

## **Exploring the Issue of Being a Co-Dependent Woman in a Relationship With a Sexually Addicted Man**

Many of us blame ourselves for the addict's behavior: We tell ourselves, "If only I were more attractive, thinner, taller, shorter, etc.—if only I were more sexual."

We give in to others' behaviors, only to lose ourselves in the process. Sometimes, we have even participated in their sexual fantasies, or joined in by using pornography with them, leaving us feeling used and abused. Some of us ignored or did not recognize the signs that the addict was living a secret life.

Many of us blame the addict and their behavior for every problem in our relationship. We believe that if they would only change then everything would be fine. In essence, co-dependents are addicted to their spouse's behaviors. They either give in to the addict, try to control them, or make them stop.

We have sometimes pretended to family, friends, and co-workers that everything is "wonderful." We have been unforgiving and sometimes punishing toward the addict.

### **Characteristics of a Co-Dependent Woman in a Relationship with a Sexually Addicted Man may include but are not limited to:**

- Having a spouse who continually escapes to pornographic material.
- Having a spouse who is currently having or has had an affair.
- You, yourself, are having an affair.
- Issues dealing with molestation and abuse from a spouse.
- Their spouse engages with sex workers.

### **How We Find Recovery**

Through a relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Higher Power, and by working through the 8 recovery principles and the Christ-centered 12 steps, we can find freedom from our hurts, hang ups and habits.

### **Characteristics of Someone in Recovery for Being a Co-Dependent Woman in a Relationship with a Sexually Addicted Man May Include, But are not Limited to:**

- Accept Jesus Christ as Higher Power.
- Working the 12 step recovery process diligently and consistently.
- Recognize the struggles of other co-dependents.
- Learn healthy, Christian values for family roles and rules.
- Gain information about healthy sexuality and relationships.
- Break through denial and other unhealthy family patterns.
- Encouragement from the group to find peace, strength, and grace through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Build healthy relationships by finding love and acceptance in a "safe" place to share.
- Realize that we could not control the addict or their behavior.
- Understand that our problems are emotional and spiritual.
- Face our denial and accept the truth about our lives, and our past issues.
- Realize that blaming ourselves, trying to control the addict and/or ignoring their behavior, refusing to set and uphold our own personal boundaries, are all signs of co-addiction.
- Accept responsibility for our own actions and make Jesus the Lord of our lives.
- Become dedicated to learning about sexual addiction and co-addiction and becoming partners with our spouse in recovery.
- Realize we are not responsible for their addiction or recovery. It is not our job to "fix" them.
- Find healthy ways to release our fears and anger and refuse to use anger inappropriately toward the addict.
- Have a safe place to share fears, hurt, or anger and also to rejoice in victories.
- Face our own defects and work through these feelings.
- Take the focus off of the addict and focus on God and our own thoughts and feelings.