

## PRINCIPLE ONE

*We admit that we have absolutely no control of our lives.*

*Sexual sin has become unmanageable.*

### *Confronting Reality: I'm Shackled in My Own Prison*

Congratulations! Despite long years of deceit, lies, denial, minimization, fears, shame, and manipulation, you have picked up this L.I.F.E. Recovery Guide or have come to a L.I.F.E. Recovery Group meeting. You have been wanting to, thinking that perhaps you should, pondering if it was the right thing. You have resisted, found excuses, wondered who would find out, and worried about the consequences of getting honest. You've thought that no one would really understand. You've either believed that you have done the worst things possible – things no one else has ever done; or you've thought your stuff is not so bad -- that you really don't need to come to a meeting and admit you need help. Hear these words:

**Welcome.**

**You're in the right place.**

**We're glad you're here.**

Imagine what it must have been like for the Prodigal Son. He just wanted to be home. He didn't think he deserved to return to his earlier status as a son because his sins were so great. He hoped merely to be like one of his father's hired servants. Maybe you're like that: You're just glad to be alive and able to get to a meeting. You'd like to simply be quiet and belong. The Prodigal Son's father, however, rushed out to meet him and prepared a great feast. That is what it is like with God. We want to be "imitators of God, just like little children." It may feel like you're a little boy who has just come on the bus or into the lunchroom or onto the playground and you're expecting to be rejected or at least

ignored. Instead, we rush over to greet you! We've been where you've been. We understand your pain and your fears. We're glad you've come. We can't prepare a great feast, but we can go to coffee later.

Your first assignment is just to get honest. We know that the greatest enemy of sexual purity is silence. We also know how carefully you've guarded your sexual secrets. It's hard to imagine letting them out. There are demons in your mind telling you, "No! You can't talk about that. Someone will go running and screaming out of the room!" We encourage you to confront those demons. Those voices have kept you shackled in your pain for too long. We know, because we're on a similar journey of learning to live in freedom every day. We want you to tell us how bad it got and what it was like to feel powerless over your life. Chances are that others in your group have done some of the same things.

There is nothing - certainly no sexual sin - that separates you from the love of God. No matter what you've thought or what you've done, it's time to come home to the heavenly Father who loves you and is longing for your freedom.

The assignment that you are about to undertake will take great courage. It will be a risk and a challenge. Don't turn back now. Keep putting one foot in front of the other and head for home. The freedom you'll experience is worth all it will take to get there.

## Assignment One - Admitting Our True Condition

Unhealthy sexual behaviors have been variously divided into categories and groups of categories. In his first book, Dr. Patrick Carnes grouped such behaviors as shown in the chart below. As you look at these, note the behaviors that you have struggled with and to what degree, even if you were only involved with a particular behavior once. Try to remember how many times you have done each of these. You may have to estimate. No one remembers, for example, how many times they have masturbated. State how often this most recently took place (once a day or more, once a week, and so on). If you need further explanation of the categories, try reading Dr. Carnes' book, *Out of the Shadows*. My book, *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*, also divides sexual behaviors in this way and defines each one.

### Basic or Building Block Behaviors Began How Often

Fantasy \_\_\_\_\_

Masturbation \_\_\_\_\_

Pornography (*magazines, videos, internet, TV, books, movies, music*) \_\_\_\_\_

Prostitution (*on the street, over the phone, in massage parlors, escort services, on the Internet*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Affairs (*long-term and emotional involvement, short-term and non-emotional, one night stands,*

*sexual or non-sexual*) \_\_\_\_\_

Anonymous Sex (*the name of the sexual partner is not known*) \_\_\_\_\_

**Paraphillic or Level Two Behaviors Began How Often**

Voyeurism (*undressing someone with your eyes can be included*) \_\_\_\_\_

Exhibitionism (*wearing provocative clothing counts*) \_\_\_\_\_

Indecent Liberties or Frateurism (*hugging someone and getting sexually excited is included, as well as any form of touch performed for a sexual feeling. This is true even if the other person isn't aware of it.*) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Sex/Cyber Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Bestiality \_\_\_\_\_

Sado-Masochistic (S&M) or Pain Exchange \_\_\_\_\_

**Offending Behavior Began How Often**

Incest \_\_\_\_\_

Molestation \_\_\_\_\_

Rape \_\_\_\_\_

Authority Rape (*using the power of role, status, age, or authority to gain sexual access*)

