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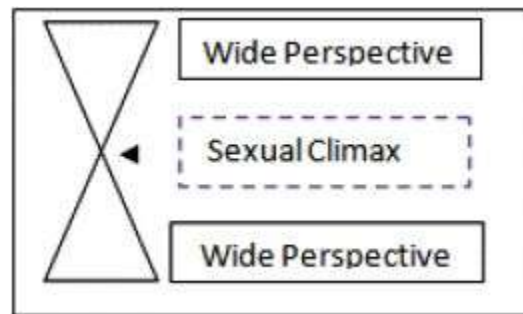
FREE RECOVERY COURSE

1. The Learning Begins

In his book [The Drug of the New Millennium, the Brain Science Behind Internet Pornography Use](#), Mark B. Kastleman (founder of [Candeo Can program](#)) provides a very detailed description of the process that takes place inside a pornography viewer's brain.

In order to understand these processes, the author first examines how the brain is designed to work in a healthy sexual relationship. Then he compares it to brain activity during the pornography viewing session.

He describes both processes as "going down the funnel". The top of the funnel represents our normal state of mind, where we are completely present and aware of what is going on around us. As we begin to engage in a sexual activity, our attention span begins to narrow down, until the sexual climax is reached. After that, we begin to slowly return to our normal, wider view of the world.



The author also provides a detailed description of internal chemicals that are being released during this process. The following excerpts from [The Drug of the New Millennium](#) explain this process.

The Narrowing Process of the Healthy Marriage

In a healthy marital relationship, sexual intimacy creates powerful physical, emotional, and chemical changes:

A Narrowing Process: *At the top of the funnel, the married couple enjoys a wide perspective of the world and the people around them. Then, as they become physically intimate, their brains begin to narrow in focus. Climax is*

the most narrowly and powerfully focused singular event that the brain can engage in. To make this happen, the brain must narrowly focus its attention and block out all distractions (work, the children, paying bills, etc.)

The Release of Natural Chemicals: *To aid this narrowing process, the brain begins releasing a flood of endogenous (meaning produced from within) chemicals. These natural chemicals include the following:*

Dopamine: *Elevated levels of dopamine in the brain produce extremely focused attention. This chemical causes each spouse to focus intensely on the other at the exclusion of everything else around them. A release of dopamine is associated with craving and dependency in addiction, which may be why it can help produce a healthy attraction and dependency between the spouses.*

Norepinephrine: *This chemical generates exhilaration and increased energy by giving the body a shot of natural adrenaline. Norepinephrine has also been linked to raising memory capacity. Whatever stimulus is being experienced in the presence of this chemical is "seared" in the brain. This helps explain how a couple in love can remember the smallest details of their beloved's features.*

Testosterone: *Testosterone is known as the hormone of sexual desire in both men and women. For men, however, it is the key hormone of desire, triggering feelings of positive energy and well-being.*

Oxytocin: *The flood of oxytocin at climax acts as a natural tranquilizer, lowering blood pressure, blunting sensitivity to pain and stress, and inducing sleep.*

Serotonin: *This natural chemical is released right after climax, bringing on a deep feeling of calmness, satisfaction and release from stress. Anti-depressant drugs like Prozac are designed to increase levels of serotonin.*

The Experience is More Than Just Physical: *As husband and wife move down the funnel together, there is more to the experience than just*

chemicals released in the physical body... the mind, heart and spirit are all joined together...

A Climax of Many Things: *The final crescendo is a culmination of all the things husband and wife have shared – doing the dishes, paying the bills, raising the children, all that make up a marriage.*

A pornography viewer goes through a similar process as couples in a marriage but the involved chemicals produce a completely different result.

The Narrowing Process of Internet Porn

When an individual enters the funnel through pornography viewing, the physical and chemical processes are virtually identical to those in marital sexual intimacy, but with some radical differences...

A Narrowing Process: *At the top of the funnel, before beginning to view pornography, the individual enjoys a wide perspective of the world. Pornography addicts describe the top of the funnel as reality: their public self. Just as in the marriage funnel, the porn viewer begins blocking out distractions – but he is blocking out much more. He is alone. The object of his narrowing is pornographic images. Details of daily life, such as work and paying bills, slowly fall into disarray as the person starts blocking out all thoughts of God, his marriage, family, morals, commitments, and consequences...*

The Release of Natural Chemicals: *The porn viewer's brain begins releasing endogenous chemicals. The viewer feels highly aroused – all of the stress, pressures, anxieties and pain in life begin fading away as his system is flooded with endogenous drugs. The viewer is able to self-medicate and escape the reality of life.*

Dopamine: *Elevated levels of dopamine in the brain produce extremely focused attention. This causes the viewer to focus intensely on the pornographic images at the exclusion of everything else around him.*

Norepinephrine: This chemical induces feelings of exhilaration and increased energy by giving the body a shot of natural adrenaline. Norepinephrine also increases memory capacity. This explains why porn addicts can recall viewed images with vivid clarity years later.

Testosterone: Pornography triggers the release of testosterone which in turn increases the desire for more pornography.

Oxytocin: Oxytocin acts as a natural tranquilizer. The individual seeks an Oxytocin rush to cope with the stress and pressure of life.

Serotonin: The release of this natural chemical evokes a deep feeling of calmness. Individuals turn to porn to self-medicate and escape the stress.

The Experience is More Than Just Sexual: There is a lot more going on in the Pornography Funnel than sexual arousal. In fact, if you remove sexual arousal from the process, any similarities to sexual intimacy in a healthy marriage would cease. While sliding down the Pornography Funnel, a tidal wave of conflicting and confusing images and messages wash over the viewer. Visual images are stored as emotional memories in the brain before the logic center realizes what has happened. When the logic brain catches up, it brings on a "fight or flight" type response. The adrenaline gland sends out cortisol, the "stress hormone," which in turn activates myriad body-system processes to counteract stress. In essence, the entire pornography process is intensified and supercharged, far beyond what sexual arousal alone would accomplish. The human system is not designed to deal with this overwhelming level of conflicting stimulations. This is why many neuropsychologists refer to pornography as "visual crack cocaine".

An Empty and Hollow Climax: When one uses pornography to reach climax, the brain desensitizes to the images, habituates to them, and eventually becomes bored. An increase in the variety of images and/or time spent on the Internet is required to maintain stimulation levels. In a healthy marriage relationship, sexual intimacy is only a part of everything else going on in the

couple's life. So when the couple "brings all of that into the bedroom," it is highly unlikely that the brain will habituate to the sexual process.

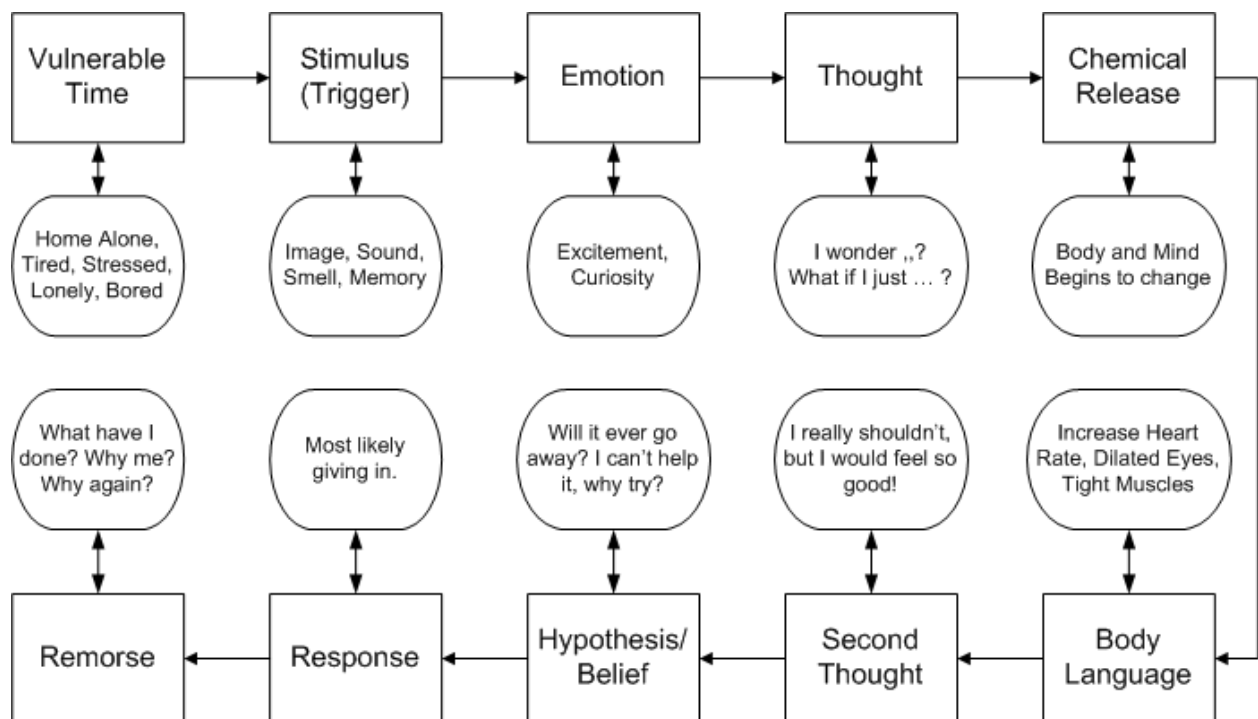
When Reality Returns – the Hopeless Dialogue: *When the porn viewer emerges from the narrowest part of the funnel back to a wide perspective, the heartless "drug-high" of pornography and climax quickly dissipate. Suddenly his rational thinking returns and the hopeless dialogue begins: "What have I done? What was I thinking?" He wasn't thinking; that was the problem! Once he descends into the Pornography Funnel, he gives up his ability to "think". The overpowering flood of chemicals overrides his cognitive thought and reasoning abilities. The frontal lobes – the logic center of the brain – are virtually shut down and the limbic system, which controls the pleasure/emotional center of the brain, takes over. (Kastleman, p39-57)*

I hope you now have a better understanding of why pornography can be so addictive.

In the next chapter, we are going to take a closer look at the addictive cycle.

I am really glad you have found this free course!

2. Understanding the Addictive Cycle



[Follow this link](#) for a larger image of the addictive cycle, please open it and take a few minutes to review it, to further enhance our discussion.

There are a few things to point out.

The "acting out" (engaging in an activity that you consciously didn't want to engage in) usually starts out with a trigger, which is interpreted by your brain at a subconscious level, and results in a strong emotion, such as excitement. Only then do you get a thought in your conscious brain!

