



Fleeing Pornography

The two most common questions asked by a person after acknowledging his or her sexual brokenness are: "Can I fix this by myself?" and "Do I really have to tell anyone about this?"

People affected by this sin must switch from trying to cover up their sexual sin to trying to identify and use every tool that will help them heal and recover. Through a growing relationship with Christ, your mind can be renewed and your life transformed.

A new realization

Let's start at the beginning—the acknowledgment that something is wrong. Perhaps you are a student who has just admitted that your Internet habits have gotten out of control. Or, maybe you are a successful businessman who just can't seem to consistently practice personal purity.

This is the moment of truth: you can no longer deny that there is a problem in your life. Perhaps, you are tempted to excuse this behavior because of age, stress, circumstances, etc. No one is trying to force you into a police line-up to determine your guilt; simply admitting that your behavior is troubling and unhealthy is the first step to moving forward.

People have a difficult time with this first step, largely because they only see the labels or stigma associated with sex addiction. Let's set those labels aside. Before you get ahead of yourself by imagining worst case scenarios, let's ask a few basic questions.

- Do you like what you are doing?
- Is this the life you pictured for yourself or your family?
- Do you think your life will be better or worse if you continue with your behavior?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, stop reading. This article assumes a desire to live a healthy life. Continuing in your behavior cannot be part of that equation. It is

unlikely you will find much of value here until you are truly ready to hear and apply it.

If you answered "no" to these questions, you have taken your first big step—you have acknowledged that your life is not what it could or should be. This really is a big step, because many people are convinced they can live two lives—the normal life that intersects the real world and real people, and the fantasy life involving two-dimensional images, imaginary situations, as well as tremendous isolation, secrecy, and loneliness.

The good news is that you can be freed from this unhealthy dependence on behaviors, images, or people that are actually destroying you. It takes patience, perseverance, and faith. But, the transformed life also requires more tangible tools as well—the active assistance of mature, committed, people.

Now what?

Most people in this situation feel a lot of shame or guilt, which, unfortunately, leads to the desire to keep everything hidden, even while seeking healing. Rather than ask whether or not you have to share this with someone else, consider a different question: "Where has my own thinking gotten me?"

Here's the typical cycle of sexual addiction: You told yourself a hundred times that you would never do it again. You even managed to stop for a time, but something triggered a relapse and you went back to it. You prayed, you cried, you did everything you could think of to put an end to this miserable struggle. In the end, nothing worked. Given this long, defeating ordeal, would you still hold onto the idea that you can fix it without the help of others?

Let's ask another question: What is preventing you from sharing this struggle with others? The answer to this question is the real hindrance to recovery.

Some common responses involve fear, shame, guilt, and embarrassment.

While there are legitimate concerns about acting wisely and confiding in safe, mature believers, we need to recognize that fear is the enemy of love, and love—of God and others—is our goal in recovery. When we love someone, we sacrifice ourselves; we engage in service and put their needs above our own. This is how humans were designed to operate, and precisely how we are not operating when engaged in a secret life of fantasy.

Sin has that effect on us. It causes separation, loneliness, fear, and shame. Sin tries to convince us that we are unwanted, unworthy, and undesirable. Just as we inherited sin through our First Parents, we have also inherited God's promise of forgiveness and salvation, which is found in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The keys to a transformed life

Our inability to open ourselves to another to be fully, lovingly, and authentically known is what leads us to seek inauthentic, temporary, selfish, intimacy with substances and relationships that were never designed to perform that function. All of the drugs, alcohol, pornography, serial relationships, food, or sex in the world will never fulfill us. Only a restored relationship with God can make us whole, and only through this renewed bond will we be able to bond with others in a healthy, loving way.

Pure Intimacy is part of a growing movement within the sex addiction recovery community that emphasizes the spiritual component of sexual brokenness.

A renewed, transformed life does not simply seek to stop a behavior, as important as that is. The real recovery is one in which our lives—behaviors, thoughts, emotions, and relationship to God and others—is made new and restored to what He originally intended.

God has given us friends, mentors, and spouses because, as a people, we need community. Isolation only feeds the secrecy, lies, and shame that have kept us from realizing our true design for fellowship with others. Here are some other questions to consider:

- Can you restore a healthy intimacy with God and others in your life without the involvement of others?
- How will you know what true intimacy looks like or how to develop it?
- If you've felt that separation from God your entire life, have you ever connected with Him?

True and lasting recovery involves a community of responsible, committed people. This community will likely include a Christian counselor trained in intimacy disorders or sex addiction, a spiritual mentor, such as a pastor or mature Christian friend, a group of serious friends with whom you can develop accountability relationships, and the loving support of trusted family members.

There are resources on this site to help you set up these relationships and encourage you to begin the process of rebuilding your life. All of this may seem daunting, but take heart, God loves you more than you know and He will be with you every step of the way. Just ask Him.



RELATED SCRIPTURE

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ... We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:10, 19).



RELATED RESOURCES

[Celebrate Recovery at Long Hollow](#)

You can find more information about Celebrate Recovery at longhollow.com/celebraterecovery.

Hendersonville Campus

Mondays at 6:30 pm in the Chapel.

Gallatin Campus

Thursdays at 7:00 pm in the worship center.

Men's and Women's step studies meet on the Gallatin and Hendersonville Campus. New groups start often and days of the week vary.

If you need to talk with someone about this issue, contact Long Hollow's Counseling Ministry at (615) 824-4006.