring us safely back to our eternal home and destination."¹⁷¹

It may be difficult to claim the positive and see ourselves as Christ sees us, but the Lord will reveal unto us our true nature so long as we open our hearts to His personal revelation. In doing so, we secure our vision of the peace and serenity that awaits us on the other side of this process.

¹⁷⁰ (D&C 124:18)

¹⁷¹ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Christlike Attributes," *Ensign*, Nov 2005

Step Four: Section 9 - Identifying anger and resentment

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- In what ways do I identify anger as a 'bad' emotion?

"We all feel slighted when we're not given the respect that we feel we deserve. . . . Our vulnerability to minor slights seems to point to a fundamental insecurity inside us . . . Many of us feel a basic sense of separateness and incompleteness, which means that we're prone to feelings of insignificance. As a result, [we need] to be continually boosted by affirmation. We need to be shown that we're important. A slight can be a terrible blow because it uncovers that latent sense of insignificance. . . . Personal development coach Ken Keis points out that. . . 'the likelihood is that [we] feel slighted because [we're] expecting a certain type of behavior and not getting it. So perhaps it's [our] expectations which need to change.'"¹⁷²

- In what ways does feeling disrespected lead to me feeling angry?
- How can shifting the focus of my anger motivate my desire for change and growth?
- In what ways is anger damaging me physically? Emotionally? Spiritually?
 - In what ways does it also hinder my recovery progress?

"If I don't express my anger right when it flares, or soon thereafter, it never really goes away and ends up festering into resentment. It lingers around in the corners of my mind, influencing my everyday decisions and actions; even those that had nothing to do with triggering my anger in the first place. Yet, when I express my anger in a healthy way and get it over with--because sometimes conflict is really uncomfortable--it no longer bothers or burdens me, and no longer holds power over me. In fact, I feel clear headed, confident and liberated."¹⁷³

- How can expressing anger right when I feel it actually diminish its power?
- How can the following phrases help me in expressing my anger to others without blame?
 - When that happened I felt . . .
 - The story I'm telling myself is . . .
- What is the difference between anger and resentment?
- In what ways has resentment affected my life?
- Although resentment can make me feel powerful, at a core level, what is it really doing to me?
 - In what ways does it hurt others?

"One of my biggest realizations in recovery was that most of my anger and resentment stemmed from unmet expectations. I would go into social situations and relationships with others expecting a certain result or outcome and when that

¹⁷² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/out-the-darkness/201201/slighting-the-dangers-being-disrespected>

¹⁷³ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 9 - Identifying anger and resentment

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

*expectation wasn't met I got angry and resented others. How dare they not live up to my expectations! Sadly, they usually had no idea why I was upset because I never communicated these expectations to others. They were my own internal attempt to control situations and justify my own actions."*¹⁷⁴

- At first glance, what do I feel triggers my anger and resentment most?
- What are the benefits of managing my anger rather than suppressing it?
- Why is it so important to be patient with myself as I learn to process my anger?
- How can relying on the Lord help me process through my anger and resentment?
- What tools to soothe my anger works best for me?
- What do I look forward to the most as I begin this journey of neutralizing my anger?
- In what ways can I be grateful for my anger?

Truths and affirmations

Although we all have our own unique personal triggers that awaken our anger and resentment, we are probably more alike than we realize, as affirmed by Elder W. Craig Zwick: "We all regularly experience highly charged feelings of anger—our own and others' . . . All of us, though covenant children of a loving Heavenly Father, have regretted jumping headlong from the high seat of self-righteous judgment and have spoken with abrasive words before we understood a situation from another's perspective. We have all had the opportunity to learn how destructive words can take a situation from hazardous to fatal. . . . Nevertheless, what would happen to the 'corrupt communication' Paul spoke about if our own position included empathy for another's experience first? Fully owning the limits of my own imperfections and rough edges. . . . The willingness to see through each other's eyes will transform 'corrupt communication' into 'minister[ing] grace' . . . I bear humble witness that we can 'minister grace' through compassionate language when the cultivated gift of the Holy Ghost pierces our hearts with empathy for the feelings and context of others. It enables us to transform hazardous situations into holy places."¹⁷⁵

Daily affirmations

- The light of peace is radiating throughout my entire body.
- I am confronting my problems in a patient and constructive manner.

¹⁷⁴ Name withheld

¹⁷⁵ W. Craig Zwick, "What Are You Thinking," Ensign, May, 2014

Step Four: Section 9 - Inventory: anger and resentment

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

The purpose

In order to recognize, process and manage our anger in resentment, we first need to really identify what it is. Anger, in and of itself, isn't bad or even toxic. It's simply a heightened emotional reaction to a trigger. *It just is*. It is the subsequent resentment that comes from unprocessed and unreleased anger that erodes our serenity. It is resentment that leads us to feel as if everyone is out to get us, that life is unfair and that we'll be stuck forever. But as we continue in the work of self reflection and self awareness, our anger will begin to subside and our resentment fade away.

The Inventory

The birth of resentment

- Do I just accept negative treatment from others passively, never expressing how I feel about it?
- In what ways have I done things for others while feeling taken for granted or taken advantage of.
- In what ways have others ignored my point of view or dismissed my opinions?
- List instances in which I've gone unrecognized for my accomplishments while others have received praise.
- In what ways have I been belittled by a person whose intention was to embarrass me?
- In what ways have I been rejected by someone who I'd previously deemed safe?
- How have my silent expectations turned into resentments once they aren't fulfilled?

Resentment in relationships

- In what ways do I harbor animosity toward others who I feel have mistreated me?
- What unresolved anger do I harbor over events that occurred in my past?
- Do I ever experience seething, aching emotional turmoil whenever a certain person or event is discussed? Who or what does it involve?
 - Do I tend to pout or fume silently in their presence or at the mention of their name?
- Do I have unresolved grief over personal losses I have experienced?
 - Whom do I blame for that loss?
- List instances in which I have felt slighted after exerting a great deal of effort and energy to achieve something that eventually was lost to me.
 - Who do I blame for this loss?
- In what ways do I feel I've been unjustly victimized with no resolution to the problem?
- List instances in which I have felt my innate rights as a human being have been violated.
 - Who denied or violated these rights?
- What songs, movies or TV shows remind me of unpleasant interactions I have had with others?
- In what ways do I have nightmares or distressing thoughts or daydreams about others who I feel have harmed me?
- Do I ever feel like I get stuck in my efforts for personal growth and don't even know why?
- How often do I get furious for no apparent reason?
 - What about getting depressed, despondent, and finding myself going in circles in my attempts to overcome such negative feelings?
- Do I tend to get angry at others when they bring up how angry I am?
- Do I fake enthusiasm and excitement about being with certain people when I'd rather have nothing to do with them.
- Have I ever been the object of discrimination or prejudice?
- Whom have I tried to please but no matter how well I did, it was never good enough.
- Am I ever the one who always makes the effort in a relationship, but when I stop giving, the relationship ceases.

Overcoming resentment

There are certain steps that we can take to help resolve the resentment we feel:

- We acknowledge that we are burdened with unresolved resentment and commit to rid ourselves of it.

Step Four: Section 9 - Inventory: anger and resentment

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

- We identify a specific resentment and letter detailing all of the reasons for our resentment.
- We work to identify the triggers that indicate the presence of resentment in me and working at defusing their impact.
- Identify specific people we resent and systematically working to forgive them for any past offenses.
- We work to improve our feelings of self-worth; looking only to ourselves and to God for approval and recognition.
- We work with our support network to identify hidden resentment and areas of improvement.
- We develop targeted self-affirmations and positive self-visualizations to overcome my negative outlook on life.
- Pick up where we left off with goals we abandoned because we felt we wouldn't succeed.
- Giving more power to the possibility of success than the unlikelihood of failure.
- What are the negative effects of my unresolved resentment?

Overcoming resentment

In order to overcome any resentment we have accumulated over the years we first must identify the person, event or circumstance that triggered it. Once identified, we ask ourselves the following questions:

- Are the offenses against me real or imagined/perceived/assumed?
- In what ways has the resentment I feel regarding this situation affected my feelings about myself and my future?
 - What other negative effects have I experienced as a result of my resentment?
- How paralyzed am I in my efforts toward personal growth by the resentment I carry toward each of these situations?

Once we have identified the extent to which our resentments have affected us, we answer the following questions:

- What roadblocks are in my way of expressing my anger openly?
 - How would I rate my willingness to overcome these roadblocks?
- What personal character traits do I need to develop to better help me express my anger and diminish my resentment?
- How will my life be positively impacted by getting rid of my resentment?

(It is recommended that we save this inventory to use during Step 4 & 5, and Step 8 & 9)

Conclusion

"Over the years and in my efforts to find peace and healing on the path of forgiveness, I came to realize in a profound way that the same Son of God who atoned for my sins is the same Redeemer who will also save those who have deeply hurt me. I could not truly believe the first truth without believing the second."¹⁷⁶ Forgiving is hard so we pray for help to forgive. When we do not want to forgive we pray for willingness to forgive. Some have even found help when choosing to pray for those that have hurt us to receive the blessings we want for ourselves. Turning to the Lord is the only way to let go of some of the anger and resentment that we have." Sister Yee continued, "I know He is able to heal the sinner and those sinned against. He is the Savior and the Redeemer of the world, who laid down His life that we might live again. He said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to *heal the brokenhearted*, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to *set at liberty them that are bruised*.'"¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Kristin M. Yee, "Beauty for Ashes: The Healing Path of Forgiveness," Ensign, November, 2022

¹⁷⁷ Kristin M. Yee, "Beauty for Ashes: The Healing Path of Forgiveness," Ensign, November, 2022

Step Four: Section 10 - Recognizing trauma from our past

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Reflection questions

- In what ways has trauma been present in my life?

“Although our brain is wired for connection, trauma rewires it for protection. That’s why healthy relationships are so difficult for wounded people. And that’s why for most of my life healthy relationships have been difficult for me. All through my childhood and teen years I felt small, unloved and insignificant. These feelings left me believing everyone felt the same way about me, which left me constantly on the defensive. I was never able to really truly connect with people in an emotionally healthy way. I liken it to two sides of a velcro strip. When each side is clean of debris, they stick very tightly, but if even one side has the smallest amount of debris it begins to lose its ability to adhere. Now imagine if that side is packed full of debris.. It won’t stick at all. It wasn’t until I used the tools of recovery to clean up my emotional debris that I was able to connect and attach to others in a healthy way.”¹⁷⁸

- How has trauma affected me?
 - How has it affected how people treat me? What about how I treat others?
 - How has it affected my addiction?
 - My thinking patterns?
 - My behavior?
 - My addiction?
- How can I relate to the concept of pain bodies?
 - In what ways does visualizing them within me make healing them seem more manageable?
- In what ways can I prepare to let go of my pain?
- What are the pros and cons to working through my trauma and releasing my pain?
- What are the positives to willingly and deliberately telling my pain bodies to disperse?

“Having been sexually abused when young, I struggled to trust anyone - even the Lord. How could God be near me in my damaged state of perceived uncleanness? While suffering in silence for many years, I began to recognize God's mighty miracles and tender mercies in my life. I realized I had been pushing Him away rather than inviting Him into my heart and soul. Trusting in the Lord's perfect love has allowed me to come to know my Savior! He embraces me when I don't deserve it! He lifts me when I fall! He strengthens me when weak! He soothes my troubled soul! He fills me with His perfect love! He takes away my pain and replaces them with thanksgiving and joy!”¹⁷⁹

- What are the benefits of trusting the Lord enough to soothe my pain?

¹⁷⁸ Name withheld

¹⁷⁹ Name withheld

Step Four: Section 10 - Recognizing trauma from our past

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

When most people think of trauma, they think of some type of abuse, a painful accident, or the loss of a loved one. The word “trauma,” however, can also refer to those times in our life where we felt helpless, unloved, or alone—particularly in times when we were expecting to feel safe, loved, and supported. Although it can be helpful to write a trauma inventory, because of the nature of the content and impending consequences a trauma inventory is not required in this workbook. We do, however, encourage those working this Step to seek the help of a qualified therapist to work through trauma that may need additional attention.

Truths and affirmations

“Our Savior’s Atonement does more than assure us of immortality by a universal resurrection and gives us the opportunity to be cleansed from sin by repentance and baptism. His Atonement also provides the opportunity to call upon Him who has experienced all of our mortal infirmities to give us the strength to bear the burdens of mortality. He knows of our anguish, and He is there for us. Like the good Samaritan, when He finds us wounded at the wayside, He will bind up our wounds and care for us. The healing and strengthening power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement is for all of us who will ask. I testify of that as I also testify of our Savior, who makes it all possible.”¹⁸⁰

Daily affirmations

- I do not believe the voice of shame and I am at peace.
- I release all the false beliefs I have about myself.

Moving on to Step 5

Step 4 is all about getting our negative feelings, regrets and shames out into the light where it can be cleansed from our soul. This is a big Step in the process of truly giving everything over to God. Step 5 is where we actually give it to God. We do this by sharing our inventory with our Bishop and our sponsor; opening ourselves up to the healing Light of Christ and allowing Him to truly love us, flaws and all. Still, it is important that we share our inventory as soon as possible after completing this step. We ensure this happens by scheduling appointments with our bishop and sponsor now, and work on the step 4 assignments in the meantime. Truly, faith is stepping into the darkness and trusting that the light will follow. Huge miracles await us on the other side of this giant leap of faith.

