

COMMENTARIES ON THE CHARACTERISTICS MOST OF US SEEM TO HAVE IN COMMON

Characteristic 1:

“As adolescents, we used fantasy and compulsive masturbation to avoid feelings, and continued this tendency into our adult lives with compulsive sex.”

For many of us, our compulsive sexual behavior and fantasizing began at an early age, often in conjunction with the use of pornography. We found that compulsive masturbation, despite its negative physical effects, relieved our feelings of anxiety and helped us cope with the daily struggles and emotional turbulence of life. Feelings of validation were often not something we experienced in our youth. Many of us were neglected, or came from families where emotional expression was frowned upon. We resorted to using sex to feel validation, to numb feelings, and to convert unpleasant feelings of various kinds to more pleasant ones. As we reached adulthood, masturbation and other compulsive behaviors allowed us to escape from reality into a fantasy world. Compulsive sex became a general coping mechanism. The pain of life—especially emotional pain—prompted us automatically to seek the pleasure of sexual release.

In recovery, we strive to feel our feelings, no longer avoiding them, and be capable of sharing our feelings with others. Through prayer and meditation, and by working the Twelve Steps, we learn to become present in our own lives, and in the lives of others. We develop a sexual recovery plan that enables us to achieve freedom from compulsive sex, to bring sexuality into our lives that is integrated, and that enables us to deal with life on life’s terms. We examine masturbation as an element of our sexual behavior, and develop individual boundaries around it. In the process, we often take a masturbation inventory, and sometimes make a specific masturbation plan. We let go of unhealthy fantasy and euphoric recall. We avoid allowing emotions to propel us into being sexual as an escape. We develop a connection with our Higher Power, and connect with others through empathy. We enjoy the here and now, keeping busy and engaging in healthy activities.

(Extract from “The Characteristics Most of Us Seem to Have in Common” © SCA-ISO)