

Having a (or a series of) goals that galvanize you to become engaged with yourself, with others and with life is a TERRIFIC motivator to get and stay on the recovery track. Active sex addiction involves large amounts of time spent engaged in non-productive, non-creative, non-engaging activities. No matter what one's goals in life are, sex addiction is NOT in the interest of achieving them.

Wasn't it Ben Franklin who said *"Don't waste time – it's the stuff life is made of."*?

She will come to see that her own life goals and enduring values can guide him, as the North Star, towards restoration, recovery, and the achievement of a satisfying and meaningful life.

Most people want to achieve real connection with others and not the mere illusion of connection. They want to build the genuine self-esteem that comes from living out one's most cherished ideals and values and they want the ability to regulate their feelings and behaviors. They want to stop the lies, secrets and deceptions that keep them in a perpetual state of fear, shame and self-doubt. People struggling with addictive behavior are no different. Luckily, these goals are attainable.

To stay motivated, he needs to be consistently aware of the negative consequences of unregulated sexual behavior. Remembering the pain and suffering of being in active addiction can be a great motivator to change. AA calls it "keeping it green."

The process of continuously doing what one's committed to do is itself a strong motivator. Active addiction gradually erodes your moral fiber and betrays your essential values. She/he'll move from being a pleasure-seeking individual to being a meaning-seeking person. Knowing what makes life meaningful and re-committing to essential values will be the motivational force and the foundation for the work of change in sex addiction recovery.

The First Rule of Recovery

You don't recover from an addiction by stopping using. You recover by creating a new life where it is easier to not use. If you don't create a new life, then all the factors that brought you to your addiction will eventually catch up with you again.

You don't have to change everything in your life. But there are a few things and behaviors that have been getting you into trouble, and they will continue to get you into trouble until you let them go. The more you try to hold onto your old life in recovery, the less well you will do.

Tri County Recovery

From Sex Addiction to Meaningful Life



SAA

From Shame to Grace
Path to Healing and Recovery
<http://tcr.p2har.org>
info@tcr.p2har.org
Tel : 1-844-523-8676, ext 10827

What Motivates a Person to Change?

It's hard for any of us to walk away from pleasure. Hell, it's hard for most of us to take a pass on the dessert tray.

Consider the plight of the person who's considering making a commitment to sex addiction recovery. The pleasure they experience is not from sex, per se, it's from the rush of neurotransmitters that get released into the brain from the anticipation and the ritual involved in sexual acting out. In a state I have labeled "*the erotic haze*", their reward receptors get flooded with the neurochemical dopamine and they feel great. They're not really addicted to sex; they're addicted to their own neurotransmitters.

Every type of reward that has been studied, in fact, increases the level of dopamine in the limbic system of the brain. The limbic system is the primitive part of the brain that ensures survival, governs emotions, and is the seat of all desires and drives. This is the area of the brain where all addiction happens. When the limbic system is out of balance, sexual addiction is all about avoiding pain/discomfort and they aim at the experience and re-experience of pleasure.

The great thing about the "*dopamine rush*" is that they feel euphoric for lengthy periods of time. Time passes by while they're immersed in a separate world, free from physical or emotional discomfort. Problems, frustrations, irritations don't exist. All that exists is the person getting his needs met in a way he thinks he can't get met in any other way. The focus is entirely on the person, they experience perfect control over other "people" and their environment.

The "*hook*" of sex addiction – the thing that keeps people coming back for more, despite considerable costs – is that it gives people feelings and gratifying sensations that they are not able to get in other ways. It may block out sensations of pain, uncertainty, depression, or of distressing emotions. It may create powerfully distracting sensations that focus and absorb attention. It may enable a person to forget seemingly insurmountable problems. It may provide illusory, temporary feelings of calm, self-

worth, accomplishment, of power or control, of intimacy or belonging. These are the alluring benefits that explain why a person keeps going back to the "*Erotic Haze*" and these are the factors considered in therapy for sex addiction.

So Why Change?

A multitude of factors may go into the person's desire for change: awareness of long-term negative consequences, personal well-being, social and family life, employment status, the failure of sex addiction to provide beneficial effects despite increased dose levels (increased tolerance), confrontation with significant others, contact with others who are successfully overcoming sex addiction, spiritual crisis, significant lifestyle change and so forth. Unless the ground is firmly prepared and your commitment to change is solid, your efforts may lead to self-defeating experiences of failure and reluctance to recommit yourself to recovery.

Motivation and commitment to change are essential elements in the recovery process. The simplest answer to the question "*When do people change?*" is "When they want to."

To counteract the pull of the addiction, with its seemingly overwhelming cravings for a particular type of intense sexual experience, they person needs to know why they are motivated to work for sex addiction recovery.

People overcome addiction when they realize that it is in their own best interest to do so. Usually, they've undergone some type of process where they examined their behaviors in terms of their own values and goals.

Therapists and sponsors can hold up a mirror so (s)he can see discrepancies between who (s)he wants to be and the reality of his behavior. They see into the self-defeating contradictions in themselves that often characterize human thought and behavior, especially with addictive behavior.

They become aware of the contradictions in themselves. They'll see the discrepancies between where they want to be and where they are. He may say he wants an intimate relationship, but he's really being intimate in an isolated, self-centered relationship to pixels on a computer screen.

Core Values as Motivators

To overcome addictive behavior, hold enduring core values firmly in place which oppose the addiction and thus enhances the desire to change.

In the fever pitch of sex addiction, people forget what's important to them. To change, they must re-conceive their most deeply held values, those most essential to their sense of themselves. Having assessed the damage the addiction is doing to important parts of their life, they must decide that those things are too important to sacrifice.

Here are some values people can discover within themselves that run counter to addiction. These values are a kind of unrealized strength that they can summon up: to the extent that they possess them, the better able they are to surmount the pull of the "*erotic haze*".

They can consider how much they value:

- self-control and moderation
- accomplishment and competence
- self-consciousness and awareness of themselves and their environment
- health
- self-esteem
- relationships with others,
- community and society
- the ability to be honest with themselves and others
- having more energy and stamina from not staying
- awake all night looking at porn
- improved sexual relations with my partner
- reduction in shame and guilt
- ability to experience healthy pleasures

Attainment of Meaningful, Realistic Goals

What do you want to achieve in life? There are two things that make a person's life fulfilling: connected, intimate relationships and meaningful, realistic goals. What is a meaningful goal? One that incorporates core values and about which you feel passion.

The attainment of goals is important because it increases our sense of ourselves as people who "*can do*". But the real joy of living is in surrender to the process of using skills and resources in the application of mastering the tasks and challenges along the way to the end result. One achieves a sense of self-mastery and self-efficacy. A writer called this process "*flow*". It is an experience of being totally in the moment, engaged with something that challenges you where you can experience an inner stillness in outward activity. It is clear. It is alert. It is full onto itself. It is the opposite of the "*Erotic Haze*".