Think about it! In our society, most of the people hold a belief that we are primarily motivated by our thinking. This, however, is not entirely true! In fact, as much as 90% of our daily behaviors are motivated by our subconscious brains.

To make things worse, once our body begins a chemical response, it overrides our cognitive ability. Meaning, we still are aware of what is going on, but unable to make an accurate, rational evaluation of our behavior and upcoming consequences.

Immediately after the internal chemical release, our body begins to change (we will talk more about it in upcoming sections). This really is our last line of defense.

The second thought is our last chance to realize what is happening and to take emergency actions to save ourselves (we will talk a lot more about this as well).

If we were not able to break the cycle, chances are we will end up giving in, and engaging in the behavior.

After the "acting out" part is complete, our brain goes off the auto-pilot, and we are back to our normal selves. This is when we are usually able to look at the situation logically, and realize what has happened.

A common reaction to this realization is to feel intense negative emotions, such as guilt and self-hatred. This approach, however, only strengthens our addiction. It keeps us from taking constructive action.

Remember, we do bad things, but we are not bad people!

Did you notice that I skipped one of the items on the list – vulnerable time? Mark Kastleman, founder of [Candeo Can](#), came up with an acronym BLASTed, which stands for: Bored, Burned Out, Lonely, Anxious, Afraid, Angry, Stressed, and Tired.

Another acronym that is commonly used in the 12 steps community is HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired.

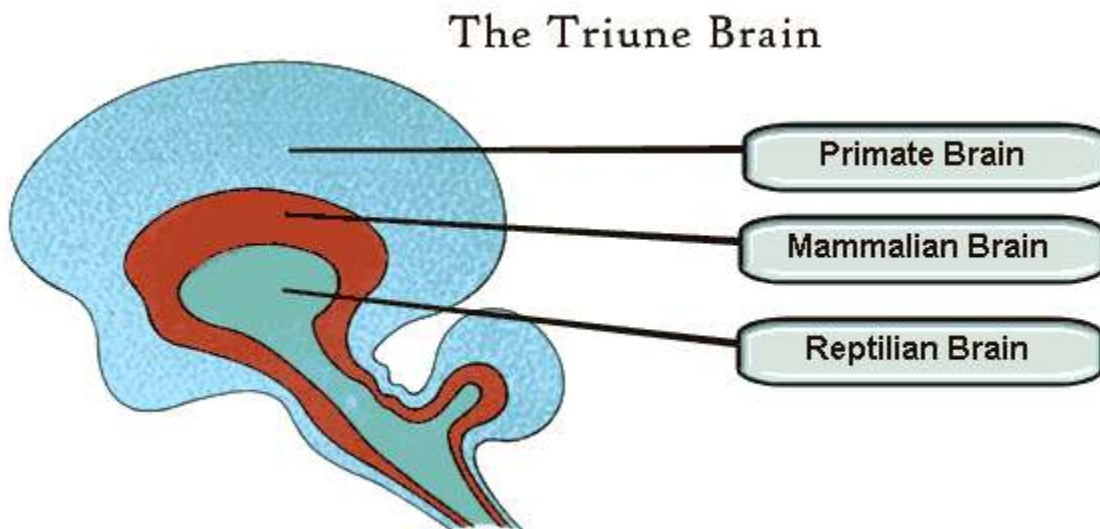
During the vulnerable times, our conscious brain loses the ability to see things clearly. That is when our subconscious brain is more likely to take over. And we already know where this is going to take us.

You can avoid vulnerable times by beginning to take good care of yourself. Simple things like getting plenty of sleep, eating properly, drinking enough water, and journaling to de-clutter your brain can go a long way. In the future chapters, we are going to talk a lot more about things that you can do to bring about peace and calmness into your life.

In the next chapter, we are going to take a closer look at how the human brain has developed over time.

Stay safe!

3. A Quick Look at the Human Brain



The triune brain model was proposed by Dr. Paul MacLean in the 1950s. It states that humans don't just have one brain, but rather a layer of 3 brains that have each evolved on top of the other over the course of years: reptilian brain, mammalian brain, and primate brain.

The Reptilian Brain

This brain is the first to be developed. It is responsible for autonomic bodily functions such as heartbeat, breathing, and temperature control. It is also responsible for the most important human needs, such as survival, feeding and **mating**.

This brain is part of your subconscious mind. It has a set of pre-programmed instructions that it will always execute. This brain cannot change or learn from past experiences. It only understands images, and does not understand language.

Some of the traits associated with the reptilian brain are: aggression, dominance, obsessiveness, compulsiveness, fear, worship, submission, greed, **sex, and seeking a mate.**

The Mammalian Brain

This is the type of brain developed by most mammals on top of their reptilian brain. It is your emotional brain – this is the brain that is responsible for making you feel the way that you do. This brain creates chemical messages that allow you to store information in memory. **The more emotionally charged the message is, the stronger effect on the brain it is going to have.**

This part of the brain is able to learn from past experiences. It ensures that you feel pleasure from the activities intended for your survival, such as eating and **sex**. This function helps to ensure that you will continue to repeat the favorable behaviors. The emotional brain is also able to learn to associate pain with activities that may threaten your existence, such as getting burned or getting hit by a car.

We like to think that we make most of our decisions based on what we think is right. In actuality, however, we make most of our decisions, on what we feel is right. And this "feeling" is the response that we get from our emotional brain.

The Primate Brain

This is the thinking brain. It controls such things as thinking, language, and creative thinking. This brain is responsible for telling us who we think we are.

Unfortunately, this brain does not have a priority over its two predecessors. For example, in an emergency situation, your brain can cause you to automatically react in a certain way, without you ever having to think about it. This function is crucial to our survival, but it can also present some real problems if our

subconscious mind decides to take over, as it often does, in non-emergency situations.

In the next chapter, we are going to take a closer look at some of the possible triggers (external events) that can cause our reptilian and emotional brains to take over.

4. Triggers of the Reptilian Brain

In the previous chapter, we took a look at the triune brain model, which consists of 3 kinds of brains: reptilian, mammalian, and primate. Now let's take a closer look at some of the external events (a.k.a. triggers) that can cause the reptilian brain to take over our decision making.

Essentially anything that has to do with survival of the species, such as **sex**, power, self image and food, will trigger a reptilian brain response.

The easiest example of the reptilian brain response that most of us can relate to is getting cut off in traffic. The person who cuts us off is invading our personal space, and we immediately respond with an act of aggression – yelling at the other driver or honking our horn. Only after some time are we able to return to our "normal selves" and consciously reassess what had just happened.

Also note that the reptilian brain is motivated by visual images, sounds, touch, smell, and taste, but it is not motivated by language (thinking) unless the language helps us to create a vivid mental image.

The visual stimulation is the strongest, since we process about 80% of our daily informational intake through our eyes.

Additionally, it is important to note that our reptilian brains are not able to tell the difference between a fake image and a real life occurrence.

That is why we get hungry when we look at a picture of a juicy burger, even though we know the burger is not real.



That is also why we get scared when we watch a horror movie even though we understand that it is just a movie.

Speaking of horror movies, try to remember the first time you saw something scary on TV. I remember my first time was a movie about some man who got his face burned in an accident. After I saw his face, I couldn't get the image out of my head, and I (and my parents) stayed up for the rest of the night, because I kept having nightmares.

It took a few years before I could watch a horror movie and go straight to bed. My brain eventually got used to those scary images and no longer reacted in the way that it originally did. Now I would have to see something really scary on TV for it to have a similar effect as that first movie did.

Pornography works in a similar way. Vivid images that we see and sounds that we hear get a quick pleasurable response from our reptilian brain. Most of us have these experiences when we are very young, and know very little of our inner workings. All we can tell is that it feels good, and we make sure to come back for more.

Over time, our brains become accustomed to the images that we see, and we are forced to seek stronger stimulation in order to receive a similar pleasurable response from our reptilian brain.

All marketers, including pornographers, are very well aware of the inner workings of our brains. In a constant battle for our attention, they are doing their best to create a message that would have as much effect on our reptilian brain as possible.

One of the tricks that they use is a combination of sex, power, self-image, and food to create as strong a message as possible. Additionally, they are constantly trying to push the boundary of socially accepted norm, making sure that their messages are modest enough to avoid legal trouble, but wrong enough to get the strongest response possible from our reptilian brain.

This stuff is very powerful. If you think about it, all of the behavioral addictions, such as gambling, overeating, compulsive shopping, sex and pornography addictions are motivated by one or combinations of the desire for sex, power (social status), self-image or food.

We are literally in competition with various forms of media for our own minds. Therefore, it becomes very crucial for us to firstly become aware of what is going on around us, and secondly learn to "get our minds" back whenever we are triggered by an external event.

We are going to talk a lot more about different tools we can use to get and keep our lives back, but now I want to point out one very quick, but very powerful tip.

Remember how I said in the previous chapter that the reptilian brain controls all of our automated bodily functions, such as blood pressure, heartbeat, and breathing? Well, turns out one of these functions is not completely automated.

We have an ability to control our breath. By taking slow deep breaths, we are able to convey a message to our reptilian brain that everything is OK, causing it to release the control back to our thinking brain.

Next time you feel triggered by any external event, try to take 10 slow and deep breaths. Count to 10 when you inhale, hold your breath for 10 seconds, and count to 10 on your way out. You will notice a great sense of peace and calmness return!

In the next chapter, we are going to take a quick look at our emotional brain.

5. The Emotional Brain

Now that we have discussed the reptilian brain, it is time to become more familiar with the emotional brain.

As you probably remember, the reptilian brain does not have the ability to learn. Therefore, it will continue to do the same thing over and over again, no matter what the previous experience might have been.

That is why the next step in evolution became the emotional brain. This brain has the ability to learn, balancing the reptilian brain, and it uses signals of pleasure and pain to control our behavior.

It is very important to understand that it is the emotions that we are feeling, and not the thoughts that we are thinking that control most of our behavior.

Unfortunately, the power of the emotional brain is very familiar to us addicts. It is our emotional brain that causes us to do things that we don't want to do that we will later regret.

For example, for a very long time, I struggled to avoid certain pornographic websites. Yet after a week or two of staying away, I would find myself giving in, and going back to looking.

This was happening for two reasons.

1. A pre-programmed response from my reptilian brain causing me to look for sex.
2. The emotional connection between the website and intense pleasure that I had established in the past.

Reason number 2 is the one that makes all of the difference. Reptilian brain does not learn, and it will always maintain its desire for sex.

The emotional brain, however, is what caused me to associate a website, a bunch of pixels on a screen, with a possibility of intense pleasure.

