** Relapse in Recovery**

**I**t is believed that only 5% of addicts who go into therapy are able to “beat” their addiction. 1 That gives us a relapse rate of 95%! This is certainly a concerning statistic and can even be discouraging, but this is a very clear example of the seriousness of the addiction and the level of commitment and work needed to manage it. Quite plainly, there is no cure. Those who suffer from sexual addiction will live with it for the rest of their lives, similar to an alcoholic. But just like an alcoholic can manage their addiction and even remain sober for several decades with dedication, surrender, and work, so too can the recovering sex addict hope to achieve long term sobriety with the same work. As we say in the SAA program “Rarely have we seen someone fail who has thoroughly followed our path.” Whenever we have seen a member relapse, they admit to not having either worked the program or utilized the tools the program has to offer such as working the 12 steps, contacting their sponsor, or regularly attending SAA meetings. The more you are able to commit yourself to the recovery program the stronger your sobriety foundation stands to be.

Many members deal with the fear that if they relapse then they “lose” their sobriety. This may come from the practice of turning in your sobriety chips you’ve acquired throughout your recovery, after you’ve relapsed. It also comes from the shame and guilt of relapse. But it is important for the addict to remember that the time they were able to stay sober is never “lost”. You still have all that sober time. The marker on your sobriety date simply resets and you begin the count again, hopefully with renewed dedication. **It is also important to remember that our recovery is not defined by our relapses, but by our decisions to remain in recovery despite them.** Relapses, if we let them, can be important learning tools about ourselves along the path of recovery. We discover new triggers, we learn about different aspects of our lives that we may not be coping well with, and we are again reminded of how powerful this addiction is. We are able to grow from our relapses so it is important for the recovering addict not to fear relapse but know that it is never the end unless we let it be. This of course doesn’t mean that if an addict suffers relapse again and again every week that they’re learning a lot about themselves. They simply aren’t working the program or taking their recovery seriously.

This doesn’t mean that we in the group are fine with relapse, use them as an excuse to act out again, or expect our loved ones to accept it as okay. With every relapse wounds are reopened. The hard truth of what life is like with or as a recovering sex addict is again revealed. The uncertainty of if, or more likely when, and addict relapses is a difficult thing to live with let alone deal with when it actually happens. As recovering addicts we need to be aware of the pain that we’ve caused others and the recurring pain they feel even as we are in recovery. The recovering addict will hopefully feel the burden of shame lifted from them as they work the program. It is important to understand however, that though the burden has been lifted from our backs, in many cases it has now been placed on the backs of our loved ones. Where we are now free, our loved ones must face some difficult decisions on how to proceed in their own lives. Relapse can be helpful but it is always painful.

139 Shocking Sexual Addiction Recovery Statistics, *http://healthresearchfunding.org/39-shocking-sexual-addiction-recovery-statistics/*,Item 6, Nov 7, 2014.