

THE RECOVERY PROCESS IS MADE UP OF 3 KEY STEPS: **HEALING, GROWING, & SERVING**

Recovery is a process of healing from compulsions and growing in our God-given identity, for the purpose of serving others with similar struggles.

THE FIRST STEP: HEALING

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by Jonathan Daugherty



HEAL **GROW** **SERVE**

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." -Chinese proverb

If you or someone you love are addicted to pornography or other unhealthy sexual activities, there is certainly sickness present. It may not be a physical sickness (although many porn addicts report they

don't feel well most of the time). But there is always emotional and spiritual sickness in those who develop sexually addictive patterns. And if the one sick is to become well, healing must occur.

Before we dive into what it takes to heal from sexual addiction, we must understand the overall process and purpose of recovery. ***Recovery is a process of healing from compulsions and growing in our God-given identity, for the purpose of serving others with similar struggles.*** It is a lifelong process that invites a person to exchange their life of addiction (self-centered idolatry) for a life of purpose and meaning (selfless acts of service). With this in mind, let's dive into what it takes to heal from sexually addictive patterns.

Diagnosis

Proper healing never happens without proper diagnosis. If you suffer from a head cold and a doctor inaccurately diagnoses you with bronchitis, whatever treatment is prescribed will have little effect on your actual illness. It is important to assess the problem carefully in order to develop a quality treatment plan.

When it comes to sexual addictions, it isn't as easy to diagnose as a head cold (or even bronchitis). There are many variables: family of origin issues, abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual), trauma, sexual history, exposure to porn in childhood, religious beliefs, and more. This part of the recovery journey can benefit greatly from counseling by a [qualified sexual addiction counselor](#).

Take your time in the diagnosis stage. Be careful not to get "stuck" in analysis, but also don't be too quick to rush to "solutions" before you have adequately unpacked all that has been bottled up deep inside. Secrecy is a big part of developing (and perpetuating) an addiction, so it is likely that it could take a while for everything that has been hidden to come into the light for examination. Be patient and keep bringing it all out. It will be painful, but it is pain with a good purpose: healing.

Prescribe treatment

Once the diagnosis is made, there must be a plan for treating the sickness. How would you like to go to your doctor with the head cold I mentioned earlier, and after he diagnoses your cold he stands up, shakes your hand, and dismisses you from his office? No prescription. No advice. Not even a "hope you feel better" as you head for the door. I'm pretty sure you wouldn't keep that doctor.

The same should be true in recovery. Too often people keep going back again and again to "doctors" (i.e. helpers in recovery) who do nothing more than tell the patient, "Yep, you're addicted to porn and sex. Good luck." What? Healing from a sexual addiction does not occur through diagnosis only. There must be a [plan for getting well](#).

The combination of [counseling](#) and [support groups](#) can be very helpful when developing a plan for your specific needs. These are environments that are designed to give you the time and space you need to absorb new thoughts and engage in healthy relationships that motivate you to live in a different way -- free from addiction.

But a "prescription" doesn't fill itself. You ultimately have to "take your medicine."

"Take your medicine"

I remember being sick as a kid -- a lot! It felt to me like I was going to the doctor every week with a sore throat and fever. Every time I started to feel bad, I knew what was coming: the spoon. Yeah, I think you know what I'm talking about. The spoon that carried this liquid that was a color no one can describe. And the taste. Well, I'd rather not talk about it anymore. I'm not feeling too well...