¹⁸⁰ Dallin H. Oaks, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov 2015

Step Four: Section 10 - Promoting emotional healing through meditation

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Purpose

Meditation can be described as a “variety of practices that includes techniques designed to promote relaxation, build internal energy, and develop compassion, love, patience, generosity, and forgiveness.”¹⁸¹ It can be a great tool to help block out earthly distractions and promote emotional healing. It can help us to develop a mindset to withstand negative thoughts that invade our minds. There are many forms of meditation. We offer a simple example below that may be helpful. Through many sources (videos, books, apps, therapists, etc...) we can find additional help in guided meditation.

A White Bubble of Light

Find a quiet, comfortable spot where you can be assured of not being disturbed. Silence your phone and ensure there won't be any interruptions. The outside world can wait. Sit upright in a chair, on a couch or on the edge of your bed with your feet flat on the floor. Rest your hands comfortably in your lap and make any adjustments necessary to correct anything that is physically uncomfortable for you. Close your eyes, breathe and relax. Check your body for any muscles that you are holding tight, especially around the face, neck and shoulders. Squeeze them even tighter and then release them, allowing them to fall into complete relaxation.

Now, imagine yourself totally surrounded by the most beautiful sparkling white descending from above. Now imagine that the white light is filled with the most beautiful, little sparkling stars. As you focus on them, the stars begin gently falling over you, surrounding your entire body and enveloping you in its cool warmth.

Breathe in this divine white light and let it fill your entire body. Now breathe deeper, allowing the white light to reach all the way to your toes. Now relax your breathing and focus on releasing your worries, fears and concerns. Each time you breathe in, breathe in the beautiful healing white light, and breathe out the negativity, allowing your body to fill with peace and serenity.

Take some time to journal how you feel.

Conclusion

It will take some time but in the end doing a little meditation on a regular basis can help reduce anxiety and stress, begin healing emotions scars and ultimately lead us closer to Christ. President David O. McKay spoke about meditation, “We pay too little attention to the value of meditation, a principle of devotion. In our worship there are two elements: One is spiritual communion arising from our own meditation; the other, instruction from others, particularly from those who have authority to guide and instruct us. Of the two, the more profitable introspectively is the meditation ... Meditation is one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.”¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/inspiration/faithful-meditation>

¹⁸² President David O. McKay, Chapter 4 “Elements of Worship”, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay*

Step Four: Section 10 - Promoting emotional healing through meditation

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Additional Resources for Meditation

We are not licensed therapists or experts on meditation. There are many wonderful resources to help us as we try to find healing through meditation. There are also many different ways to meditate. Seek a therapist out. Use videos or an app to help do a guided meditation. We've included some resources below to help find what may work for you.

- <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation-and-mindfulness-what-you-need-to-know>
- <https://www.mindful.org/>
- <https://greenhousecenter.org/deeply-rooted-in-sitting-with-your-emotions/>
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/17906-meditation>
- <https://www.everydayhealth.com/meditation/>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858>
- <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/320392#types>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/meditation>

Step Four: Section 10 - Crisis Hotlines

Engage in the healing process by making a searching and fearless written moral inventory of ourselves.

Child abuse hotlines

National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: 1-800-THE-LOST (843-5678)

Crisis Hotlines

Crisis Text Line US: Text CONNECT to 741741 in the US (<https://www.crisistextline.org/textline/>)

IMAlive: Virtual crisis online chat center <https://www.imalive.org/>

Depression Hotlines

Depression Hotline: 1-630-482-9696

Domestic Violence Hotlines

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men and Women: 1-888-743-5754 (DAHMW.org)

Eating Disorders Hotlines

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa & Associated Disorders (ANAD): 847-831-3438

Human Trafficking Hotlines

National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888 – OR text 233733 in the US

Rape/Sexual Assault Hotlines:

The National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1.800.656.HOPE (rainn.org)

Safe Horizon Rape, Sexual Assault, and Incest hotline: 212.227.3000

Self-Injury Hotlines:

1-800-DONT-CUT (366-8288)

Stalking Hotlines:

Crime Victims Hotline: 1-866-689-HELP (4357)

Safe Horizon: 1-800-621-HOPE (4673).

Substance Abuse Hotlines:

Alcohol Abuse and Crisis Intervention: 800-234-0246

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Helpline and Treatment: 800-234-0420

Suicide Hotlines:

National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-784-2433

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (Text line: 1-800-799-4889)

LGBT Youth Suicide Hotline:

866-4-U-TREVOR (OR text “Trevor” to 1-202-304-1200)

Teen Text Line: Text TEEN 839863 Daily from 6pm-9pm PST

Step Five: Section 1 - The truth shall set us free

Acknowledging to ourselves, to God and to our sponsor the exact nature of our wrongs.

Reflection questions

- How do I currently feel about working Step 5?
 - What fears do I have?
 - Am I willing to continue trusting the process?

“There are innumerable benefits to working all of the Steps. But working Step 5 for the first time brought me such peace that I’ve never forgotten it. This peace truly came from God, for as I trusted in God enough to fully share all of my pains, sins, and secrets with another human being, I was rewarded with a lifting of the loneliness, heaviness, and weight of sin that I’d been attempting to carry for far too long. I actually felt in that moment, and for many days after, the powerful reality of the Atonement of Jesus Christ as it lifted my very soul, lightened my burdens, and filled me with indescribable joy. I distinctly remember waking up morning after morning, so happy to be alive that I almost literally jumped out of bed. My mind was quickened as Gospel truths became very clear to me, and I understood better what walking in the Spirit truly meant. I was truly alive in Christ. And though it has been many years, I can still feel these feelings today as if no time had passed at all. The promises of the program are true, for God stands behind His word.”¹⁸³

- What are some benefits of working Step 5?
 - What am I most looking forward to?
- If I could remove the fear of what others would think of me, if they knew about my struggle, how would being completely honest feel?

“It isn’t sin that has kept me separate from God, for He is near me always, but my own feelings of unworthiness. When I’ve acted out, the subsequent shame that I would feel would cause me to hide from God because I felt so uncomfortable in His light--not because He was uncomfortable with me in His light. But what I’ve grown to realize is that I actually need His light to heal me. That when I consciously choose to surrender to Him, He will heal and cleanse me, and I again feel worthy to be in His presence.”¹⁸⁴

- How can honesty increase my feelings of self-worth?
 - How can strengthening my self-worth drive me to be more honest?
- What fears do I have about disclosing to God?
 - Why is it important to do so even if He already knows everything?

¹⁸³ Name withheld

¹⁸⁴ Name withheld

Step Five: Section 1 - The truth shall set us free

Acknowledging to ourselves, to God and to our sponsor the exact nature of our wrongs.

“It takes great courage and faith to ask a Bishop for help. Fear and shame discourage many from taking this step so vital for healing and forgiveness. It is natural to wonder what the Bishop will think and feel when you share your struggles with him. While not all Bishops are alike, my experience, having been a Bishop twice and a Stake President, tells me that when members struggling with sin and addiction come for help most Bishops . . . want to help and respond appropriately, and will do the best they can because they love you and the Lord. That love will be deepened, not diminished by seeking his help. I know also that God loves us enough to guide Bishops and will bless you for confiding in your Bishop and seeking his

help. The Atonement is an infinite gift offered at tremendous cost. We must never let fear or shame keep us from accepting the gift”¹⁸⁵

- What fears do I have about disclosing to my bishop?
- How is disclosing and sharing with others an act of faith?
- What fears do I have about sharing my Step 4 with my sponsor?
 - What are the benefits of doing so even in spite of my fear?

Post disclosure:

- How did this or previous disclosure experiences go?
 - How did I feel before and after?
 - What did I learn?

Truths and affirmations

President Thomas S. Monson shared this powerful truth: “No one has described these years as being easy. Indeed, they have become increasingly more difficult. The world seems to have slipped from the moorings of safety and drifted from the harbor of peace . . . Anxiously you ask, ‘Is there a way to safety? Can someone guide me? Is there an escape from threatened destruction?’ The answer is a resounding yes! I counsel you: Look to the lighthouse of the Lord. There is no fog so dense, no night so dark, no gale so strong, no mariner so lost but what its beacon light can rescue. It beckons through the storms of life. It calls, ‘This way to safety; this way to home.’”¹⁸⁶

Daily affirmations

- I am sincerely and wholeheartedly loved by God and by others.
- I am courageously living in integrity.

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/2012/10/will-my-bishop-think-less-of-me.html>

¹⁸⁶ Thomas S. Monson, “The Lighthouse of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov, 1990

Step Five: Section 2 - The purifying power of repentance

Acknowledging to ourselves, to God and to our sponsor the exact nature of our wrongs.

Reflection questions

- What has been my experience with repentance thus far in my life?
 - What regrets do I have? Why?
 - What positives have there been?
- What is the purpose of repentance as I understand it?

“It may be hard to see, but the Lord actually gifted our weaknesses to us. He has allowed us a refining process to cultivate and strengthen our humility. Weakness is not a vice, but rather a virtue. Rebellion is our vice. Rebellion is brazenly denying His outstretched hand; giving up, stopping and denying His plan. That is where the dark clouds of trouble roll in. That is where we choose to leave the safety of His Celestial mantle. So long as we strive to recognize, repent and learn from our mistakes, we are safe. Weakness does not deny us His help, but rather, His help is freely offered because of our weakness.”¹⁸⁷

- What gets most in the way of my willingness to repent?
- What would my life be like if I didn't have the opportunity to repent?
- What are some times in my life in which I've felt like I'd messed up too much to be able to repent?
- In what ways do I now feel hope in my repentance process?

“Growing up my understanding of the atonement was seeing it as a one time event that would allow me to return to my Heavenly Father at the end of my life. During my recovery I have realized that I need the Savior's atonement on a constant basis. That I needed His help to overcome cravings was plain to me, but then I saw that I also needed His help in hardships that weren't related to my addiction. And eventually I began to see how He would help me with things I considered too trivial for His notice. The more I noticed the help, the more I realized how integral He was in my daily life. The atonement has become a continuous blessing in my life. The knowledge I have that He is watching over me during the easier times helps me have faith that He will also help during the really rough times.”¹⁸⁸

- How has my recovery journey thus far helped me better understand the Atonement?

Truths and affirmations

Elder Stephen W. Owen reminds us of the blessing that comes once we begin the process of repentance: “Sometimes the journey will seem long—after all, it is the journey toward eternal life. But it can be a joyous journey if we pursue it with faith in Jesus Christ and hope in His Atonement. I testify that the moment we set foot on the path of repentance, we invite the Savior’s redeeming power into our lives. That power will steady our feet, expand our vision, and deepen our resolve to keep moving forward, step by step, until that glorious day when we finally return to our heavenly home and hear our Father in Heaven say to us, ‘Well done.’”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.bythelightofgrace.com/2013/10/malignant-virtues.html>

¹⁸⁸ Name withheld

¹⁸⁹ Stephen W. Owen, “Repentance Is Always Positive,” Ensign, Nov 2017

Step Five: Section 2 - The purifying power of repentance

Acknowledging to ourselves, to God and to our sponsor the exact nature of our wrongs.

Daily affirmations

- I am faithfully and courageously following the will of the Lord.
- I am using my entire being as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.
- God's grace is greater than my fears

Step Five: Section 3 - Allowing repentance to strengthen our recovery

Acknowledging to ourselves, to God and to our sponsor the exact nature of our wrongs

Reflection questions

- How many times can I think of that I repented but soon thereafter returned to my addictive behavior?
 - How did this cycle contribute to my feelings about repentance?
- How have I expected my repentance to remove or change my desire to act out in my addiction?
 - In what ways has this mindset hurt my progression?
 - How has it fed my resentment?
 - How has it fed my shame?
- In what ways is my healing dependent on recovery *and* repentance? Why?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland offers this important insight about repentance: “Only Satan would have you think that a necessary and required acknowledgement of sin is more distasteful than permanent residence in it. Only he would say, ‘You can’t change. You won’t change. It’s too long and too hard to change. Give up. Give in. Don’t repent. You are just the way you are.’ That, my friends, is a lie born of desperation. Don’t fall for it.”¹⁹⁰

- In what ways does the adversary tempt me to not repent?
- How often should I repent?
- Do I view the idea of repentance in a positive or negative light?
 - How can I help see repentance as a gift to me from my loving Heavenly Father?
- What am I grateful for about repentance?
- How do I think the Lord sees me when I confess and repent?

“Thinking back over all of the mistakes I’ve made, it was the ones that left me feeling persistent and unresolved guilt and shame that I needed to talk to my bishop about. Still, it was hard because I had so many rationalizations and justifications telling me I didn’t need to see my bishop. But in the end, it was the deep unsettling feeling of spiritual conflict that always brought me back. When I had sexual sin that needed to be confessed, I felt spiritually restless and unworthy, but without fail, as soon as I would confess it, the most profound feeling of peace would settle over me.”¹⁹¹

- What sexual sins require repentance?
 - What sexual sins require talking to my bishop?
 - How often do I need to talk to him about them?
- Why is repentance and confession still important even if I’ve maintained an extended period of abstinence?
-

¹⁹⁰ Jeffrey R. Holland, “How to Change,” *Liahona*, Feb 2017

¹⁹¹ Name withheld

Step Five: Section 3 - Allowing repentance to strengthen our recovery

Acknowledging to ourselves, to God and to our sponsor the exact nature of our wrongs

“I mistakenly thought that I needed to be perfect at a thing before I could repent. So I would delay repenting because I needed to have it under control before I talked to the Bishop about it or even to my wife. I now see that the adversary didn’t want me to be open about my struggles with those close to me as that would have helped me to change. I now see repentance as a gift from Christ to be changed by him.”¹⁹²

- In what ways is struggling a necessary part of the solution?
- What are some blessings of repentance that I have received in my life?

