

In Sex Addicts Anonymous®, step one says that we admitted that we were addicted and our lives were unmanageable. Many of us worked a first step by telling our story. In many cases, we wrote it down, worked it over with our sponsor and then presented it to the group. Step two is not done by simply admitting to something. It takes openness to the rest of the program – a reaching outside of our own selves.

Step 2 “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

This step is very difficult for addicts. It is easy to intellectually accept that there is some power out there but that is not what this step asks us to do.

Step two starts off with “Came to believe...” This step is not about religion. It is about behavior and hope. Beliefs are not the verbal statements we make about what we think is true. We have watched many people state one thing and then not live on it. Our beliefs are shown in the ways in which we make decisions. “To come to believe that a power greater than ourselves” means that we started to make different decisions and take different actions. As one person put it “It took me 9 months to really understand that recovery needed feet - not rhetoric. I learn to talk the talk quickly. I had a good therapist who helped me understand that it required changes in how I acted and that required changes in how I thought.”

Some of us thought that somehow, magically, by coming to these meetings, the desires and compulsions would disappear and we could go back to living our lives as they were before. We thought that after a few meetings and the desires disappeared, we could continue to use our old techniques and methods for dealing with life’s stresses. Unfortunately, the program doesn’t work like that. As another sex addict put it, “Because no one knew what was going on between my ears, I was not getting my needs met. Because I was not asking for help, I was not getting any and the stress of helplessness

was feeding my cycle.” The desires do not go away; we learn to ask for help with them.

Step two is difficult as it requires reaching outside of ourselves rather than relying on our own skills when we are in trouble. We cannot work step two as long as we are acting as though all we need for recovery are some extra techniques for controlling our behaviors.

The second step offers us hope. When we emotionally “get” the first step, we comprehend that our addiction and our own efforts have not worked. At this point, we can get lost in despair. We had someone come to the group for a couple of meetings. Nice fellow. But he committed suicide after two meetings. Once we emotionally accept that we are powerless over this addiction, either we can despair of finding help or we can hope that there is help outside of ourselves. The program offers hope that help exists outside of us.

We addicts do not trust anything outside of ourselves. That is part of our problem. We have trusted only ourselves and our addiction. As we worked step 1, we got to see in gory detail how the addiction didn’t solve our problems, but has made them worse. Still, many of us want to continue to trust only ourselves. Because of this lack of trust, getting a sponsor is an essential part of working step two.

For most of us, step two is very alien to our prior experiences. We have nothing to base understanding on. We need to be open to simply acting as instructed by our sponsors and groups. After acting and seeing the results, we can understand. Our openness to being directed by others is often the key to getting step two.

“Coming to believe” means that we have the opportunity to deal with the question “What happens when I ask for help? At this point, many of us have had all sorts of emotional reactions based on past abuse, abandonment, or neglect. By continuing in the program, we are able to work through this emotional baggage. As we get to see that the help the program offers is

nonjudgmental, not coercive, and not controlling, we can heal from the wounds of the past.

Healing the addiction requires feedback. As addicts, we have had blinders on about the reasons behind the addiction. By ourselves, we are not able to see why we did certain things. We need others to point out the connections between how we felt before acting out and the urge to go act out. Also, as addicts, we do not like the truth. We do not want to face our pains, our limitations, and our actual realities. That is why we have the addiction. Facing truth requires caring feedback from people we can trust. Often, this is a process where we have to experience asking for help after acting out before we can trust people enough to call before acting out.

Facing truth also requires introspection. It is easy to split into a “recovery self” who can talk the talk and an “addict self” who is acting out outside of the meetings. Step two requires honesty with ourselves, our sponsors, and in meetings.

At this point, we start seeing the insanity that we used to be living in all the time. As we continue to experience recovery and see our lives become more sane, we can more readily accept that our thinking prior to recovery was not sane.

Step two poses a question. The question we need to face is “In this situation, am I acting as though I am sane and have power, or am I acting as though some power outside of my own skin can help me?” This requires that we look outside of our own capabilities for help. We reach out to other people through going to meetings, with phone calls, and getting (and using) a sponsor..

The basics of working step two are: 1. Persistence in going to meetings. 2. Getting a sponsor 3. Calling for help (phone calls) after acting out. 4. Calling for help before acting out.

The Twelve Steps

One: We admitted we were powerless over our addictive sexual behavior - that our lives have become unmanageable.

Two: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Six: Were entirely ready for God to remove all these defects of character.

Seven: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

Eight: Made a list of all the persons we have harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in all of our activities.

Please send feedback to
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Asking for help

A practical guide to working step 2"



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