PURE DESIRE MINISTRIES

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THE DISCLOSURE PROCESS

The disclosure process is a very important, but challenging aspect of recovery. Disclosure is defined as a full, fact-based reporting of the addict's sexual history and is usually recommended after six months of focused recovery work have been established.[1] When possible, disclosure should be done with a Certified Sex Addiction Therapist (CSAT) or Pastoral Sex Addiction Professional Supervisor (PSAP-S). Many couples, however, will walk through disclosure as part of their group experience. Please refer to pages 248-254 in *Seven Pillars of Freedom*, 200-209 in *Betrayal & Beyond*, or 337-340 in *Unraveled* before undertaking disclosure.

Although the full disclosure process happens after sobriety has been established, it is critical to recovery that the addict learns to be transparent while working toward sobriety. Relapse(s) that occurs during the recovery process should be disclosed to group members and the spouse. Immediately after relapse occurs, your **Recovery Action Plan (Addict)** should be implemented. Breaking free from an addiction requires a person to live an honest lifestyle, break isolation, relate behaviors to consequences, and give the people who they have hurt the respect and dignity to make informed choices. Your spouse will have their own **Recovery Action Plan (Spouse)**. If you are working on your recovery but still keeping secrets, then shame will keep you stuck. Being honest and using your recovery tools with your spouse will move you toward true freedom.

The following is an outline of important steps for both the addict and betrayed spouse to take leading up to, during, and after disclosure has occurred.

STEPS FOR THE ADDICTED SPOUSE

Write out a full sexual history. The following list from *Seven Pillars of Freedom* provides this guidance:

- Include the time frame when referring to each incident where you acted out and how many times incidents happened during that time frame.
- Include sex acts that don't involve a physical act, such as flirting or planning to act out.

[1] In certain cases, an immediate disclosure is necessary. Such cases include when a spouse has been caught in the act, when illegal activity has occurred, when sexual activity involves other people and potential STDs, or when the betrayed spouse feels unable to move forward in spite of other support in place (Pure Desire group).

- Include financial information.
- Include health issues or health risks such as exposure to STDs.
- Acknowledge if there is someone else who the spouse may know or run into.
- Refer to the spouse in the second person (I betrayed YOU when…).
- Stick with information sharing; do not justify any of your addictive behavior.

Before sharing with the spouse, share this written disclosure with your group leader or another trusted advisor familiar and experienced with the disclosure process.

Both the addicted and the betrayed spouse should work together to find a time for disclosure that is conducive to an honest conversation with appropriate time following the disclosure to process it emotionally.

STEPS FOR THE BETRAYED SPOUSE

Write out questions that are needed to establish truth, understanding, and forward motion in recovery. Keep in mind that restoration and healing, not curiosity, should be the driving force behind the questions. Examples of commonly asked questions are:

- In what ways have you lied about or hidden behaviors from me?
- What are the addictive behaviors you are/were involved with?
- What are the time frames of these behaviors?
  - What was the frequency and duration?
- Has your behavior involved another person/people?
  - How many other partners were there?
  - What were the places and locations of these encounters?
  - Do I know any of the people you were sexually involved with?
  - Have you cut off all contact with anyone you have acted out with?
- Has any of your sexual acting out included same-sex relationships or behaviors?

Share these questions with the addicted spouse before the disclosure, so they have time to formulate honest, thorough answers. These may be shared through the group leader or trusted advisor.

If you're not already in a *Betrayal & Beyond* or *Hope for Men* group, join one for support and empathy.

Share questions with your group leader or another trusted advisor familiar with the disclosure process. This advisor might suggest omitting certain questions to help the spouse avoid questions that are overly detailed or hold more potential for pain than healing.

Determine whether or not to include a friend, group leader, or trusted advisor in the disclosure meeting for personal support and wisdom. Including outside people in the disclosure process should always be at the choosing and comfort level of the betrayed spouse.

STEPS FOR THE GROUP LEADER OR TRUSTED ADVISOR

- Encourage both spouses to be in a Pure Desire group before disclosure. (They will need the support of group members in this process.)
- Remember to be an advocate for **the marriage** and not for only one spouse.
- Review the written disclosure to make sure it is complete and honest.
- Review the written questions from the spouse.
- Find a private place to meet with the couple.
- Determine if the couple wants advocates to also be present. Some couples may want their group leader/advisor also present, while others prefer a smaller meeting. It is essential that both spouses feel supported and not ganged up on. In cases of forced or immediate disclosure, support persons for both spouses is encouraged.
- Work with the couple to determine what kind of follow-up care needs to be in place for the addicted spouse to process; arranged child-care for the day, a safe place to grieve, or driving in separate cars to the meeting may be necessary.
- The addict reads their full disclosure.
- The spouse asks questions that were previously written.
    - If something completely unexpected is disclosed that the spouse doesn't have questions written out for but wants to ask questions about, stop the meeting. The spouse needs additional time to process the new information disclosed and to write out questions. The spouse should write out new questions that are necessary for recovery. If needed, schedule another meeting to give the spouse a chance to ask his or her new questions.
- The spouse asks any clarifying questions of the information received during the full disclosure.
- Clarify before leaving what next steps are needed for the addicted spouse to continue healing and recovery and what steps are needed for the betrayed spouse to find hope and support.
- If significant issues surface that are beyond the skill and experience of the person facilitating the disclosure, refer the couple to Pure Desire or another CSAT for counseling.

Find more examples and steps in the ***Group Leader Training***.