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IN SIGHT

for Oregon Lawyers

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

THE ROAD BACK TO INTEGRITY

Like any addiction, it started slowly. I worked hard and was successful, but I used my work as a cover for depression and feelings of inadequacy. When stress and anxiety overwhelmed me, I looked for relief, even temporary relief. Lost momentarily in pornography, I thought I had found relief. It seemingly hurt no one. I was not really violating my wedding vows, I rationalized.

But over time, my reliance grew. Soon, I began to organize my day around pornography. After many years of justifying my habit, I lost my sense of right and wrong. By 2005, the Internet hosted more than 4 million pornographic Web sites and had grown into a \$13 billion industry. I was only one of 45 million men (and not a few women) who monthly looked at some of the 300 million pornographic Web pages.

An addiction grows; that is its nature. The addict seeks out more and greater highs, because old behaviors no longer generate the same euphoria. The brain needs more stimulation to produce the same chemical effect. Some addicts escalate by being drawn to the more than 100,000 Web sites that display images of minors, or by acting out in public places, or by having consensual sex outside of committed relationships. My addiction escalated to watching pornography more hours each day.

Instead of bringing me relief, the result of my pornography use was now indescribable guilt and shame. I could no longer work. I could not stop watching. I was racked with fear of discovery. Suicidal ideation was a constant companion. Legal consequences loomed, too. Like many addicts, it took a crisis to shake me out of my delusional fantasy world. One day, my wife discovered me watching pornography; it was not the first time. It was time to get help or lose everything that made life worth living.

First, I had to break through my denial by acknowledging I had a problem and seeking professional help. Then I had to understand the nature of the illness that I share with an estimated 15 to 20 million people in this country. I started my recovery with weekly visits to a certified sexual addiction therapist. Within a month of starting my recovery, I began attending a six-week session at a sexual addiction treatment center. After I returned home, I found 12-step groups that met daily to provide experience, strength, and hope for the recovering sexual addict. And I was blessed by a remarkable wife and family, some caring friends and supporters – such as the attorney counselors at the OAAP – a growing library of information, and the time to absorb and reflect on it.

I take things one day at a time now. I practice sexual sobriety. I wake each morning and express my gratitude to my higher power. I meditate and read recovery literature, which enriches my spirituality. Most days I attend a 12-step meeting, where I enjoy a culture of ongoing support. With a therapist, I continue to explore factors underlying my addiction and learn new coping skills. I try to do the next right thing. I volunteer to help others – something I never did when active in my addiction. I look for new work. I listen thoughtfully now to the wisdom of others and appreciate the blessings in my life, even if the glass is only half-full. I know I am not in control of anything but me.

My primary job now is to have the courage to change me, to restore my integrity, and to work on my recovery every day. I will always be an addict. There is no cure for my addiction. But there is a daily reprieve if I work for it. I have strung together more than 450 consecutive days of sobriety. That is the road I will travel in the future.

Eternally grateful for a road map

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Sexual Addiction Resources

General Resources

- SAA (Sex Addicts Anonymous)
503-452-5961 • www.saa-recovery.org
Meets in Beaverton, Bend, Corvallis, Eugene,
Medford, and Portland.
- Portland Intergroup for SAA
www.portlandsaa.org
- SA (Sexaholics Anonymous)
503-224-9840 • www.sa.org
- www.sexhelp.com
(Web site of Dr. Patrick Carnes, author of
Out of the Shadows)

Resources for Spouses/Partners

- S-Anon local hotline • 503-299-4442
- S-Anon International Family Groups
www.sanon.org
- COSA • www.cosa-recovery.org

Treatment Centers

- Gentle Path Program at Pine Grove –
Hattiesburg, Mississippi
(888-574-4673)
- The Meadows – Wickenburg, Arizona
(800-632-3697)
- Keystone Center – Chester, Pennsylvania
(800-733-6840)