

## *The Problem*

We have a problem in common: we feel terribly alone and live a double life. On one hand, we hold down jobs, are upstanding people in our communities, take good care of our families, and care deeply about other people. Yet, we are consumed by sex; preoccupied in getting sex, and fantasizing about the next time. We can spend hours seeking the next thrill in pornography, cruising, surfing the 'net, or grooming our next sexual "partner".

This is not a new problem. We started young. The discovery of masturbation and sex was the greatest thing that had happened to us and we wanted more. We sought out that incredible high again and again. Sex became our best and closest friend. We used sex when we were down in order to feel better. We used sex when we felt good to reward ourselves. Desire was the only emotion we knew. All other emotions were swallowed up in the rush of sex.

But the second time was not the same. We needed ever-new activities and new stimulation. And, so, our addiction grew.

But the sex didn't satisfy the real need. We were left empty and alone with feelings of guilt, shame and remorse over what we had done. We made solemn promises to ourselves and tearful assurances to others that we would never do that again. But we could not keep our promises. We tried to stop and couldn't. No matter how long between times; days, weeks, months, or even years, the urge would come back with renewed strength. No matter what we did to keep control, nor how long we managed to stop, the time would come when the addiction called us out. We would be blind to the consequences and compelled to do it again.

We tried many things to stop: became more religious; did a big repentance; went on retreats, changed jobs and careers, divorced and remarried, moved, and even left the country. But we could not run from what was inside us. The addiction always came back.

The only solution we have found is to be steadfast in meeting with other addicts, sharing our experiences with them and working the Steps. Learning to surrender our lives to a higher power, we find that others have gone before us. Our lives are not as unique as we feared, nor as bad as we dreaded. We all have been there and all have the same problem. Together, we can heal.