

Thank you for your interest in this topic. If you have any questions about this, or any issue, please contact our office at 214-642-8737

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## Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

### ▣ Getting Started Correctly- Wholeness Toward Relationships

Based on the information from the past two months of articles on the subject of compulsive sexual acting out—a sexual addiction results from an abuse of the natural sex drive that each person is born with. The abuse can start at any time in life and then progresses until it becomes a compulsion that the sexually addicted person cannot cope with. The sexual addiction eventually affects every part of the individual's life, including self-respect, relationships with family and friends, and finances and career. For the sexually addicted person, sex is not the profoundly wonderful experience it is supposed to be. A sexual addiction is like alcohol to an alcoholic and drugs to a junkie. It is a fix that the sexually addicted person will do just about anything to get. It is a compulsive drive that brings short term thrills and long term miseries. And just like alcohol or drugs, overcoming it can be the most important decision in a man's life.

### ▣ Stages Of Change

Of the people I have seen in counseling, it has been my experience that admitting to having an out-of-control sexual struggle is one of the hardest confessions a man may ever make to another person. And Satan wants men to hide their struggles so he can get them alone and deceive them with lies such as

"the problem is under control" or "you will never change." A man might fool himself by saying, "I don't have a problem with addictive masturbation and pornography. Everyone does it." But change is possible. In their book, *Changing For Good*, (1992) Fred Prochaska and Ralph DiClemente present the following internal and psychological readiness model to identify and help people take the necessary steps for effective change. As men start to talk about their struggles with others who can help them change they will begin to see that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The first stage is *Precontemplation* wherein the individual does not see a need to change whether it is due to an unawareness or an under-awareness (i.e. unable to see the problem and therefore resistant, reluctant or denying any willingness for treatment).

Therefore, a *precontemplation* intervention strategy in getting started is to be honest with the individual by providing them information on the magnitude of the problem and the serious consequences to follow (see January edition, 2004). It is sometimes at this stage where they lack an awareness of the severity of their compulsive behavior. Or, the individual may compartmentalize their actions and thoughts while keeping them secret. Consider the following confession: "For over 20 years, I lied to myself that my addiction was normal and that there must be thousands like me out there who silently acted upon their addictions as normally as I did. I

secretly spent hours pouring over magazines and pictures on the Internet. I had convinced myself that my sexual addiction had no bearing whatsoever on my professional life, nor had it any bearing on my marriage. I was always angry at those close to me for some inexplicable reason. The stronger my obsession became, the angrier I got. I was living a lie, and it was taking over my life." Within this first stage I have found three observable progressive phases in an individual's failed attempts to stop their addictive behavior:

1. The person attempts to rid the addictive desire.
2. The desire returns days or even years later.
3. He resists the returning desire until he can't fight it any longer. Then, since he has no way of coping with the desire, he returns to the addictive behavior.

This three-phase experience illustrates how the person attempts to consistently exclude from his consciousness a thought or feeling that is determined to be threatening. It is the most common reason that an individual has difficulty overcoming any addiction, especially sex addiction. In attempting to help stop their addictive behavior, you'll probably find some of these familiar symptoms:

- Living in fear of experiencing an addictive desire they have trouble getting rid of.

- Resorting to other addictive behaviors, including overeating, drinking, drug use, smoking, workaholism, compulsive exercise, or obsessive sexual activity.
- Excruciating pain when trying to push the desire out of their mind.
- Feeling as if a ticking time bomb of addictive desire resides within and will explode any minute.
- Anxiety, depression or anger when experiencing a strong, long-lasting addictive desire.

So, how can we help the individual move to a place of freedom? What will it take to help them be willing to share the truth and be vulnerable?

### ☐ Sharing The Pain

One of the reasons people do not succeed in overcoming compulsive sexual acting out behavior is that they don't accurately identify the problem. Stage Two: *Contemplation*. In order for the behavior to be admitted they must seek to understand the story of how they have gotten to this place. Often a man may be ambivalent while going through a lot of pros/cons thinking. This is also known as a "decisional balance" where justification of the behavior is coupled with minimization: i.e. "Even though it feels good, next time it happens I'll stop." According to recent clinical data, 64% of men have daily thoughts about intense sexual fantasies, or urges with multiple sex partners or masturbation most frequently through the internet (Raymond, Coleman, & Miner, 2003). Sadly, 70% of all internet porn is viewed during 8AM-5PM work day.