Truths and affirmations

Elder Helvecio Martins helps us to see that repentance is truly an extraordinary gift from God: “Life is a succession of exchanges. We exchange darkness for light, sadness for happiness, pain for relief, and affliction for well-being. The exchange from sin into forgiveness and remission is obtained through this transformation called repentance. The opportunity to repent is an extraordinary gift of God. . . .

Repentance brings the sinner to the ways of the Lord. It takes him from darkness into light. It reconciles him with eternal principles, brings him back to the congregation of the just, and allows him to once again enjoy communion with the Holy Ghost. All this will open the doors to happiness in the days of this life and full joy in the eternities.”¹⁹³

Daily affirmations

- I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for the gift of repentance.
- I am courageously and willingly surrendering to the Lord through the process of repentance.
- Every time I approach my Heavenly Father in the attitude of repentance He will bless me.

¹⁹² Name withheld

¹⁹³ Helvecio Martins, “From Darkness to Light: The Gift of Repentance,” *New Era*, Jan 1993

Step Six: Section 1 - Become willing to “let to, and let God”

Become entirely ready to surrender each of our character weaknesses to God.

It is recommended that prior to this Step section we take some time to revisit Step 1, Section 5: The many faces of denial to help us prepare to be honest about our character weaknesses.

Reflection questions

- What fears do I have about working Step 6?
 - Do I tend to feel that I have an overwhelming amount of character weaknesses or not many at all?
 - How can I include God so as not to become overwhelmed?

“This step was scary to me because it required that I take an up-close look at myself. All of the mechanisms I had used to avoid looking at myself became glaringly apparent. With Step 4 I also had to take a deeper look at myself, but that was because of things I DID; not because of things I AM, so it wasn’t quite so bad. But in this step, I examined the underlying character weaknesses that led me to do what I did; the core issues and weaknesses that I used to relate to myself, the world and God. Even to this day with years of recovery under my belt, I am continually faced with forms of character weakness as I move forward in my self-discovery. But it is so worth it. I am so grateful for this process of learning, growth and connection.”¹⁹⁴

- What is the benefit of acknowledging character weaknesses we may have previously thought less of a problem?
- Why is it important to almost expect our recovery to cause some level of conflict in our relationships?
 - In what ways can I stay the course and move through these conflicts?
- Why is it important to remember that there is opposition in all things?
- What is the divine purpose of weakness?
 - What would our purpose be on earth without weakness?

“With experience I’ve realized that being grateful in difficult situations can help me get through them. As I see a weakness in me, I try to find gratitude for it. It can be hard to find one but in the end I can at least be grateful that it gives me an opportunity to be humble and submit myself to the Lord and that he can make out of me what I can’t myself. It’s not much, but it’s a start.”¹⁹⁵

- What does it mean for the Lord to give me a new heart?
 - What does a new heart mean for me personally?
- What does it mean to ‘Let go, and let God?’
 - What can we do to more effectively ‘let’ God?
- Why does acknowledging that I am flawed actually give me strength?
- How does it feel knowing that every character weakness has an opposing character strength?
 - How can I more effectively channel my energy into my character strengths rather than my character weaknesses?
- How does it feel knowing that God is not too surprised that I am tempted by my weaknesses?

¹⁹⁴ Name withheld

¹⁹⁵ Name withheld

Step Six: Section 1 - Become willing to “let to, and let God”

Become entirely ready to surrender each of our character weaknesses to God.

Truths and affirmations

“Let us dare to be different from the ways of the world when its ways are not the ways of God. In a world troubled with selfish greed, dishonesty, and dishonor, let us set ourselves on a higher path, striving to develop and strengthen the qualities of unselfish service with wholehearted effort, dependability, honesty, morality, and every other good attribute that would lead us to integrity of character. . . . Let us set high goals for ourselves and work to achieve those goals by making God the center of our lives. He is the fountainhead of all truth, justice, and peace . . . Maintaining good personal habits which are pleasing to our Heavenly Father will strengthen our character, increase our influence for good, improve our example, bless our loved ones and friends, enrich our lives, and enable us to accomplish those things that yield true personal satisfaction and build peace and happiness in our hearts.”¹⁹⁶

Daily affirmations

- God is with me.
- I am taking full responsibility for myself, my life, and my happiness.
- I am a son/daughter of the most high God, and He will empower me to change.

¹⁹⁶ Delbert L. Stapley, “Good Habits Develop Good Character,” Ensign, Nov 1974

Step Six: Section 1 - Character weakness vocabulary

Become entirely ready to surrender each of our character weaknesses to God.

Note: *Identifying character weaknesses in others is a character weakness in ourselves (comparison, judgment, blame, inventory taking.)*

Abrasiveness, hostility, belligerence, being generally bad-humored.

Ambition – An earnest desire for some type of achievement or distinction, as power, honor, fame, or wealth. Seeking these things rather than to be a worker among workers, or to be as useful as possible to God and my fellow human beings.

Anger, hatred, aggression, being argumentative.

Antagonism – Acting in hostility or opposition.

Anxiety – Not as a clinical diagnosis, but as a general way of viewing things with an eye toward what is wrong, what might be wrong, what has been wrong or what is going to be wrong. Excessive worry, especially about things that cannot be changed.

Apathy, indifference – Not caring about others, selfish behavior.

Arrogance, conceit – Offensive display of superiority or self-importance; overbearing pride. An excessively favorable opinion of one's own ability, importance, wit, etc.

Closed mindedness – Contempt prior to investigation. Disregarding things and ideas just because they are new and unknown. Being unwilling to try things or follow suggestions. Failing to remain teachable. Having a mind firmly unreceptive to new ideas or arguments.

Controlling attitude toward people, places and things; self will – Trying to control others by manipulation, bribery, punishment, withholding things or tricking them into acting as we wish, even when we believe it is in their best interest to do so. Failing to be equal partners with others and to consider their knowledge and opinions.

Dependency, over dependency, codependency – Relying on others to provide for us what we ought to provide for ourselves. Feeling we must be in a relationship, or must hold on to others who want to move on. Letting others control us to an extreme due to our fear of being alone, abandoned, or independent.

Depression, pessimism, complaining – Not as a clinical condition, but as a way to generally see the dark side of things.

Dishonesty – Sins of omission and commission. Telling lies, hiding things, telling half truths or pretending something that isn't. Withholding important information. Adding untrue details to stories and situations. Telling lies about another person. Hurting someone's reputation. Stealing, cheating, taking things that aren't ours and that we aren't entitled to.

Fear – an emotion that halts progression and is one of Satan's most powerful tools.

Gluttony, greed – Wanting and taking too much: food, sex, time, money, comfort, leisure, material possessions, attention, security. Acquiring things (material things, relationships, attention) at the expense of others. Feeling entitled to (like I have done something to deserve) things like money, time off, privileges, material things, praise, inclusion, benefits.

Step Six: Section 1 - Character weakness vocabulary

Become entirely ready to surrender each of our character weaknesses to God.

Gossiping – Speaking or writing about others in a negative manner, especially to get them in trouble or to feel superior to them and bond with someone else against the target of the gossip. During these times it is good to take pause and question what trait in that person you see in yourself that is causing you to want to lash out at them.

Guilt, self-pity, whining (pride in reverse) – Spending too much time thinking about how bad you are, how you screwed up, whining about how your life sucks.

Humility, lack of – Feeling better than and worse than others, and being self-centered.

Impatience – Being frustrated by waiting, wanting often to be some time in the future, wanting something to change or improve rather than accepting it as it is.

Intolerance – Not accepting people or things for whom or what they are.

Inventory taking, being judgmental, criticizing – Noticing and listing, out loud or to ourselves, the faults of others.

Jealousy and envy – Wanting what others have, feeling we don't have enough or deserve more, wishing we had what others do instead of them. This applies to material possessions like houses, cars, money and such. It also applies to non material things like relationships, a nice family, children, parents, friends and partners, and fulfilling work relationships. We can envy others for their looks and physical appearance; their talents and physical abilities or attributes such as thinness, tallness, sports ability or musical talent.

Laziness, procrastination, sloth – Not doing as much as is reasonable for us to do. Putting things off repeatedly. Not carrying our own load as much as we are able. Letting others provide things for us that we ought to get for ourselves.

People-pleasing, being a "yes" person – Being false by saying yes when we actually mean no, and feeling resentful about it. Trying to trick others into liking us by saying what I think they want to hear, rather than what is true.

Perfectionism, compulsiveness, being a workaholic – Expecting or demanding too much from yourself or others.

Treating things that aren't perfect as not good enough. Not recognizing a good try or progress. Concentrating too much on what is wrong.

Prejudice – Pre-judging people based on a group they belong to. Negative feelings about someone based on their religion, race, nationality, age, disability, sexual orientation, accent, politics, economic status, physical characteristics like height, weight, hair style, clothing style, physical fitness, age.

Pride – a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority, whether as cherished in the mind or as displayed in bearing, conduct, etc.

Rationalization, minimizing and justifying, self-justification – Saying and/or believing you had good motives for bad behavior. Saying that you did bad things for good reasons, or that what you did really wasn't that bad.

Resentment – The feeling of displeasure or indignation at some act, remark, person, etc., regarded as causing injury or insult.

Rigidity, shyness, aloofness and fear of change – Being closed down and not open for change or progression.

Sarcasm, cruelty, meanness – defense mechanism which gives permission to judge others but not look at yourself.

Sex: misuse of – promiscuity, pornography, masturbation, using people, adultery, inappropriate conversations, excessive and inappropriate use of chat rooms and webcams, reading sexual related material.

Step Six: Section 1 - Character weakness vocabulary

Become entirely ready to surrender each of our character weaknesses to God.

Self-centeredness, selfishness, self-seeking, attention-seeking – Spending excessive time thinking about yourself. Considering yourself first in situations instead of others. Not having enough regard for others or thinking about how circumstances hurt or help others. Thinking about what you can get out of situations and people, i.e. ‘what’s in it for me?’ Spending too much time considering your appearance, acquiring things for myself, pampering myself, indulging myself.

Undependability – Not keeping your word, being late, not being where you should be, not doing what is yours to do, letting others down, not doing my part.

Step Seven: Section 1 - Surrendering our weaknesses unto Him

Humbly ask God to transform our character weaknesses into strengths

Reflection questions

- How would I rate my willingness to surrender my character weaknesses to God?
 - What fears do I have?
 - What am I looking forward to most?
- What suffering have I endured because of my own character weaknesses?
- Why is it so important to acknowledge my own accountability for my weaknesses?
- What does it mean to have the character defect still remain but no longer have to obey it?
- How can understanding the difference between perfectionism and becoming perfected in Christ increase the quality of my surrender?
- What beliefs have I previously had about grace but have since learned differently?
- In what ways does admitting my weaknesses free me up for greater growth and happiness?
- Why is my direction more important than my speed?
- In what ways can surrendering my character weaknesses soften my heart and bring me closer to God?
- How does it feel knowing that heaven won't be full of perfect people, but sinners who admitted their weakness? weakness, and received God's grace?

Surrendering our weaknesses

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."¹⁹⁷

How we surrender our weaknesses can look different day to day. Here are a few ideas we can try:

- Repeat the Step 7 prayer (above) daily
- Say a prayer specific to a weakness we are seeking to overcome, "God, I give you my anger today. I pray that I will see my struggles through your eyes so that I can show your grace to those around me."
- Ask God to help us see the positives in our weaknesses and lean into them
 - If we're struggling not being codependent with our kids, realize that can come from a place of wanting them to feel loved. We can express our love in other ways that are not connected to trying to save or manipulate them. (Do something that speaks to their love language: Tell them we love them, spend time doing something they like, give them a hug, give them a simple gift, serve them in some way)
- Allow ourselves to take small steps into overcoming weaknesses:
 - If we're struggling with being open, honest and vulnerable with our spouse, set specific times throughout the day to check in and give them 1 emotion we are feeling at the time
 - If we're struggling with shame, express 5 things we're grateful for to someone else
- Ask God to help us see ourselves as he sees us

Truths and affirmations

President Henry B. Eyring shared this powerful testimony: "We are the spirit children of a Heavenly Father. He loved us and He taught us before we were born into this world. He told us that He wished to give us all that He had. To qualify for that gift we had to receive mortal bodies and be tested . . . We would be subject to temptations through the desires and weaknesses that came with our mortal bodies. Subtle and powerful forces of evil would tempt us to surrender to those temptations. Life would have storms in which we would have to make choices using faith in things we could not see with our natural eyes. . . . I know that His Son, Jesus Christ, lives and that He is our Savior and that He paid the price of all of our sins . . . I know that through the Holy Ghost we can learn what God would have us do. I testify that He can give us the power to do what He asks of us, whatever it is and whatever trials may come. I pray that we will choose to obey the Lord

¹⁹⁷ "Alcoholics Anonymous," Chapter 6, Into Action, pg. 76

Step Seven: Section 1 - Surrendering our weaknesses unto Him

Humbly ask God to transform our character weaknesses into strengths

quickly, always, in quiet times and in storms. As we do, our faith will be strengthened, we will find peace in this life, and we will gain the assurance that we and our families can qualify for eternal life in the world to come.”¹⁹⁸

Daily affirmations

- I am guided by the same God that aligns the stars and keeps everything in the entire universe orderly and harmonious.
- I trust in God’s grace.
- I surrender my weaknesses to God who can do more for me than I can do for myself.

