

Day One Again – Your Path to Freedom.

Dear Member,

Welcome – let me congratulate you on taking that first incredible step toward sexual sobriety. I don't care how many 'first days' you have celebrated...and neither should you! You have not given in to despair – WELL DONE. Yesterday does not matter. Tomorrow has not happened. Right now, you are determined to start anew – that is all that matters.

There is a lot you have to do and you already understand it will not be easy. Over the coming weeks, months or years you will be working through a self-help program designed by us, for us. I am not a professional; I am an addict. Like all recovering addicts, I live one day at a time and I never lose contact with my support group. I never fall into despair and I never, ever, stop talking to those who want to help me. That is why *Men of Hope* was developed.

This program has no affiliation and no professional accreditation. *Men of Hope* is all about learning from our experiences – good and bad. Each of us struggle with our own 'personal torment'. As a result, shared experiences can often lead others back into the light...and hopefully, back into grace.

With your help, we aim to learn and profit from these shared experiences to build on our armoury of defensive weapons. To date, Men of Hope has worked with over two dozen members on a personalised 1:1 basis.



This is not just 'Day One' for you...but for *Men of Hope* also.

So why is it that we are all so ready to give up on ourselves when things get tough? I have suffered this addiction for nearly 35 years but I only started to fight it 8 years ago. Why was that? I hate my addiction and I hate the damage it has done to me and to those nearest to me. I hated that it kept me away from God; that it destroyed my career and that it very nearly took my family. **I hated me!**

I hate asking for help too...

Brilliant – so I have all the hate out in plain sight. Sexual Addicts are great at hate; but they are even better with spreading blame to others whilst nursing their guilt and self-loathing in private. Whilst working through the Self-Help Units, you will have the opportunity to explore and discuss your understanding of hate, desperation and guilt. All discussions and disclosures remain confidential within the member and mentor relationship.

So, with all of this hate and despair, why did it take me so long to start to fight? The answer will be different for each of us. In my case, I could try to blame: neural chemical addictions, abusive childhood, early exposure to pornography, non-Catholic childhood, over-bearing bosses, demanding family, or just unrealistic expectations of The Faith. All of these, regardless of their true effect on me, have fed into my addiction in one way or another.

In truth, I have fought and I have tried to overcome my addictive behaviours. I have had many short and medium term successes. However, without ever truly addressing the causes, my periods of freedom have always ended in failure. Therefore, the real question I had to ask myself is ‘what can I do differently’. It was at this point that I began to write my daily diary and to chart how I managed and how I felt. Over several months, I began to see the patterns of my temptations and falls. I also accepted a truth that many of us fail to acknowledge:

“Deep down, I didn’t want to give up. I craved the pleasure it gave. I must have, otherwise I would have given it up for something better...SURELY?”



This program is progressed within the support structure of *Men of Hope*. By agreeing to this, you are also agreeing to become a part of the Fellowship. You will have full access to the website and be able to seek support from your peers via CryptChat sessions. Ultimately, it will be your responsibility to manage any progression and development. Each Unit has a specific aim and is also intended to not only increase your confidence and trust BUT to encourage you to ‘open up’ and face your secrets – with true honesty.

Experience has shown that anybody who skimps on the Self Help Units or ‘forgets’ to do their homework will struggle to get anything from this Fellowship. Many of the exercises appear tedious and repetitive – I do not apologise for this. The intention is to help you recognise and develop healthy daily habits that will be pivotal to you overcoming your ‘long term’ sexual addictions.

Men of Hope is a voluntary support service and all decisions on whether any individual is ready to progress to the next ‘Self-Help Unit’ is in their own hands, however, we would suggest that this should be taken on peer advisement. On average, it takes between 3 – 4 months to complete Stage 1. Each session takes about 2.5 hours to complete so think about when you are most likely to have this time available.

Mentors give up their time freely to plan, manage and lead new members through the Self Help program. Mentors have their own lives and families and I ask that you consider this when you agree to scheduled appointments. If you must cancel a session then please provide notice. Do not ‘forget’ your session times – they are for your benefit, so put a reminder in your diary.

Your mentor will be flexible to your needs but he does have his own commitments to work around. **Your mentor will never chase you up if you miss an appointment.** Please remember this when you agree a time and date for your next chat 😊

The first question you must answer - NOW:

Can I avoid the temptations of pornography without first removing the source? If that source is the internet do I either:

- Use a broadband 'pornography' filter, via the provider
- Use an accountability service / package (Accountable2u is highly recommended)
- Block all internet until I have gained some level of control
- *Convince* myself that I can safely manage myself 😊

This is not an easy question to answer as we all have differing family and working environments. I have found that applying a pornography filter to my broadband 'at source' has eliminated the opportunity to look at images without interfering with my family’s internet usage. It also allows my children to remain

unaware of my issues whilst still keeping them safe from any improper searches. You do not want to risk your family stumbling onto your 'secret' internet history. That hurts!