That is why even though I would tell myself that I did not want to go onto that site, all of the sudden it would **feel** that it was not such a bad idea.

Before I knew it, I would spend hours viewing pornography until I reach a level of stimulation significant enough to satisfy my reptilian brain.

Only then would the reptilian and emotional brain return full control of my body back to my thinking brain, allowing me to analyze what had just happened. And as a result of it, I would feel guilt and regret, knowing that I just did something that I did not want to do.

It is important to understand that our reptilian and emotional brains have the ability to override our thinking brain, leaving us as mere observers.

That is why we should be very careful not to make any decisions while we are feeling any intense emotions, both positive and negative, since they can greatly affect our judgment.

Most of the people don't have a habit of monitoring their emotions. That is why I challenge you to pay closer attention to what you are **feeling** for the rest of the

day. Some of the basic emotions to watch out for are anger, anxiety, excitement, happiness, love, and sadness.

In the next chapter, we are going to take a look at some of the simple things that we can do to help us strengthen our thinking brain, and help us live a more conscious life.

6. Getting Your Brain Back

By now, you are probably a little concerned with the prospect of spending your life enslaved by your reptilian and emotional brains.

The unfortunate reality is that our brains have the capacity to get better at the behaviors that we repeat consistently. So if you've spent the past 5-10-15-20 years of your life practicing an emotional brain response, chances are you've gotten really good at it.

The good news is that our brains have the capacity to get better at the behaviors that we repeat consistently.

So the trick is to practice the healthy behaviors. To **consciously** work on strengthening your thinking brain, as well as learning to recognize the behaviors of your emotional brain.

Over time, old emotional associations will become weaker, and the new, healthy ones will get stronger. Eventually you will be able to walk away from pornography **because it feels good to walk way**. This however, will not happen overnight.

In succeeding chapters, we are going to look at a systematic way for you to fight your addictive response. This process will take time, so here are a few simple things you can begin practicing today to help strengthen your thinking brain.

Journaling

Remember how I asked you to keep track of your emotions and thoughts throughout the day? I also recommend for you to begin to journal about your observations.

Make sure that your journal is private, and that nobody else can access it. It is extremely crucial that you be completely honest and open with your journal.

Journaling is not keeping a diary, but rather looking back at your day, and consciously analyzing what was driving your emotions and behaviors throughout the day.

This practice will allow you to strengthen your thinking brain, as well as to get in touch with and better understand your emotional and reptilian brains.

Delaying Gratification

Find something that is very pleasurable for you and practice postponing it for 10-15 minutes.

For example, first thing that I want to do every morning is to check my email. I choose to do my morning practice instead (we will talk more about morning practices later). By doing so, I practice my thinking brain response.

In comparison, on the days when I skip my morning practice and go straight for my email, I practice my emotional brain response.

We are faced with opportunities to strengthen our thinking brains on a daily basis. Even if stopping pornography might be too hard for you right now, there are other small steps that you can take to help your thinking brain get stronger.

Delaying Your Actions

This one is similar to delaying gratification.

If you feel a strong emotion forcing you to do something, practice postponing this behavior for a short period of time.

For example, if you get angry at your co-worker, you can type up a response email, but don't hit the send button. Let it sit there while your emotional brain cools down. Or if you come up with a really exciting business idea, write it down and leave it alone for a while. Come back to it the next day and see if it still looks feasible.

Controlling Your Breathing

Just like I mentioned before, breathing is the secret key to your reptilian brain. So anytime you notice yourself react with the reptilian or emotional brains, try practicing deep breathing.

For example, if somebody cuts you off in traffic, causing you to feel anger, immediately begin to breath.

Similarly, if you see something on the street or on TV that triggers your addiction, try to do the breathing exercise.

Ten breaths in, hold it for 10 seconds, 10 breaths out. Repeat it until you feel better.

These four tips are simple but they are very powerful! Make sure to practice them, simply reading this book will do very little for you.

Our society does not do a very good job helping people to develop their thinking brain. In contrary, our entire media industry is built on training people to make decisions (buy) with their emotional and reptilian brains.

Unfortunately by this point in your life, your emotional brain has caused you so much pain that it forces you to look for help. But this can be good news.

Looking back at it, my addiction is the best thing that ever happened to me. No, I am not happy with all of the pain and sorrow that it brought into my life and the lives of my loved ones. I am not happy about all of the time that I've spent fueling my addiction. I am not happy with all the dreams that I gave up on, choosing to act out.

But I am happy that I am finally awake; that I am finally able to see things around me for what they really are. I am glad that I have the rest of my life. I have the rest of my life, not my addiction, not the media, and not the porn industry.

And I believe that you will have a similar experience, even if you might not feel like it just yet.

In the next chapter, we are going to take a look at how to create your recovery plan.

7. Creating Your Sexual Recovery Plan

You can spend thousands of dollars on the most expensive recovery course, but it will do you no good unless you take action.

Below is my old sexual recovery plan that I wrote almost 3 years ago. I got this idea from a book called [Cybersex Exposed](#).

Sexual Recovery Plan

Column 1 - Problematic Actions

- Watching Pornography
- Masturbating

Column 2 - Warning Signs That Sobriety Is in Jeopardy

- Getting online when nobody else is at home
- Engaging in any kind of activities on the Internet that are not work related
- Scanning the TV channels hoping to find something exciting or distracting
- Not resolving fights with other people
- Lying to myself or others, keeping secrets
- Isolating
- Working more than forty-five hours a week
- Not getting enough sleep or exercise

- Skipping my support groups or therapy
- Feeling overwhelmed, scattered or guilty
- Intense sexual fantasies
- Excessive sexual objectification of others
- Thinking about former sex or dating partners

Column 3 - The Positive Reward of Maintaining Sobriety and Refraining from My Primary Problem Activities

- Having more times with loved ones and friends – better relationships
- Returning to hobbies and creative activities that bring pleasure
- Rediscovering romance with partner
- Taking some classes toward a possible new career
- Feeling clean and good about self
- Having more time for relaxation and fun
- Going to movies and theaters
- No need to be worried about getting caught lying
- Not having to apologize for being late
- Placing greater emphasis on financial health and stability
- Improved health

I recommend that you create a similar recovery plan for yourself.

As you can see, it consists of 3 parts.

Problematic Actions

I saw a poster at a rifle range once; it said, "If you don't have a target, you will miss every time."

You have to define for yourself what behaviors you are trying to stop. This will provide you with a starting point from which you can judge your progress.

Warning Signs That Sobriety Is in Jeopardy

Simply look back at your past acting out experiences and try to identify the behaviors that can serve as warning signs that you are about to act out.

The Positive Reward of Maintaining Sobriety and Refraining from My Primary Problem Activities

This is the most important part. Why do you want to stop?

Another saying that I've heard is that having a strong **why** (reason) can overcome almost any **how** (condition).

I recommend that you take the next 2 days to create your personal sexual recovery plan. Don't worry about getting it perfect, just get the ball rolling and get something in writing.

8. The Best Thing You Can Do For Yourself Today

By now, you should have completed your personal sexual recovery plan.

Now you know what behaviors you want to stop, why you want to stop, and what behaviors to watch out for.

I also hope that you had a chance to watch my introduction video titled "[How to Stop Pornography Addiction](#)".

Please do not continue reading until you have finished your sexual recovery plan and you've watched the video.

Now please download and print the [ERP checklist](#). If you don't have a printer, simply re-create a first row by hand.

Also make sure that you have your sexual recovery plan handy.

Now take a few minutes to identify a triggering situation. Chances are you can use one of the warning signs from your sexual recovery plan. Make sure to create a vivid mental image of a situation where you are most likely to act out (i.e. home alone with a computer) and observe the physiological response from your body.

Note: Please do not try to look at pornography and other sexually explicit material in order to trigger yourself, this will only have a contra-productive effect. Concentrate instead on a challenging situation where you tend to lose control.

Measure your pulse rate as soon as you feel the response. Record it into the table.

Now immediately follow through with breathing exercise. Breathe in for 10 seconds, hold your breath for 10 seconds, breathe out for 10 seconds. Repeat it 10 times.

Now read out loud to yourself all of the positive rewards for staying sober from your sexual recovery plan. Make sure to take your time to imagine each of the positive rewards. Imagine how it would feel to be that person. Try to create a very vivid and colorful image.

Once you are done, measure your pulse rate again. Record the difference in the table. Be aware that there are no right and wrong results; you are simply observing your body to gain a better understanding of how it functions.

I want to congratulate you! You just finished your first ERP exercise!

Well, you've almost finished it, except for the most important part.

I want you to shut off your computer and go for a walk. Drop everything that you are doing, and just go. And if it is too late at night, shut off your computer and go to bed. Trust me, this will be the best thing you can do for yourself.

In the next chapter, we are going to revisit the ERP techniques, and look into why it is so important for our recovery.

P.S. If you chose not to do the exercise, I highly advise you to find some time to do it before the end of the day, so you can better understand our next discussion.

9. How to use ERP Properly to Help You Change

In the last chapter, you completed your first ERP exercise. If you haven't done so, I encourage you to do it now.

The common mistake that people make is to think that the ERP is a tool that they can use to avoid acting out.

In actuality, it is the complete opposite. ERP is the tool that you must use consistently and systematically when you do not feel like acting out. Let me explain.

Remember our discussion about the triune brain model, and how the emotional brain can take over our body and make us crave, feel, and **think** things that we don't really want in our life?

If your emotional brain begins taking over and forces you to act out, your thinking brain will be too weak to remember to do ERP. It would just not **seem** like a good idea at the time.

ERP is not a tool to help you stop yourself from acting out. It is a tool to help you **train your emotional brain** to crave different things.

That is why you must use ERP consistently, daily, over a significant period of time (at least 30 days) in order to see a desired result. This is your workout for your emotional brain.

You are training it. You let it feel a little bit of craving, and you train it to react in a healthy way.

As you continuously repeat the training, your emotional brain will realize that this activity is important and will begin **automating the process**.

Do you remember when you were first learning to drive the car? How difficult it was? You were completely present in the process, and it required a lot of conscious effort on your part, right?

How do you feel about driving a car now? Chances are you spend most of your time spaced out, thinking about your day, listening to the radio, or talking on a cell phone.

The same thing will happen with your ERP practice, **if you practice it regularly**.

To this day, I still get a call from my reptilian brain to act out. But now when it happens, my emotional brain has access to two kinds of memories. One is my previous acting out behaviors that forced me to associate pornography, TV, computer, magazines, etc. as powerful sources of pleasure.