¹⁹⁸ Henry B. Eyring, “Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady,” *Ensign*, Nov 2005

Step Eight: Section 1 - Preparing to make amends

Reflection questions

- Why is it so important to surrender my weaknesses before righting my wrongs?
- How can I invite the Spirit to guide me through this process?
- Why can just saying “sorry” without change seem hollow?
- Why would the adversary work so hard to distract me from being accountable?
- What are some benefits of taking occasional breaks from writing our list?
- Why is it important to list the ways in which we have harmed God?
- What are the benefits of listing all the ways in which we have harmed ourselves?
- Why is it important to list everything in which we have negative feelings instead of just about our addiction?
- What is the purpose of writing a list of those who have harmed us whether or not we owe amends in return?
- In what ways would I like to be an instrument in the Lord’s hands?

Truths and affirmations

“Trust and confidence in Christ and a ready reliance on His merits, mercy, and grace lead to hope, through His Atonement, in the Resurrection and eternal life. Such faith and hope invite into our lives the sweet peace of conscience for which we all yearn . . . It also strengthens us to see, do, and become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity. . . . Exercising faith in and on the holy name of Jesus Christ, meekly submitting to His will and timing in our lives, and humbly acknowledging His hand in all things yield the peaceable things of the kingdom of God that bring joy and eternal life.”¹⁹⁹

Daily affirmations

- I am willing to make amends for my actions
- The Lord is guiding my life
- His grace is helping me forgive and be forgiven

¹⁹⁹ David A. Bednar, “Therefore They Hushed Their Fears,” *Ensign*, May 2015

Step Eight: Section 2 - The healing balm of forgiveness

Reflection questions

- Why is it so important to prepare our hearts to surrender to the Lord any negative feelings we harbor toward others?
- Why is humility such an important component to being able to be forgiven as well as forgiving others?
- In what ways am I harming myself the most by not forgiving others?
- What are some positive outcomes to feeling forgiven as well as forgiving others?
 - How does it make me feel?
- What negative emotions do I feel when I think about forgiving others?
 - Why do I feel that way? (Repeat multiple times)
 - How does the Savior's Atonement play into this?
- In what ways can admitting my powerlessness, having hope in Christ and surrendering to God help me forgive myself and others?
- Why is it so difficult to forgive ourselves?
- What is holding me back from forgiving myself?
- What role does the adversary play in influencing our ability to forgive ourselves or others?
- Why is it important to distinguish the difference between forgiving and forgetting?
 - Why can remembering actually be beneficial?
- How does it feel knowing that we will be forgiven every time we repent?
- How does it feel knowing Christ will forget all the wrongs we have repented?

Truths and affirmations

President Spencer W. Kimball testified of the miracle of forgiveness: "Sometimes a guilty consciousness overpowers a person with such a heaviness that when a repentant one looks back and sees the ugliness, the loathsomeness of the transgression, he is almost overwhelmed and wonders, 'Can the Lord ever forgive me? Can I ever forgive myself?' But when one reaches the depths of despondency and feels the hopelessness of his position, and when he cries out to God for mercy in helplessness but in faith, there comes a still, small, but penetrating voice whispering to his soul, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'"²⁰⁰

Daily affirmations

- I acknowledge my faults and forgive myself completely.
- I am at peace with anyone who has done me wrong.
- The Lord's grace helps me forgive and be forgiven daily.

²⁰⁰ Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness* [Bookcraft, 1969], 344.

Step Eight: Section 3 - Liberating ourselves from past trauma

Reflection questions

- In what ways have I been stuck in “victim mentality”?
 - How does resentment come into play when acknowledging my victim mentality?
- How does feeding my victim thinking keep me stuck in my addictive behaviors?
 - What is my part in what happened?
- What role does forgiveness play in resolving my victim mentality?
- How can we acknowledge and validate the trauma we have endured while avoiding getting stuck in the victim mentality?
- In what way is blaming others counterintuitive to recovery?
- In what ways can I cultivate forgiveness in my heart?
- What role does agency and choice play in forgiveness?
- In what ways is forgiving others something I do for myself rather than something I’m doing for those I’m forgiving?
- How can the Savior help me forgive others?
- What does the Lord want me to learn from these past events?

Truths and affirmations

The benefits of forgiveness were expressed by President James E. Faust, “If we can find forgiveness in our hearts for those who have caused us hurt and injury, we will rise to a higher level of self-esteem and well-being. Some recent studies show that people who are taught to forgive become “less angry, more hopeful, less depressed, less anxious and less stressed,” which leads to greater physical well-being. Another of these studies concludes “that forgiveness ... is a liberating gift [that] people can give to themselves.”²⁰¹

Elder Kevin R. Duncan shared the eternal purpose of forgiveness, “Forgiveness is the very reason God sent His Son, so let us rejoice in His offering to heal us all. The Savior’s Atonement is not just for those who need to repent; it is also for those who need to forgive. If you are having trouble forgiving another person or even yourself, ask God to help you. Forgiveness is a glorious, healing principle. We do not need to be a victim twice. We can forgive.”²⁰²

Daily affirmations

- I am surrendering to God everything I cannot let go of.
- I seek to forgive everyone in my life.
- I am honest, open-minded and willing.

²⁰¹ James E Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness” *Ensign*, May 2007

²⁰² Kevin R. Duncan, “The Healing Ointment of Forgiveness” *Ensign*, May 2016

Step Nine: Section 1 - The humble and courageous act of making amends

Reflection questions

- Why is it important to make amends for unintended harms?
- How can I prepare myself to make amends to myself?
- What can I do to figure out which person to make amends to next?
 - What can I do when I feel I cannot face someone to make amends?
 - What does God want me to do when I feel I cannot face someone yet (or perhaps ever)?
- How can I find a healthy balance between continually progressing in the amends process while not pushing myself too hard or fast?

Truths and affirmations

"A sincere confession is not merely admitting guilt after the proof is already in evidence. If you have 'offended many persons openly,' your acknowledgment is to be made openly and before those whom you have offended . . . If your act is secret and has resulted in injury to no one but yourself, your confession should be in secret, and your Heavenly Father who hears in secret may reward you openly. Acts that may affect your standing in the Church, or your right to privileges or advancement in the Church, are to be promptly confessed to the bishop whom the Lord has appointed as a shepherd over every flock and commissioned to be a common judge in Israel. . . . Following confession, one in sin must show forth the fruits of his repentance by good deeds that are weighed against the bad. He must make proper restitution to the limit of his power to restore that which he has taken away or to repair the damage he has done."²⁰³

- In what ways have I previously misused the apology process?
- How can I approach the amends process; admitting mistakes of my past, while still maintaining dignity and respect?
- How can I focus on the actual amends while not putting energy into the outcome?
- How can the serenity prayer help me in this process?
- In what ways can Christ help me find the courage, compassion and strength to make amends?
- How can making amends strengthen my sense of self-worth?

Daily affirmations

- I release the past so I can step into the future with pure intentions.
- I set my past free and forgive my participation in it.
- I turn each person over to God for healing and love.

²⁰³ Harold B. Lee, *Youth and the Church* [Deseret Book Co., 1970], p. 99.

Step Nine: Section 2 - Rebuilding trust within the marital relationship

Reflection questions

- What fears do I have of living a transparent life?
 - What are the benefits?
 - In what ways do the benefits outweigh my fears?
- In what ways are forgiveness and trust different?
 - In what ways can our spouse forgive us, but at the same time still reserve trust?
 - Why is it difficult to ask someone to forgive or trust us after we've harmed them?
 - Why might it be difficult for them to hear it?
- What aspects of the grief cycle have I witnessed my loved one experience?
- In what ways has my behavior hindered trust in my relationships?

*"Integrity is choosing courage over comfort, choosing what is right over what is fun, fast or easy; and choosing to practice our values rather than simply professing them."*²⁰⁴

- Why is it important to work on restoring our integrity and being trustworthy, rather than worrying about whether or not others trust us?
 - What is the natural progression of maintaining my integrity and being trustworthy?
- What things do I do that hinder an environment in which trust can grow in my relationships?
- Why is it important that we show empathy no matter how our spouse reacts or responds to the trauma I have caused them?
 - How does feeling and expressing empathy benefit me personally?
 - What can I say to own my part without trying to excuse myself?
- Why is it important to avoid putting timelines on forgiveness, trust and healing?
 - How can expectations damage the healing process?
- In what ways can relying on Christ help my spouse and myself through the process of restoring my integrity?
- How can I allow my partner (spouse) time and space for their own recovery journey with God?

Truths and affirmations

"Satan is a subtle snake, sneaking into our minds and hearts when we have let our guard down, faced a disappointment, or lost hope. He entices us with flattery, a promise of ease, comfort, or a temporary high when we are low. . . . When we build a fortress of spiritual strength, we can shun the advances of the adversary, turn our backs on him, and feel the peace of the Spirit. We can follow the example of our Lord and Savior, who, when tempted in the wilderness, said, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'"²⁰⁵

Daily affirmations

- I am full of light and integrity.
- Honesty is a value I honor every day.

²⁰⁴ Brene Brown, *Rising Strong: How The Ability To Reset Transforms The Way We Live, Love, Parent, And Lead*; 2015 Random House; Kindle Edition, Location 1735.

²⁰⁵ Ronald A. Rasband, "Build a Fortress of Spirituality and Protection," *Ensign*, May 2019

Step Nine: Section 3 - Nurturing marital connection through emotional intimacy

Reflection questions

- How would I rate my willingness to honestly and openly share my feelings with my spouse?
- Why is processing my emotions so important to the health of my relationships?
- In what ways is it important to surround ourselves with those who make us feel seen, heard and valued?
- Why is it sometimes so difficult to share my emotions?
 - What fears do I have?
- What attributes do I feel my marriage should be built on?
 - In what ways will my personal integrity and trustworthiness nurture these attributes?
- In what ways have I or do I feel that sexual relations are a 'have to'?
 - What are the benefits of shifting this perspective to a 'get to'?
- How do I feel about participating in a period of complete sexual abstinence with my spouse?
 - What fears do I have?
 - What are some benefits?
- What are my biggest hopes for my marriage?
 - In what ways is working recovery orienting me toward the things I hope for?
- What are some ways I can practice being emotionally vulnerable in everyday situations?
- How can I listen better?
 - In what ways can I practice empathy?

Truths and affirmations

"Wherever we are with respect to marriage—years from it, close to it, or deeply committed in it—we must be wise, be faithful to the commandments of God, be true. Marriage is the closest and most intimate relationship one makes in this life, and the most serious and sacred decision"²⁰⁶

Daily affirmations

- I am patient, compassionate and trusting toward my spouse.
- I honor and respect my spouse, rejoicing in their own journey and success.
- I listen with intent to my spouse.

²⁰⁶ Marion D. Hanks, "Eternal Marriage," *Ensign*, Nov 1984

Step Ten: Section 1 - The protective shield of daily accountability

Reflection questions

- Why is it so important to maintain my recovery on a daily basis?
- How does Step 10 and walking the covenant path work together?
- In what ways is Step 10 a way of actively putting the previous 9 Steps into action?
- Why is it so important to be flexible in regards to my daily reflections?
 - How can the Spirit help me discover what I need to be accountable for?
- In what ways can my desire to be right get in the way of my daily accountability?
- How can I increase and maintain my courage to make daily amends to those I have harmed?
- Why is it so important to make amends as soon as possible after the offense was made?
- Why does shame have no place in daily accountability?
 - What can I do when I start to feel shame when reviewing my day?
 - How can I turn my shame over to the Lord?
- How can Just For Today mantras help me avoid perfectionism and focus on the progressive nature of being human?
- How can daily accountability nurture my relationship with Heavenly Father and my Savior, Jesus Christ?

Truths and affirmations

“We all need to know what it means to be honest. Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving.”²⁰⁷

“Walking the covenant path, coupled with daily repentance, fuels positive spiritual momentum.”²⁰⁸

Daily affirmations

- I am responsible, accountable and trustworthy.
- I learn from my mistakes, increasing my sense of self-worth and confidence.
- Today I walk the covenant path.

²⁰⁷ James E. Faust, “Honesty – a Moral Compass,” *Ensign*, Nov 1996

²⁰⁸ Russel M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum” *Liahona*, May 2022

Step Eleven: Section 1 - Strengthening our relationship with God

Reflection questions

- How do I feel about the power of prayer?
 - How has it improved since starting recovery?
- Why is it so important to pray especially when I don't feel like praying?
- In what ways can it be helpful to pray about my feelings regarding circumstances, rather than the event itself?
- In what ways can studying the scriptures strengthen my recovery?
 - How can it help me grow closer to God?
- What are the benefits of mindfully living in the moment?
- What are the benefits of continually asking the Lord what His will is for me?
- In what ways do I feel my relationship with God is alive?
 - How can nurturing this relationship enliven me?
- How could a prayer of gratitude help me?
- What other ways can I invite the Spirit and nourish my soul?

Truths and affirmations

"When we give our heart to the Father and the Son, we change our world—even if circumstances around us do not change. We draw closer to Heavenly Father and feel His tender acceptance of our efforts to be true disciples of Christ. Our discernment, confidence, and faith increase. . . . Our Father's infinite love reaches out to us, to bring us back into His glory and joy. He gave His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to repair the breach that gapes wide between us and Him. Reunion with Father in Heaven is the essence of lasting love and eternal purpose. We must make the connection with Him now to learn what really matters, to love as He loves, and to grow to be like Him."²⁰⁹

"Cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

"Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."²¹⁰

Daily affirmations

- I find mercy and healing in the arms of my Savior.
- God loves me unconditionally and infinitely.
- I will listen to God who wants to speak to me.

