

STEP ONE¹

"We admitted that we were powerless over lust -- that our lives had become unmanageable."

The twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, adapted by Sexaholics Anonymous, are the greatest force yet found in battling addictions of any kind. They are a path to sobriety that can bring relief to me, this suffering addict, like nothing else can.

I am a sexaholic and my life is unmanageable. The purpose of Step One is for me to become crystal clear, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that I am really a sexaholic who is powerless over lust and that my life is really unmanageable. If I become uncertain at any future time, or start to think I am cured or fully recovered, or that I no longer need the program, then I need to get out my First Step, see what I wrote, and re-convince myself.

Step One consists of two distinct parts: 1) the admission that we have a mental obsession to lust uncontrollably and that this could lead us to the brink of death or insanity, and 2) the admission that our lives have been, are now, and will remain unmanageable by us alone.

The first half of the first step -- we admitted we were powerless over lust -- is the beginning of the SA program which we strive to perfect on a daily basis. Since lust is but a symptom of our disease, we must realize that the thinking mind with its acquired traits, habits and character defects allowed itself to develop this obsession of the mind -- to lust. "By going back over our drinking [sexual] histories, we could show that years before we realized it we were out of control, that our drinking even then was no mere habit, that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression." (*Twelve & Twelve*)

This idea of personal powerlessness goes against what our thinking mind is telling us. Only through utter defeat (having hit our own bottom) are we then able to take the first step toward liberation and strength. This utter defeat is necessary so we can become convinced, beyond any doubt, that we are powerless and our life is unmanageable by us alone. Until we so humble ourselves (accept the devastating weakness and all its consequences), our sobriety -- if any -- will be precarious.

That fact that our lives were unmanageable is apparent, or else why would we be involved in SA? However, it is not readily apparent to most of us that, even now, our lives are still unmanageable by us alone. This fact must be driven home. This realization that we cannot manage our own lives forms the basis for taking each of the twelve steps of SA in sequence.

¹ This material was adapted from San Diego SA's use of the study guides from the Top of the Hill Group, an AA group. Their resources included *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Big Book), chapter 5, and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Step Three.

In the process of accepting our powerlessness and unmanageability, we must be willing to put aside false pride, the pride which nearly killed us. Although the doing of step one can be painful to the thinking mind, the road to recovery begins with surrender.

The facts of your life are just that -- facts. It is not the purpose of this step to judge where you have been right and wrong. Therefore, the purpose of writing the first step is to admit to yourself honestly that you are powerless and your life is unmanageable by your thinking alone.

The following questions are suggested as a guide in working this step. Most of the work is in thinking about the answers, dredging up the pertinent recollections, and making notes, so that I can write it out. This step should contain enough details to convince me. Sometimes it is healing for me to reveal these secret instances to someone who has achieved a period of sobriety and who can support me and guide me in my sharing with the group.

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WRITING GUIDE

1. I am a Sexaholic

In this section I do a sexual inventory. This means I write down all the things I have done sexually that I wish I hadn't. I may organize it any way I wish, from my earliest remembrances to most recent, or by subject, or in whatever order comes to mind. I put down all the details I need to put down in private. I explore how I feel about each of them now. Some questions for reflection are:

- A. What is my earliest recollection of sex? Was there anything unusual about it?
- B. Did I have any unusual pre-puberty experiences with sexual curiosity?
- C. At the outset of puberty, did I discover masturbation? Did it become compulsive and frequent? If so, has that practice continued?
- D. What about pornography? At what age, if any, did I start reading or viewing such materials? Has the practice continued?
- E. What about visualization and fantasy? Have I spent much time in this practice?
- F. What about relations with women (men)? Have I used them for self-gratification? If so, how exactly have I used them? How compulsively?

Am I aware of feelings I might have been trying to cover up by masking them with a sexual high? What were my payoffs for these actions?

2. My life is unmanageable -- I am powerless over lust.

In this section I recognize my powerlessness and how my life has become unmanageable

from my sexaholism, how have I tried to control lust but have been unsuccessful, and how my life is out of control. Some questions to guide my reflection are:

A. What has it cost me to obsess sexually? A spouse(s)? Family? Girlfriend/ Boyfriend? Job? Promotion? Money? Reputation?

B. What have I done that I didn't want to do? Whom have I associated with that I wouldn't have associated with? Where have I gone that I never would have gone? Is something other than me running my life?

C. How has my illness affected my home life? My spouse? My children?

D. How has my illness affected my work? My employment? My career?

E. How has my illness affected my finances? Have I lost income over it? Incurred significant costs?

F. How has my illness affected me legally? Have I been arrested? Could I have been arrested for what I have done? Could I have been sued?

G. How many times have I tried unsuccessfully to quit? What promises did I make myself? Did I keep them? What happened when I failed?

H. What financially brought me to SA? What were the financial incidents?

(Note: Try not to dwell on whose fault it is. So your parents didn't raise you right. Neither did their parents. We got like we are as a part of the human process.)

The only real essential of Step One is stated on the first page of *Alcoholics Anonymous*: "We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics." No book, no guide, no other person or group, no God is necessary, just the addict admitting to his innermost self that he is out of control and helpless and that lust is ruining his life. But the rest of these may help him reach that point.