
INTRODUCTION



This workbook was written for you because you are either considering participating in a treatment program for men who have committed sexual crimes, or you understand that you need help with your sexual problems. In either case you have made a good choice. Each year in America, tens of thousands of individuals like you are charged with a sexual crime. Many more are never caught or charged; but know in their hearts that they have a problem with their sexually aggressive behavior. Whether you have been identified by the court as having sexual problems, know that you have sexual problems but have not been caught, or are concerned that you may have sexual problems, the fact that you are reading this workbook is important. It indicates that at some level you desire to heal the distress that harmful sexuality has caused in your life.

Many men who have committed sexual crimes are convicted and given some form of punishment such as prison or jail, and some are on probation. No matter what your current situation, you are fortunate because you are beginning to think about how you can change your life. You are making the first step toward a better future. Working through the exercises in this workbook or starting in treatment with a sex offender treatment program will help you make changes in your life.

“You are making the first step toward a brighter future.”

This workbook is written to give you some guidance through the first steps in treatment. It gives you some straightforward ideas to help you start working on a very complex problem. We hope that as you read this you will look at your life and find the inspiration, hope, and desire to change your life. The authors work in the assessment and treatment of people whose sexual problems have caused harm to others. It is our experience that the best way of gaining help with sexual behavior problems is to work with an experienced therapist and at least one other individual who knows you and who you trust. This other individual must be someone with whom you can talk to about yourself and all aspects of your sexuality. One of the earliest steps down the path towards committing sexual crimes is keeping secrets. Hiding your thoughts and actions from your friends and family is a sign that you are on the wrong track and heading for trouble. As you go through the early steps of treatment it is essential that you learn to trust someone else. Even under the most difficult of circumstances, everyone who wants to can find a friend to share feelings and thoughts with and to get feedback and support from. If you are in the ideal circumstance, where a sex-offender treatment program is available, you will find other men with similar problems with whom you can share your story.

We recommend that you join, if possible, a treatment program for men with sexual behavior problems. This is hard to do. Even if one is available, you may find a number of excuses to avoid committing yourself in this way.

One excuse is that it is hard to talk to other men about past shameful behaviors. Another reason is that, if you live in the community, treatment is often expensive. A third reason is that, if you are in an institution, you may be creating more problems for yourself by disclosing your crime. All of these reasons (and many others) are used as excuses for avoiding treatment. Our view is that those who really want help can get it. Getting help and being open to it when it comes takes courage.

If you are in an institution, you know that many rumors circulate about mental health, counseling, and treatment programs. If you have heard stories about the uselessness of being in a sex offender treatment program, consider the source. Was the man who spoke to you about the program successful in it or not? Those who do well in such programs receive help and turn their lives around. They will speak positively about the experience even though they may admit that the program wasn't perfect and that treatment wasn't easy. Others who have not done well in a treatment program will sometimes lie about the experience to make themselves look good and the treatment program look bad. Keep in mind as you think about getting help that this is your life. You are responsible for what you do and what happens to you. You can, with help, take advantage of opportunities that are provided to you.

No matter where you are or what your situation is, you are trying to change your life for the better. The most helpful and fundamental step for you to take is to begin being honest. Who do you need to be honest with? First with yourself so you can be honest with others. What is the first thing to be honest about? About who you are and what you have really done in your life. Many men who have committed sexual crimes lie about their crimes, deny doing them, minimize their role, and are unwilling to take responsibility for their behavior. No one likes to experience shame, guilt, pain, fear, anger and other negative emotions, but running from them will lead you to lie and deny what you know that you have done. It is also the first step to committing a new crime. Hopefully, as you read this workbook you will understand that you must accept responsibility for your crime, recognize that you have a problem, and want help to change.

We hope this workbook will help you to better understand the evaluation and treatment process, and how you can get the most out of them. It will serve as an educational tool to give you guidance as you begin to examine your life. One way of looking at the process that you are beginning is to imagine that you are taking a long trip. To be successful and reach your destination demands a great deal of preparation before you start. It requires acknowledging that you wish to travel, identifying your goal, gathering the resources that will be needed for your livelihood and for emergencies as you travel, and then, after your preparations are complete, taking the trip. The evaluation phase of treatment is the time to take on the first of these tasks. It gives you a chance to set your goals, look at the road map, and gain some skills that you can use over the years it will take to make your trip. [If you are in a treatment program it also gives the therapist a chance to evaluate you and your problems so that he or she can help you map out the best route.] During the evaluation process you will have many questions about the road ahead. The more you ask, the more you involve yourself, the better you will know what the road will be like ahead. If you are working with a therapist and interact honestly with him or her, he or she can better prepare you to avoid some of the deeper potholes. Professionals, who know you well, can help you plan your treatment so that you can be more confident of reaching your goals.

The evaluation period is also a time to determine the source and strength of your motivation to reach your goals. You gain the most from your work when you have a desire to help yourself. Your motivation to change is probably the single major factor to your success in treatment. At times you will find your motivation wavering up and down, becoming very strong and then very weak. This is normal. Almost every individual who starts down the road to change his life for the better has thought about dropping out at one time or another. When you have to face yourself or begin trying to change old habits, it gets tough. That is the time that many men who have committed sexual crimes feel like giving up. **DON'T**. That time is the most critical for you to stay in treatment and face your problems. For example, if you decided to stop smoking, the easy part is to know your goal (a tobacco-free life) and what you need to do (don't buy cigarettes, don't carry matches, and so forth). It is not until you stop smoking that you get into difficulty. Giving up at that point makes all the effort that went into your preparation useless. It also makes all your friends believe you a little less when you say you will stop the next time. If you are like most men who have committed sexual crimes, you have given up on difficult projects for most of your life. Now you have a new opportunity. If you find yourself *weak, tired, frustrated or angry*, **DON'T GIVE UP!** Be determined to succeed. One way of keeping on towards your goal is to talk with someone who supports your dream of a healthy life and understands your fears and frustrations.

Take your time and seriously think about your life and what it means to you. Don't cut yourself short by discounting this chance to help yourself. Don't make up convenient excuses to avoid looking at yourself. Even if you are not sure of what you want, you have nothing to lose by trying. Most importantly, be sure to give being in treatment a fair chance and your best effort. We wish you the best of luck.

“DON'T GIVE UP! Be determined to succeed.”

Robert E. Longo
Laren Bays
Steven Sawyer

NOTE: The authors recognize that people who commit sexual crimes can be male or female. However, since the majority are men, and to make the reading of this workbook easier, we have elected to refer to people who have committed sexual crimes as males.