²⁰⁹ Neill F. Marriott, "Abiding in God and Repairing the Breach," Ensign, Nov 2017

²¹⁰ Alma 37:36-37

Step Twelve: Section 1 - Paying it forward

Reflection questions

- How often have I felt I was the only one who has struggled the way I have?
- Why have I kept my struggle a secret?
 - What fears do I have?
- In what ways have these perspectives shifted since starting recovery?
- What does it mean to practice the principles of recovery in all that I do?
 - How can I strive to accomplish this goal but also embrace my imperfections?
 - Why must I give away what I have learned?
- In what ways am I committed to pay forward all that the Lord has given me?
- What are the specific ways I can carry the message of recovery to others and practice these principles in all of my affairs?
- What fears do I have about working Step 12?
 - How can knowing God would never place me in danger alleviate these fears?
- What opportunities have I already had for helping others along their recovery journey?
- How has other's willingness to work Step 12 helped me in my own recovery journey?
- Why is the gift of recovery not really mine to keep?
- In what ways can my willingness to work Step 12 be as a lower light along the shore?
- What is the Lord's promise if I shine my light forth to help others?
 - How can this help me on a daily basis?

Truths and affirmations

"Jesus wants every one of us to know him because of the transforming power of that knowledge and because of the indescribable joy it brings into our lives. But the influence of the gospel is to extend beyond each individual. It is to be as a light that dispels the darkness from the lives of those around us. No one of us is saved solely and simply for himself alone, just as no lamp is lighted merely for its own benefit."²¹¹

Daily affirmations

- I pray for willingness and courageously go and do what the Lord asks of me.
- I humbly and willingly share with others what has been so graciously given to me.
- I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, and I witness His power to help us change.

²¹¹ Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Let Your Light So Shine," Ensign, Nov 1978

Step Twelve: Section 1 - Paying it forward

The Lower Lights

We've all heard the hymn, *Brightly Beams our Father's Mercy*; relating the story of the 'lower lights along the shore' that guide a lost seaman into the harbor. The lighthouse itself represents the Savior, but sometimes we need the help and guidance of the lower lights to help us navigate the often narrow, dark and turbulent channel to get us to the Savior.

- Take some time to study the lyrics while listening to this sacred hymn.
- In what ways is this story representative of my recovery journey?
- How does my journey relate to the lost seaman?
- In what ways do I need to follow the guidance of those that have walked this path before me?

Sponsee Guide

A comprehensive guide for sponsees.

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1. The requirements to be a sponsee

There really is only one universal requirement to be a sponsee and that is willingness. Willingness to ask, to admit, to acknowledge, to reach out for help, to dig deep and to change. That's it. The moment we retract our willingness is the moment we disconnect from any possibility of recovery.

2. The purpose of having a sponsor

Our willingness to get a sponsor is one of the first great acts of surrender we perform in our recovery. We must first acknowledge that we *need* a sponsor. Absolutely *no one* is exempt from this need, for having one opens the door to greater strength, greater learning, greater connection and greater and more focused progression. Indeed, "those who have suffered the most will be our greatest teachers . . . because they are the closest to the truth of all of our lives. Because they are the most connected to the feelings that we are all burying . . . It may seem counterintuitive in this conditioned world, but those who have the courage to own their pain, are actually the ones we need the most . . . [we must] listen to them and let them whisper [our] heart back to life."²¹²

Ultimately, having a sponsor is part of the promise that we never have to be alone again; granting them stewardship over us, to help us work the Twelve Steps and adopt the very principles of recovery into our own life that has guided them out of the darkness in theirs.

Still, because we are new to recovery, we are likely to have some lingering questions regarding the process as a whole:

- How and where do I begin recovery?

²¹² Jeff Brown, <https://www.facebook.com/SOULSHAPING>

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- What does ‘working the Steps’ even mean?
- How do I know when a Step is complete and if it is okay to move forward?
- How will I ever stay motivated to take on all this additional effort in recovery?

It is through listening to our sponsor—and following their counsel and example—that we gain the answers to these questions and learn to work the program of recovery. By doing so, we can be confident that we are positioning ourselves for success; learning how to allow Christ to heal us. Utilizing our sponsor creates an atmosphere of accountability; a system of checks and balances to guide our recovery efforts, leading to long term freedom from the everyday torment of our addiction.

3. The benefits of utilizing a sponsor

A sponsor, through their own hard work and perseverance, is someone who has demonstrated proficiency in working the Twelve Steps and gaining long-term sobriety. They are our personal safari guide as we navigate the traps and pitfalls that surround us in early recovery; helping us personalize the Twelve Steps in order to anchor us to the Lord. They are grounded in recovery, they practice what they preach, and have the ability to hold us accountable while withholding judgment.

A sponsor knows what we struggle with, knows the pain and sorrow associated with it, and knows how isolating this disease can be, yet willingly:

- Reminds us over and over again that Heavenly Father and our Savior, Jesus Christ have not forsaken us, that They love us, and that They will never leave us.
- Directs us to the essential recovery principles that sustain us throughout every aspect of recovery; including the strong pull of temptation.
- Helps us identify—and supports us through—triggers, danger zones, behaviors and people that bind us to our addiction.
- Helps us get back up after slips, reject the the looming shame and identify what we can learn and change in order to progress in our recovery
- Guides us through any disclosures to others we choose to make along our journey.
- Helps us unravel and dispel the toxic hold shame has over us.
- Teaches us to open ourselves up to connective emotional intimacy by emotionally connecting to us.
- Helps us to not only realize our innate worth and value but actually come to like and even love ourselves.

4. Is a sponsor like a therapist?

Because of the personal mentor relationship that develops with our sponsor, it is not uncommon for us to also want to turn to them for direction and advice regarding situations outside of recovery. However, we often do so with the expectation of getting the same qualified counsel we have received regarding recovery matters, which is not only unlikely, but unfair to our sponsor. Through working their own recovery, sponsors have become somewhat of an ‘expert’ at working the Steps, qualifying them to then teach us to do the same. Still, that qualification does not apply to our own personal circumstantial, emotional or mental struggles; matters that are more effectively addressed by a therapist.

Ideally, it is best to work with a therapist in conjunction with working the Steps with a sponsor. Therapists and sponsors target different areas of our addiction and recovery, and—when used together—can be synergistically beneficial. Working with a therapist addresses areas in our lives that the 12-Steps are not necessarily designed to target.

5. Can my friend be my sponsor?

Although our friends can offer great advice and counsel, they are not the best option when it comes to choosing as a sponsor. Although friendship and sponsorship overlap in some areas, their roles are quite different. Friends support us in everything, sponsors support is in recovery. Friends tend to sugarcoat the truth to save our feelings, sponsors graciously

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tell us the hard truths to help us see through our addiction. Friends are emotionally enmeshed with us, where sponsors maintain boundaries to keep emotional manipulation at bay. Although on paper our friends may have the experience and knowledge to be a sponsor, sponsorship requires a dynamic that could actually damage an already existing friendship. In the end we must decide, do we want to be coddled, while risking our friendships at the same time? Or do we want real, unhindered recovery?

6. How many sponsors should I have?

Building up a support network is definitely important to our recovery, however, friends in recovery that make up our support network don't necessarily have to be labeled as our 'sponsor' to be effective. The role of a sponsor is to guide us through the Steps and teach us how to work the program, so having more than one can actually confuse our recovery and blur our focus. That is not to say that we don't listen to and learn from the experiences of others or switch sponsors later. It just means we keep our recovery as simple and focused as possible in the moment.

7. Who should I ask to be my sponsor?

There really is no right or wrong answer to this question, rather, it's more about taking into consideration how the relationship will affect our recovery. First, we must consider our motive. We don't ask someone to be our sponsor because we find them physically appealing (sexually or non-sexually), like how they act or want them to be our friend. We avoid *sponsor shopping*²¹³, or looking for a sponsor who keeps us safe within our comfort zone, rather than seeking someone who will challenge us to step outside of ourselves. And we don't use the ever convenient excuse that we haven't found the "perfect fit" yet, because there is no such thing anyway. In essence, we are seeking a sponsor that is best for our recovery, not our ego.

Still, there are certain things we can identify about potential sponsors before we even pop the question:

- Do they create balance to my own personality (introvert/extrovert)?
- Do they attend group regularly?
- Are they open about their own recovery journey?
- Do they practice what they preach?
- Do I sense they would be able to and willing to call me on my addictive behavior—both physically and spiritually?
- Do they have a good working relationship with God?
- What other pros and cons are there to them being our sponsor?
- (Repeat with other potential sponsors)

8. How do I ask someone to be my sponsor?

The formal act of asking someone to be our sponsor can be one of the biggest roadblocks to actually gaining one. Vulnerability is scary, and it's vulnerable to ask for help, especially with something so personal. Will it be challenging? Yes. Will it feel uncomfortable? Yes. But will we grow in hope, trust, and self-worth because of it? Even more so, yes.

9. What do I do if the person I ask says no?

The fear of someone saying no to being our sponsor can be monumental. We already feel so awful about ourselves that it's near impossible to not take such rejection personally. Still, there are many factors that come into play when it comes to a sponsor saying no:

- They may not be far along enough in their recovery to support someone else in theirs.
- They may already have a number of sponsees and don't feel they can take on any more.
- They may have recently had a slip or be somehow struggling in their own recovery.

²¹³ See Glossary in the Healing Through Christ Addiction Recovery Workbook

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They may also just have a feeling that sponsoring us wouldn't be beneficial, which sounds like there is something wrong with us, right? But that's not the case, because the truth is, we want our sponsor to be beneficial, and sometimes finding that right fit first takes a few misses. So if we hear 'no' to our first request, or even subsequent requests, let us not give up, for that is exactly what the adversary would want us to do.

10. Communicating mutual expectations

Once we have asked someone to sponsor us, it is important to interview them to establish mutual and acceptable expectations, including but not limited to:

- Scheduling
- Methods of communication
- Availability and frequency of contact
- Sponsorship style
- Assignments
- Mutual confidentiality and anonymity
- Rigorous and reciprocal honesty
- Working a 30-in-30
- Recovery work and meeting attendance
- Spirituality

It is also important that we start our relationship off with an 'all cards on the table' mindset by sharing the nature of our addictive behavior with our potential sponsor—whether it be viewing pornography, masturbation, inappropriate relationships or something else. We do this because they may not be able to relate to our addiction, may be triggered by it themselves, or even better, they may actually know of another potential sponsor who would be even more beneficial to us.

11. Who should be contacting who?

Because we have been isolated in our addiction so long, it can be hard to reach out to our sponsor, especially about something so personal. We may spend time hoping and wishing that they, or others, will notice we are struggling and do the approaching just so we don't have to do the asking. However, just as this is our program of recovery—not theirs, so is it also our responsibility to reach out—not theirs. If we are feeling resistant to reaching out, we simply work to identify why. If we feel we can't identify why, we barrel through it anyway. Our comfort zone will never expand so long as we refuse to challenge its boundaries.

12. Recovery assignments and 30-in-30's

The purpose of Step assignments and other recovery work is to create habit and consistency in our recovery. Think about it, an everyday addiction needs an everyday solution. We need to learn to daily work the Steps and practically apply them in our lives in order to shift the power and momentum from addiction to recovery.

Working a 30 in 30 with our sponsor is an excellent way to sink ourselves into the deep end of recovery right from the beginning. A 30-in-30 is a comprehensive program of thirty assignments in thirty days, guided by a sponsor. Some additional guidelines include:

- Scheduling daily check-in's.
- Completing assignments on time.
- Being thoughtful, purposeful, prayerful and deliberate in our conviction.
- Striving to maintain sobriety throughout the thirty days and being immediately forthcoming and accountable for all slips.

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Still, our sponsor should never work harder than we do. Our recovery is on our own shoulders, not on theirs. Indeed, the quality of our recovery is directly proportional to the quality of our effort. The pace of our deliverance is not set by the strength of our addiction, but by our willingness to do whatever it takes to get better. So we give ourselves to God by giving ourselves to the program. We meet with our bishop, we attend meetings, we check in with our sponsor and we daily work the Steps. For the Lord's promise is sure: "For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul."²¹⁴

13. Sharing our inventories

It is also beneficial to share the inventories, or itemized journaling, we write while working the Healing Through Christ Program. There is power, great power, in writing down that which we have kept locked inside of us. It is both healing and cleansing. Still, while writing the inventory is important, we must also share them in order to 'let go' of and turn away from the pain they hold. Some inventories can be shared with friends in recovery, some in meetings, and others are best shared only with our sponsor. Regardless of the audience, our job is to be open, honest and willing. We don't skip or gloss over items on our inventory. We share it all, for in order for the Great Physician to heal us, we must expose our wounds.

14. Asking questions with an answer in mind

Sponsors are good about getting us to think. They understand the importance of us discovering how to find solutions ourselves. In order to teach this, they will sometimes work to help us find the solution, rather than just telling us what they think the solution is. Most of the time, this is facilitated through open-ended questions. Although we may just want a straight answer, and their questions may seem pointless, we must trust their method. They've been where we are, and they understand the importance of teaching us to develop essential problem-solving skills.

15. Observing our sponsor in meetings

It is important to observe our sponsor in a recovery group setting to gauge a deeper understanding of what working recovery not only looks like, but also witness the results. We watch them engage with others, observe their body language and listen to what they have to say. We sense their energy and listen to how it makes us feel. We learn from our observations and strive to implement the changes necessary to align ourselves with recovery. Still, although we are actively observing our sponsor, it is important that we remain respectful of the space they need to work and practice their own recovery.