\_\_\_\_\_

## Journaling Exercise: Your Sexual History

*Plot a timeline of your life. One easy way is to draw a vertical line down the left side of a page (about an inch from the left of the paper), with your age marked to the left of the line at different intervals (beginning with your earliest years and continuing to your present age). This timeline, then, could be several pages long depending on the amount of history you have to record. In the space to the right of each age, record your sexual and relationship behaviors. The following questions can provide a beginning point, but add anything else relevant that comes to mind. One result of preparing this history is that you'll probably see how your sexual addiction developed over time.*

1. What is your earliest memory of being sexual? How old were you? What happened? Was there anyone else involved?
2. Note the times when the frequency of certain sexual behaviors increased and when new form of sexual acting out occurred.
3. Addicts act out when they are tired, lonely, angry, anxious, sad, afraid, or bored. Often these emotions work in combinations. Can you recognize times when these feelings prompted your acting out? If so, indicate on your timeline when this was true.
4. Every addict has made various promises and attempts to stop. List some of the times and actions you have taken to stop your sexual or relationship behaviors. Make sure to list your most recent efforts.

One of the clearest signs of an addiction is when we continue in a behavior even though we experience negative consequences. It's obvious to those around us that we're paying a high price for our behavior, yet we keep doing the same thing. What consequences have you experienced due to your sexual acting out? The next exercise guides you in plotting the results of your sexual and relational behavior.

## Journaling Exercise: Your Consequences

***Make a list of your consequences and note when they occurred on your timeline. (Consider using a different color pen for your consequences.) Perhaps it will help you remember if you think of various categories:***

**Physical** – Have you conceived a child when you didn't intend to? If so, what choice did you make about that pregnancy? Have you contracted any STDs? Or AIDs? Have you been sick in any way that is the result of the stress of your addiction? Do you experience any sexual dysfunctions (erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation)?

**Financial** – How much money have you spent? (Count the money you spent on pornography or other forms of buying sex or funding an affair.)

**Social** – Have you been divorced or lost a relationship? Is anyone really angry with you? Have you had to move from a certain place? Leave a team, club, or activity because of your sexual behavior? Has your sexual behavior caused problems with your parents or siblings? What about with your wife or children?

**Vocational** – Has your acting out affected your productivity at work? If so, has it cost you a promotion or some other career advancement? Have you lost a job or lost time at work? Are you underemployed or not able to work in the career of your choice?

**Legal** – Have you ever been arrested, spent time in jail, or been sued?

*Some of you may turn to other resources to work through this material. Assignment One parallels the work of the Faithful and True Workbook, Unit 7: Lessons 1-3, and Unit 8: Lesson 1. You may also find similar inventories in other workbooks listed on the websites listed on the Resources page (page 199). For this assignment you would include any work that you have done around Step One.*

I applaud your courage in completing these writing exercises! You've done a tremendous amount of work. Don't worry if you realize you've left out some things. Outlining the truth about your experiences is an ongoing process as you continue this journey. You've made a great start.

Although writing all of this information in your journal is a step toward being honest, it is not the final step. The next crucial move is to share this information with others. I know that thought may be terrifying. But how long have you kept this information to yourself? Has it helped you to carry this burden alone? What lies have you told to cover up this story? It *is* a story, isn't it? It is a part of who you are. It does not define you, but it does belong to you. For years you have been thinking, "If people knew this part of my

story, they would hate me and leave me. They would not want to be around me.”

Your feelings of fear have kept you hostage. They have been your oppressor. Your solitude of spirit has been the result. Silence has been your companion, and lies have guarded your silence. Loneliness has become all too familiar. You have had two lives: the one that others know, and the one that only you know. The public one may have many friends, but the silent one has none. Your silent self pervades your existence and overwhelms all else in the darkness of your loneliness. It is time for your two selves to unite.

The only way to emerge from the darkness is to break the silence. That is what your L.I.F.E. Recovery Group is for. They are the brothers who will stand with you. They won't go running and screaming out of the room. They've probably done many of the same things you have. They will understand. Confront your fears. Be of good courage. Share the story. During a L.I.F.E. Recovery Group meeting you will have the chance to tell your story to some safe people. (You may want to practice first with one or two members of the group.) You may not tell all of it the first time, but eventually you will. And you will find tremendous relief in releasing the secrets.

*(Please take note of this word of caution: **Don't be graphic in describing your sexual behaviors, especially not when sharing with your group.** You don't want to trigger other group members if you can avoid it. You also don't want to educate group members about other forms of sexual acting out.)*

Congratulations! You are beginning the journey of transformation into L.I.F.E. - living in freedom everyday.