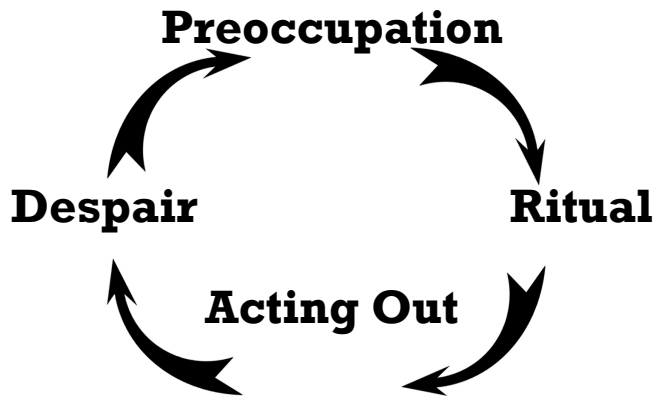


# Lesson 2:

## The Addiction Cycle

*“You feel the lowest of the low, so remorseful, so sorry. I am so done with myself, doing this mess over and over again without ceasing.”*

Rahheem



Based on Carnes' Cycle of Addiction

Remember that all addiction is basically an avoidance of reality. The reality someone is trying to avoid could be, hurt from wounds such as abuse or abandonment, or even something as simple as boredom.

Whatever the catalyst, the desire to feel differently begins a search for something that can alter, or at least mask, the unwanted feeling. When someone discovers the experience that produces the desired result, an equation is made in their thought process. For example Pornography = Relief.

Through repetition, individuals come to rely on the substance or experience to maintain their sense of well-being. It becomes their way of coping with life's struggles.

**However, pornography - the “answer” to their original problem - adds more hurt.**

Since relief is short lived, they find themselves back to their old reality. Because of the unhealthy way they have been trying to medicate their pain, they encounter even more shame, more misery and more hurt than before.

What has worked for them in the past? *Pornography*. So they begin to preoccupy themselves with thoughts of escaping all over again.

**Preoccupation:** Obsessive sexual thoughts that dominate the mind and create desire for more sexual stimulation. Induces trance like state with small amounts of dopamine already being released.

**Ritual:** Unique to each individual, the ritual is a set of preparatory steps designed to maximize the acting out experience. Larger amounts of dopamine being to flow.

**Acting Out:** Engaging in the actual sexual experience or behavior. Dopamine floods the brain.

**Despair:** Immediately follows acting out, feelings of self-loathing, shame, humiliation, hopelessness and anger are often experienced. The release of dopamine drops drastically. Neurochemical “crash” or low begins.

The addiction cycle has at it's very beginning any attempt to escape or avoid feeling.

***Imagine someone who is floating on a raft in the ocean dying of thirst. Water completely surrounds them. Although they know the salt water will only make them more thirsty they begin to drink. The more they drink the thirstier they become and the quicker they return to the salt water in an futile attempt to quench their thirst.***





**Preoccupation**  
Describe those things in life that can preoccupy your thoughts. For example, sex, work, food, TV, church, money - the things you use to escape.

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**Ritual**  
Describe the process you engage in to maximize the benefits of the acting out behavior.

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**Acting Out**  
What behaviors do you engage in to escape?  
How do you act out?

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**Despair**  
Describe your feelings after engaging in your escape behavior and realizing the hurt is still present.

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**1. Which of your feelings do you dislike the most?**

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**2. How do you currently deal with those feelings when they arise?**

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**3. What behaviors do you currently engage in that bring you feelings of guilt or shame?**

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**4. What efforts do you make to keep these behaviors a secret from others?**

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**5. Have you ever thought that these behaviors/thoughts were spiraling out of your control? Explain.**

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**6. When you find out that someone has a sexual addiction, what assumptions do you make about that person?**

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**7. How would you describe a male who has a sexual addiction?**

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**8. How would you describe a female who has a sexual addiction?**

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**9. Are there differences in your answers to # 7 and # 8? Why or why not?**

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**10. Have you ever thought that the concept of addiction is just an excuse? Why or why not?**

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**11. What would you say to someone who made the comment that “sex addiction” is just an excuse for someone who wants to justify their sinful behavior?**

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**12. How can someone with an addiction at the same time be held responsible for their actions and choices?**

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