16. Developing active listening skills

Just as it is important for our sponsor to listen to us, it is equally important for us to listen to them. In doing so, we internalize what works in recovery. We take what they say and let it rest on our hearts; digesting it and letting it nourish our own recovery. Actively listening also invites the Spirit and allows divine influence to settle into the relationship.

Some important attributes of an active listener include, but are not limited to:

- Being attentive; making good eye contact to show interest in what is being communicated.
- Listening without pre-formed opinions or responses; striving to have an open mind.
- Identifying areas in which we can relate to what is being shared.
- Being quiet in the moment; recognizing that what is being said is more important than responding to it.

If for some reason, we are not in the right frame of mind to be an active listener, it is best to be honest about it and reschedule for a later time.

²¹⁴ D&C 4:4

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17. The power of “I don’t know”

If we are unsure what to do or say when working with our sponsor, it is not only OK to acknowledge that we don’t know, but highly recommended. Think about it this way: If our sponsor is across foggy meadow yelling “come over here!” but we didn’t quite hear them, we don’t just stand there feeling dumb. We yell back “Where!?” and continue the back and forth Marco/Polo until we finally find one another. That’s how the most effective communication works. Both parties ought to be courageous enough to ask for clarity if either misunderstands. Uttering the phrase “I don’t know” gives all parties involved permission to find out who does.

18. Being open to honest feedback

Whether it’s labeled constructive criticism or honest feedback, it can be really hard to receive sometimes. Such feedback challenges our security and how we think others perceive us. It can be disastrous if we aren’t in the right frame of mind and soul to receive it; leaving us defensive, ashamed and resentful. In order to avoid having such a negative reaction, it is important that we recognize that our sponsor’s intent is to help us. It is likely just as uncomfortable for them to give such feedback as it is for us to receive it.

The first question we can ask ourselves is: “No matter how painful this feedback may be, is there truth to it?” Think about it, if someone points out a blemish on our face, it’s going to emotionally sting. We are going to get embarrassed and want to hide. But the fact that it is painful doesn’t make it any less there. Same goes for the honest feedback offered to us by our sponsor. Just because what they say is painful, doesn’t make it any less true. Our job is to just trust that it is not said to hurt us, but rather to create awareness of a weakness, so it can become strengthened.

19. Codependency and boundaries

Boundaries are an important element that protect the health of the sponsorship relationship. It is very easy for us to become overly dependent on our sponsor, because they are likely the first person we’ve been really honest with about our addiction, only to discover that they loved us anyway. Setting boundaries to protect us against becoming overly dependent on our sponsor allows us to freely use the remaining space to work and use the principles of recovery and come to know our Savior.

20. Resolving conflict

Most sponsorship relationships will experience conflict at some point or another. It’s simply expected given both parties are human and both are battling addictive thinking patterns on various levels. The key to resolving any and all conflict is honesty, accountability and sometimes even tolerance.

It is important to remember that during conflicting situations, our sponsor is still our guide. Conflict is a normal part of the human condition, and as addicts, something that we are often not very good at resolving. However, in recovery we learn to surrender our pride and our fears to God. If conflict arises, it is important to remain calm and respectful, giving ourselves permission to learn and to grow.

21. What do I do if I slip?

Slips and relapses can be some of the most devastating obstacles to hope, progression and newly budding feelings of self-worth. Still, the most important combatant to a slip is to be open and honest about it, map out how it happened to avoid the same pitfalls in the future, and then simply get up; as the Japanese proverb states: “Fall seven times, get up eight.”²¹⁵ Slips and relapses do not set us back at our starting point. A slip is just a slip. If we fall on the ground, we don’t stay there. We get up, dust ourselves off, and keep going.

Another trick in the recovery playbook is to train ourselves to recognize and give humble credit for our successes, as a sister shared: “I remember the first time I met with my Bishop he told me to track, in red, for 7 days how many times I

²¹⁵ Japanese proverb

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gave into my addiction and, in blue, how many times I withstood. It was eye opening for me to see that for each slip, there were many more successes. My week was virtually all blue. Still, for some reason I seemed to just focus on the slips, giving no credit for the many successes.”²¹⁶

22. What do I do if my sponsor slips?

The slip is not what defines our recovery, it's what we do after the slip. If our sponsor slips and promptly gets back up and continues working a healthy recovery, then keeping them as an active sponsor is a consideration. If, however, they seem to be struggling and fall back into addictive behavior, we need to give them their space to regain their own recovery footing.

23. If it's not working, it's not working

Like all healthy relationships, our relationship with our sponsor must be mutually rewarding. Someone who is inspirational and caring in the early stages of our recovery may not be as effective later on when we're in need of a different type of guidance. Still, it is important that we not give up on a worthy sponsor simply because of uncomfortable conflict or because our own addictive thinking is causing us to sabotage our recovery. However, if the relationship has become distant, disconnected or even toxic, it is recommended that we switch sponsors.

24. When in doubt, Serenity Prayer it

Never in our entire lives will the Serenity Prayer be more powerful and beneficial to us than during our early stages of recovery. Devoting undue attention to things we cannot change depletes us of valuable physical, emotional and mental energy:

*God, grant me the serenity,
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Although the adversary would have us think otherwise, to 'surrender' or let go of that which we cannot control does not mean we resign, are weak or have failed. Indeed, accepting that there are some things we can-not change does not make us complacent, but signifies a leap of faith, straight into the arms of courage, strength, deliverance and freedom.

25. Conclusion

The fact is, there are no 'leaders' in recovery. There are only 'servants'. The name of this program is the essence of the healing process—through Christ. Our sponsor will help us turn to Christ and access the healing power of His Atonement.

The time is right, and the moment is now—to start looking at those individuals we respect, and that best represent the principles of recovery in the meeting(s) we attend. Although finding a sponsor isn't an exact science, it's not all that difficult, either. What is important is that we find one and begin our journey to physical, emotional and spiritual freedom.

²¹⁶ Name withheld

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A comprehensive guide for those willing to serve as sponsors.

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1. The purpose of a sponsor

The role of a sponsor is ""strengthen thy brethren."²¹⁷ Being a sponsor is Step Twelve in action, by serving and helping others in their sacred recovery. It is part of the promise that we never have to be alone again. Ultimately, as sponsors, we are granted stewardship to help "sponsees" work the Twelve Steps and [guide] their recovery program based on the experience, strength and hope of our own recovery."²¹⁸

Indeed, we are better able to see the vision of the sponsorship relationship if we first understand our own purpose, which is to be a guide for the sponsee as they work their own recovery program and learn to rely on God. We don't do it for them, but simply and honestly share what we have learned, what we see and what we feel. Indeed, probably the most effective way we can help our sponsee is by showing them how to work recovery—simply by working recovery ourselves.

Although those new to recovery may be willing to do their part in working the Steps, like us, they are sure to have some lingering questions as to 'how' to work them:

- How do I begin?
- What does 'working the Steps' even mean?
- How do I know when a Step is complete and if it is okay to move forward?

²¹⁷ See Luke 22:32

²¹⁸ Twelve Step Sponsorship, Page 54

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- How do I know what to include in my First Step Inventory?
- How will I ever stay motivated to take on all this additional effort in recovery?

It is through listening to our sponsor, and following their counsel and example, that we learn to work the steps. By doing so, we can be confident that we are working them thoroughly, and are on the high road to a successful recovery. Working the Steps allows Christ to heal us. Utilizing our sponsor creates a system of accountability; a recovery checks and balances to guide our recovery efforts, leading to long term recovery.

2. The benefits of being a sponsor

The beauty of the sponsorship relationship is the sponsee is not the only one that benefits. Sponsors also benefit from the relationship because they are able to find their own measure of healing through serving others.²¹⁹ A sister explained; “My friends in recovery are more dear to me than almost any other relationship I have. As with every other sacrifice God asks of me, when I give with an open heart, He pours out His blessings upon me.”²²⁰ Indeed, as with other teacher/student relationships, it is often difficult to tell who learns more, the sponsor or the sponsee.

The Lord’s commandment is clear, but also is His blessing; “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me.”²²¹ We benefit from serving others, because we are ultimately serving our Savior, as a brother related; “As a sponsor, I have been guided by the spirit to greater spiritual understanding of addiction, of the Steps and the broader recovery process. As I listen to others talk about their journey, I understand my own journey better. As I explain the ‘how’ and ‘why’ behind the Steps, I find more work that I need to do. When I receive difficult situations or questions from sponsees, I am forced to dig deeper for understanding and my own roots inevitably grow deeper. I learned from my own sponsor that what he taught me was truth. And now, as a sponsor myself, I have experienced the greatest benefit in the relationship.”²²²

3. The requirements to be a sponsor

The most important component to being an effective sponsor is working our own recovery first.

Like the scriptures state; “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” The fact is, we must “first seek to obtain [His] word, and then shall [our] tongue be loosed; then . . . [we] shall have [His] Spirit and [His] word . . . unto the convincing of men.”²²³ Although we may feel that we will never be qualified to guide someone else through the sacred journey of recovery, we must trust in the promise “that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.”²²⁴

That being said, there are a number of general guidelines to follow when considering whether or not we can benefit others by being a sponsor:

- Attending meetings regularly: Regularly attending meetings not only maintains our own recovery, but also nurtures our relationship(s) with our sponsee(s).
- Utilizing our own sponsor: Making use of our own sponsor is another key action to being a good sponsor. It helps keep us humble and keeps our own addictive behaviors in check. Not to mention, it avoids the hypocrisy of being a sponsor, by not willingly using one ourselves.
- Shared a Step Five inventory: It is recommended that those who sponsor have at least completed through Step Five. However, having worked through Step Nine is even more preferred. Imagine, how could we respond if a sponsee, when reflecting future Step work, were to express fear regarding a Step we have not yet worked? No matter where we are, however, it is important that we remain further along in the Steps than that of our

²¹⁹ Roger Stark, *The Waterfall Concept a Blue Print for Addiction Recovery*, 83

²²⁰ Name Withheld, Mosiah 2:21-24

²²¹ Matthew 25:35-45

²²² Name Withheld

²²³ Matthew 15:14, D&C 11:21

²²⁴ Thomas S. Monson, Duty Calls, April 1996 Conference

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sponsee(s). If they ever were to pass us, we must suggest they find a new sponsor as soon as possible.

- Have a sustained period of sobriety: Potential sponsors should have a significant and sustained period of sobriety. How much time is not as important as the actual quality of sobriety. A person can have physical sobriety yet still be struggling internally with lust. We must work our own program, maintain our own sobriety and ultimately fill our own cup before we can effectively show others how to thrive by living in recovery.
- Let the sponsee choose their sponsor: Because choosing a sponsor is a very personal decision, it should be made with great care and under the direction of the Spirit. Therefore, it is important that the sponsee choose their sponsor and not the other way around. The deliberate act of picking a sponsor is an affirmative effort to earnestly energize or re-energize recovery. It must originate from the person whose recovery it is—the sponsee.
- Same gender: In order to protect our own sexual sobriety, as well as that of our sponsee, it is important that sponsors only work with those of the same gender.
- Work and emulate recovery principles: By working our own program of recovery we literally become a product of that recovery, a product that we must emulate when serving as a sponsor. Although it is best to have worked through Step 9 it is most beneficial to have worked Steps 10, 11 and 12 as well, so we can share a vision of what types of things our sponsees can look forward to.
- Be willing to be available: Oftentimes the sponsee's experience with a Twelve Step program is defined by the relationship they have with their sponsor. For a time, that bond—as well as their group attendance—becomes the essence of their program. A sponsor who is not responsive or who is not an empathetic engaged guide is not going to be effective in their role.

4. Stewardship over vs. responsibility for

Although we are given stewardship over our sponsees, it is sometimes difficult to recognize that we are not actually responsible for them. We are given charge to oversee and guide their journey, but we are not responsible for the work that effective recovery requires. It is a constant ebb and flow of digging deep together and knowing when to let go and let God. As a sister shared; “I got really nervous when my first sponsee stopped attending group and working the Steps. I thought I’d done something wrong and that I’d failed her as a sponsor. Upon sharing this concern with my own sponsor, I was told ‘you don’t have that much power.’ In that moment I knew that the Lord was telling me to let her go, so that He could catch her.”²²⁵

5. I’ve been asked to sponsor, now what?

There is something special about the very first time we are asked to be someone’s sponsor. We are likely to feel scared, nervous, excited, unworthy, and yet consumed with the most intense gratitude for what we have been given, and the opportunity to pass that knowledge on to someone else. The key here is to not let our own character weaknesses get in the way of working this Step Twelve opportunity. So if we feel so inclined, just say YES!

Although we might wish we could help everyone that asks us to sponsor them, there will likely come a time when we just don’t feel good about it. Sometimes the reason will be obvious, whatever it may be, and other times it will be a nagging feeling with no clear explanation. The fact is, sponsorship relationships are different for everyone. Although the roots of addiction are similar, and the recovery principles are the same, establishing a sponsorship relationship is personal, and needs to be a mutual decision between both the sponsor and sponsee.

If we do find ourselves feeling uncomfortable about a potential sponsee—no matter the reason—it is okay to decline. However, it is important to do our part to identify why we feel uncomfortable, for the reason may lie within us, rather than circumstances surrounding the sponsee. Digging deep, while utilizing prayer and personal reflection to discover the roots of our discomfort, opens our mind and heart to learning more about ourselves.