Interpretation: men struggling with compulsive behavior are viewing the material in their office or work place.<sup>1</sup> Even though 68% tried to resist an intrusive thought involving compulsive sexual behavior, approximately 70% reported a sense of gratification after following through with their thoughts (Raymond, Coleman, & Miner, 2003). A *contemplation* intervention strategy may prove helpful by working with the individual in weighing the pros/cons in changing their behavior. It is important for the individual to *name* what has affected him and to deeply *feel* the disappointments of relationships and unfulfilled dreams. Therefore, a helpful strategy is to provide an awareness that some kind of problematic behavior exists socially, occupationally, and spiritually. Point out- via conscious awareness- the justification and minimization coping mechanisms they are using for their behavior. God gives a man over to the consequences of what he has attached his heart to (Rom. 1:24). Until he experiences these consequences and takes ownership for his behavior it is impossible to move forward to the next stage.

### ☐ Taking Action

As a man begins to comprehend and accept God's response to his sin, his attachment to the shame of pornography will begin to loosen. And experiencing these consequences can be redemptive as it wakes him up to the agonizing yet exciting truth: "I am a mess. I've been wounded,

but I've hurt many in turn." Thinking through the shaping events of their own personal stories provides the chance not only to grieve but also to consider and question what they've learned about themselves, about women, about relationships, and about God. Asking deep questions from their own heart allows men to reconsider the truthfulness of what they've learned. More important, it sets the stage for them to struggle with their God. The good news is that he can come home. By God's grace he is forgiven, and he can be different for the Lord and for others. This is the *Action* stage where the individual is ready to take the necessary steps for change. The focus has shifted from ambivalent resistant thinking to intentionally making new behavioral changes in his life. A possible intervention strategy is to restructure cognitions. Bible memorization is an excellent tool to maintain an effective line of defense (i.e. Ps. 101:3a; Mtt. 5:28; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:13). Consider the following formula:

I-Items  
P-Places  
R-Relationships

Men who are struggling with compulsive sexual behavior need to address specific *items* or triggers that activate irrational thoughts such as Centering which is learning how to function without the compulsive highs and without medicating anxiety from pre-contemplative thoughts. The goal would be to work on the activating event in their life that causes a recurring sexual thought, feeling and behavior. Then, help them identify the belief system circumventing around any fantasy, sexual urge that may lead them to compartmentalize or

<sup>1</sup> Canes, Delmonico, and Griffin, In The Shadows of the Net

rationalize the thoughts and feelings. Upon identifying their belief the next step is to discuss the consequences-i.e. discuss the false intimacy that leads to greater disconnection within marriage and family) Another intervention goal is addressing major past events (i.e. loss of a job, marital difficulties) that have caused such high levels of depression and anxiety resulting in going to certain *places* (i.e. adult bookstores, internet). To help restructure a healthy cognition ask, "What alternative changes can you make and what effect will it produce?" "What kinds of characteristics from Scripture should a man have?" "Which of those characteristics are you willing to work on?" Other suggestions may be that of helping the individual repair his ability to make attachments to others, or, cultivating the skills and mental outlook associated with genuine intimacy...learning to look for multiple attachments with a variety of individuals and groups rather than one "all or nothing," "fix it all" sexual attachment. An addicted man can seldom change on his own Prov. 27:17). He must begin talking about his problem in *relationship* to someone who is experienced in dealing with sexual addictions and with a few trustworthy men. Talking with other men can be a risky process. A man needs to be careful about those he chooses to confide in. He needs to talk with men who are aware of their own capacity to lust--men who won't be horrified or cast self-righteous stones of condemnation. He needs men who can keep his struggle confidential and who will pray for him, challenge him, and dream with him about who he could become for others and for God (1 Th. 2:11-12). Talking with a few men requires an investment of

time and heart where conversations go beyond work, sports, or hobbies. At times the conversations will be painfully uncomfortable. But if others are involved, a man will have a band of allies who can help him begin to address his sexual sin and look forward to the redemptive work God will do in his heart and life. This helps prepare a man especially when stress levels build or when he begins to lose a sense of purpose.