Accountability software can be very effective if you have the right support and are already honest about the 'things' that trigger your sexual addictions. It is no good having reports sent to your accountability partner that show you have been avoiding pornography when he is unaware that you actually use YouTube or another media vehicle to fuel your lust. This is something that is covered later in the course as we learn more about our triggers and permission givers.

Blocking the internet entirely is impractical in this age of social media and mandatory online services. It is nearly impossible to book a flight, transfer money or search for a job without first completing an online submission. If you have a family then the children will need access for homework and your wife will need access to supervise what they are doing online. In short, if you have not yet reached the point of 'full disclosure' then this option could cause large relationship issues.

Let's not forget the issues associated with Apps on our phones either! Since starting the Fellowship, I have heard about so many different ways of finding pornography (Discord, Twitter & Audio Books) – nothing like the old days of magazines and VHS cassettes...

However, Beware...

When I had no internet access, I resorted to the following:

- impure daydreaming and deliberate fantasies
- Looking at immodestly dressed women and fantasising about them
- Finding internet hotspots and other places where I could surf undisturbed
- Using the internet at work and deleting history (That got me fired)
- Writing impure stories and other 'innocent' activities that satisfied my sexual needs
- Cross dressing (my particular primary 'trigger')

If you do block the internet entirely or have limited access then please try to have the following internet sites de-restricted:

1. www.menofhope.co.uk
2. www.chatcrypt.com/chat.html

The second question you must answer - NOW:

Do I tell my wife / family?

For many of us this question has already become irrelevant because family already know. Either they discovered our secret life by accident or circumstances / despair forced us to tell them. I will not expand on this further because I have no right to. It will be an aspect of Section 2 Units and the confidential crypt chat meetings.

In *my* experience, telling my wife early was a big mistake. I had not yet reached a point where I was willing to accept full responsibility for my sexual addiction and had not yet recognised I was an addict. I really only told her because I had run out of lies for my secretive behaviours - which she had discovered. I had done nothing to try to resolve my issues and I was still not willing to give up cross-dressing or masturbation. I

was not 'honestly' ready to change and I wasn't willing to get help from anyone else. By tearfully admitting all my faults to my wife, **I effectively made her jointly responsible for my recovery.**

I was in 'selfish' despair and though truly sorry for all the pain I had caused was unable to understand just how much of a betrayal of trust this was to her. By making such an admission, my wife was naturally disposed to help me recover - that was unfair and unrealistic. She hid all the hurt and betrayal behind a mask of hope. Every time she found I had relapsed, she blamed herself. Every time I promised 'never again', she prayed to Our Lady that it would be true. Then one day my wife broke down and left...and I was still selfish and very, very broken.

This decision should not be taken lightly, so please, discuss it with your Spiritual Director or a *Men of Hope* mentor first.

The third question you must answer.

Whom am I doing this for and am I really willing to do the hard work?

This is all about learning self-management techniques and putting in place healthy routines to stop you from falling back into 'old habits'. Nothing we speak about will be new or mind blowing. However, I can almost guarantee that many of you will not do what is required, because you will decide that it is boring and a waste of time and doesn't help you. Just trust me when I tell you that you will be wrong. Over 90% of the Fellowship looks back at the time they wasted in the first few months and wished they had been a lot more attentive.

This system will not work for everybody though. Some of you will have some serious issues that *Men of Hope* cannot safely help. If you feel this is the case then I strongly advise you to seek experienced qualified help...and then come back to us 😊

To complete this introductory unit

1. Have had a referral to *Men of Hope* and a follow-up contact with Fr Nicholas Mary.
2. Have a Spiritual Director aware of your addiction and willing to provide 'appropriate' support outside of this Fellowship. If you cannot find a Spiritual Director then try to establish regular contact with a priest from your parish who knows your ongoing struggle.
3. Be able to demonstrate a willingness to make use of the *Men of Hope* website on a regular basis.
4. Recognise and accept that this battle is not fought alone – especially during the 'bad times'.
5. Be willing to discuss your addiction and personal history when able to do so with your mentor.
6. Have started taking the appropriate internet safety options and be ready to discuss this during your first CryptChat meeting.
7. Be ready to embrace 'Day One' as a positive step – regardless of the number of times you have done so previously.
8. Start charting how you use your days. Try to identify the 'blocks of free time' that seem to cause you the most problems. Then tell me about them during our first chat 😊

Day One is a success – every time you have it. So be proud of yourself!