## About The Tools

This leaflet outlines the tools of Sexual Recovery Anonymous, especially for beginners. It is meant to give an overview of the program and how we "work it." Many of us have found that these "tools" have helped us achieve and maintain sobriety, peace of mind and have offered us a "bridge back to life."

### Awareness, Acceptance, Action (The Three "A"s)

"The Three 'A's" can be an extremely powerful tool in coming to terms with our addiction. The first part of this tool is Awareness. We shatter our denial by becoming aware of our feelings and the nature of our disease. We do this by listening at meetings and identifying with other members' feelings and experiences. As our contact with others who have similar issues increases and our willingness to participate in our recovery increases, we find that our awareness also increases. The temptation to take action at this point is strong. Yet, it is wise for us to wait until we truly know what it is we are trying to change! Acceptance comes when we are willing to admit our feelings and experiences to ourselves and others. After this admission, we see that we are accepted by other members just as we are. From this and by simply allowing ourselves to stay with our feelings, we learn how to accept our feelings and experiences without judgment. Finally, we learn how to Accept ourselves.

Once we know and accept who we are, our Actions flow naturally. It becomes easier to see how our old behavior hurts us and we learn new ways of taking care of ourselves.

### H.A.L.T. And S.A.F.E

It is a danger sign when we are feeling Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. It is also dangerous when we are Secretive, involved in anything Abusive (to ourselves or others), out of touch with our Feelings, or feeling Empty. These signs warn us that we are heading for (or are already in) our addictive behavior.

### Literature

Literature is extremely reliable. It is always there for us. It is something we can carry with us and refer to at any time of the day or night. Because it is drawn from the experiences of many members, it carries great strength and wisdom. It gives us hope and inspiration. We learn from the example of others that it is possible to live sober, productive and serene lives.

The books Alcoholics Anonymous (the "Big Book") and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (the "Twelve and Twelve") teach us how to work our program. Out of the Shadows by Patrick Carnes, Ph.D, describes the disease of sexual addiction and co-addiction. There are other books we use in our recovery from sexual addiction, such as Came to Believe and Answers in the Heart.

Many of us have found that reading literature on a daily basis has greatly helped us in our ongoing recovery.

### Meetings

Meetings are the core of our fellowship we all contribute to and share. By attending meetings, we affirm our commitment to help ourselves recover. They are a place where we can: (1) share our experience, strength, and hope, (2) learn to accept ourselves, and (3) make a connection with others. In listening to others, we gain new insight and awareness by identifying with feelings and experiences. Meetings help us to realize that we are not alone! Everything we say is confidential—our anonymity is protected and respected. We feel encouraged to build trust towards other members and the SRA program. For beginners, we strongly recommend going to as many meetings as possible. Frequently, in the spirit of fellowship, there is time after the meeting when we can share further.

### Service

Many of us find service to be extremely helpful in maintaining our sobriety. It keeps us connected with the SRA program, which is useful since we are people who tend to isolate and "disconnect" from others.

For beginners, such simple things as helping to set up chairs or straightening up rooms at the end of a meeting can be a great way to start feeling like a part of the group. Introducing ourselves and saying hello to another newcomer is also a very important element of service.

After having been in SRA for a period of time, we can take on responsibilities at meetings by becoming a chairperson, treasurer, literature coordinator, or intergroup representative.

We can also offer our services to SRA Intergroup in a variety of other ways, including attending business meetings, volunteering for institutional meetings, working on committees, and responding to mail or telephone inquiries. These services further our commitment to the fellowship and to our sobriety.

### Slogans

Slogans are a quick way of bringing the spirit of the program home—especially when we need it most! Most of us groaned at the thought of them, but just ask any experienced members if they use them...Before we realize it, slogans have a way of appearing in our minds just when our old attitudes are about to lead us down a path of self-destruction. Here are some examples:

| EXAMPLE OF OUR OLD ATTITUDES | SLOGAN |
|---|---|
| This is hopeless....<br>I can't! I'm paralyzed with fear! | Act as If |
| I've got to understand everything before I do anything. | Analysis is Paralysis |
| I've got to fix it now!<br>It's time to run. | Don't Just Do Something, Sit There |
| I hate myself. I'm bad.<br>I'm unworthy.<br>I can whip myself into shape. | Easy Does It |
| I've got to do it all at once.<br>Who needs priorities? | First Things First |
| My life depends on it! | How Important is It? |
| I already know the answer. If I'm wrong it proves I'm unworthy. | Keep an Open Mind |
| It seems really complicated... | Keep it Simple |
| I've got to hang on...I don't trust... | Let Go and Let God |
| I don't want to hear it.<br>I already know it.<br>I know everything. | Listen and Learn |
| I'll die if I stop meddling...<br>I need to prove I'm right! | Live and Let Live |
| I'm projecting...It's too much for me...<br>I feel overwhelmed by the future. | One Day at a Time |
| I've got to do everything perfectly.<br>I've got to be perfect. | Progress, Not Perfection |
| I'll die if I don't... | This, Too, Shall Pass |
| I should have ____...<br>(fill in the blank) | Today I Won't Should All Over Myself |