But I also have a new kind of memory: the feeling of self respect that I feel when I choose to walk away from my addiction and to turn to a healthy outlet instead. To me, this feeling is stronger than any benefit of acting out that I could possibly get.

Additionally, when I feel triggered, I notice myself beginning to engage in an ERP practice automatically without having to think about it. I literally notice myself beginning to take deep breaths without even having to make a conscious effort.

This new habit, of course, only comes with consistent practice.

I hope that a consistent ERP practice will help you develop a similar – new kind of memory and an automated healthy response.

Today, I encourage you to download a pdf with [sample motivation statements](#) and choose at least 20 (from the PDF, your sexual recovery plan, or your imagination) that really speak to your soul.

When you are done, write them on 3 by 5 cards (small cardboard cards) in a large font. One statement per card, and use these cards in your daily ERP practice, making sure to read out loud to yourself.

People learn the best by a combination of doing, seeing, and hearing. When you use the cardboard cards, you see them, move them, and hear yourself read them, which greatly facilitate your learning process.

Next, we are going to take a look at an important strategy you can use to help you break free.

I am proud of you! Keep up the good work!

10. An Important Strategy to Help You Break Free

Many people spend a lot of time trying to find “the” perfect method that will set them free.

The truth is there is no perfect method. Most methods are good, but none of them are perfect.

So what are we to do if there is no method that works 100%? How are we to beat our addiction?

The approach that worked (and is still working) for me is to use a combination of methods to help me break free.

Instead of trying one method, hoping that it will work, I decided to do everything possible at the same time, to help me overcome my addiction.

Here is a story that inspired me to get sober.

One evening, an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside all people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all.

"One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."

"The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

If you feed your right wolf the rest will take care of itself.

What did I do to feed the right wolf? I did everything I could have thought at the time.

Prayed in the morning and at night (If you don't believe in God, simply replace prayer with a plan on how you're going to stay sober for that day)

Journal daily

ERP practice daily

Meditated daily (10 minutes of silencing my mind)

Exercised daily (Low impact cardio, usually a part of my ERP practice)

Ate healthy (3 meals and 2 snacks a day)

Stayed hydrated (8 glasses of water a day)

Got plenty of sleep (at least 8 hours)

I encourage you to commit to do a combination of positive things in your life on a daily basis. The more, the better. Some days you will do more, some days you will do less. But you need consistent systematic positive actions in your life in order to break free.

Until this day, if I find my life beginning to spin out of control, I revisit those items. I usually notice that I was skipping on all of them, so I re-commit to a systematic positive self care in my life. This approach never fails to bring me back.

In the next post, we are going to take a look at a powerful model that will help us understand how our beliefs affect our emotions.

Oh, and make sure to do your ERP Practice today!

11. A-B-C-D-E Model

If you enjoyed the triune brain model, you will probably enjoy the A-B-C-D-E model as well.

I first learned about this model from [Candeo Can](#), although they only called it A-B-C-D model. I later saw E added at various Internet resources, and thought that it fits well with our practice.

A-B-C-D-E Stands for:

A - Activating Event

B - Belief

C - Consequence

D - Dispute

E - Exercise and Evaluate

Essentially, this model is used to help us understand how our subconscious brain works.

A,B,C are completely automated processes, and take place without us ever being consciously aware of them.

For example, let's say you noticed somebody laughing, while looking in your direction. All of a sudden, you feel anger or concern that something is wrong with you.

What took place here was

A - Activating Event - People Laughing

B - Belief - If somebody is laughing, they probably are laughing at me

C - Consequence - Feeling of anger or concern

Like I said, these 3 steps are automated, and we have no control over them. We do, however, have control over what happens next.

D - Dispute (or Debate) - we can look at our automated belief, and resulting consequence, and dispute it. In our example above, we can notice that people were laughing at something else. Or even if they were laughing at us, we can remember that their opinions are irrelevant, and will not have any effect on our future.

E - Exercise - If we dispute our old belief once, it will make us feel better for that moment, but it will not replace our automated belief. In order to learn a new belief and make it part of our automated response, we need to PRACTICE it.

Let's look at another example related to porn addiction. Let's say you find yourself alone with a computer, and you suddenly feel strong excitement. You can step back and identify the following.

A - Activating Event - Being alone with computer

B - Belief - "There is so much exciting stuff to see there"

C - Consequence - A strong sense of excitement and desire

D - Dispute - The "exciting stuff" is actually a poison to my brain. It has caused nothing but pain and harm in my life. It was designed to keep me hooked and coming back for more. If I walk away, I will feel free and I will be proud of myself.

E - Exercise - That is where tools like ERP become so important. They provide us with a systematic approach to changing our negative beliefs to our positive ones.

Did you do your ERP practice today? Did you make sure to follow up with an act of self care?

A-B-C-D-E model plays a huge role in helping us overcome our addiction. As you will find out in your near future, there is probably a large number of false beliefs reinforced throughout your life that keep you trapped in your addiction.

In the next chapter, I am going to share some of my personal beliefs that kept me trapped.

I encourage you to pay attention to your own feelings and emotions for the rest of the day. Whenever you notice yourself experiencing an emotion or a feeling, try to step back and identify the A-B-C's involved.

I hope you will find this exercise useful!

12. Beliefs That Kept Me Trapped

Here are some of the most serious false beliefs that kept me trapped in my addiction.

I was able to identify my negative beliefs through Journaling, by looking at the A-B-C-D model. I then re-wrote my negative belief with a statement of truth, as you can see in the examples below.

Belief #1: Uncontrolled erection is a sign that I have an uncontrollable animal inside of me.

I think an erection was one of my earliest sexual experiences. Nobody told me that this was supposed to happen, and I really wanted to make it go away. I tried to use my will power to make it stop, but couldn't get it to work. Eventually, my erections began to serve as an indicator that there was a part of me – my sexuality – that was stronger than my willpower and that there was no way for me to control it.

The truth is that erections are not bad at all; they are one of the greatest gifts of life. They are signs that I have the power to use my love to create another life. They are signs that I can have a family of my own. This truly is a beautiful and wonderful gift, and I am thankful for it.

Belief #2: Every man has secret sexual desires that cause them to cheat on their wives; they just don't talk to anyone about it. All men are born this way.

The truth is that all men do have sexual desires. This is part of the great gift of sexuality. However, this does not mean that men have to cheat and that all men will cheat. Many men do, but many men do not. It is my life, and I was given a power to make the choices of what I want to do with my life. I can choose to disperse my sexuality onto thousands of women, or I can choose to save it for the special woman in my life. The choice is always mine and mine only.

Belief #3: If somebody knew about my dirty secrets, they would have lost all respect for me.

The truth is that sharing my experience with others is the only way for me to be whole again. For most of my life, I thought that I could not ever be happy if I were to tell somebody about my secrets. Now I realize that **the only way** for me to be happy is through sharing my experience with others. There are plenty of supportive and understanding people out there who have had similar experiences, and who would not judge me and will support me on my journey towards become the best man that I can be.

Belief #4: Pornography is a safe and healthy way to explore my sexuality; it is just a tool that I can use to keep my animal instincts at bay.

The truth is that pornography is the worst way to explore my sexuality. Through intensive pornography use over many years, I completely redefined my definition of sexuality, and what I considered to be acceptable. I went from looking at models when I was a teenager, dreaming of one day meeting my true love, to looking at hardcore pornography. Eventually even this was no longer enough for me, so I kept on looking for harder and harder stuff. Pornography, acting as a drug, was tapping directly into the pleasure centers of my brain. That is why I was able to spend hours watching pornography, while it felt like I could not concentrate on any other task for longer than 5 to 10 minutes.

Belief #5: Pornography is the only thing that I have to cope with life; without it, I have nothing.

The truth is that pornography **was** the only response that I'd learned for coping with the stresses of life, but it is not the only response available to me. I am learning to develop a new healthy outlook on life, proper time management skills, meditation, and other techniques that would allow me to go through life without having to rely on pornography.

Belief #6: I don't know if I really want to quit, maybe it is OK to look.

The truth is that there is so much more to life than pornography. I only get one chance on this planet, and while it might have felt that pornography was the only thing that I truly enjoyed, in actuality it simply kept me trapped. When I look back at my life, all I can see are years of acting out. By no longer allowing pornography to dominate my life, I am able to follow my true dreams for myself.

Belief #7: This is not my fault that I turned out this way; it is a result of what others have done to me.

The truth is that I do not have control over what other people do in my life, but I always have control over how I choose to react to it. I accept full responsibility for everything that takes place in my life.

These are just 7 out of hundreds of negative beliefs that I was able to identify in the recent years.

These 7, however, were very powerful for me. I followed recommendations from [Candeo Can](#) and created an audio file of me reading out loud my statements of truth. I then uploaded this audio file into my iPod and continued to listen to it daily for the next 30 days.

I encourage you to identify 7 most powerful negative beliefs that keep you trapped.

I also encourage you to create an audio file with the positive statements of truth, and listen to them daily for the next 30 days, in addition to your ERP practice and other healthy behaviors.

It sounds like a lot of work, but it takes about two hours of initial set up, and only 2-3 minutes per day to listen to the statements.

You can use Sound Recorder on your PC or Garage Band on your Mac. If neither of these options works on your computer, you can download [audacity](#) – free audio-recording software.

I apologize for overloading you with information over the past couple of weeks.

Let's take a couple of days off, so you will have enough time to identify some of your false beliefs and make your audio recording. Also please make sure to keep up with your ERP practices, as well as other healthy activities that you chose for yourself.

In two days, we are going to take a look at a technique that I call mini-ERP. This technique is very useful in dealing with triggers when a full ERP practice is not available.

13. Mini - ERP, or How to Handle Triggers

I hope you were able to record your own statements of truth and that you are continuing your ERP practice.

Today, we are going to talk about a quick method that you can use to handle a trigger when a full ERP practice is not available. I call it mini-ERP.

Mini-ERP is a stripped down version of a full ERP practice and is very useful, since you can't stop and measure your pulse every time you get triggered while driving your car or walking on a busy street.

Mini-ERP consists of breathing, positive statements, and shifting your attention towards something else. (Think: Breathe - Positive - Shift)

Breathing

This is just like the regular ERP practice. Simply take a number of deep breaths. The key is to become aware of your breathing and consciously slow it down.

Positive Statements

Chances are you will have some of your reasons to stay sober memorized through your regular ERP practice. Additionally, you can simply think to yourself of why it is that you are trying to get sober, or to remember how out-of-control your life was when you were acting out.

