Disclosure Writing Guidelines
Guidelines for Writing a Disclosure for Relationship Partner

As you prepare to write a disclosure to your relationship partner, the following assumptions are made:

· You are ready to be 100% honest with your relationship partner.
· You are ready to stop acting out. DO NOT GO THROUGH THIS PROCESS IF YOU ARE NOT SURE YOU WANT TO STOP YOUR COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIORS. Otherwise you will need to repeat this procedure at a later time and create additional, unnecessary trauma for your spouse, as well as unnecessary expense for yourself.
· You have already given a First Step in a 12-step meeting. (This may or may not be the case for a client who is doing a Three-Day Intensive.)
· Your relationship partner is already in therapy or is willing to enter therapy. This therapy should be with someone who is skilled at working with spouses of sex addicts.
· Do not include any expressions of love, apology, or pleas for forgiveness.
· One of the most helpful things in preparing a disclosure is to construct a timeline that includes all of the major events of life. For example, you could number the lines on a piece of paper from one through your current age. Then go back and add a very brief description of major events for each year. These events are not going to be part of the disclosure. But they will help in identifying when various sexual behaviors took place.
· Start writing your disclosure today! The best disclosures are written over a period of several weeks, writing for an hour or so per day. Disclosures done hurriedly over a day or two usually result in a failed polygraph exam because much tends to be left out. The average disclosure takes about 20 hours to write if done properly.
· This disclosure covers your entire sexual history. That’s right, your entire life!
· There is not one right length for your disclosure. Most of them run 12 to 20 pages. If your disclosure is less than 10 pages, start back with your timeline and see what else you can recall.
· If your disclosure is more than 20 pages, you need to go back and take out the extraneous detail. Remember, this is an account of your acting out, not a novel. Unnecessary details need to be left out. Extraneous details may make such a vivid picture your partner may have difficulty ever forgetting it. However, the disclosure needs to be very specific as to your acting out behavior.

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Lurid details will only serve to hurt your partner. Figure out how to tell your partner the facts without dragging her/him through the muck of your acting out!

This work will be easier if you use a computer/word processor since there will likely be several revisions. When you are done, print this out double spaced so as to have room to add edits that occur during our therapy session(s). Please understand that you are working on a first draft that will be edited. Changes that I suggest do not reflect a failure on your part but are simply part of the process. Only bring one copy of your disclosure.

1. Start with text of First Step (if you have given one). You will then rewrite this as your disclosure using the following guidelines.

2. Include all sexual behavior to the present. This includes all sexual behavior with both males and females.

3. Do not include thoughts or fantasies. Focus only on behaviors instead. However, if you have masturbated to fantasies of family, friends, neighbors, work associates, etc., identify each person that you fantasized about during masturbation.

4. Do not include any sexual behavior that involves your current spouse. She/he knows this already. We are not going to put your partner’s life on display or under scrutiny during the disclosure. The exception to this would be if you have pressured your spouse to engage in your addictive behavior.

5. Using the timeline referenced on page one, recount behavior chronologically year by year. Give timeframes for all behaviors; for example: “In October 1989 I went to a strip club for the first time.” Please follow this carefully: you will begin each of your acting out behaviors with the date of the acting out. Be as specific as you can.

   a. NOTE: Be sure to go back through your personal and business phone records, credit card statements, and email history to help you recreate your timeline.

6. When speaking of acting out partners, refer to them as “the woman” or “the man.” However in the following cases use full name of acting out partners: if your relationship partner knows the person, you still have contact with that person, you work with or used to work with that person, if your relationship with that person covered a significant amount of time, or your partner has had any contact with that person.
7. Use clinical or anatomically correct terms rather than slang; for example: use the terms breast, masturbate, intercourse, etc., instead of various slang terms.

8. Do not say, “I had sex.” Thanks to a former president, you have to specify the sexual behavior in which you engaged. Specific language like “oral sex,” “vaginal intercourse,” “anal intercourse,” and “sexual touching” are more appropriate.

9. Use “I” statements to focus on your addiction and behaviors.

10. When speaking of your relationship partner use second person; for example: “When you [rather than using your partner’s name] went out-of-town on business in April of 2005, I called an escort service and hired a prostitute for two evenings. I engaged in vaginal intercourse and received unprotected oral sex. I also gave her oral sex which was unprotected.” You speak directly to your partner for you will be reading this to him or her during the disclosure.

