

Guide: Understanding Sexual Addiction

By Ben Bennett

Using The Article

1. Read over the article, Understanding Sexual Addiction and familiarize yourself with the issue.
2. Use the free clinical tests provided to help determine where an individual is in their struggle. If there is a consistent struggle with sexual sin, it could be an indication that there is an addiction. Although a licensed therapist may need to diagnose someone as having a sexual addiction, a good indication can be found by using this free Sexual Addiction Screening Test (found at puredesire.org/images/resources/sast-test.pdf). And as many women also struggle with Love Addiction, the following test can also be helpful (found at puredesire.org/images/resources/love-addiction-evaluation.pdf). Although some of the questions on the tests are stated in the present, answering each question based on an individual's entire life experience gives the best indication.
3. Have the individual read the article, Understanding Sexual Addiction, before meeting to discuss it with you.
4. When you meet with the individual, ask good follow up questions. What stood out to you in the article? What was new to you? Is there anything you have questions about?
5. Help the individual identify what pain in life they may have experienced that has led them to coping with sexual sin or an addiction. This may be really difficult as most may not have thought about this before and have no other family or life experience to compare theirs to. Walk them through the three issues that lay at the foundation of most addictions: Family Dysfunction, Personal Trauma, and An Addictive Society. Look at the examples given in the article for each category and ask if they resonate with any of those experiences. They may share some deep and painful things, so be sure to empathize with them, thank them for sharing, remind them of Jesus' radical love, and pray for them.

Next Steps For Application

1. A really helpful assignment is to have them go through the Working Through Pain page of this document with you. By utilizing this, they'll develop a list of their Top 10 Most Painful Experiences in detail and answer questions that help them process their pain. If someone is thorough in this exercise, a lot of insights will occur as to why they struggle with the specific things they struggle with.
2. Another helpful assignment is to help the individual renew their mind to combat faulty core beliefs about themselves, God, and others. The Renewing The Mind exercise can also be found in the Working Through Pain Page of this document. This exercise engages the mind and the heart and helps heal their core beliefs.
3. Recommended reading. For men and women, the book Pure Desire by Dr. Ted Roberts and Healing The Wounds of Sexual Addiction by Dr. Mark Laaser has great insight from a biblical and clinical perspective into sexual addiction.
4. If the individual is not practicing healthy accountability, send them the Healthy Accountability document and help them implement it in their life.
5. If the Sexual Addiction Screening Test indicates that the individual has an addiction, encourage them to pick up the Living Free recovery workbook (puredesire.org/living-free). It utilizes a clinical and biblical framework and is ideal for a small group format of 3-5 guys, although not a ton of it is gender specific so women may find it helpful as well.

WORKING THROUGH PAIN & RENEWING THE MIND

By Ben Bennett

“In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.” Ephesians 6:16 NLT

The enemy often attacks us through fiery arrows in the form of lies that have been rooted in our soul as a result of our painful life experiences. Often, these lies can operate at a subconscious level, causing great difficulty in identifying them, their source, and steps to practically work through them. These painful experiences and lies can easily lead us to develop ways to cope in life through emotional health issues and habitual sin. Throughout this document, you'll find a couple practical solutions to begin the process of identifying pain in your life, working through it, and renewing your mind in light of your true God given identity.

TOP 10 MOST PAINFUL EXPERIENCES EXERCISE

Make a list of your top 10 most painful experiences in detail, focusing on painful experiences that happened during childhood. Please note, some experiences may be infrequent but of high intensity. I.E. the divorce of parents, a death in the family, sexual assault, or physical abuse. Other experiences may be frequent but of lower intensity. I.E. bullying, a somewhat physically or emotionally absent parent, a performance mentality, being controlled, manipulated, or it being communicated that you have to earn the love of friends or family by their words or actions.

For each of the 10 experiences answer the following three questions.

1. What part of the pain am I responsible for, and who do I need to forgive? (Working toward forgiveness is a process that takes time. Forgiving others is crucial to the healing process and allows us to no longer be controlled by bitterness or our pain.)
2. How did this event affect the important people in my life? (How did people respond? Did people stand up for me?)
3. How has this event affected life for me today? (What faulty core beliefs about myself do I believe as a result of this experience? How am I still reacting to these experiences?)

RENEWING THE MIND

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” Romans 12:2 NIV

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV

One of the most practical ways to renew your mind in light of your true God given identity is through meditating on something called Personal Promises. These are simply those times where you've experienced a promise from God about your core identity or who He is. Practically, these allow you to renew your mind and heal from faulty core beliefs.

1. Identify 3 core lies you believe about yourself, God, and others. Often these are directly tied to some of the painful experiences in your life. I.E. I'm worthless, unlovable, can never measure up, I can't trust people, if I let people close they will hurt me, God doesn't love me.
2. Identify a verse of scripture that combats each of these lies. I.E. 1 John 3:1 (I'm a loved child of God).
3. Identify a time in life where you experienced the truth of this scripture and when God communicated this to you. I.E. When I recommitted my life to Christ at a worship gathering, I felt so loved and accepted by God and others and experienced 1 John 3:1. This part is crucial as it engages the right side of the brain, the same place our woundedness is stored, so this helps the truth of scripture sink into our heart, renew our mind, and combat our painful experiences.

Meditate daily on the scripture and the experience. As you meditate on the verse, close your eyes and visualize yourself back in the experience. Meditate on these whenever old faulty core beliefs get triggered.

Lastly, we sin because we are sinful, but we also sin because we are sinned against. We develop ways of coping with our painful life experiences. As you find yourself reacting to stress, difficult situations in life, or going back to habitual sin, ask yourself what pain from your past is getting triggered that may be leading to your specific reaction.