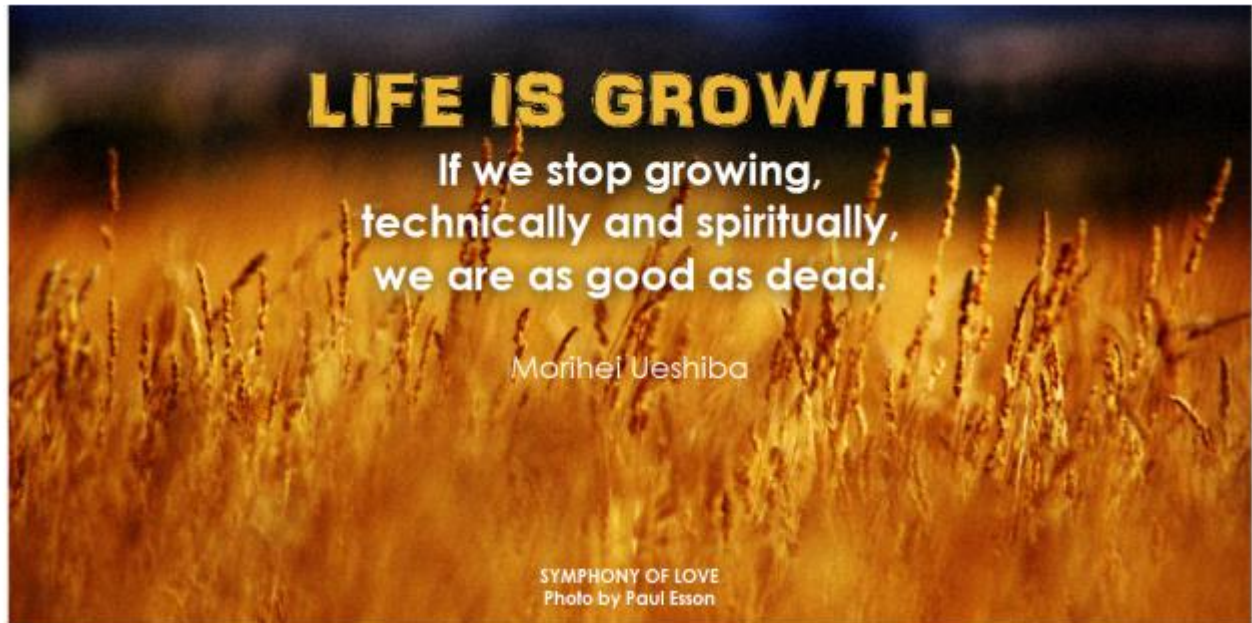
I'm not sure why most medicines can't taste good, but it seems to be that way when it comes to the ingredients that make us well. The same is true in recovery. I wish I could say it "tasted" good to confess, to make amends, to humble myself before God and others, to resist temptation, to reach out for help, to set up boundaries at home and work, and much more. But what the "prescription" for purity lacked in taste, it made up for in effectiveness. This is what it takes to heal.

When you discover that the prescription, or plan, for your recovery is actually for your good, you won't be as likely to resist it. In fact, you will reach out for the "spoon" and drink the weird-colored medicine because of its healing effect. Over time you will even begin to "feel" better, not wallowing about in the cloud of addiction, loneliness, and shame. This is what healing looks like, and it's the first step of the long, and rewarding journey of recovery.

THE NEXT STEP: GROWING

4/7/2015

by Jonathan Daugherty



HEAL GROW SERVE

Recovery is a process of healing from compulsions and growing in our God-given identity, for the purpose of serving others with similar struggles.

There is a process to recovering fully from sexually addictive patterns. It is simple: Heal --> Grow --> Serve. In a [previous post](#) I wrote about what healing looks like in this process. In this post I want us to explore the next stage: Growing. This stage focuses on three primary areas of growth: emotional, spiritual, and relational.

Emotional Growth

No one struggling with sexually addictive patterns is emotionally healthy. You might want to pause and reflect on that statement for a moment. You might even want to argue with it. But in my many years of hearing thousands of life stories of sexually addicted men, I have yet to meet one who exhibited emotional health in conjunction with their addictive lifestyle. Emotional health and addictive lust just don't go together.

Therefore, it is essential that emotional health be a high priority when seeking to grow into a man of sexual integrity. This means "growing up" and leaving childish ways behind.

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

Most sexually addicted men act like children emotionally. This is largely due to the fact that lust teaches a man to be self-centered, controlling, ill-tempered, angry, and deceptive. Just like a 2-year-old. But in order to be a mature man of integrity, he must give up such childish ways.

Often, [counseling](#) can be very helpful in understanding and overcoming childishness. Also, [getting into a group](#) of mature men can help sharpen these emotional skills.

Spiritual Growth

The bible promises that if we walk by the Spirit of God we will not gratify the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). But how do we "walk by the Spirit?" By deepening our intimate relationship with God through Jesus. We must grow in our dependence upon God.

Most of us know the things to "do" when it comes to "spiritual growth," but few engage these activities in the way God had in mind. We know to pray, read our bibles, feed the hungry, care for orphans and widows, and serve the poor. But too often we engage in these disciplines with a "box-checking" mentality, not with a heart eager to know God.

Spiritual growth never occurs through activity alone. God is a Person, to be related to intimately, not as something we *do*, but rather as Someone we *know*.

John 14:3-7

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. *How can we know the way?*" Jesus said to him, "*I am the way*, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Spiritual growth is about knowing the Way, not as a religious ritualistic journey, but as one knows a Person. Jesus is THE WAY! On this journey of growth as a man of integrity, you must *know* Him. May this change how you engage prayer, bible study, and fellowship with others. These are not means to an end, they are ever-present points of contact with the living Jesus.

