

Creating Your Personal Action Plan – Dan Hitz

This is the fourth article adapted from our new teaching series “Escaping the Dungeon of Porn”. This series can be taught in men’s groups, Sunday school classes and Saturday seminars. If you are interested in hosting an “Escaping the Dungeon of Porn” class at your church, call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114. Much of this article was adapted from Falling Forward, The Pursuit of Sexual Purity, Craig Lockwood, Desert Stream Press, Grandview, MO, 2000.



One of the most important steps toward walking in sexual and relational wholeness includes making a personal action plan – a list of the steps that you will take to walk away from the old patterns of sin and to guard against relapse. This article will help you create such a plan. Once you do, share it with your trusted friends and ask them to hold you accountable to implementing this plan in your life.

Write out your personal definition and goals for sexual purity.

You need to be clear in your own mind about what God is telling you to walk away from and what He is asking you to walk in to. Detail your specific sins and what it is that you must surrender to God. After that, list what God wants as a replacement for the sin in your life. If you have been engaging in pornography on the internet and masturbating, then part of your personal definition and goals will include no longer viewing pornography online and installing blocking or accountability software on your computer. As Christian men, we are called to honor and protect women and children. Honoring women means that we will no longer view them as objects of our illicit sexual desire, but as God’s daughters to be guarded from those who would devour. Sexual purity also means purposefully casting sinful images and fantasies into the cross and replacing those images with godly thoughts and actions. The important thing is to seek God in prayer to ask Him what sexual and relational purity specifically means for you in the context of your walk with Him and clearly delineate it in your plan.

Write out some of the non-sinful activities which you have formerly participated in which are now off limits to you.

Many of us engage in activities which are not inherently sinful, but that may make us vulnerable to sin. It is important to identify yours. Driving through a certain section of town may actually save you time in your commute, but if seeing some of the establishments starts filling your mind with fantasy it would be far better to drive a few miles out of your way than to put yourself into a place of warfare. Channel surfing in the motel room may seem like a great way to relax after a business meeting, but are you really hoping to see an eye-ful in the process? Where are you compromising with non-sinful activities to give yourself that reminder of the sinful past? Giving into these types of behaviors is like riding in a canoe near the top of a waterfall. It may be exciting, but it’s not a good idea.



List some of your triggers and high risk behavior.

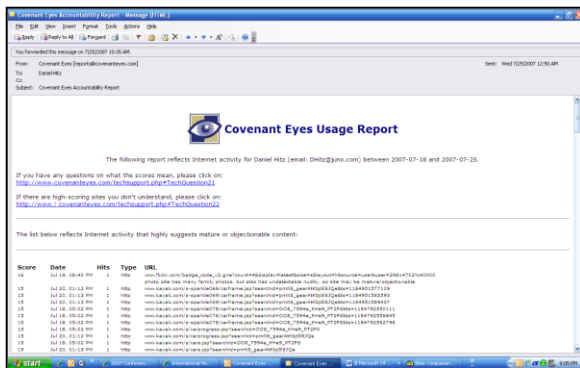
What makes you vulnerable to sin? Loneliness, inadequacy, invalidation, and unaccompanied business trips are some of the primary triggers – jabs to the heart – that lead many to acting out sexually. It is important to identify your triggers and high risk behaviors when you are emotionally strong so that you may make other plans and/or take precautions when you know a precarious situation is possible. If you struggle with pornography when you have long

periods of time alone, it is important to plan for the next time that you know you will have the house to yourself. Some high risk situations may be unavoidable, but if the weariness of staying up late on the weekends leaves you susceptible to sexual sin you are creating a high risk situation when you do so.

Write out some of the rationalizations that you have used to justify your sinful behavior in one column, then write a Biblical truth in another column which you can use to counteract your rationalization.

Rationalizations are lies that we tell ourselves to make it easier to sin. “My week has been so stressful; a little pornography will help me relax.” “I wouldn’t have to try to pick up another woman if my wife would just put out a little bit more.” It is amazing how men who love God and worship Him freely at church can convince themselves of a lie so easily. Write down the rationalizations that you use when you’re tempted to sin, and seek God for a specific Scripture to counteract that lie in your heart. “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” (Gal 5:16)

Write out the steps that you will take to achieve your goal of sexual purity. Include what you plan to do to avoid triggers, and what you plan to do when you are triggered



There are many beneficial steps one can take to avoid falling into sexual sin. If you have internet access in your home, filters and/or accountability software is crucial. Covenant Eyes (www.covenanteyes.com) is the best internet accountability software available. It lists each site visited by the user, ranks them for acceptability, and sends Internet logs via e-mail to two accountability partners. Sites which have a high probability of illicit content are listed separately, along with the date

and time the site was visited and the number of hits. It costs \$7.95 per month with discounts for additional user names, but it is well worth it. XXXChurch (www.xxxchurch.com) also offers accountability software which may be downloaded for free, or an upgraded version is available for a one time cost of \$20. This software is not as extensive as Covenant Eyes, only lists sites which may be questionable, and is not as easy to read. Both programs store the browsing history in a way that is inaccessible to the user.

