How do I get started?

□ Get a temporary sponsor (sober member who has a sponsor and has worked the steps with a sponsor)

□ Call sponsor and SA members daily and when I have desire to lust

□ Go to another meeting

□ Begin listening to audio files (ask someone for CDs or mp3s) □ Humbly follow sponsor's suggestions if I want solution he/she has □ Be rigorously honest with others (I'm only as sick as my secrets) □ Be rigorously honest with myself (stop listening to lies I tell myself) □ Let sponsor take me through the steps (this is the PROGRAM) □ Commit to going to meetings regularly (this is FELLOWSHIP) □ Get the literature and start reading (available at all SA meetings)

- Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous
- White Book of Sexaholics Anonymous
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
- Step Into Action

Helpful Sayings:

One day at a time

Let go and let God

This too shall pass

I don't need to know

When in doubt, it's lust

Act as if, don't ask what if

Don't leave before the miracle happens

Keep coming back! It works if I work it, and I'm worth it!

What you see and hear here, let it stay here when you leave here.

Welcome!

We hope you feel welcome and that you keep coming back. Our meetings are designed to provide a safe place for recovery.



What Is SA?

SA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober. There are no dues or fees for SA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. SA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sexually sober and help other sexaholics to achieve sobriety.

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Meeting Locations: www.freedomfromlust.com (Local website)
Other information & videos: www.sa.org (International website)
S-Anon: www.sanon.org (For those affected by another's sexual behavior)

Test Yourself

1. Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thinking or behavior?
2. That you'd be better off if you didn't keep "giving in"?
3. That sex or stimuli are controlling you?
4. Have you ever tried to stop or limit doing what you felt was wrong in your sexual behavior?
5. Do you resort to sex to escape, relieve anxiety, or because you can't cope?
6. Do you feel guilt, remorse or depression afterward?
7. Has your pursuit of sex become more compulsive?
8. Does it interfere with relations with your spouse?
9. Do you have to resort to images or memories during sex? 10. Does an irresistible impulse arise when the other party makes the overtures or sex is offered?
11. Do you keep going from one "relationship" or lover to another?
12. Do you feel the "right relationship" would help you stop lusting, masturbating, or being so promiscuous?
13. Do you have a destructive need—a desperate sexual or emotional need for someone?
14. Does pursuit of sex make you careless for yourself or the welfare of your family or others?
15. Has your effectiveness or concentration decreased as sex has become more compulsive?
16. Do you lose time from work for it?
17. Do you turn to a lower environment when pursuing sex? 18. Do you want to get away from the sex partner as soon as possible after the act?
19. Although your spouse is sexually compatible, do you still masturbate or have sex with others?
20. Have you ever been arrested for a sex-related offense?

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Getting an SA Sponsor

As we get into the Steps, we find it indispensable to rely for help on those who have gone this way before. In Twelve Step programs, the term commonly used is *sponsor*. What we call the person doesn't matter; and we don't have to call them anything. Asking for help and accepting suggestions are what bring results.

Experienced members advise getting a temporary sponsor as soon as one is serious about recovery. Later, when we are better established in the fellowship, we can choose another.

We take responsibility for our own recovery, but we don't remain isolated and "in charge" of it. We surrender to God and take direction from the sponsor. Thus, we go to meetings and start making our Connection with people. Alone, we cannot make the transition to reality.

Sexaholics Anonymous. pp.72-73
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Hope

If all of this leaves you with a feeling of despair, that very despair may indicate you are willing to face the truth about yourself for the first time. It was to such despair that we had to come before we could be released. Left to our own devices, the prognosis is dismal. Only for those who want recovery is there any hope at all, and to such, we offer great hope: release from the power of addiction, loss of guilt and shame, power over wrong and freedom to do right, and the ability to live comfortably with ourselves, others, and God. This is precisely what the Fellowship of the Steps will do when we make it a way of life.

But the hope we offer lies in a certain direction. Since sexaholism is essentially a spiritual process in its origin and development, it follows that the program of recovery giving us the best results is also essentially spiritual. Since our condition is characterized by the relentless progression of diseased attitudes, recovery for us lies in a profound change of attitude toward ourselves, others, and God, and in the righting of our wrongs. Thus, SA is a program of action, from the inside out.