I picked up another great idea from [Candeo Can](#) , they call it *gratitude breathing*. Essentially, it is a combination of deep breathing and positive thoughts. What they suggest is to think of 3 to 5 things that you are really thankful for in your life. This is a great exercise, and very powerful. Just give it a try next time you get triggered, and you will feel it yourself.

Shift Your Attention

This is also very important, instead of trying to fight your trigger, simply pay attention to something else.

Personally, I try to find something beautiful in nature. I try to notice a tree, or the sky, or a bird, and really take a second to admire that beauty.

But since not everybody is a nature freak like me, you can find something else healthy that catches your attention, like a sports car passing by, and shift your mind to it.

Another way of shifting attention that I learned from the [Candeo Can](#) course is to connect with another human being. You can do this by either making a direct eye contact with somebody, engaging in small talk, helping somebody with something small like holding a door, or calling somebody over the phone.

Try to practice the mini-ERP for the next couple of days in addition to your standard ERP practice. Also make sure to take good care of yourself, and replace the old lies of your addiction with the new statements of truth.

In the next chapter, we will take a closer look at our triggers and why some days are worse than others.

14. What Does a Trigger Tell Us?

Sometimes it feels like we have no control over the amount of triggers that show up in our life, and that they are completely dependent on the outside world. This, however, is only partially true.

But before we go on with further discussion, let me ask you to do a simple task. Look around the room where you are sitting and notice all of the things that are green. It could be a vase, a dollar bill, or a plant. Anything that is green.

Stop reading and look around the room now!

Did you notice a lot of green things?

Now repeat the same exercise, but this time look for everything that is the color red.

Stop reading and do it now!

Did you notice a lot of red things that you did not notice the first time you looked around the room? I hope so, at least that is the result that I get when I perform this exercise.

So what does this simple experiment tell us? Well, it appears that we do have some control over what we choose to notice in our environment.

So the next time you find yourself getting triggered a lot, take a step back and try to identify what is causing your brain to focus on all of the triggering stuff.

Chances are you will find that in one way or another, you were not in a good place. Maybe you didn't get a lot of sleep, maybe you skipped the breakfast, or maybe there is a strong emotion or false beliefs that are really taking over your life.

In other words, you will be able to determine what is causing you to feel triggered, as long as you are consciously aware that something unhealthy is taking place.

Don't get me wrong, the environment where you choose to be is a major factor on the amount and strength of triggers that you are being exposed to. But staying away from triggering places is only one part of the equation. The other part is what takes place in our heads. As one of my friends in recovery put it, "when I am in a bad place, I can sexualize dirt."

So you don't have to go to a triggering place in order to feel triggered. On the flip side, if life takes you to a triggering place by accident, you will be more likely to maintain your composure if you are in good place.

Just remember this simple rule. If you notice yourself getting triggered a lot, it is just a sign that something in your life is out of balance. You can restore the balance once again by taking good care of yourself. You know, all of those things we talked about earlier: journaling, meditation, eating, sleeping, hydrating, doing your ERP practice, looking at your A-B-C-D's, etc.

There is another area of taking care of yourself that we have not talked about yet, and we will get into it shortly.

But before we do that, there is another important exercise that we will need to complete. I'll tell you more about it in the next section.

Today, try to pay attention to yourself when you are getting triggered and later journal about it to identify what emotion, belief, or discomfort was the real cause behind this experience.

Keep up the good work!

15. Very Important Exercise

Today, I am going to ask you to complete a simple but very important exercise. If I could ask you to complete only one exercise before you leave this course, this would have to be it.

I waited so long to introduce it because I wanted to help you to release some of the initial pressure of addiction first and only then ask you to look at the bigger picture.

Your past is the result of choices you have made. Your future will be the result of the choices that you will make. There are millions of roads that you can take, and each one of them will take you to a different place. The question is, where do you want to go? We are going to try to answer this question now.

I want you to imagine yourself being an old person, lying on your deathbed. You only have few breaths left in you. You look back at your life, and you realize that while it wasn't perfect, you lived it well. You feel proud of yourself, and the choices that you have made. It is OK to go now.

The question is, what choices do you need to make now, in what direction do you need to take your life in order to become this old person?

When I did this exercise, I realized that I wanted to have a family. I realized that I wanted to do work that was meaningful. That I wanted to be a good, honest, present, and sober man.

Nothing extraordinary really, but it does not need to be extraordinary, it is simply right for me.

Before I did this exercise, I wasn't sure what I wanted in life. I was lost and confused. Sometimes I wanted one thing, and other times I wanted another.

But I know now, from the bottom of my heart, that what I truly want is to be this happy old person, looking back at my life, feeling proud of the life that I lived.

Now I have a vision of where I want to go. It is like the North Star that I use to guide my journey. Anytime when I get lost in life, I can step back and ask myself, will this road take me to where I really want to go?

Please take the next 3 days and think about what route in life would help you to become this happy and satisfied person. There are many different roads available. I want you to find the one that is right for you!

Take your time and be gentle. And please don't forget to do your ERP practice and the other positive things.

See you in 3 days!

16. My Relapse, and What I Learned From It - Part1

I think it is important now for me to share a story of my relapse.

I was able to get one month of sobriety by doing the ERP practice. Since I adopted this system myself, I wasn't sure how effective it was. I decided to seek further knowledge and purchased membership at the [Candeo Can](#) program.

Surprisingly, I found that my system was very close to the solution proposed by Candeo Can. Nevertheless, I was able to learn a lot from Candeo Can and more importantly, I gained confidence that my approach towards recovery was in fact efficient.

With the help of Candeo Can I was able to stay sober for a total of 3 months. Three months with no masturbation and no pornography felt like a miracle to me. Never ever in my life was I able to achieve something like that.

Since I stopped my addiction, I now felt like life will really begin to work out for me. The problem was that it never happened. I did stop my addiction, but it did not help my social anxiety and other issues that I had. If anything, it felt like my life got harder. I lost the only crutch that I used to help self-medicate myself from the pains of life. Without it, I felt all alone and vulnerable.

I felt like the people at Candeo Can and my ERP practice had cheated me. I stopped my addiction. How come my life was not getting better? Were all of the promises I told myself during the ERP practice just a lie?

Slowly I began to look for new ways to self-medicate myself. Sure I wasn't going to watch porn anymore, but it was OK to watch a horror movie. After awhile I would start watching 2-3 horror movies a day. It was OK because it wasn't porn. Soon I began to fast forward through the movies looking for "interesting" parts, which usually involved extreme violence and sexuality. I wouldn't even care to watch the plot, just the "interesting parts".

Soon I began to engage in behaviors very similar to the worst days of my addiction. I would stay up all night watching horror movies and I would default on my work. That is when I began to really feel insane. I had all this knowledge on how to stop. I knew that I learned the tricks to allow me to stop. Yet it seemed that I just couldn't stay in the right mindset for an extended period of time.

Sometimes I would want to be sober. But sometimes, I would just feel like I didn't care anymore. Like I "deserved a break".

To make things worse, if I were to admit that my problem wasn't cured, I would have to come clean before my girlfriend. Just the thought of that was killing me.

She was so proud of me being able to stop, and so happy with our relationship. I hadn't seen her that happy in the first 2 years of us being together.

So I decided to do what any addict would do. Try to fix it on my own, in secrecy.

The problem was that I no longer knew where to turn to. I'd already read some of the best books on the subject. I'd already paid for some of the best recovery programs. I've had professional counseling. Yet somehow it just wasn't enough.

Desperate, I decided to look into 12 steps literature.

During my Candeo Can recovery stage, I decided that it was a good idea to go to a Sex Addicts Anonymous meeting. I didn't feel like I needed it, but I wanted to do it, just in case. I thought it would help me to connect better to people.

When I attended the meeting, I felt very out of place. The room was full of people with some real issues. Everybody was hugging each other. We even had to get in a circle and hold each other's hands at the end of the meeting. This was the weirdest experience of my life.

To make things worse, I decided to go out for a breakfast with these people. That is when my social anxiety really kicked in. This was the first time since I got sober (about 2 months at that time) when I really felt like acting out.

Needless to say, I swore to never come back to the meeting, since it was making me feel like I wanted to act out, instead of being helpful.

On my way back from the breakfast and into the parking lot, I got to talk to one of the old-timers. I asked him how long he was sober for. He told me that it was about 3 years at the time. I was very impressed with his results and I asked him how did he do it?

He said, very easy, my program is **spiritual**.

Oh SH*T, I thought to myself, Now I get it. This guy is a religious freak. Now he is going to tell me all about Jesus coming over to him one night and saving his soul.

That is nice, I said out loud, and decided to not ask any more questions.

When we got to the parking lot, the guy gave me the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous. He said that oftentimes newcomers do not come back. And if I were to never to come back, it was OK, and I could keep the book. But he highly advised me to at least read Bill's (a founder of AA) story, if I didn't feel like I wanted to read the whole thing.

I thanked him, and took the book. I read Bill's story, and mailed the book back to the guy. I decided to not go back to the 12 steps meetings ever again.

But now 4 months since I originally got sober, and finding myself in trouble again, not knowing where to go, I decided to turn to 12 steps literature again, to see if it might have something new to offer.

In summary, I realized that the phrase "Mind, Body, and Spirit" existed for a reason. My ERP practice and [Candeo Can](#) took care of my mind. Through healthy daily habits, I was taking care of my body. But my spirit, my soul was not taken care of at all. This was the missing element, and that is what I had to do in order to begin to see positive changes take place in my life.

I'll tell you the rest of the story in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, I encourage you to take a closer look at your behaviors today, to make sure that you are not letting new addictions replace your old one.

17. My Relapse, and What I Learned From It - Part 2

In the last chapter, I shared with you how I had a relapse, got desperate, and began reading 12 steps literature. Now I am going to share what I found there and why it made sense to me.

Essentially the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book is just a nickname, the book is actually pretty small) is a guidebook for the hopeless. It begins with Bill W., the founder of AA, sharing his personal struggle.

He had been drinking for many years. At first he didn't think anything was wrong with him, but eventually he couldn't deny that his life was completely out of control. He then proceeded to try to quit drinking.

He first tried self-control; that didn't work. Then he tried getting a psychological understanding of his problem; that didn't work. Then he tried locking himself in a recovery center – but as soon as he was out he got drunk again, so that didn't work either.

Essentially, he tried everything that modern medicine at the time (late 1930s) had to offer, and nothing seemed to help him.

One night, he had an old drinking friend of his come over to talk to him. This friend was sober from drinking for about 2 months. Strangely, Bill said that his friend seemed to appear very happy and present.