Another crucial step is to commit to full accountability with a member of your home church leadership team. It is important that your struggle be brought into the light with someone in authority that can walk with you and ask the tough questions. Be sure to share your specific struggles openly and honestly. The sins that you keep hidden from those God sends to help you will become the ball and chain around your ankle. In addition to your pastoral staff, you will need to make a list of at least three people that you can call when you are tempted, or when you realize that you are in an addictive cycle. You will also need to pick two people that you will engage in regular accountability meetings with at least every two weeks. These accountability relationships will differ from the one that you have with your church leadership in that they will be two way accountability relationships where you will hold them accountable to sexual purity as they hold you accountable. In these relationships you will



learn to know others and to be known by them. You will grow in purity together as you share your victories and failures with those you can trust. The hardest aspect of accountability relationships is creating them. Pray and ask the Lord for the names of men that he wants you to approach. It may be difficult initially to be vulnerable to others, but the benefits of an accountability relationship are invaluable. A sample list of accountability questions is included at the end of this article.

List some activities and groups that you plan on participating in to keep yourself active and engaged in a social environment.



Those engaged in sexual sin often develop tunnel vision and are only able to focus on their next sexual fix. It is important to create healthy social outlets for relaxation and fellowship as you walk away from the illicit sin that once filled those voids. If you don't currently have a lot of social contacts, your church men's group may be the best place to start. Volunteering will also help connect you to men with similar interest. Don't forget the most important social network of all – your family. Very often the spouse and children of sexual addicts are themselves feeling the robbery of addiction. Spend time rebuilding those relationship and learning to share your heart in a healthy way with your family. They need their father. Your wife needs her husband.

Write out in detail the specific things in your life that have been adversely affected, and will be affected more if you continue to engage in sexually inappropriate behaviors. Pay special attention to the things you stand to loose if you do not conquer your sexual sin.

The cost of addiction is high. A powerful tool in relapse prevention is to be ever mindful of the price that you have paid for sexual sin and the chains that once held you captive. It is astounding what we will give up for an illicit orgasm. Write a detailed account of what you have lost and what has been tainted by your sin. It may also be helpful to journal what may happen if you have another fall – even taking it to the extremes of being confronted by a divorce lawyer, an angry husband, or the police. You can contrast this by journaling what you have gained, or stand to gain, as you walk in purity and holiness. As you weigh the loss with the gain, you can develop a deeper motivation to continue in your recovery.

Maintain and adjust your personal action plan as necessary.

As you progress and gain victory in your recovery, you may be tempted to set aside the very boundaries and actions that the Lord has used to give you the victory in the first place. As people finish our support groups, they are told that their most dangerous period may come six months to a year after they have been walking in sexual and relational wholeness.

Boundaries and accountability take concentrated effort and strength. We may think that we don't need them anymore when we've been walking clean. Don't grow weary in well doing. Maintaining our boundaries and accountability is part of the battle that we will be in until we meet Jesus face to face. It is worth it. As you may very well write in your journal when following the step above, we can feel our hearts connected to Jesus so

much more intimately when we aren't filling our souls full of the poisons of pornography. God has opened the doors to the dungeon of porn. Don't let the enemy throw you back in



Accountability Questions
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God moves through the Body of Christ to bring healing and recovery. Give your accountability partners permission to look you in the eyes and ask you some specific, blunt questions:

1. Have you felt [insert your emotional trigger] since our last meeting? If yes, how did you manage your feelings?
2. Have you had a [insert your negative emotional habit(s) which are responses to your triggers] since our last meeting?
3. Have you **dwelt** on any lustful thoughts since our last meeting?
4. Have you masturbated, or started to masturbate, since our last meeting?
5. Have you been on any questionable websites, watched any unacceptable videos, or used pornography since our last meeting?
6. Did you engage in any unacceptable behavior, including flirting, innuendos, or sexual encounters with anyone other than your wife since our last meeting?
7. Have you had your daily quiet times since our last meeting?
8. What is God teaching you?
9. Have you prayed with wife and kids regularly since our last meeting?
10. Have you told any other accountability partners anything you are avoiding with me/us?
11. Have you done any of the above prior to our last meetings and not yet confessed it?
12. Have you lied about any of the above questions?

Please modify these questions to specifically address your areas of need.

Determine in your heart that you will answer these questions truthfully.

If you or someone you know needs help with sexual addiction, call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114. Help is available.