Relational Growth

Every sexually addicted person has damaged relationships. Lust and love are not synonyms. Therefore, in order to move forward to a life of integrity, you must grow healthy relationships. You must learn to relate well with others.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Healthy relationships require stuff that doesn't exist in addiction. Stuff like sacrifice, forgiveness, sharing, communication, honesty, faithfulness, patience, and lots and lots of love. These are not characteristics that tend to come naturally, especially if you have had lots of practice being a self-centered, addicted jerk. But there is good news! These are *skills*, therefore, they can be *learned*.

The best context to grow relationally is -- in relationships! Duh. So, talk to your wife. Spend time with your kids. Share your story with someone. Connect, connect, connect. Don't worry about "messing it up." There is no such thing as a "perfect" relationship. But you can have healthy ones, if you will work on growing in the area of relating well with others.

Growing is essential in becoming a strong man of integrity. There are no shortcuts on this journey. But from a solid foundation of healing, you can grow into the man you always wanted to be. And from there, well, some pretty amazing things can happen...

THE FINAL STEP: SERVING

4/29/2015

by Jonathan Daugherty



HEAL **GROW** **SERVE**

Recovery is a process of healing from compulsions and growing in our God-given identity, for the purpose of serving others with similar struggles.

This is the final post in our Heal --> Grow --> Serve series, outlining the overall process and aim of recovery from sexual addictions (or any addictive patterns). In the [first post](#), we explored what it takes to heal our sexual brokenness. In the [second post](#), we examined what it takes to grow emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. In this post, we uncover the greatest gift of recovery: serving others.

If one isn't careful, recovery can simply become another way to feed self-centeredness, much like addiction does. The focus in the early stages is very self-focused, working to close the gaping wounds of lust, pride, childhood trauma, and more. This self-focus is healthy and necessary at this stage, but it is only the beginning of the journey. If one gets stuck in healing, they never fully break free to the joys of serving.

Acts 20:35b - *...and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

If you want to experience the deepest riches of recovery, don't get stuck in healing. Work hard to grow in grace so that you can serve others with pure motives and a clear conscience. Here are a few tips to help you serve well.

Serve at Home

The obvious place to "practice" serving others is at home, right where you live. Serving is not an "event" or project, it is to be a way of life. And each of us does life every day at home. Begin to seek out ways you can serve your family, keeping in mind that serving is about placing other's needs above your own.

Philippians 2:3-4 - *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Are you counting your family as more significant than you, their needs as an opportunity to serve? Serving your family doesn't have to be complicated, but it does require that you know their needs. To serve them you must know them. To know them you must spend time with them, talking and sharing and listening.

Here are some ideas of how you might serve at home:

- Do the dishes.
- Lead times of bible reading and prayer.
- Teach your kids a skill (i.e. mowing the lawn, changing a flat tire, building something, etc.)
- Help your wife on a project -- any project!
- Be present as much as possible; you never know when an opportunity to serve will arise.

Serve your family. Your joy in recovery will be multiplied.

Serve at Work

When you read "serve at work" it may feel redundant. Don't you already serve at work? Isn't that what "doing a job" is all about? Yes and no. Yes, you serve at work in the sense that you have a boss or shareholders or a mission that is the driving force behind the specific tasks you do. But that isn't the same as the kind of serving God wants us to do at work.

1 Peter 4:10 - *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.*

Serving at work is about serving the people you work with. Are you being a good steward of God's grace in the workplace? Are you helping others without ulterior motives? Are you making sacrifices for the advancement of your co-workers without regard for your own success?

Here are just a few ideas of how you may serve at work:

- Be quick to speak kind words of encouragement to co-workers.
- Offer helpful advice to newer employees.
- Volunteer to help others on projects, letting them get the credit.
- As appropriate, offer care for ill co-workers.
- Make coffee, buy lunch, be present.

Your "job" is the place God put you to serve. But you are not there just to serve your boss, you are there to serve God by serving your co-workers. Do this well and your treasure will be great in heaven.

Serve Every Day

Mark 10:45 - *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

The example Jesus set for us was clear: love others. He walked from town to town sharing the Good News of His Father, and caring for the needs of the people. He spent His earthly life touching lives. Every day.

It is easy to get lulled into thinking that recovery is all about you. But this is no different than what your lustful addictions taught you. Recovery is about Jesus, and the beautiful, eternal work He wants to accomplish through you. As you get "cleaned up" and deepen your growth in grace, you will discover that your recovery was always intended for the benefit of everyone your life touches. Will you allow God to use you in such a profound and enriching way?

Every day, serve someone. It is the entire reason for recovery. It is the way Jesus taught us to live. Anything less is woefully unsatisfying. Live in such a way that when your life is over it lingers on in those you served...