His friend told him a story of his own, of how he was going to go to jail for his drinking and misbehaviors, but a couple of men came over and convinced the judge to let them try to save Bill's friend. The judge agreed and Bill's friend went out with these two men.

The two men were part of a religious Christian movement called the [Oxford Group](#), and in essence their belief was that we human beings, were very poor managers of our own lives and that God could do a much better job of managing

our life than we could. They have also worked out certain steps and principles to follow in order to achieve just that.

Additionally, Bill became aware of an idea that drunks existed throughout the history of the world, and usually most of them died from the eminent death, except for a few exceptions.

Every once in a while, some of the drunks claimed to have an intense “spiritual experience”, where they found their connection to God. After which they usually would stop drinking altogether for the rest of their lives, and became very religious.

The problem was that Bill W. didn't believe in God. He agreed that perhaps there was a certain rule, law or energy source that governs the entire universe, but he couldn't believe in anything else.

That is when his friend suggested that instead of adopting the traditional vision of God, Bill would **create any description of God that would make sense** to him. (This I believe is the crucial point to the success of AA).

Bill remembered this idea. At a later time in his life, Bill found himself committed to a mental hospital yet again for his drinking problem. He overheard his doctor talking to his wife, saying that this time Bill finally did it, and chances are his brain will not recover from another drinking spree, and if Bill were to get drunk again, his life expectancy would likely be less than a few months.

That is when Bill attempted to talk to God in his hospital room, asking God to save him. Then Bill claimed to have an "intense spiritual experience" where he saw a very bright white light, and he was able to fall asleep.

It is a historical fact that Bill W. did stop drinking after that day. When he left the hospital, he went on to share his vision with other alcoholics. Eventually, he broke

away from the Oxford Group because its membership was too broad, and created a group designated specifically for alcoholics.

Bill's followers went out and actively began to share their story with other alcoholics, and their membership grew to about a thousand people. By that time, the group existed for about 2-3 years, allowing many of the members to get and stay sober. That is when Bill W. wrote the Big Book of AA, which was reviewed and edited by the entire group, and later published.

The book was not an overnight success, but it did create a revolution in how the world saw addiction and created one of the most popular treatments for it – a 12 steps group. Hundreds of different groups have adapted Bill's vision in one way or another, and are using it to help people overcome all kinds of different problems from overeating to sex addiction.

Let me bring you back a little to Alex's story...

Remember how I shared in the last chapter that I began to watch a lot of horror movies during my relapse? Well, it didn't stop there. As I continued to feed my addiction, my behavior continued to progressively get out of control.

The problem was not that I didn't know how to stop. The problem was that I didn't know how to manage my life if I did stop. I knew that if I were to do an ERP practice, I would not watch anything. I wanted to watch it though; I wanted to watch it really bad because I couldn't stand to take the void, the emptiness that I was feeling. I just had to make it go away, to escape no matter what the price was.

At the same time, I realized that I could not rely on my addiction to take away this void, but I just didn't know what else to turn to. So I continued to try to manage my addiction, through limited exposures and "white lies" (as I saw them at the time) to my girlfriend.

What I was actually doing was practicing my addiction, and reinforcing some of the negative beliefs that kept me trapped in the first place.

As I progressed further into more intense behaviors, I could no longer deny to myself that I'd fallen off the wagon. I felt desperate, I felt out of control, I felt like I'd tried everything humanly possible, and I didn't know what to do.

That is when I went back to the 12 steps literature; I downloaded an audio book version of the Big Book of AA, and listened to it. And I bought the idea. I really felt like turning my life over to God, however I understood God, was the only thing that was left for me to do.

I still was facing one big problem though. Should I tell my girlfriend about my relapse? She was so happy with my recovery; I didn't think I could hurt her again. I told her that I was thinking of attending a 12 steps meeting (AA like meeting) for sex addicts, and she asked me why I felt like I needed to go.

I reassured her (lied) that everything was OK, and I just was curious to check it out. Few days after that I was laying in bed, thinking over what I was to do with my life. I asked myself, what would God want me to do? And instinctively I felt that God would want me to tell the truth to my girlfriend. That is when I made a decision to tell her, to do what God would want me to do, and hope that the rest will work itself out.

After I made this decision, my anxiety went away. I know it will sound cheesy, but I also saw a white light in my inner eye, I felt really happy and pure, and I was able to quickly fall asleep.

Few days later I came clean to my girlfriend, and few weeks after that I made it to my first 12 steps meeting.

Since then, many things have changed. I do not blindly believe everything that AA tells me. I did a lot of my own research (which I will share with you in future

posts), and found out that there were many things that, I think, are wrong with AA.

Nevertheless, the 12 steps approach worked for me and is still very helpful until this day.

No, it is not perfect, but **it is good enough**. It is a powerful tool that helped me to get sober and stay sober. And I am confident that were it not for 12 steps, I would not have been able to achieve any long-term sobriety.

In the next chapter, I will share a little bit more about my take on 12 steps programs, and why I think it might be important for you.

18. What is Wrong with 12 Steps Groups, What is Right with 12 Steps Groups

In the last chapter, I talked about my experience during my relapse and how I ended up in a 12 steps program. I also suggested through my writing that the 12 steps approach might be beneficial for you.

But at the same time I want you to be very careful with 12 steps programs. There are a lot of misconceptions and straight out lies floating around this program.

That is why I ask you to always remember to **take what works for you, and leave the rest behind**.

Let me first point out just some of the things that I think are wrong with AA.

1. The 12 steps approach did not work that well (in my opinion) for Bill W.

My biggest problem with Bill W. is that he was (in my opinion) a sex addict. Here is a quote from an interview conducted by F. Hartigan with Tom Powers, the man

who helped Bill write his 2nd book, taken out of *Bill W., A Biography of Alcoholics Anonymous Co-Founder Bill Wilson*, Francis Hartigan, 2000, pages 171-172.

"All the while we were working on the 'Twelve and Twelve,'" Tom said, "I would argue with him, 'you're killing yourself. And think about what you're doing to Lois!"

Other people I spoke with insisted that Lois never knew about Bill's affairs, Tom insisted that "Lois knew everything and she didn't have to guess about it, either. A lot of people tried to protect her, but there were others who would run to Stepping Stones to tell Lois all about it whenever they saw Bill with another woman."

I asked Tom how Bill reacted when Tom would insist that Bill's guilt over his infidelities was responsible for his depressions.

"I think that was the worst part of it," he said. "Bill would always agree with me. 'I know,' he'd say. 'You're right.' Then, just when I would think we were finally getting somewhere, he would say, 'But I can't give it up.'

"When I would press him as to why the hell not, he would start rationalizing. What would really kill me is when he'd say, 'Well, you know, Lois has always been more like a mother to me.' Which somehow was supposed to make it all right for him to cheat on her."

Tom himself had also been sexually compulsive even after he quit drinking, and he found it very hard to change his behavior.

Tom said that it took him five years after he quit drinking to change his behavior in this area, and for five years after that, he tried to get Bill to change, too. "Besides what he was doing to the women he was chasing and to Lois, his behavior was a huge source of controversy in AA," Tom said. "He could be very blatant about it, and there were times when it seemed like the reaction to a particularly flagrant episode would end up destroying everything he had worked for. But then people would scurry around and smooth things over, or cover it all up."

According to Tom, Bill's behavior caused some of his most ardent admirers to break with him. Eventually, Tom broke with Bill, too.

"I told him that I still considered him to be my sponsor, but that I didn't want to work with him anymore. I said that I hoped we could be friends, but I didn't want to have anything more to do with him publicly. I just couldn't go on feeling as though I was in any way supporting what he was doing to Lois – and to himself.

"Bill said, 'Fine. I feel the same way about you, too,' and we shook on it. As though it were some mutually agreed upon parting of the way, with fault on both sides. Which was a real switcheroo, you know. I think he knew that I saw right through it, but I guess it made him feel better not to have to take responsibility for destroying what had been a very enjoyable and productive working relationship."

2. People are stuck in the past and accept everything Bill W said blindly.

If you go to a 12 steps meeting, you will find that a lot of people are religiously reading 12 steps literature (just 2 books really), turning to it as "THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE".

I like those books too. They have a lot of good points in them. They helped me to get sober. But they are far from perfect. And I think it is important to look at them in a historical perspective, considering the authors who wrote them. Additionally, I think that there many other good books out there that are worth reading and studying as well.

This point is also bad because people are ignoring all of the scientific and spiritual discoveries that were done by other people in the past and in the present.

Last but not least, it forces people to persistently repeat some of the beliefs that are possibly wrong, which can have a very scary effect when viewed in terms of the A-B-C-D model.

3. Its scares people who are seeking help away. Simply put, 12 steps meetings are a little strange. They look like a cult, and it scares people away, forcing them to

suffer on their own, until they get really desperate for help. A lot of times, people will not come back for help until after they lost their marriage, jobs, or freedom (got arrested).

There are, however, many things that I think are right with 12 steps programs.

1. It is a social support group.

You are surrounded by people who are going through exactly the same experience that you are going through.

It is not uncommon for addicts to be socially isolated. For many, including myself, 12 steps groups become a safe place, to learn to connect to others and make friends.

2. Safe Group Therapy

There is a saying in 12 steps, you are only as sick as your worst secrets. Yet you cannot share some of your secrets with anybody. 12 steps groups provide me with a safe place to share exactly what is going on in my life. I know that I can be completely honest and that nobody will judge me, and that most of the people will be able to relate to my experience.

3. Moral Encouragement

Sometimes our addiction can be very devastating, so it is very encouraging to see others who were able to stay sober for an extended period of time.

Additionally, 12 steps groups provide a framework for you to monitor your own progress. By giving you an opportunity to announce the amount of time you were sober, and celebrate your achievement.

4. Free Advice and Experience of Others

While I criticized 12 steps for only reading out of 2-3 books, I want to praise them for another tradition. Usually after the reading is over, members get to share. This part is extremely beneficial, because you get to learn from other people's experience, and see what has worked or did not work for them.

After the meeting, you get a chance to interact with other members, which gives you an opportunity to receive some feedback on your personal struggles.

Additionally, most 12 steps members ask a more experienced member to be their sponsor, and through that they gain access to somebody who has "been there, done that".

5. The Infrastructure is Already in Place

12 Steps Groups are huge organizations; they have thousands of in-person, phone, and online meetings all over the world. All of these meetings are organized through mostly volunteer work and donations.

In other words, there is no need to re-invent the wheel. There is already a support group of like-minded individuals put in place that anybody can go to in order to get help.