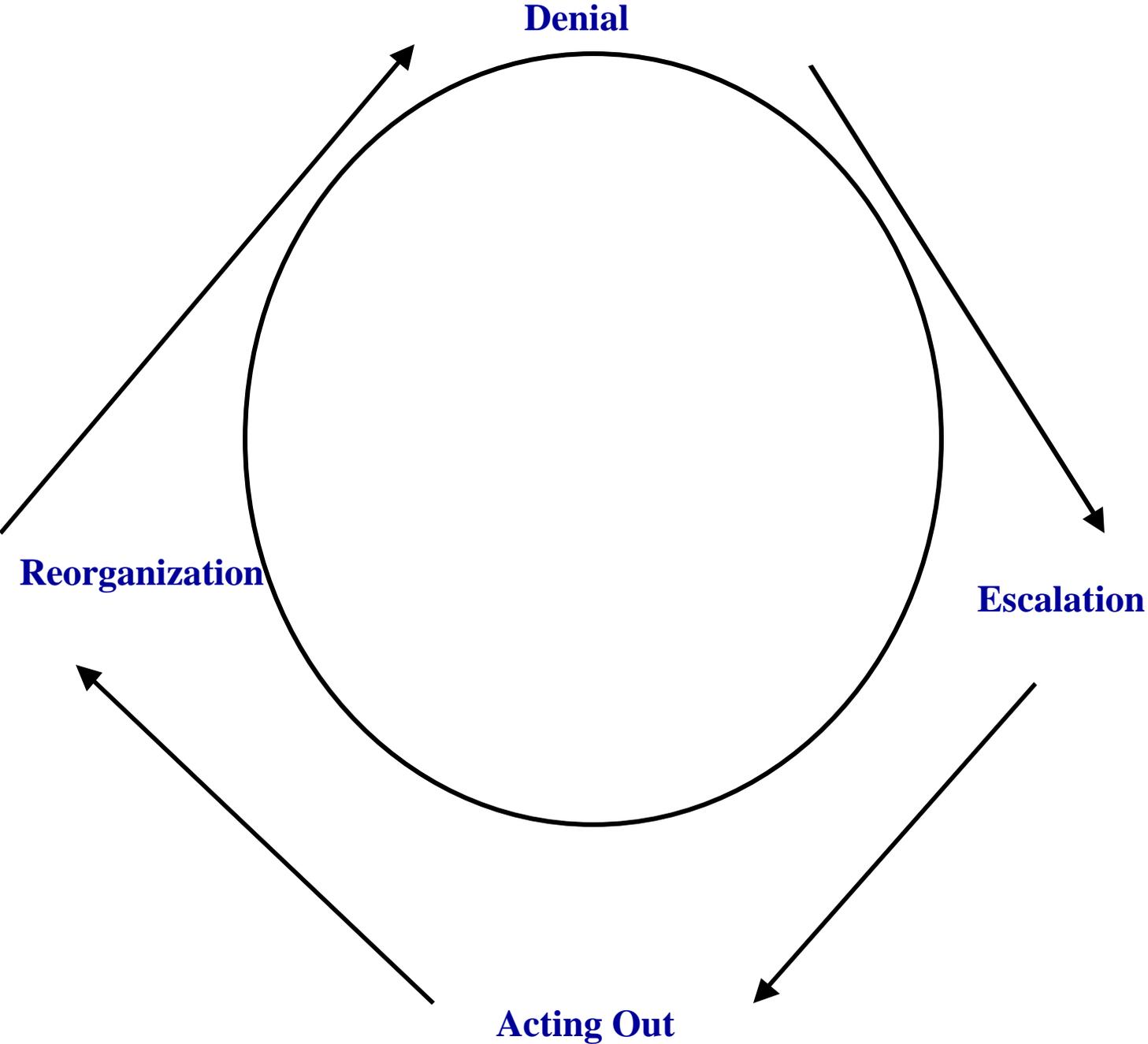
### 📖 **Staying The Course**

The next stage from Prochaska and DiClemente is the *Maintenance* stage. This involves at least a six month time frame of meeting consistently with the individual through accountability and staying focused on new healthy thoughts and feelings. Please note that even though the individual has taken ownership to his compulsive sexual fixation he will need a concerted effort for restoration in reconnecting himself to God, others, and himself (Ps. 51: 1-3, 7-12). Possible *maintenance* intervention strategies include pastoral consultations, individual counseling, men's Bible studies and devotionals, peer-accountability relationships, etc. Based on the IPR formula in the *Action stage*, it is crucial to guide the individual in **relationship** with other men so as to provide new experiences for learning and reconnecting in a manner that glorifies his Heavenly Father. The last stage in Prochaska and DiClemente's model of change is the *Relapse* stage. As a man learns how to reconnect, his struggle with disconnection through intrusive thoughts and urges can at times propel him to acting out, justifying, and minimizing so that he reverts

once again to a lifestyle of secret compartmentalization (see p. 5). As a man begins to comprehend and accept God's response to his sin, his attachment to the shame of pornography will begin to loosen. God isn't shocked by his sin. It saddens Him for sure, but He quickly reminds him that Jesus' death paid the price for his sin (Col. 1:14). He didn't just pay for *some* of our sins. He paid for *all* of them. Although our sin may result in serious consequences, God doesn't see our sin as an excuse to withdraw from Him and others. Instead, He urges us to use the reality of our sin and our shame as a reason to come to Him for restoration. God is the only One who can break a man down without crushing his spirit. While He alone can change a man's heart each of us in the helping profession have a wonderful opportunity to provide new direction in their world that was once filled with lust, anger and betrayal and to live for a higher calling with a life of freedom, purpose and hope. Each of us plays a vital part in God's purpose. While it's challenging and unpredictable at times, it's anything but boring to use our words, our gifts, our interests, our burdens in order to build relationships with people-one man at a time:

All this newness of life is from God, Who brought us back to Himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to Him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ Himself were here pleading with you, "Be reconciled to God!" (II Cor. 5:18-20)

**Sexual Addiction  
Stage Model (Price,  
1996)**





# Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

From the desk of....

**Bob Good**



**Sexual Addiction Group Meeting**  
**Tuesday Nights at 7:00 pm**  
**Location: SCA office**



Dear Educator and Ministry Leader:

Did you ever notice... that food with half the calories costs twice as much? ...that the only vacant parking space is always on the other side of the street? ....that a penny for your thoughts is now a quarter? ...that there are always more last-minute details than there are last minutes? Indeed the test of any man's character is being able to put up with **change**. I'm reminded that for many years, ABC television produced The Wide World of Sports show. At the opening they would show "the agony of defeat" of a painful ending to an attempted ski jump. The skier appeared in good form as he headed down the jump, but then, for no apparent reason, he tumbled head over heels off the side of the jump, bouncing off the supporting structure. What viewers didn't know was that he chose to fall rather than finish the jump. Why? As he explained later, the jump surface had become too fast, and midway down, he realized if he completed the jump, he would land on the level ground, beyond the safe landing area, which could have been fatal. As it was, the skier suffered no more than a headache from the tumble all because he decided to make a **change**. To change one's course in life can be a dramatic and sometimes painful undertaking, but **change** is better than a fatal landing at the end.