Sexaholics Anonymous. Pp.57
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Surrender

Joining a group doesn't automatically make the problem vanish. Most of us had tried stopping countless times. The problem was we couldn't stay stopped; we had never surrendered. So, the first time the craving hits again, when we get that urge for a fix, we give it up, even though it feels like we'll die without it. And at times, in our new frame of mind, the craving may seem stronger than ever. But we don't fight it like we used to; that was always a losing battle, giving it more strength to fight back. Neither do we feed or give in to it. We surrender. We win by giving up. Each time. Coming off our habit can be confusing.

"My head turns automatically! I can't help feeding it. I don't have any choice!"

But we always fed our habit. We simply weren't aware of it. So whenever this happens, we simply acknowledge our powerlessness. Instead of either fighting or indulging, we surrender. We pick up the phone, we ask for help, we go to a meeting. We even admit we may not fully want victory over lust; most of us don't have pure motives in wanting to get sober. Recovery is a slow process.

Often it begins in the privacy of our innermost thoughts, when we're alone, when we're living inside our head and the emotions we could never face overwhelm us. So what do we do? Naturally, we want to reach for the drug again; that's what we programmed ourselves to do. Instead, we surrender. Again. Just like the first time. And the cry for help goes up again: *I'm powerless; please help me!*

And we take the action of getting out of ourselves and making contact with another member. As soon as possible. The closer to the heat of the action the better. We use the phone. We make the call. Not because we want to, *because we don't want to*. We call because we know we have to. Our survival instinct comes to life. And we go to a meeting as soon as possible.

Surrender is a constant thing. Practice. Day by day, hour by hour. Put into practice so often, it becomes habitual. *That's how we get the attitude change that lets the grace of God enter to expel the obsession!*

Sexaholics Anonymous. pp.66-70

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What Is a Sexaholic and What Is Sexual Sobriety?

We can only speak for ourselves. The specialized nature of Sexaholics Anonymous can best be understood in terms of what we call the *sexaholic*. The sexaholic has taken himself or herself out of the whole context of what is right or wrong. He or she has lost control, no longer has the power of choice, and is not free to stop. Lust has become an addiction. Our situation is like that of the alcoholic who can no longer tolerate alcohol and must stop drinking altogether but is hooked and cannot stop. So it is with the sexaholic, or sex drunk, who can no longer tolerate lust but cannot stop.

Thus, *for the sexaholic*, any form of sex with one's self or with partners other than the spouse is progressively addictive and destructive. We also see that lust is the driving force behind our sexual acting out, and true sobriety includes progressive victory over lust. These conclusions were forced upon us in the crucible of our experiences and recovery; we have no other options. But we have found that acceptance of these facts is the key to a happy and joyous freedom we could otherwise never know.

This will and should discourage many inquirers who admit to sexual obsession or compulsion but who simply want to control and enjoy it, much as the alcoholic would like to control and enjoy drinking. Until we had been driven to the point of despair, until we really wanted to stop but could not, we did not give ourselves to this program of recovery. Sexaholics Anonymous is for those who know they have no other option but to stop, and their own enlightened self-interest must tell them this.

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To the Newcomer - What Works for Us Those of us

who are recovering in Sexaholics Anonymous were driven here by many different forms of the same problem. Some of us fit society's stereotypes of what a sexaholic might be and some of us did not. Some of us were driven to buy or sell sex on the streets, others to have it anonymously in bars or public places. Some of us found ourselves in painful and destructive affairs or consumed by an unhealthy obsession with a particular person or succession of persons. Many of us kept our obsessions to ourselves, resorting to compulsive masturbation, pictures, fetishes, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. Some of us victimized others. And with many of us, our compulsions took a toll on family, coworkers, and friends. Very often, we felt that we were the only ones who could not stop, that we were doing this—whatever it was—against our will.

When we came to SA, we found that in spite of our differences, we shared a common problem—the obsession of lust, usually combined with a compulsive demand for sex in some form. We identified with one another on the inside Whatever the details of our problem, we were dying spiritually—dying of guilt, fear, and loneliness. As we came to see that we shared a common problem, we also came to see that for us, there is a common solution —the Twelve Steps of recovery opracticed in a fellowship and on a foundation of what we call *sexual sobriety*. (See pp. 191-193.)

Our definition of sobriety represents, *for us*, the basic and necessary condition for lasting freedom from the pain that brought us to SA. We have found that nothing else works. When we have tried to deny what our common experience has taught us, we have found that recovery still eludes us. And this seems to be true whether we are male or female; married or single; whether our acting out was with the same or opposite sex; whether our relationships were "committed," "meaningful," or one-night stands; or whether we just resorted to a little sex with self as a "physical outlet." As the men and women of Alcoholics Anonymous learned over fifty years ago, "half-measures availed us nothing"!