6. Provides a Structured Program of Action

Twelve steps meeting are called 12 steps for a reason. There is a structured program of recovery that is put in place that many members are advised to take.

Historically, Bill W. took 6 steps of the Oxford Group and transformed these with the help of his group members into the 12 steps of AA.

Through the 50-plus years of AA and other 12 steps groups' existence, these steps have been interpreted and re-interpreted thousands of times by thousands of people. This allowed them to develop a series of very helpful exercises.

So while in my opinion 12 steps groups are far from perfect, they are definitely **good enough** and provide a great tool that we can use, in addition to everything else, to help us maintain our recovery.

Next, I am going to walk you through the basic structure of 12 steps meetings, so that if you decide to visit one in the future, you will know exactly what to expect.

Have a wonderful and sober day!

19. 12 Steps - 101

Previously, I talked about some of the benefits of 12 steps groups. Today, I want to spend some time reviewing the basic structure of 12 steps groups so you will be prepared in case you decide to visit one in the future.

Usually at the meetings, people are seated in a circular formation, with one person, a secretary, leading the meeting. Before the meeting starts, the secretary passes out a number of readings (single sheets of paper) that the people will be asked to read throughout the meeting.

The secretary starts the meeting by greeting everybody and reading the introduction. After this, he or she asks somebody to read the "Preamble" (one of the readings passed on earlier), as well as "How it Works", "12 Steps", and "12 Traditions".

After the general reading is over, the secretary might ask if there are any visitors to the meeting. This is usually anybody who is visiting from out of town, or is new to the meeting but does not consider himself to be a newcomer.

Afterwards, the secretary would ask all of the newcomers to introduce themselves. A newcomer is anybody who is in their first 30 days of sobriety. So if you were sober for 20 years, but then had a slip, you are still considered to be a newcomer for the first 30 days.

After the newcomers, everybody in the room would introduce themselves. The introduction is usually something like this: "Hi, I am Alex and I am a Sex Addict." After which everybody would say: "Hi Alex."

After the introduction, the meeting can take a number of forms, which usually will be explained by the secretary.

One of the most common forms is for one person to choose a reading for that day (usually something from the Big Book of AA or other approved literature). After the reading is complete, the reader would share his or her personal experience with the reading, and the reason why it was chosen.

After that, the secretary would say that the meeting is now open for discussion, and everybody starting from the left of the reader would have a chance to share. Share time is usually about 1-3 minutes. Some of the meetings will have a handheld hourglass that everybody is passing around to help you keep track of time.

Feel free to share anything when you get your chance to share. It could feel weird at first, but you will get used to it. If at first you don't feel like sharing (which I didn't for first few of my meetings), you can simply say "Pass". After a while you will get the feel for how the sharing works, and will see the benefit of it.

Another thing that people do during their shares is "getting current," meaning going off-subject from the reading and telling everybody about their personal struggles. Talking about what is going on in your life could be a great tool to help you clear up your head.

One thing that is not allowed in 12 step meetings is "Cross Talk". Meaning you are not supposed to make any comments or remarks about anything anybody said during the meeting, unless you can do it in very general terms during your share. This is done to make sure that the atmosphere of the meeting stays safe, and that everybody feels comfortable sharing. However, after the meeting is over, it is completely acceptable to approach any member and to relate any comments that you might have.

About 10 minutes before the meeting is over, the secretary will announce that the time for sharing has ended and will ask somebody to read "The Promises".

After that, the secretary would say something like: "It is now the time to practice 7th tradition" and you will see everybody reaching for their wallets. The 7th tradition states that 12 steps groups cannot be for profit, and will use voluntary donation to pay for the rent and other expenses. The usual donation is about one or two dollars (that is US prices, I am sure it costs a lot less in other countries).

After that, the secretary will ask everybody to join in for the Serenity Prayer. That is when everybody will get up, stand in the circle, hold hands, and say a prayer together. This part could be very weird at first, but you get used to it after one or two meetings.

After the meeting is over, members are free to go, but a lot of people stay to interact. This interaction after the meetings is perhaps one of the most important parts of the program.

Most [12 steps programs](#) have a website where you can go to find their meeting schedules, and other related information. Sometimes they will call a meeting "open" or "closed". "Open" means that anybody can go to the meeting, but "closed" is reserved only for people who consider themselves to be addicts.

You do not have to go to a newcomers' meeting, orientation or anything else like that. All you have to do is show up at whatever meeting makes sense for you. Just walk in, and people will be very helpful and will help you from there.

I am not sure how you feel about 12 steps groups by this point, but I would like to challenge you a little.

[By clicking this link](#), you will find a list of phone meetings (or telemeeting as they call them) for Sex Addicts Anonymous. The times for the meetings are listed in Pacific Standard Time, so you will have to calculate the right time for your area.

I would encourage you to find one meeting and call in.

Phone meetings are very similar to the in-person meetings that I described earlier. But in phone meetings, you really don't have to do or say anything, you are completely safe. All you have to do is call in and listen (press * 6 to mute your phone).

I think it will be a great experience for you, and you will hear people from all over the world who share a very similar problem calling in and helping each other stay sober.

I think in the next 3 days, you should be able to find some time to call into at least one meeting. Try to do that.

Warning: Right about now your brain will begin to try to come up with an excuse. Something like "I don't believe in God so I shouldn't call" or "All these people are Christian, and I am not, they will not understand me" or "I don't need to call this cult" or something else.

Call yourself on this excuse. You are not making any lifetime commitments; you are simply making this one phone call, just to expose yourself to this tool. Just in case you might need it. That is it, no pressure, no commitments.

Just remember, **take what works for you, and leave the rest behind!**

20. God's Will, or Awaken Your Stronger Self

The more I read about recovery, the more I observe the same phenomenon being described over and over again in a wide range of literature, ranging from ancient Buddhist beliefs to modern day self-help books.

This phenomenon has various names: God, Energy of the Universe, Higher Power, Observer within Us, and Our Stronger Self. But in my opinion, all of these attempt to describe one very important concept that is crucial to our well-being as humans.

I think this is happening because through centuries, people are faced with very similar struggles and they continue to come up with very similar solutions.

In this chapter, I am going to make my attempt to describe this phenomenon.

It is a very controversial subject. For most of my life I kept my views to myself, and was debating if I should do the same with this course.

In the end, I decided to share because this concept was crucial to my personal recovery. That being said, please take everything that I say with a grain of salt, and if anything contradicts your current beliefs, please ignore it.

For most of my life, I tried to be my own manager. I made decisions based on what I wanted and what I felt was right for me. It worked fairly well.

Surely I had shortcomings, but overall I was not a bad person.

This model of self-management began to really backfire on me when my addiction began to escalate. The further I fell into my addiction, the more I began to lose my values and desire things that were not reasonable or moral.

Nevertheless, I continued to look inside of myself trying to figure out what I should do with my life. I would ask things like "What do I really want to do?", and would proceed to base my life around the answers that I got.

It took me 2 years of struggling and a relapse to finally accept that "I" (my wants), cannot be trusted to keep me sober and happy, and that I must find a new way to live my life.

That is when I was finally ready to make a decision to live by "God's will". Which for me literally translated into the following commitment that I've made to myself.

From now on, I will not base my decisions on what I think is right for me at the moment, but rather based on what I feel God would want me to do at the moment.

This is what I call living by God's will.

So how do I know what is God's will for me?

I believe that every human being has an ability to connect to God or to their Stronger Self. Some people might call it intuition and some people might call it educated guess based on the prior experience. I really don't know what it is. But it is this little voice in my head, that every once in a while tells me something like "don't do this, you will regret it".

For me, living by God's will is a practice of listening to this voice and doing what it tells me to do. The more I learn to listen to this voice, the stronger it gets.

I also believe that every human being has a similar ability.

Don't get me wrong though. I am not able to always listen to this voice. Sometimes I tend to take "my will" back. Sometimes I begin reasoning with God, saying things like: "But God, you don't understand. I really want to... it will be good for me".

Usually living by "my lower self-will" results in my life getting a little bit out of hand. Just enough for me to realize that it is not working, and make me willing once again to follow God's will.

When I do follow God's will, my life seems to be working perfectly fine.

Take a moment to think back on your life. Can you identify moments when your life really seemed to work? Why did it work? What were you doing differently?

There is another issue related to God that I've struggled with in the past.

How could God let so many innocent people die in accidents and wars?

For me, this could be explained by the notion that living by God's will is not a guarantee against anything negative happening in my life. It is a guarantee, however, that I will be proud of the way I made use of whatever little time I had on this planet.

That being said, I do believe that if I live by God's will, my chances of having a quality life will greatly improve.

After all, my self will just want "it all, now, and forever". More money, more power, more sex. And if I spend my life guided by those desires, it is very likely that I will do something really stupid in one way or another.

Living by God's will, feeding the right wolf, makes chances of good, honest, and quality life seem to be much more likely.

Likely, but not guaranteed.

In any case, I encourage you to not get caught up in the terminology and look for what works instead.

What is God's will for you? I believe that only you can decide this for yourself.

But from where I stand, I believe you already have been following God's will for the past three weeks. You are reading this book. You are taking better care of yourself. You are doing your ERP practice (right?). You are doing things that help you get and stay sober. And I am proud of you!

In conclusion, I want to share something that my sponsor in a 12 steps program told me a long time ago.

"If your life doesn't work, it is because you are trying to manage it yourself. Get a new manager!"

In the next chapter, I am going to talk about one very difficult decision that I had to make, which allowed me to take my recovery to a completely new level.

21. A Tough but Important Decision

In the last chapter, I mentioned a tough decision that I had to make. That decision was turning the control of my Internet filter over to somebody else.

By that point I had used the filter for at least a year, but I kept the password to myself. I viewed the filter as a tool that I could use to block out bad stuff whenever I wanted it to be blocked.

Not surprisingly, every once in a while, I would convince myself to take off the filter for a seemingly good reason. Yet when the filter was gone, I would end up doing something that I did not consciously plan on.

After a few slips, I finally was ready to step my program of recovery up a notch. One of the things that I realized I had to do was to let somebody else manage my password.

This decision provided 2 benefits:

1. I could no longer disable the filter when I was tempted.
2. I knew at all times that I WILL BE accountable for my actions.

Remember that saying that you are only as sick as your secrets?

Having a filter and another person monitoring my Internet use has taken the anonymity out of my online presence.

I must say that I do occasionally find myself around unfiltered computers, and still manage not to act out. I am able to do so because I have a completely different frame of mind than when I use filtered computers.

On unfiltered computers, I stay very careful with my actions, because I know that I am only one click away from making a mistake.