For the past few months we have been investigating the slippery slope of sexual addiction and the inevitable consequences of personal and occupational ruin that occurs when a man refuses to acknowledge his destructive behavior. For example, the consequences may include **severe depression**, often with suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, shame, self-hatred, hopelessness, despair, helplessness, intense anxiety, loneliness, moral conflict, contradictions between ethical values and behaviors, **fear of abandonment, spiritual bankruptcy, distorted thinking, remorse, and self-deceit**. Men who are sexual addicts will frequently say to themselves, "This is the last time that I am going to..." yet they will find themselves ultimately feeling driven to return to the same sexual situations, despite previous commitments to change. Having identified the signs and symptoms of compulsive sexual behavior from the last two month's articles the objective for this newsletter is to discuss what strategies are available in order to assess and help the individual make positive changes in his life. A characteristic of addiction, particularly for sexual addicts, is their difficulty maintaining a clear focus on personal beliefs, values and goals, when faced with situations that potentially involve intensity, arousal, stimulation and impulsive acting-out. This is where the best of intentions, the "please trust me just one more time" and all of the promises "to be good", go out the window. Without clearly defined boundaries, the sex addict is vulnerable to deciding "in the moment" what action is best for him/her. So, therefore make the right change is much better than a fatal ending in one's marriage, job, or family. This article is dedicated to serve those in the helping profession maintain a clear focus on recovery choices regardless of the situation or momentary motive. Because, the good news is that any man can change. And, by helping people see life from the perspective that there is hope will lift them above the magnitude of their problem and know the honor and meaning of being a warrior for God's purposes.

Sincerely,  
Bob



## Upcoming Free Workshop

Please RSVP



### How To Counsel Men With Compulsive Sexual Behavior—March 31, '04

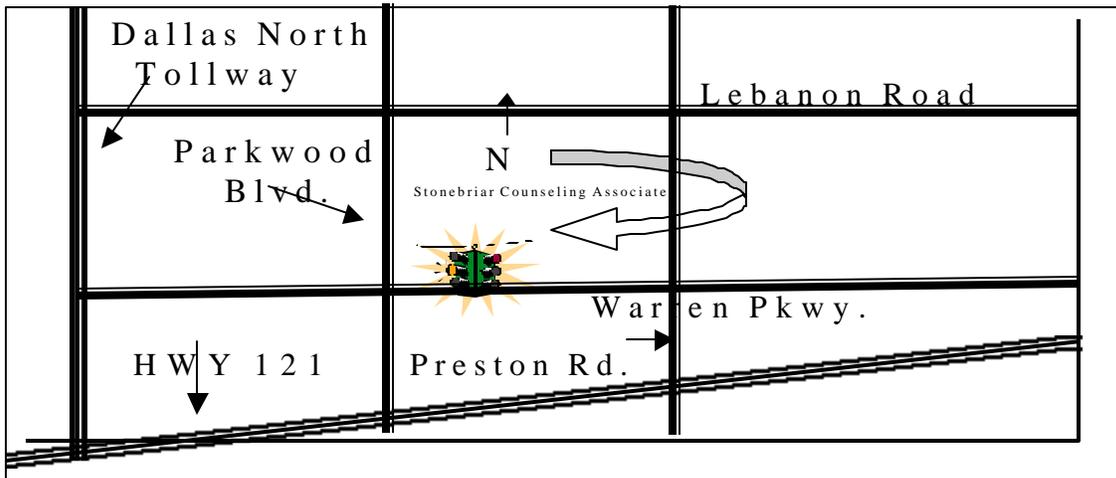
(Free Coffee and Donuts) Time: 6:30 PM

Location: 3550 Parkwood Blvd., Suite 301, Bldg. C, Frisco, Texas

Call SCA office at 214-642-8737 to register



**New Location!!**



### Mission Statement

Stonebriar Counseling Associates (SCA) is purposefully passionate in providing quality psychotherapy from a Christian perspective that influences the treatment of psychological, emotional, and mental health issues.

To this end, SCA is committed to glorify God by:

- Believing that each person has the innate ability for personal growth and wholeness.
- Seeking a variety of approaches to help you learn new skills and find more choices so as to manage life's changes with a broader range of solutions for recognizing your strengths.
- Accepting all people with respect and love regardless of age, sex, race, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status.
- Thoughtfully affirming and carefully following the morals of the Christian faith and the ethics of the professional governing boards.
- Providing research and development for new and innovative programs, seminars, and workshops in order to further the well-being and self-sufficiency of each client.