### Sobriety And Abstinence

Because destructive sexual behavior so dominates our thoughts, it is essential to our recovery that, one day at a time, we let go of that behavior. Though we are powerless over our addictions, we can learn to recover with our feet (attending meetings), our minds (praying), our fingers (dialing other members), our eyes (reading literature), and our guts (sharing our feelings), which can keep us sober one day (or one hour) at a time.

Being abstinent, we find destructive urges are diminished and occur less frequently. This, in turn, allows us to see ourselves more clearly and to start building feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. In sobriety, we find "old tapes" that were set off by anger, fear, pain, frustration, guilt, obligation, etc. no longer dominate us as they used to!

### Spirituality

SRA is not allied with any sect or denomination. It is not a religious program and does not demand that we believe in anything. All of its steps are but suggestions.

At the same time, SRA is a spiritual program. Experience taught us that recovery happens when we learned to rely on a "power greater than ourselves." Most of us tried, unsuccessfully, to battle our addiction on our own and learned that when we made it a contest between self-will and the disease, the disease won every time. But when we allowed a "Higher Power" to help us, amazing things happened—we found freedom from our self-destructive behavior and experienced joy and serenity!

For some members, their "Higher Power" is God (as they understand God). For others the SRA fellowship is their "Higher Power." In any case, the only prerequisite for experiencing the spirituality of the program seems to be an open mind.

## Sponsorship

A sponsor is a sober, experienced member of SRA who is willing to help another member on a regular basis. He or she guides us in learning how to "work" the program and the Twelve Steps of SRA. When choosing a sponsor, it is important to pick someone whose program works and whose sobriety you respect. We strongly recommend that members take into account sexual considerations when choosing a sponsor (Sexual attraction can be counter-productive to the relationship.)

Many of us found it extremely helpful to get a sponsor quickly, as it kept us connected to the program. A sponsor provided a safe place to talk about things that were difficult to share at meetings. Divulging the secrets that had haunted and tormented us, we became able to start the process of letting go of our self-destructive behavior and thinking. We began to trust and believe that another person would be there for us. This, in turn, opened us to others, helping to further break our isolation.

There is no time limit as to how long a sponsorship lasts. After careful consideration, either member can end the sponsorship.

This relationship is not only beneficial to the sponsee, but to the sponsor as well. One of the keystones of the SRA program states that "we cannot keep what we do not give away!"

## Telephoning

Phoning other members for support or receiving calls to support others is a part of the fellowship and program. Asking others to exchange numbers, while it may be difficult, is a major step towards breaking our isolation. Simply taking the action of calling someone often makes us feel better. Likewise, it always seems to be a boost when someone calls us. The call itself is an opportunity to talk in more depth than at meetings and to hear someone else share their related experience. We may need to gain perspective on a problem that we would otherwise obsess about. Phoning allows us to reason things out with someone else and keeps us connected with the program.

## The Twelve Steps

SRA received permission from AA in 1991 to use its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

The Twelve Steps are the core of the SRA recovery program. By studying them and practicing them in our lives, many of us have been able to stop our destructive sexual behavior and begun to live rich and fulfilling lives.

We learn to use the steps by reading about them, dicussing them at meetings (particularly "Step Meetings") and talking about them with our sponsors and other members. The principles they embody are universal and applicable to everyone whatever his or her personal creed.

1. We admitted we were powerless over our sexual obsessions—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to those still suffering, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## Writing

From experience we have found that when we write, we have a greater ability to get in touch with our inner selves and the roots of our disease. Writing helps us to make a con-nection with the healthy side of ourselves. Expressing our feelings directly on paper often enables us to experience and release them rather than stuff them. It is a way of facing feelings rather than running away from them. Writing can serve to clarify our thinking and break the vicious cycle of our disease. It can be encouraging to refer back to what we have written. In times of distress, it can be heartening to see that we have come through similar situations before. It reminds us of our progress, our growth and what we've learned from our experience.

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# SRA

# Tools of the Program