When I am on my filtered computer, I don't have to monitor my actions – 99.99% of the time the filter does its job, so I am able to browse the healthy side of the Internet without taking too much risk.

Let me talk a little about the software that I use:

For the filter, I use K9 Web Filter : <http://www1.k9webprotection.com/>

This filter is completely free and works really well. I keep it at default settings, which blocks everything that needs to get blocked. Additionally, the filter keeps a detailed record of my Internet activity.

Last but not least, the filter is configured to disable my access to the Internet, between the hours of 11:30pm and 6:00 am, since I find this block of time to be the most dangerous. It also helps me to insure that I get a proper amount of sleep everyday.

I also use Mozilla Firefox as my Internet browser: <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/firefox.html>

The reason that I use Firefox is that it has a very important add-on that can be installed inside the browser – Addblock Plus : <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1865/>.

This add-on blocks most of the Internet ads. This is very important because the Internet marketers are very well aware of the fact that sex sells, and they are trying to use this knowledge as often as possible.

When I had a work computer on which I could not install Internet filter, I opted in for the next best thing – accountability software.

The program that I used was called Covenant Eyes:
<http://feedtherightwolf.nfshost.com/link/CovenantEyes.php>

This program is not free, it costs \$8 per month, but I believe it is worth the price.

The way this program works is that you install it on your computer, and it tracks your Internet use. Once a week, Covenant Eyes emails a detailed report of your Internet use to your accountability partner.

There is a free alternative - X3 Watch: <http://x3watch.com/x3watch.html>

But in my experience Covenant Eyes is a much better program. It provides much more accurate reports and it is much more reliable. In other words, you get what you pay for.

I advise you to take the next day to experiment with all 3 programs. I am not saying that you should give up your privacy now. I simply want you to be familiar with these programs, so you know where to go if you ever need them in the future.

In two days, I am going to share with you one of the last pieces of knowledge that I used in my recovery. It has to do with the "feeling of emptiness inside of me" that I have had since I was a teenager, and how I was finally able to realize what was causing this feeling.

Please [let me know](#) if you run into any difficulty with the software.

22. The Emptiness Inside of Me, and How to Fill It Up

In the last chapter, I mentioned a condition that I call "an Emptiness Inside of Me". Let me explain a little better what I mean by that.

When I was a teenager in high school, I got to listen to a presentation given by an alcoholic. She talked to us about her childhood and teenage years, how she felt that she didn't belong to the world, could not connect to others, and how she felt this "emptiness" inside of her.

She then went on to tell that when she first tried alcohol, she felt confident and the feeling of emptiness disappeared. She shared how slowly, over time, her use of alcohol became excessive, and how she was finally able to stop.

In the end, she summarized by telling us to remember that alcohol was not the answer to our problems.

I remember that after her presentation, I was left wondering: you told us what the problem was, and you told us what not to do to solve it, but what should I do? How can I fill this emptiness inside of me?

I come from a family of alcoholics, so I knew that drugs and alcohol were not the answer. Unknowingly, I developed a sex addiction that provides me with a different way to escape my feelings.

When I was able to stop my sexual acting-out many years down the road, I found myself re-experiencing the same sense of emptiness inside of me. This time, I needed to find a healthy way to deal with those emotions.

But first I had to understand what was causing these feelings of emptiness. The book that helped me with that was [The Practicing Mind](#) by Thomas Sterner.

The ideas described in the book are not new. In actuality, the author simply took old principles from Eastern philosophy and applied them to the modern world. Same principles, worded a little differently, are seen through most of the major religions. Nevertheless, there was something about the author's presentation that stood out for me.

EXPECTATIONS

Ever since, I've read books, watched movies and commercials, and listened to stories of others about how life was supposed to be. The result is that I have developed a certain set of expectations of the way I would be "when I grow up".

The problem was not that I had expectations in and of itself, but rather the kind of expectations that I had. I wanted to be perfect. I wanted to do everything right

the first time. Every time something went wrong, I assumed that I just was not talented at it, and quit.

By the time I became a teenager, I began to feel "worthless" since I was not able to live up to my own expectations.

I had pre-defined expectations towards how my life was supposed to be, but life was unfolding on its own terms, and I just did not know how to handle it.

So I felt pain, and I tried to self medicate myself through watching movies, pornography, and spending more time on the Internet – anything to get my mind off reality.

I did everything I could to give myself a chance to start over. I changed schools, countries, girlfriends, joined the military, hoping that every new endeavor would finally fix me. But no matter what I did, eventually I would find myself back in square one – disappointed and unhappy with myself.

What I didn't realize was that I already was perfect this whole time. Perfect at being myself.

Let me ask you a question, at what time is a dog perfect at being a dog? Is it perfect when it is just a puppy? Or is it perfect when it is fully grown? Or is it perfect when it is old, calm, and wise?

It is a funny question. A dog is always perfect at being a dog. It might change its appearance based on the stage of life it is in, but it is not getting any better or worse. It is just being a dog.

It's the same case with me. I am perfect at being myself. I am pretty bad at being Superman, Batman, Bruce Lee, or Bill Gates. But I am perfect at being Alex.

The reason that I "failed" at everything is because I never really took the time to practice it. Whenever I would try to learn a new skill, let's say playing a guitar, I never had the patience to practice. I would try playing, having pre-defined expectations of where I wanted to be. After a while, I would compare the music that I was producing to the results that I was hearing and get discouraged and stop practicing altogether.

In other words, I was only interested in the result, knowing how to play a guitar, and viewed the required process of practice, as an unwanted sacrifice that I had to deal with in order to get the result that I wanted.

Therefore, the key to a successful practice is to have a proper set of expectations. Instead of expecting certain results, it is better to simply expect yourself to be fully emerged in the process of learning.

It is amazing how my experience with learning changed by simply changing my expectations. What used to be a painful, boring task transformed into something easy and fun. Since my only expectation was to be emerged in the process, I could constantly meet my expectations, by simply doing what I was doing. And it felt good too.

Life is a Journey, not a Destination. We all have heard it before, the trick is to apply it.

In 12 steps, they say progress and not perfection. I would add process and not perfection or process and not results. If you keep engaging in the process, the results will take care of themselves.

This is not an easy task. As with other techniques that we've discussed, I constantly have to bring them back into my awareness, and continue to practice them. My life seems to get quickly out of control as soon as I let it run on autopilot.

I will summarize all of the techniques that we talked about in the next chapter, and try to point you to a number of other resources that you can use to further enhance your recovery.

23. Thank You for Your Time! Course Summary Inside

We have reached the end of this course. I am very thankful for you taking time and reading everything I had to say.

I want to summarize everything that we've talked about up to this point, also to point you in the right direction so you can continue your journey of recovery.

Summary

In our course, we've talked about:

- Chemical Changes that Take Place Inside an Addict's Mind
- The Addictive Cycle and Point of No Return
- Triune Brain Model and How it Affects Our Decision Making
- A Small Thing that You Can Do Every Day to Strengthen Your Thinking Brain (Journaling, Delaying Gratification, Delaying Your Actions, and Breathing)
- Exposure and Response Prevention Technique
- Sexual Recovery Plan
- A Strategy of Using as Many Different Techniques as You Can at the Same Time to Break Free
- A-B-C-D-E Model (Activating Event, Belief, Consequence, Debate, Exercise)
- Some of the Most Common Beliefs that Kept me Trapped
- Mini-ERP and How to Deal with Small Triggers
- Understanding Why Some Days are more Triggering than Others
- An Exercise to Help us Create a Vision for the Rest of Our Lives
- Introduction to 12 Steps Groups
- "God's Will" or "Our Stronger Self" Concept

- Filtering and Accountability Software
- How Expectations Affect Our Quality of Life

What to Do Next?

Below, I am going to outline some of my suggestions to help you maintain your recovery.

Establish a Daily Routine

This could include all of the things that we've talked about before

- Healthy Eating
- Proper Hydration
- Proper Rest
- Exercising
- Meditation
- Journaling
- Making Phone calls to Friends in Recovery
- Going to Religious or Spiritual Groups
- Anything Else You Can Think of that is Healthy

I would like to recommend one book that is a great help in my Daily Practice. It's called [*Answers in the Heart*](#). It has short passages for every day of the year, and it helps me to get my brain in the right mindset every morning.

Social Support

Get actively involved in a social group. I would highly recommend a 12 steps program, but if it doesn't work for you there is plenty of other options that you can turn to. It could be a religious group, Toastmasters group, a men's or

women's club. All of this will work, but the groups have to meet at least once a week, and there has to be a lot of new people around you.

Use this group to practice your social skills. I know you probably don't feel like doing it, but that is exactly why you should do it! True changes only happen when we get out of our comfort zone.

My sponsor in 12 steps asked me to commit to going to at least 3 meetings a week, and calling 2 people every day. When I asked him how long I had to do it for, he said until you want to do it.

My sponsor was right, when I got over the social anxiety and gained experience of interacting with others, social groups became fun.

Reading

Reading really is the key. We live in a world where information is greatly available. If you have a problem with anything, chances are somebody already had a similar problem, figured it out, and wrote a book about it.

And I don't just mean books related to addiction.

Now that you are no longer completely blinded by your addiction, you will begin to notice other problems popping up in your life, that you previously were too busy to pay attention to.

Instead of trying to figure them out yourself, try to get a few good books on the subject, and read them first. Chances are it will make your life a lot easier.

I am going to recommend one book to you that I think will be very beneficial.

[The Practicing Mind](#)

I have talked about this book but barely scratched the surface. I love this book, and it was very helpful for me. Do not get the audio book though. This book was meant to be read not listened.

Other Recovery Programs

1. [Recovery Nation](#)

This is a free web-based program. It was created by a sex addict in recovery who already passed away, but the site is maintained by his followers. It is a good recovery spot on the Internet.

2. [Candeo Can](#)

This program costs \$47 per month, and it covers a lot of the similar material already enclosed in this course. But it does so in video lectures, going in a little bit more detail, and the program is created by real doctors. If you can afford the payment, I would recommend it as a good way to reinforce some of the basics already learned in this course.

3. [12 Steps Groups](#)

I know I already mentioned it in the social groups section, but 12 steps also have a program of recovery aspect to it. It is free and it is in person. You get to choose a sponsor who has been sober for a very long time. And it is very insightful. It is a 2 in 1 deal (social and recovery), and I highly recommend it.

That is it :) This is the end of the course.

Thank you so much for your time! If you want to stay updated, make sure to sign up for my email list.

Meanwhile, I wish you all of the best in your new life!

Your friend in recovery,
Alex