

The Abstinence Statement

Our primary purpose is to abstain from sexually compulsive behavior, and help others to achieve abstinence. In line with this purpose, we feel that a brief statement regarding the meaning of abstinence is in order.

First, we define abstinence in terms of behavior rather than mental states. We do not focus our efforts upon abstaining from mental "lust", but from compulsive behavior. Just as A.A. focuses on the need to stop the behavior of drinking, and as O.A. focuses on compulsive eating as the point of abstinence, so S.A.A. focuses on compulsive sexual acting out. The lust of the mind may take years to drain away as one works the twelve steps of recovery; abstinence from the destructive and addictive behaviors, however, can begin today, and is the basic foundation upon which all subsequent personal growth depends. "Progress rather than perfection" is the atmosphere for growth that we seek to promote.

Secondly, abstinence will be different for each member of S.A.A., depending upon what behaviors are compulsive and lead to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. Some addicts can engage in sexual behaviors from which other addicts find they must abstain; in S.A.A., we leave the choice up to the individual.

Finally, abstinence does not imply the complete elimination of sexuality from the addict's life, whether married, partnered or single; rather, it lays the foundation for learning a new approach to the experience of sex and relationships which is non-compulsive and non-destructive. Such an approach is possible to all who earnestly desire it.