6. Communicating mutual expectations

²²⁵ Name withheld

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Once a sponsee has chosen who they would like as their sponsor, they will approach us with the request. As honored as we may feel, we ought not rush to say 'yes' right away, for we need to take time to pray and ponder; allowing our answer to be a well thought response rather than knee jerk reaction. If we then determine that we will accept, it is important to establish mutual and acceptable ground rules prior to sealing the deal. Such rules may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Scheduling
- Methods of communication
- Availability and frequency of contact
- Sponsorship style
- Expectations about sobriety, step work, recovery activities, etc.
- Assignments
- Ethics
- Mutual confidentiality and anonymity
- Rigorous and reciprocal honesty
- Working a 30-in-30
- Recovery work and meeting attendance
- Spirituality

Additionally, it is well to look for indications that the sponsorship request may be driven by unhealthy motivations. If something doesn't feel right it is perfectly acceptable to offer to be a temporary sponsor, or say no altogether. Ultimately, sponsors have the right to feel as safe as their sponsees.

7. Setting sponsees up for success

Although it is important for sponsees to do the majority of the work in their own recovery, there are certain things we can do as their sponsor to set them up for success.

- How meetings work – If a sponsee is brand-new to the fellowship, it will help them feel more comfortable to educate them on the ins and outs of meetings, events and general goings on of the meeting.
- Permission to ask questions – Giving our sponsees permission to ask us anything, helps relax their fear that we will judge or reject them if they do.
- Familiarity with recovery lingo – One of the easiest ways to help people feel part of the group is to help them learn recovery lingo. Suggesting that sponsees read the Healing Through Christ Glossary is a great way to expedite such learning.

8. The power of positive sponsorship

In general, humans, and in fact—all living beings—respond better to positive feedback and motivation than to negative. As sponsors, we are representatives of the Lord; paying forward that which He, through others, has so graciously given us. Therefore, it is important when meeting with or talking to sponsees that we pray, even if only in our minds, that the Lord will provide inspiration to know how to best help our sponsee. Although important to be firm and set clear boundaries, it is important to strive to avoid negativity in any aspect of our sponsoring style. Sponsors acknowledge and validate progress in their sponsee; acting as cheerleaders for their achievements and encouragers when they are struggling. Recovery is hard as it is, so even the smallest progress is to be celebrated.

9. Developing active listening skills

An important aspect of being an effective sponsor is the ability to actively and empathetically listen. Such ability gives us a deeper level of understanding about their situation, and helps us empathize with their feelings. It also allows us the power of observance as we discern the meaning behind their facial expression, body language, tone of voice and other forms of nonverbal communication.

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Active listening requires specific attributes, that can be learned, including, but not limited to, the following:

- We are attentive, make good eye contact, and avoid interrupting.
- We show empathy for what is being shared. We are genuine, authentic and sincere.
- We do not check our phone or other devices in the middle of a conversation, and promptly silence them upon alert.
- We use positive and open body language, and don't convey inappropriate shock at what is being shared.
- We do not rush, but ask directive open ended questions to guide the sharing.
- We avoid listening with pre-formed opinions or responses, but strive to have an open mind to what is being communicated.
- We strive to identify areas in which we can relate to what is being shared, yet avoid the cliché statement; "I know exactly how you feel," because such precision is impossible.
- We treat what is shared with reverence and respect by remembering, but not internalizing, what has been shared.
- We are trustworthy and sensitive.
- We understand that we are not required to know all the answers, but just that we strive to empathize and connect.
- We not only understand that each person's life experiences are different, but celebrate those differences.
- We repeat back what we heard from them, to make sure we understood correctly.

Active listening solves the biggest problem in communication, which is the illusion that it has even taken place.²²⁶ It opens our heart and mind to the influence of the Spirit who helps us hear not only with our ears, but our soul, for "small voices are heard only by those who are willing to listen."²²⁷ Active listening teaches the recipient to open up and trust. It creates a safe space for them to reach out for help and emerge from the shadows of their despair.

10. The importance of open-ended questions

A high-value question is one that creates learning and insight for either the sponsor or the sponsee, or better yet, both. One type of question that creates such value is that of an open-ended question, as opposed to one that is closed-ended (i.e. yes, no or one-word answer questions). Keep in mind that such questions might be uncomfortable for us to ask, just as they may be uncomfortable for the sponsee to answer. We must be patient and allow them time to ponder, even enduring the inevitable uncomfortable silent periods that may occur. Remember, if they are thinking, then they are processing. They are striving to learn within themselves, where the Spirit resides to help them.

The following are some examples of closed vs open ended questions:

- Closed: Did you have a good day?
- Open: What was the best/hardest part of your day?
- Closed: Do you think you'll get better if you work recovery?
- Open: What do you have to gain if you continue to work recovery??

Once a sponsee starts opening up about their struggles or what they are learning, prompting them with open-ended questions can be effective in finding even more solutions and insights. You might say to a sponsee; "I'm hearing that accountability is important to you. What might give you the accountability you're looking for?" or "What would the ideal outcome of working recovery look like to you?" These types of open-ended questions allow sponsees to outside the limits of their current understanding. Follow-up questions can keep the learning energy flowing.

²²⁶ George Bernard Shaw

²²⁷ There Are Many Gifts – Marvin J. Ashton October 1987

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11. Observing sponsees in meetings

It is important to observe sponsee(s) in a recovery group setting in an effort to gauge a deeper understanding of the health and wellbeing of their recovery. As one brother shared; “I needed to be with my sponsee in a different setting from our one-on-one interaction. My insight into his progress expanded as I listened and observed his recovery throughout the meeting.”²²⁸ Some things to look for in our sponsee(s) at meetings might include, but is not limited to:

- Do they make eye contact with others?
- Do they share during the sharing portion of the meeting?
- Are they actively listening when others are sharing?
- Do they seem emotionally present?
- What is their mood?
- Do they stay and mingle after the meeting or leave quickly?
- What is their demeanor like when interacting with others?
- Do they stay after the meeting to ask questions?
- Are they asking others for contact information in an effort to expand their recovery support network?
- Are their shares full of hope or despair?
- Do they work through the problems they share with the group, or do they seem to be stuck in victim thinking?

Although it is important that sponsors observe their sponsee(s) in the group meeting setting, the purpose of such observation is not to see what they are doing wrong, but just to gauge where they are. They should never be made to feel like they are being spied on, scrutinized or analyzed, therefore any information we do gather should not be addressed at the meeting itself. Furthermore, the information gathered should never be used to belittle, shame or guilt-trip sponsees, but should be used to identify areas in which we can encourage them to progress.

Additionally, it is imperative that sponsors remain respectful towards their sponsees at meetings; allowing them to share openly and honestly. Sponsors do not dictate sponsees behavior by bossing them around or telling them what to think or say, and understand that important conversations with their sponsee take place outside the meetings.

12. The ‘meeting before & after the meeting’

Besides frequent telephone contact, it is valuable for sponsors and sponsees to meet face-to-face. These meetings will strengthen the relationship bond and enhance mutual understanding. It has been said that we “take our problems to our sponsors and our solutions to the meetings.”²²⁹ Sponsorship communication which precede scheduled Twelve Step meetings can offer the additional benefit of preparing for the meeting, un-loading feelings or experiences that are best handled outside of meetings, or discussing what the sponsee might want to share in the meeting. Sponsorship communications following the Twelve Step meeting can be used to discuss emotions, questions or deeper concepts that manifested during the meeting.

13. The practice of open and honest feedback

It is important that we learn to develop a clear understanding regarding the difference between the actions of a ‘friend’ and a ‘sponsor’. Friends are usually well practiced at validating the problem, whereas a sponsor helps the sponsee see the truth of the solution. Sponsors avoid validating victim thinking and behavior that puts their recovery at risk.

We must not avoid being open and honest because of our own fear of what might happen. Our intent is to help someone get better, not to support them in their sickness. We care enough about them to tell the truth—no matter what it looks like—even when there is risk of hurt feelings or defensiveness. Sometimes sponsees may experience resistance, anger or fear. We can empathize with these feelings, so respond with empathy and compassion, for some level of resistance is

²²⁸ Name Withheld

²²⁹ Recovery slogan

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usually present within all of us.

If a sponsee rejects our counsel, then we respond with the SA mantra; “It works if you work it, so work it you’re worth it.” We remain teachable, yet steadfast in the principles we have come to know and love; reminding them that although we love and care about them, we are their sponsor first before anything else. Therefore, it is important that we never sponsor family members or friends, for if we do, we are already too emotionally involved to be an effective sponsor.

14. The power of “I don’t know”

If we are unsure what to do when working with a sponsee, it is not only OK to acknowledge that we don’t know, but highly recommended. Upon admitting our own powerlessness over the addiction of others, we can ask them for permission to seek counsel from our own sponsor in an effort to gather information to help them. This practice is referred to as *grandfathering*²³⁰ or *grandmothering*²³¹. When utilizing this process, it is still important to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the sponsee, and share as minimal detail as possible.

If, after consulting our own sponsor for guidance, we are still unsure how to help the sponsee, it suggested that they ask others themselves, which may include their bishop, other friends in recovery or a qualified therapist. They can also consult recovery literature for answers. Most important still, is personal and humble prayer.

15. Recovery assignments and other Step work

The majority of the work we do with our sponsee takes place outside of the actual meetings. The purpose of such assignments is to create an environment in which sponsees are able to turn their focus from daily lust to daily recovery. Through recovery focused assignments, they come to know their Savior; increasing familiarity with His truths, His grace and ultimately His presence.

Although as sponsors, we may feel an inclination to initiate contact with our sponsees, it is important that we not only allow our sponsees to do the work, but we must require it. Just as a butterfly strengthens its wings by working to escape its cocoon, sponsees also strengthen their recovery as they work to break out of the bonds of fear, shame and resentment that keep them trapped in their addiction.

Although sponsees are directed to do most of the contact initiation, through the direction of the spirit, there may be times when we are prompted to reach out. Those bound by such debilitating levels of shame are not used to talking to others about their struggles. As a result, they are likely to have difficulty reaching out for help. Supportive contact from their sponsor can help the sponsee overcome this aspect of recovery avoidance. However, care must be exercised so the sponsor is not doing more than the sponsee in their relationship, for a sponsor should never work harder than their sponsee.

16. Guiding a sponsee through their 30-in-30

30-in-30’s should be sponsored by those who are strong in recovery and, when possible, have previously completed their own 30-in-30. Some additional guidelines include:

- The key principle in the title of this section is ‘their’. It is their 30-in-30, not ours.
- The program is called ‘30-in-30’ for a reason, because it lasts only thirty days.
- Although assignments are given every day during the program, it is up to the sponsee to determine how much effort they actually put forth. It is not the responsibility of the sponsor to police assignments.
- If the sponsee successfully completed a 30 in 30 they have the option of continuing on with a ‘60-in-60’ or ‘90-in-90’, either with their current sponsor or a different one.
- Simply put, the sponsee will get what they give to the 30-in-30, for “the quality of our recovery is directly

²³⁰ See Glossary

²³¹ See Glossary

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proportional to the quality of our surrender.”

- If the sponsee does not seem committed to the program, they may not be ready for such rigorous recovery work. Don't hesitate to point this out, and suggest they take some time to reassess where they are and what they are willing to do.
- Encourage sponsees to continue coming to Group and reach out for help; moving at a pace that progresses their recovery.
- Sponsees should check in daily at a previously agreed upon time.
- Urgent situations do arise, which can result in skipped days. When this occurs it is at the discretion of the sponsor to continue beyond the allotted thirty days.
- The call itself should be the sponsee reporting on what they learned from the previous day's assignment. Calls generally last 20-30 minutes.
- There is no set '30-in-30' program. Let the Spirit guide you to know what's best for your sponsee. Some ideas of things to work on:
 - Read a section from the workbook and answer questions about the reading
 - Work on a new daily activity and share the experience of how it's going
 - Incorporate a new boundary and notice the emotions surrounding that
 - Work on a section of the 'Working the Steps' and discuss
 - Attend as many meetings as possible
 - Work on reaching out when triggered

17. Guiding sponsees through withdrawal

Early recovery is a roller coaster ride as sponsees strive to endure the craziness of abstinence and withdrawal. We must support our sponsees through this difficult time, yet avoid getting on the roller coaster with them.

Some points to make our sponsees aware of might include:

- Helping them understand the 'what' and 'why' of their triggers so they can develop a plan of action built to maintain their abstinence in the face withdrawal.
- Help them understand the importance and benefits of reaching out to their recovery support network for help when triggering.
- Make them aware that detox, and the accompanying withdrawal symptoms, usually take 6-8 weeks to dissipate, after which, their brain and spirit can truly begin to heal.
- Help them understand that there may be increased emotional sensitivity that will manifest during this period of time, including but not limited to, resentment, envy, jealousy, insecurity, shame and anger. They can even feel a swing to positive emotions, feeling incredibly happy and excited. It is important to remember, however, that the goal is not to feel super happy all the time, but to reach a point in which our emotions become manageable.

Although we understand and empathize with the difficulty of navigating the symptoms of withdrawal, we remain focused on the solution, remaining consistent and grounded. We remind them that although we may not jump on the emotional rollercoaster with them, we will always be waiting when they finish the ride.

18. Identifying a slip waiting to happen

Special is the gift that we are given, to be so keenly tuned into the behaviors that lead up to a slip. Although they are often difficult to see in ourselves, they manifest like glaring fog horns in others.

- Decline in meeting attendance or stopping altogether.
- Re-associating with those who have contributed to, or trigger their addictive thinking or behavior.
- Physically returning to old haunts that have contributed to, or trigger their addictive thinking or behavior.
- Isolating from recovery, family, friends, social activities or church.

