

Step 1 Overview

Step 1 – We **admitted** we were **powerless** over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become **unmanageable**.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. Romans 7:18

What is typical first step?

Each person's story is unique. However, the events recounted in that story are usually of 2 types: events that are not widely shared by others in the group; events that are quite similar to those in the lives of many others in the group (porn, masturbation, affairs, paid sex, etc.).

Delivered orally to a group of men in a support group setting

Typically 10-20 minutes in length

Written in advance, reviewed with sponsor, maybe multiple times

Rigorously honest, but not graphic in details – sponsor should help remove triggering material

Key phrases:

Admit

Break through denial about our condition

Admit defeat, guilt, and shame

Powerless

Inability to stop – “this is the last time”; often said for the 5th time?

Rationalization – “not so bad”

Unmanageable – life does not work anymore, catastrophic failures

Late/“no show”, spending, eating, poor health, etc.

Divorce, Employment termination

Examples: 6 months behind on mortgage after spending money on paid sex; missed a family event because I could not stop watching porn; wife threw me out of the house; wife left me; divorced; STD; poor health due to lack of sleep, exercise, proper eating, etc.

Cost of Addiction is one indicator of unmanageability

May be evidenced by significant out of pocket expenses incurred in pursuit of sexual obsessions and compulsions.

May be evidenced by estimate of the monetary value of time lost to process of sexual acting out.

The primary purpose of this component is to try to make tangible the extent of resources expended in the pursuit of sexual gratification – as a measure of life becoming unmanageable.

Format - suggested

How/when entered recovery

Discovery

Wife found porn; Illegal activity – arrest; Job loss; Affair

Voluntary

Step 1 Overview

Less frequent, but some just get tired, want something better
Bottom line – ready for help – program not for people who need it; for people who want it

Family of Origin

Ancestors with addictive, compulsive behaviors

Earlier trauma, exposures

Not an excuse, not to dishonor – to recognize influences from early life

Concise history of sexual impurity – told thru the lens of **Powerlessness** and **Unmanageability** – including cost

First sexual experiences, including first exposure to porn

Subsequent experiences as relevant to disclose scale and scope of sexual activities

Each event should be related to powerlessness or unmanageability

Conclusion – with this admission, ready to proceed to next step

First step exercises – building blocks of First Step; serve as research notes for drafting it

Family of origin

Examples of powerlessness

Examples of unmanageability

Cost of Addiction

Benefits of giving first step

Admission paves the way for next step

Often provides some relief from guilt and/or shame

Reinforces commitment to working the steps

What a first step is NOT

Not a clinical disclosure – detailed account of who, what, when, where, how often.

Not a detailed history of sexual history

Not a family history or family tree

Not a biography – more like the Gospels – a recounting of some events from the life of Jesus woven into a story with a stated purpose – “that you may believe”. The first step is an admission of failure and brokenness based on stories that illustrate powerlessness and unmanageability that follows.

Not a declaration of freedom – way too early in the process for declarations of results, much less “freedom”; this is a declaration of the mess I have made of my life.

In summary, the information we gather as we complete Step 1 exercises 1 through 4 will be the building blocks we use to tell the story of how we developed our obsessive and compulsive behaviors, how we repeatedly failed to stop acting out (powerlessness), the damage our behavior inflicted in our lives (unmanageability), including the estimated cost of our wasted time and moneys spent. Once we make this admission (and reflect on it), we are ready to move to Step 2.