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for Maintenance

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MAKING SOBRIETY PERMANENT

by Scott Wisenbaker

With the very best of intentions three men leave treatment honestly believing that relapse is not possible after all that they have seen and learned.

The first man returned to his upper middle class home, to his wife and lucrative career. On top of the world the man dismisses any need of 12-step meetings or any other activity that would put him in direct contact with other alcoholics/addicts. With a firm resolution he is done forever. Within three months however, divorce papers have been filed, the career is in jeopardy, and our man has not drawn a sober breath for nearly two months.

The second man returns to his family's home where a safe cocoon-like atmosphere exists. A nice safe automobile waits in the garage, while all members of the family are eager to congratulate and lend their support. No one dares to make life difficult or stressful for him. Our man is using within weeks despite the perfect

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Healthy Sexuality for Women in Recovery *Crossing the Bridge*

by Silvia V. Jason

The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn.

Gloria Steinem

What is it to be a sexually healthy woman? What does it mean to heal our sexuality? What does healthy sexuality look like? How well do we know our sexualselves? These are questions many women in recovery from addictions ask and struggle with. They are not easy questions to answer, particularly in our culture at this moment in time.

These questions are probably the most poignant for women recovering from sex related addictions: sex addiction, co-sex addiction, sex and love addiction. Sexuality is a fundamental expression of who we are. It touches our core as individuals. When sexual energy becomes entangled with our needs to cope with stress, to avoid pain, to manage our moods, to manage our relationships, to engage our partners, etc., we end up using sexual energy addictively. At the same time, we end up bringing about experiences that violate our own values and become traumatic. As our

sexual energy becomes distorted, our own sexuality becomes traumatized. It also becomes traumatizing, both for ourselves and others in our lives. As a result, our inner selves – and our lives – are damaged.

We seem to have some clarity about what healthy sexuality is not: a mood altering experience, a “fix”, the most important sign of love, a way to engage and secure a partner, the ultimate goal of a relationship, a form of currency, a way to solve a problem, etc.; figuring out what healthy sexuality looks like is a lot more elusive.

Most people do not learn about healthy sexuality from their families of origin. We know from our experience and the literature in the field that most families fail to provide healthy models of sexuality for their children.

The contributions of the field of traditional sex therapy have provided only a partial understanding of healthy sexuality. With a strong emphasis in behavior, it has neglected to understand the richness of the relational dimensions of sexuality, as well as the addictive use of sexual energy, on the other side of the spectrum.

Correspondingly, there seems to be very few models of healthy sexuality in the mainstream culture, if any at



all. There is tremendous ambivalence and contradiction between the media's portrayal of sex and sexiness, with its unlimited amounts of images and messages of unrealistic, unhealthy and many times abusive sexuality, and the silence and shaming messages of most of our social institutions.

The experience of people in recovery from addiction, researchers and therapists in the fields of sexual addiction, trauma and sexual abuse has provided some insights into what

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Motivation for Maintenance *Session in Progress*

by George DuWors

Luke showed up without his wife this week. They have been working on their relationship, participating in structured dialogs while she begins Alanon and he has returned to NA. A thirty-something alcoholic-addict, he once had about two years clean and sober in NA. Prior to this session, we had spent more time motivating him to pick up his socks than trying to get or keep him clean. And our method was more one of developing his empathy through communication than “motivational enhancement” as

described in “TIP 35.”

But he does not waste any time.

“Might as well tell you – I screwed up again.”

“How?” I ask.

Luke reveals that he had “two beers.” But they turn out to be of the 20 ounce 8.5% variety, which comes out to the alcohol content of over a six-pack. His wife and son were out of town. He had been working seven days a week for almost two months, trying to get caught up financially. Three NA meetings that week, but no AA, he says. If he has a sponsor, he does not call him.

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