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- Rationalizing and justifying prior addictive thinking or behavior.
- Comparing themselves to others in recovery—whether making themselves out to be better or worse—in an effort to justify not belonging or fitting in amongst recovery circles.
- Complaining that working the program of recovery no longer works for them.
- No longer working the Steps.

Recognition is only the first step, however, for we must also be willing to be frank in our honesty; pointing out the behaviors we identify as putting them in jeopardy of slipping, and discussing the risks and consequences of such behavior. If they don't recognize such behavior in themselves, and we—the very people who do recognize them—don't tell them, how will they ever know?

19. What do I do if my sponsee slips?

Slips can be one of the most deeply devastating blow to hope, progression and a sponsee's newly budding feelings of self-worth. During these times of trial, it is important that we, as sponsors, be empathetic, but not overly emotional. Remember, a slip is just a slip. It is not the slip that defines us, but what we do afterward. It is our job to stay grounded and help them learn from the mistake, which is all God wants us to do anyway. Entertaining the victim-thinking that sponsee almost can't help getting sucked into will make them just that, a victim. But recovery is not found in being a victim. It's found in being a survivor.

The most important decision we can ever make after a slip is simply to get up, as portrayed in the following Japanese proverb; "Fall seven times, get up eight."²³² Like a highway, recovery has many exits that tempt us off the straight and narrow. However, if we do exit, we don't start over at the beginning of the highway, but simply find the nearest on-ramp and resume our journey where we left off.

It is in these moments that it is especially helpful, as sponsors, to share our own experience with slips; how we overcome the shame and despair that follows, and how we manage to believe that the Savior not only forgives us, but still loves us. We teach our sponsee how to map their cycle; identifying the triggers and danger zones that led to the slip in the first place, as well as what they can do differently next time to break the cycle. Such discovery enables them to identify when and where their recovery got off track.

Important still, is to give our energy to our successes, and not focus on the mistake. As a sister shared: "I remember the first time I met with my Bishop. He told me to track how many times I gave into my addiction for seven days, but more importantly, how many times I walked away. It was eye opening for me to see for each slip there was many more times I walked away. My week was full of many successes."²³³

20. What do I do if I slip?

If we slip, the most important thing we need to do is focus on our own recovery, reach out for help and re-establish our own foothold on our sobriety. Also recommended, in the spirit of honesty and accountability, is to notify our sponsees. Whether or not we take time off from sponsoring should be decided—with the help of the spirit and our own sponsor—on a case by case basis between sponsor and sponsee.

21. Listening to Step One and Five inventories

Witnessing a sponsee share their Step Five is one of the most humbling and privileged experiences we will ever have, not to mention spiritual. The purity of a sponsee's humility mixed with the power of the Savior's grace truly makes for a one of a kind experience. Even with the promise of an amazing experience, we may fear what the logistics might look like. Some points of reference, include:

²³² Japanese proverb

²³³ Name withheld

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- Find a place that is private and most conducive to the Spirit.
- The allotted time should be open ended so the sponsee can share what is needed for their recovery. Some 5th Steps can be accomplished in a few hours, but others can take longer. It may even need to be divided over multiple sessions to properly cover everything.
- Have the sponsee bring their written Fourth Step to the meeting.
- Be prepared and willing to put the sponsee at ease. Let them know they are not alone in this process.
- Always remember that the Fifth Step is not a simple 'confession', but rather a discovery of the roots, or nature, of the wrongs. We must be prepared to ask appropriate questions in an effort to help the sponsee reach deeper levels of self-awareness and understanding that will aid them in their journey.
- Be prepared to suggest the sponsee be more thorough in areas they may have glossed over or completely missed. We must listen for what they are not saying as much as we listen to what they are saying. It is OK to allow them to return and report on their Step Four Inventories.
- Help sponsees explore how their shame, resentment and fear affects them, and how their mistakes feed such emotion.
- Help the sponsee explore how their addictive behavior has personally affected them.
- Be prepared to listen without judgment. Remember a sponsee may have different experiences and background than you. (child abuse, affairs, domestic violence, etc.)
- Do not leave a 5th step reading with a sponsee's emotions open and raw. Take time at the end to have some casual conversation to allow some normalcy to return.
- Encourage the sponsee to have a quiet reflection period by themselves after their 5th step.

Although sponsors commit to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of their sponsees, the information shared is not protected by law. We do not sign confidentiality agreements, and even if such an agreement were signed, it is not a legally binding contract. That said, as sponsors, "we have a legal obligation to report certain ongoing crimes (such as child abuse)."²³⁴ Therefore, it is important that sponsees be careful when sharing information that could put their sponsors in legally conflicting situations," as well as jeopardize the sanctity of their own confidentiality.

22. Codependency and boundaries

Boundaries are an essential element of maintaining the effectiveness of the sponsorship relationship. Without them, the relationship would surely fail. A sponsor's work with their sponsee must never be at the expense of themselves or their family. Simply stated, we must first put on our own oxygen mask before offering it to others. Because setting boundaries can be difficult, they should always be done with the guidance of the Spirit; being gentle but firm.

For various reasons, it is very easy for a sponsee to become overly dependent on their sponsor. Although the goal is for them to learn to rely on the program of recovery, and ultimately the Savior, at least at first, all they can really see is us, their sponsor; the person who is helping them. They may glorify us and think we are the one who is going to save them. However, we are not. The sponsee needs to learn to use the principles of recovery themselves, and we will likely have to continually remind them of that. Setting boundaries does not only protect us, but more importantly, it protects the sponsee, and creates a space for them to come to trust the principles of recovery, work their own program and come to know their Savior.

We must also set boundaries around ourselves in order to avoid becoming overprotective or trying to control or force our sponsee to change. We must avoid behavior that would interfere with the guidance of the Spirit, and hinder any progress that would come from such guidance. Such boundaries may look different among us, but the motive is always the same—to not only protect the sanctity of the sponsorship relationship, but ourselves individually.

Additionally, we are not therapists, counselors or doctors. Although at times it may seem appropriate to offer advice, counsel or take on the emotional wellbeing of our sponsee, those needs are best met by those qualified to do so. Our

²³⁴ 12 Step Sponsorship, page 55

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role as a sponsor—even if we also have therapeutic credentials—is simply to guide the sponsee through the Steps; to teach them how to adopt the program of recovery into their lives. If those lines become blurred, it compromises the stability of the sponsorship relationship.

23. Mental health challenges

Each of us have experienced the devastating despair and shame that comes with addiction. Such toxic emotion affects each of us differently, but we have all sought to escape it. The pain of our past mixed with the shame of sexual addiction leads many to experience many different mental health challenges. Some of these challenges may be present and diagnosed prior to recovery, where others may be uncovered and begin to manifest during recovery. No matter, as a sponsor, we are not prepared or qualified, nor are we expected to be, to counsel or support sponsees through their mental health challenges. Our responsibility is to guide them through the principles of recovery.

Easier said than done, though, right? The following are some tips to help us navigate the varying intensity of our sponsees mental health struggles:

- Don't be afraid to tell your sponsee to go to the emergency room or call 911 if you sense they are an immediate danger to themselves or others.
- It is not our responsibility to help our sponsees work through their highs and lows. Even if we are qualified in our professional life, it crosses ethical boundaries to do so.
- If a sponsee discloses they have recently attempted suicide, express empathy and compassion for the despair they are feeling, but don't be afraid to acknowledge you aren't equipped to handle that level of despair. Reinforce that your job, as their sponsor, is not therapy, but to guide them through the Steps.
- If comfortable, help the sponsee identify positive resources, encourage them to go to those resources and possibly sit with them as they are there. We don't all have the training to work through this type of occurrence with someone, but we have the Spirit enough to support, discern and know when to empower recovery.

As always, it is important to establish and maintain boundaries and empower the sponsee to reach out to someone with the capacity to help them, medically, therapeutically and spiritually.

24. Practicing conflict resolution

Most sponsorship relationships will experience conflict at some point or another. It's simply expected given both parties are human and each are battling their own addictive thinking patterns on various levels. However, the key to resolving any and all conflict is through the gateway of honesty, accountability and sometimes even tolerance. Conflict is a normal part of the human condition, but sometimes it's something we aren't very good at resolving.

However, in recovery we learn to surrender our pride and our fears; remembering that during conflicting situations, the sponsor is still the guide. They may not know everything, but their experience lends to them knowing more than the sponsee. If conflict arises, it is our role as the sponsor to identify its source; setting aside time to address it with the sponsee in an effort to create resolution. It is important that we remain calm and respectful, but be willing to reaffirm boundaries and ground rules when necessary. Also essential is that we never personalize the conflict and always be empathetic to the sponsee's concerns.

25. Compassion fatigue and burnout

All those who serve as sponsors are at risk of compassion fatigue and burnout. Compassion fatigue develops from emotional residue or strain of exposure when working with those suffering from addiction. It can co-exist with burnout, which is snowballing emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with over-giving. Both compassion fatigue, and burnout, usually occur when mutual emotional and behavioral boundaries are breached. It can also develop when we have taught all that we can teach, given all that we can give, yet still refuse to let go.

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The sponsorship relationship is a gift to all involved, but as sponsors “we feel the feelings of our [sponsees]. We experience their fears. We dream their dreams. Eventually, we lose a certain spark of optimism, humor and hope. We tire. We aren’t sick, but we aren’t ourselves.”²³⁵ Although we feel and even have a level of obligation to our sponsee, we must take care of ourselves first. We must admit when we are tired, and be willing to rest.

26. Letting a sponsee go

Coming to the conclusion that the sponsorship relationship is no longer working is never an easy task. Whether the relationship is no longer conducive to recovery; hindering the sponsee's recovery, or due to a personal circumstance on our part, we are at risk of experience feelings of failure, and fall into a vicious cycle of ‘shoulds’ and ‘what-ifs’. We, therefore, must take care to stay close to the Spirit, and close communication with others in our own support network, in order to avoid pitfalls in our own recovery.

If—after we have prayed and weighed the pros and cons—we determine that it is best to dissolve the relationship, we must then have the humility and courage necessary to act upon that conclusion with compassion and integrity. Although we cannot control how the sponsee will respond, we can control how we prepare for and execute the process.

27. Conclusion

The fact is, there are no ‘leaders’ in recovery. There are only ‘servants’. The name of this program is the essence of the healing process—through Christ. Our sponsor helps us turn to Christ; accessing the healing power of His Atonement, by working the steps and communing with the recovery community. The best way to become an effective sponsor is to improve our own relationship with Jesus Christ. By doing so, we will become strong in His defense, and feel the love for His sheep. Indeed, the 12 steps are the steps between being lost and being found.

²³⁵ C. Figley, 1995

Recovery slogans

- First things first.
- Don't use, no matter what.
- This too shall pass.
- Live and let live.
- Let go and let God.
- Time takes time.
- One day at a time.
- Principles before personalities.
- Is your program powered by *will*-power or *divine*-power?
- Cultivate an attitude of gratitude.
- Misery is optional.
- God doesn't make junk.
- Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.
- Live life on life's terms.
You don't *think* your way into a new way of *living*, but *live* your way into a new way of *thinking*.
- G.O.D. = Good Orderly Direction.
- H.A.L.T. = Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired.
- H.O.W. it works = Honesty, Openness, Willingness.
- S.L.I.P. = Sobriety Lost Its Priority.
- It's a simple program for complicated people.
- It works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it.
- Learn to listen and listen to learn.
- Many meetings, many chances; few meetings, few chances; no meetings, no chances.
- Meeting makers make it.
- People who don't go to meetings don't hear about what happens to people who don't go to meetings.
- To keep what you have, you have to give it away.
- If you don't want to slip, stay away from slippery places.
- Do what you've always done, get what you've always got.
- Progress, not perfection.
- Resentment is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to suffer.
- Keep it simple.
- H.O.P.E. = Happy our program exists.
- Recovery is a journey ...not a destination
- To thine own self be true
- Turn it over
- Nothing is so bad, a drink won't make it worse
- Willingness is the key
- Take what you need and leave the rest
- If you expect respect, be the first to show some
- Principles before personalities
- Keep the plug in the jug
- Do it sober
- Although we are not responsible for our disease we are responsible for our recovery
- Hugs not Drugs
- Just for Today
- Recovery doesn't happen overnight
- Pass it on
- If you want to stay clean, don't use
- Don't quit before the miracle happens
- Nobody ever found recovery as a result of an intellectual awakening
- Use the 24-hour plan
- When all else fails, follow directions
- Change is a process, not an event
- Call your sponsor before, not after, you take the first drink
- Give time time
- I was sick and tired of being sick and tired
- You only get out of it what you put into it
- It's the first drink that gets you drunk
- An addict alone is in bad company
- You can only keep what you have by giving it away
- Take what you can use and leave the rest
- Recovery begins with the First Step
- Help is only a phone call away
- Nothing changes if nothing changes
- It is possible to change without improving - it is impossible to improve without change
- Experience, strength and hope not opinions, bulls**t and dope
- One drink is too many and a thousand not enough
- An addict cannot be grateful and hateful at the same time
- Easy does it
- Easy does it but do it
- Stick with the winners - Win with the stickers
- Serenity is not freedom from the storm but peace amid the storm
- Feelings are not facts
- Turn it over, don't turn it off
- Beneath every skirt is a slip
- Seven days without a meeting makes one weak

Recovery slogans

- Growing old is mandatory - Growing up is optional
- Slogans are wisdom written in shorthand
- We don't always look where we are going, but we always go where we are looking