Polygraph Exams as an Aid in Recovery from Sex Addiction

Compulsive sexual behavior is typically done in secret. In order to protect secrets, sex addicts become accomplished at weaving a web of deceit that undermines marriages and committed relationships.

For the relationship to be restored, not only must you be fully engaged in the recovery process, but a foundation of trust must be reestablished. That foundation begins with a complete disclosure of all previous and current acting out behaviors. I will work with you to prepare your disclosure. It is important that your relationship partner also be engaged in therapy with a therapist skilled at working with the spouse/partner of sex addicts.

A polygraph exam has proven to be an important tool in helping couples get beyond the deception of the past and build a relationship on complete trust. Other sex addicts who have taken a polygraph exam following a disclosure have said that the polygraph exam was an invaluable aid in helping them get totally honest, perhaps for the first time in their life. Such honesty is necessary if there is to be hope of broken trust being restored. To further build that trust, your relationship partner will have the opportunity to suggest questions to be included in your exam.

The polygraph exam itself is painless and lasts two hours or less. The polygraph examiner conducts the session much like a business interview. 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.)

When you complete the exam, the examiner will review the results with me. I will then give the results to both partners at the same time.

Initial/Baseline Exam:

Preparation:
• Bring your disclosure to the exam. The examiner will ask you questions about this document and then use it as the basis for your exam.

Suggested questions for initial/baseline polygraph exam:
I will prepare the questions that will be used in the exam. These are prepared with the input of your relationship partner. The questions will be similar to the following:
• 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?
Aftercare/Follow-up Exams:

**Schedule:** For persons participating in Three-Day Intensives, follow-up exams are scheduled as part of the Aftercare Intensives according to the schedule suggested during your intensive.

For clients not involved in Three-Day Intensives, it is suggested that follow-up exams be taken according to the following schedule:

- **Follow-up one:** 3 months after the initial exam (3 month interval)
- **Follow-up two:** 9 months after the initial exam (6 month interval)
- **Follow-up three:** 15 months after the initial exam (6 month interval)
- **Follow-up four:** 27 months after the initial exam (1 year interval)
- Thereafter, polygraph exams are suggested annually as a continuing part of recovery.

You should take the initiative to set up these follow-up exams rather than relying on your therapist or relationship partner to prompt you.

The purpose of follow-up exams is twofold. First, it benefits sex addicts in that the knowledge there is always an exam scheduled in the future helps restore sane thinking if/when they are triggered and consider returning to acting out behaviors. Secondly, the exam benefits the partner because successful exams provide a tangible basis upon which trust in the relationship can be rebuilt.

The follow-up exams will have questions similar to the following: (These may be further defined depending on your bottom-line behaviors.)

- Have you been sexual with anyone other than your spouse since your last polygraph exam? (This question covers not only intercourse but other sexual acts as well as sexual conversations.)
- Have you communicated with any former sex partners since your last polygraph exam?
- Have you intentionally viewed any pornography since your last polygraph exam? (This question includes internet, print, and video pornography.)
- Have you patronized any sexually oriented businesses since your last polygraph exam?
- Have you engaged in any new sexual behavior since your last polygraph exam?
- Have you engaged in any cybersex activities (understood to include all types of sexual behavior on the internet, including pornography, looking for sex partners, searching ads of sexually oriented businesses, sexual chat, etc.)
- Have you engaged in (therapist will name those behaviors that fit the client: voyeurism, cruised for prostitutes, exposed yourself, called escort services, etc.) since your last polygraph exam?
- Other questions submitted by relationship partner.