We don't claim to understand all the ramifications of sexual sobriety. Some of us have come to believe that there is a deeper spiritual significance in sexual sobriety, while others simply report that without a firm and clear bottom line, our "cunning, baffling, and powerful"

Especially when I leave the house, I utter my mantra. Driving down the street, I notice someone on the sidewalk a block ahead. What gender? What age? Where headed? I don’t have to know. As I tell myself that, I find I’m no longer compelled to follow that person with my eyes. At a stoplight, who’s in that car idling beside mine? I don’t have to glance over to find out. On the highway, who’s in that car that is passing me? I don’t have to know. I’m free to pay attention to traffic.

Large stores and malls are difficult for me. In a Wal-Mart, if I’m carrying lust in my head, I feel like I’m peering out at a little world populated by strangers, any of whom can be a lust object; when I make eye contact, I often see hunger. If I’m working my mantra, it reminds me that I don’t have to know the spiritual state of these people. That’s God’s job. My job is to find the unwaxed dental floss!

That person in the canned vegetable aisle, how do her clothes fit? I don’t have to know. The sound of talking and laughter in the next aisle—are they men, women, or adolescents? I don’t have to know. The sound of heels clicking on the floor behind me—I don’t have to look because I don’t have to know. Sometimes I’ll see someone and look away while telling myself, I don’t have to know, and I’ll experience surrender from the lust impulse. But it has to be a habit.

Even when I’m not triggering environment, I sometimes recite my mantra. It’s a gentle discipline for me. It calms me.

Am I cutting myself off from the beauty and rich variety of God’s creation? It doesn’t feel that way to me. I feel more at peace with God’s world and God’s people when I’m not probing and pushing with my senses. I’m more aware of me, where I am, what my feelings are. I’m more able to respond to things in the present. I believe I’m able to relate to other people more comfortably and more directly.

The phrasing of my mantra is not elegant, but that’s how it came to me: I don’t have to know. It’s grammatically negative, but it feels positive and spiritual. I think of it as I think of the principle of anonymity, which is (among other things) about letting go of identity and ego. My mantra is about letting go of pretensions to controlling the world around me. It’s a Third Step prayer for me, a way of surrendering. It’s a reminder that God can handle what’s going on in the universe…or across the street from me.

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5sexaholism takes over sooner or later. Nor do we claim that sobriety *alone*

I Don't Have to Know *(Art B., Georgia)*

I suffer from a sort of hyper-vigilance. Something in me wants to identify and define every object, every person, every angle and surface in my physical environment. My ears are open; my eyes are taking in the very texture of things around me. This drive to know everything that's going on around me could be a useful trait if I were Batman and dwelt in Gotham City.

But I'm not Batman, I'm a sexaholic. At some point, a long time ago, this hyper-vigilance—wherever it came from—became a toll of my lust. In 'insobriety', I was always looking and listening for triggers: people and images that I could get a hit from. With my eyes and ears, I poked and prodded my environment for hits. I call that one of the habits of insobriety.

With the gift of sobriety, I wanted to leave all that behind. I wanted to control my eyes and ears. I knew that the lust hit not only hurt me immediately, but it would come back to haunt me later that day, or the next week, or a month later. Yet the more I used my will power, the strongest was the desire to look around—or look a second time.

At some point in recovery, it came to me that this exaggerated vigilance was more than a mere inclination; it felt like a need, a compulsion. "Where does this come from?" I asked myself, I didn't have an answer. Another question came to me: "Do I really need to know everything going on around me?" I
had an answer to that one and the answer was — No! I'm not Batman and I'm not God. I don't have to know every detail about everything around me.

I don't have to know! Telling myself this reminds me that my desire to poke and prod my environment with my senses is not an imperative. There are a lot of things I want to know, but I don't have to know.

My sponsor once told me that I can't just make a decision not to be compulsive. He's right, of course. Habit is a powerful force, and I can use it to my advantage. I can have bad habits or good habits, habits of insobriety or habits of sobriety. When I practice habits of insobriety, I open myself to lust. When I practice habits of sobriety, I open myself to God's grace. So now I'm in the habit of saying to myself, I don't have to know. It's become a mantra for me.

will lead to a lasting and joyous recovery. Like alcoholics, we can be "dry" without being sober in a deeper sense. We don't even claim that sexual sobriety will make one feel better immediately. We, like other addicts, can go through withdrawal symptoms when we give up our "drug." Nonetheless, in spite of the questions, struggles, and confusion that we have gone through, we find that sexual sobriety is truly "the key to a happy and joyous freedom we could otherwise never know." That's why we keep coming back to SA.