11. Avoid any statements that may tend to shift the blame of acting out to your relationship partner. For example, rather than saying, “When you got mad at me on August 1, 2005, I went to a massage parlor and….” Instead focus on your behavior. “On August 1, 2005, I went to a massage parlor and….”

12. Take responsibility for your behavior. This first example does not take responsibility: “When I was in San Diego in March of last year a prostitute propositioned me. I did not want to have sex. She insisted and I finally gave in.” Taking responsibility would be like this: “March of last year I was in San Diego on business. I paid a prostitute $150 for vaginal intercourse. I also engaged in sexual touching.”

13. Include any person you kissed or hugged that was more than a friendly greeting.

14. Do not talk about what you did not do. For example, if you went to a strip club and engaged in sexual touching, you say that. If that is the complete account of your sexual behavior there, you let the sexual touching phrase stand on its own. You do not add, “And I did not have intercourse.” For the most part, any sentence that includes the word “not” most probably would not be included. Exceptions to that would be, “When you were out of town last month, I did not go to the 12-step meeting like I told you. Instead I stayed home and looked at pornography on my computer and masturbated to the images.”
15. Eliminate all minimizing language. Words like “only” as in “I only had protected sex” should be changed to (for example), “I engaged in intercourse.” Note: if the sexual act was unprotected, say so because you need to take responsibility for the risk involved. If the sexual act was protected, simply talk about the sexual act. To say it was protected may be heard by your partner as you saying, “I had intercourse but it was protected.”

16. Be specific. Words such as, “some,” “a few,” “a couple,” “occasionally,” “the behavior increased,” and the like are not specific. Give a number. If you are unsure as to the number, give a range such as, “between 7 and 10 times.” The bottom number is the times you are sure you did this acting out behavior. The top number is what you are sure you did not exceed.

17. Leave out references to orgasm, both yours and your acting out partner’s.

18. Leave out all feelings like “it scared me,” “I didn’t like it,” “I was sad,” etc.

19. Be sure to include any and all instances of unprotected sex.

20. Give details (date, with whom, etc.) of your last sexual acting out.

21. Give details (date, with whom, etc.) of your last sexual conversation other than with your partner.

22. Give details of all anonymous sexual encounters.

23. Give listing of arrests as well as any other encounters with law enforcement officers relative to sex addiction.

24. If you were involved in any incest as a child, include a full account of the activities along with age and dates and the identity of the person(s) with whom you were incestuous.

25. Give date and details of the last time you intentionally viewed pornography or did any cybersex activities.

26. Provide a complete list of all gifts given and received from sexual partners or persons you hoped would become sexual partners.

27. Include the dollar amount of all money spent in acting out and include this with each acting out behavior. Make an itemized list of all expenditures at the end of your disclosure and include a grand total. Also tell how you paid for those expenses; for example: “I have a secret credit card and checking account….” Include detail of money spent on sex partners including gifts.

28. Include any STDs you have contracted or believe you have contracted.
29. Include other costs of your addiction including transportation, hotel rooms, meals, alcohol, therapy costs, legal expenses, lost business, gambling losses, etc.

30. List all ways you have deceived your relationship partner; for example: lying about going on business trips, deception about how you have used a company expense account, any secret stashes of money along with the source of those funds, the existence of secret post office boxes and secret email accounts (provide a complete list), secret cell phone account (give the phone number and service provider). Also provide a list of all screen names used on the Internet and all aliases you have used in your acting out.

31. List all instances of abuse toward your relationship partner and/or their children or your children.

32. Detail other addictive behaviors that are related to your sex addiction; for example alcohol and/or drug use (estimate dollars spent), and gambling activities (and give a detail of all losses and winnings).

33. Give details about the amount of time that you engaged in your acting out above.

34. What were the consequences of your acting out? How did your acting out negatively impact your life and that of your spouse, your family, and others?

35. When you finish writing, go back and reread these instructions. Then compare what you have written with the directions given here.

Polygraph Exam

You will be given an opportunity to raise the level of your credibility by taking a polygraph exam after your disclosure. The polygraph exam will include questions such as:

- Is there anything about your sexual history you have not disclosed to your relationship partner?
- Have you purposely omitted any sexual behavior from your disclosure?
- Have you been sexual with any person other than what you have disclosed to your relationship partner?

As you work on your disclosure, reread it in view of these questions.

As long as your disclosure is open, honest, and complete, you will not have difficulty with the polygraph exam. (However, you need to know that incomplete disclosures as well as disclosures that are not forthright result in failed polygraph exams.)