

SCA DC NEWSLETTER

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By SCA Metro DC Intergroup

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My Story

By Brent M.

When I first entered this program, I assumed my struggles were about having been arrested 3 times for public sex, the inordinate amount of time I spent watching porn on the Internet, the fear I had about having sex with minors, the dangers I took chatting online, the inability to be monogamous in my prior relationships, the guilt I had about not revealing my HIV+ status to sexual partners, or the shame I experienced when I would meet someone I knew at an acting out place.

The list of rationalizations for all this is impressive, but the bottom line always: No one was harmed! Everybody does it! This is just not a Big Deal! Sounds familiar? What I have slowly (and I mean at a glacial pace) learned in this program and with the help of therapy is that these actions are simply the manifestation of deeply-rooted issues formed over the years and left smoldering, ready to catch fire at any time.

I couldn't comprehend this because, by all appearances, I had a normal - dare I say happy childhood. I wasn't abused. My parents did not divorce.

I grew up the last of six kids, yet led a fairly isolated childhood. Instead of playing with my brothers and sisters or doing things with my parents and thereby learning how to connect with others, I did things on my own and became the most self-sufficient child imaginable. I convinced myself I didn't need encouragement because it wasn't coming anyway.

I realize now that isolation at that age is dangerous. Like any teenager, I found masturbation and that only deepened my isolation. I knew I was unhappy, but had no one to talk to about it and no concept on how to address it.

Not surprisingly, I didn't make friends easily - I didn't know how. By the time I hit Junior High, I was beginning to recognize that I was different. I liked other boys and that scared the heck out of me. Hard as I tried, I wasn't fitting in.

I broke out some in High School, when I went to boarding
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How I Worked Through Withdrawal

By Craig B.

It was 3:22 am and I was wide awake. I hadn't, until recently, awoke in the middle of the night for no known reason. After asking a few program folks, I came to the decision that this was part of my having to move through withdrawal. Every person's withdrawal is different. For me, waking up the middle of the night, then going back to sleep became a pattern. It still exists from time to time. I needed to remember that my Sex and Love Addiction was my survival tool that helped me make it through life. Unfortunately, this friend of mine was making my life a living hell. And, on top of that, working the first three steps to stay sober from my determined bottom line led to withdrawal - sleeplessness, irritability, unexpected sadness, with bouts of crying for hours. Sometimes I ate everything in sight. Other times I lost my appetite completely.

And, of course, the biggest withdrawal symptom of all, the urge to act out, became erratic and unexpected. Euphoric recall of past events was also part of the withdrawal process. For me that took the form of trying to control outcomes through romantic fantasies or reliving past acting out experiences. I needed a plan! So, here is my experience, strength, and hope from making it through withdrawal.

1. My decision to get a sponsor at my first meeting was probably the smartest thing I had done for my recovery in hindsight. Moving through withdrawal would have been a lonely, isolating event had I not done so. My commitment to keep coming back helped. For the first 2 years, I went to 5 meetings a week. I realized that was a lot; however, I didn't drink, smoke, or drug and this was a huge part of my
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SCA NEWS & EVENTS

The DC SCA Retreat Committee is starting to plan for **our next retreat**, which will be on Oct 26-28, 2007 at a retreat location near Frederick, MD. The theme of this year's retreat is **Taking Recovery to the Next Level**. Retreat brochures will be distributed in April and registration will be accepted through mid-June. For the last two years, SCA members have found the retreat experience to be very beneficial to their recovery. This year we will have more space to accommodate more SCA members. Please consider being part of this year's retreat and sign up soon!

Be part of DC SCA's online recovery support group. Email dc-sca-newsgroup-subscribe@googlegroups.com to join.

My Story continued

school. Being thrown into the social situation was sink or swim. I turned out to be extroverted, and found I could swim. In college I became President of my class; people wanted to be around me. I was not the same lonely kid in Junior High, but I still never truly believed that they like ME. They liked who I was and what I projected, but would they like the real me? I was too afraid to find out.

So, after college, I reverted to my old ways and began to lead a double life. One life was work, making friends, and even dating sometimes. The other life soothed rejections and disappointments with anonymous sex....surely no less an addictive drug than crack cocaine.

The danger, of course, was that the more I had anonymous sex, the more ashamed I felt; the more shame, the more I acted out to make myself feel better. I was trapped in the downward spiral of sex addiction, with no room for quality relationships. Eventually, I could not differentiate between a normal, healthy sex life and the deviate underground sex I was having. I had no idea how to break the cycle of my addictive behavior and to ask for help or even know that I could ask for help. Remember, self-sufficiency – good, strong; asking for help – bad, weak. I didn't know how to connect.

That is what I struggle with most – trying to see myself as a whole person and not just as a collection of my flaws and weaknesses because that ignites the addictive cycle in me that explodes like an emotional cluster bomb obliterating everything in its path. I wish the story had a happier ending, but I still don't know how to break this cycle.

What I do know, however, is that I cling to the promise of a happy ending, even if it's just a branch sticking out of a cliff. I've seen it in other people and I've had flashes of it in my own life – and it feels GOOD. It makes everything in my life better, gives me time I never thought I had, and makes my burdens lighter. So, I know it is there and that's why I keep coming back to these rooms.

Withdrawal continued

addicted life.

2. I had trouble with my addiction real early in the morning. I made myself a list of top-line behaviors from my recovery plan and I put it by the mirror in the bathroom. It's still there. Immediately upon getting up I made my bed. I brushed my teeth. I took supplements and vitamins for my well-being. I read a passage from "Answers in the Heart". Then I spent a bit of time actively ruminating over the first three steps phrase by phrase. After all, I sure did spend enough time obsessing about acting out. I agreed to eat some sort of healthy breakfast. At first it was a can of slim fast. It's evolved into eating various breakfast bars.

3. I had made a recovery plan, with bottom line, gray areas, and top line behaviors. I started using the tools that would help me become more willing to have the courage to move through the sleeplessness, the crying, and especially the urges to call people that I had determined were unhealthy for me. Then I agreed to abstain from going anywhere near places where I could act out. I made a plan of alternate routes I could actively take to avoid any place where I could break my bottom line.

4. On the way to work, I spent some time passively meditating on the reading from "Answers in the Heart" while I drove. Then I started making phone calls. Every couple of hours I made a call to someone. If they weren't available, I just left a message saying that I was committing to the pledge for sobriety. If all else failed, I got into the habit of book-ending tasks that brought me near acting out situations as a part of living my life.

5. I didn't know when any of the symptoms of withdrawal were going to pop up. But I had a plan of action in place. Some of the literature that helped was reading the SCA's little blue book. I read the educational books on Sex Addiction (like "Hope and Recovery"). Later a piece of literature was developed called "Moving through Withdrawal".

6. For 2 years I did not have the internet in my house. Later that evolved into no late night work on the computer. I either spent less time, or avoided any person I determined was too toxic for my recovery.

I have found that taking these steps have helped me to make it through the withdrawal process.

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