We have a solution. We don't claim that it's for everybody, but for us, it works. If you identify with us and think you may share our problem, we'd like to share our solution with you.

A Caution

We suggest that newcomers to Sexaholics Anonymous not reveal their sexual past to a spouse or family member who does not already know of it, without careful consideration and a period of sexual sobriety, and even then, only after prior discussion with an SA sponsor or group. Typically, when we come into the program, we want to share our excitement with those closest to us and tell all right away. Such disclosures might injure our family or others and should be confined to the group of which we are a part until a wise course is indicated. Of course, if there is any chance we have put others in danger, we take immediate steps to try to correct that.

Few things can so damage the possibility of healing in the family as a *premature* confession to spouse or family where sacred bonds and trust have been violated. Unwittingly, such confessions can be attempts on our part to dump our guilt, get back into good graces, or make just another show of willpower. Great caution is advised here.

Amends to family must begin with a sexually sober, changed attitude and behavior on a daily basis. Then, as we grow in recovery, we will find how to make direct amends. Help from sponsor and group is indispensable here. There's always a way, if we really want to make things right.

Sexaholics Anonymous. pp.1-3 [Also known as the White Book.]
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The Problem

Many of us felt inadequate, unworthy, alone, and afraid. Our insides never matched what we saw on the outsides of others.

Early on, we came to feel disconnected —from parents, from peers, from ourselves. We tuned out with fantasy and masturbation. We plugged in by drinking in the pictures, the images, and pursuing the objects of our fantasies. We lusted and wanted to be lusted after.

We became true addicts: sex with self, promiscuity, adultery, dependency relationships, and more fantasy. We got it through the eyes; we bought it, we sold it, we traded it, we gave it away. We were addicted to the intrigue, the tease, the forbidden. The only way we knew to be free of it was to do it. "Please connect with me and make me whole!" we cried with outstretched arms. Lusting after the Big Fix, we gave away our power to others.

This produced guilt, self-hatred, remorse, emptiness, and pain, and we were driven ever inward, away from reality, away from love, lost inside ourselves.

Our habit made true intimacy impossible. We could never know real union with another because we were addicted to the unreal. We went for the "chemistry," the connection that had the magic, because it by-passed intimacy and true union. Fantasy corrupted the real; lust killed love.

First addicts, then love cripples, we took from others to fill up what was lacking in ourselves. Conning ourselves time and again that the next one would save us, we were really losing our lives.

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The Solution

We saw that our problem was threefold: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Healing had to come about in all three.

The crucial change in attitude began when we admitted we were powerless, that our habit had us whipped. We came to meetings and withdrew from our habit. For some, this meant no sex with themselves or others, including not getting into relationships. For others it also meant "drying out" and not having sex with the spouse for a time to recover from lust.

We discovered that we *could* stop ng the hunger didn't kill us, that sex was indeed optional. There was hope for freedom, and we began to feel alive. Encouraged to continue, we turned more and more away from our isolating obsession with sex and self and turned to God and others.

All this was scary. We couldn't see the path ahead, except that others had gone that way before. Each new step of surrender felt it would be off the edge into oblivion, but we took it. And instead of killing us, surrender was killing the obsession! We had stepped into the light, into a whole new way of life.

The fellowship gave us monitoring and support to keep us from being overwhelmed, a safe haven where we could finally face ourselves. Instead of covering our feelings with compulsive sex, we began exposing the roots of our spiritual emptiness and hunger. And the healing began.

As we faced our defects, we became willing to change; surrendering them broke the power they had over us. We began to be more comfortable with ourselves and others for the first time without our "drug."

Forgiving all who had injured us, and without injuring others, we tried to right our own wrongs. At each amends more of the dreadful load of guilt dropped from our shoulders, until we could lift our heads, look the world in the eye, and stand free.

We began practicing a positive sobriety, taking the actions of love to improve our relations with others. We were learning how to give; and the measure we gave was the measure we got back. We were finding what none of the substitutes had ever supplied. We were making the real Connection. We were home.

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