

## **Abstinence Statement**

[From Sex Addicts Anonymous, pages 14-15]

“Our goal when entering the SAA program is abstinence from one or more specific sexual behaviors. But unlike programs for recovering alcoholics or drug addicts, Sex Addicts Anonymous does not have a universal definition of abstinence. Most of us have no desire to stop being sexual altogether. It is not sex in and of itself that causes us problems, but the addiction to certain sexual behaviors. In SAA we will be better able to determine what behavior is addictive and what is healthy. However, the fellowship does not dictate to its members what is and isn't addictive sexual behavior. Instead we have found that it is necessary for each member to define their own abstinence.

Since different addicts suffer from different behaviors, and since our sexuality is experienced in so many different ways, it is necessary that SAA members define for themselves, with the help of their sponsors or others in recovery, which of their sexual behaviors they consider to be ‘acting out.’”

This can be a difficult challenge. If we are too lenient with ourselves, we might not get sober. If we are too strict, we might restrict ourselves from healthy behaviors that we have no need to give up, and an inability to meet our high standards could set us up for relapse. We need the help of other recovering sex addicts, and the reliance on a Power greater than ourselves, to find the right balance between these two extremes.

Our program acknowledges each individual's dignity and right to choose their own concept of healthy sexuality. We have learned that our ideas of what is healthy and what is addictive evolve with experience. In time, we are able to define our abstinence with honesty, fairness and gentleness. This process is a valuable exercise in our recovery. It requires us to carefully examine all of our sexual behaviors, decide which ones are healthy or addictive, and note those cases where we're not sure. It is a way of taking stock of our sexuality that teaches us a lot about ourselves and our behavior.

