

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bo Sanchez started preaching at the age of 13 and wrote his first book at the age of 20. He is the publisher and main writer of the **KERYGMA**, the number one inspirational magazine in the country. Today, he continues to preach to millions worldwide. And for years now, his inspirational books have never left the top ten list of bestselling books of the country.

He founded many organizations, such as Anawim, a special home for the abandoned elderly, and Shepherd's Voice, a media ministry that publishes the widest read Catholic literature in the country. He also founded' **Light of Jesus Community** and the **Light of Jesus Counseling Center**.

But above all these, Bo believes that his first call from God is to be a loving husband to his wife Marowe and a devoted father to his sons Benedict and Francis. They live in Manila, Philippines.

Visit him at www.bosanchez.ph and subscribe to receive a free inspirational email message from him each week.

WARNING: THIS IS NOT YOUR ORDINARY BO SANCHEZ BOOK

If you've read other bestselling books by the author, you're in for a surprise.

This is NOT like his other books.

Because Bo will not be his usual happy self.

As you turn the pages, you'll discover that much of the humor is gone.

Instead, his words will grip you, penetrate you, and burn with fire within you.

Because he recounts how he was sexually abused as a child.

Because he tells us of his own sexual addiction.

Because he shares with you how he healed his inner wounds, overcame his past, and built success on the failures of his life.

This book will fill your life with hope.

For everyone who has failed, for everyone who thinks that life will not change — this book is for you.

Bo Sanchez will tell you that all failures are successes in the making.

He will tell you that your past does not define your future.

YOUR PAST DOES NOT DEFINE YOUR FUTURE

BO SANCHEZ

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SHEPHERD'S VOICE

From The #1 National Bestselling Author of *How To Find Your One True Love*

YOUR PAST DOES NOT DEFINE YOUR FUTURE

Be Free from Enslaving Habits, Receive Healing for Past Wounds — and Start Really Living!

by BO SANCHEZ



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Bo Sanchez
Best-selling author of *Simplify and Live the Good Life* and *You Have the Power to Create Love*

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Introduction

MY STORY IN BLOOD

The warning found at the back of this book is true.

I write from my soul, with less humor, because it doesn't seem to fit.

In fact, as I wrote this book, I felt I wasn't writing with ink.

It was as though I had slit my arm with a knife, dipped my pen into the open wound, and written each word with my own blood... all the while wincing in pain, trying to see through my tears.

Bloodletting was an old cure of centuries past. Medieval doctors used it as a last resort for diseases gone very bad.

No wonder I felt so much better after writing this book.

Healing happens in stages.

And this was one of those stages.

Friends, I wrote this book because I want to fill you with hope.

That *your healing comes in stages as well.*

Sooner or later, you'll have to find a way to write with your blood in order to get healed. By that, I mean opening your lives to someone who will still love and accept you no matter what.

May that first someone be God.

And may you find other wounded healers who will do the same.

I remain your friend,



Bo Sanchez

P.S. This is not only my story. If you think that you'll just be reading about my life, you're wrong. In the second part of this book, you'll find an ACTION MANUAL. I've written TWELVE ACTIONS that you need to take to create a new future for your life. Get your pen ready. We're doing this together.

PART ONE

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Chapter One

THE WOUNDING OF A CHILD

I was sexually abused when I was eight years old.

My abuser was Billy,* a cousin 10 years older than me.

Because we lived in the city, his parents sent him to us to take up college. So he lived in our house for four years.

I was happy hanging around with him. Perhaps because I was an only son, having him was like having an older brother for the first time in my life. And I was in awe of him! He seemed so strong and skilled and in control.

But his favorite line to me was, *"Do this or suffer the consequences."* He'd use it when he wanted me to do errands for him, like buy Coke or chips from the *sari-sari* store. He'd use that line when I refused to change the TV channel from my favorite cartoons to a basketball game he wanted to watch.

**Name changed to preserve identity*

He also used that line when he abused me sexually.

One day, he asked me to enter his room — and I liked doing that because it was filled with books and other odd items.

First, he showed me a pornographic book filled with nude women. As an eight-year-old kid, I remember not being affected by what I saw, except for a feeling that there was something oddly wrong about what I was looking at.

He then made me lie down on his bed and remove my trousers. Then he lay down beside me and abused me.

I fought him, but he was bigger and stronger. He pushed me down.

He growled, "Stay, or suffer the consequences."

After abusing me some more, he let me go.

I don't even recall how I felt after walking out of his room. Perhaps because it was too painful, I shelved it, buried it deep within me to a place I thought I'd never visit again.

I was wrong.

Chapter Two

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

When I was 13 years old, I was already involved with a Catholic youth group.

Together with other servants, we gave Life in the Spirit Seminars in different provinces all over the country. As a young kid, I loved the Lord and enjoyed serving Him zealously. It was one of the most exhilarating times of my life. Already, I was giving talks, leading worship and counseling a lot of young people.

One day, in passing, someone mentioned to me that my leader was a homosexual — but because he didn't look like one, I didn't give it much thought.

Soon after that, a group of us gave a Life in the Spirit Seminar in a faraway city. We had to stay overnight in one of the homes of our hosts.

Five or six of us slept in one room, and our leader arranged our sleeping assignments. The older guys were assigned to the floor, while I and the leader shared a big bed.

In the middle of the night, I was awakened by someone lowering my shorts and underwear to my knees. In the darkness, I saw my leader climbing on top of me — he was naked from the waist down.

I remember being so shocked, I was unable to move a muscle. Years later, I'd hate myself for not being violent at that point. This feeling of being a coward worsened my feelings of shame over what happened to me.

The attack didn't last very long. He moved back to his place and slept. I was still dazed, and upon realizing what happened, cried myself to sleep.

The next morning, I opened my eyes and found I was alone.

I went to the living room. There I saw the most repulsive, most disgusting sight I had ever seen — and will probably ever see.

I saw my youth group gathered in a circle, praying.

And guess who was leading the prayer?

He had his eyes closed, his face reverent — almost angelic — with his hands clasped in front of his chest.

My youth group leader.

My rapist.

Chapter Three

SEX ADDICT

They say that sexually molested or rape victims end up taking one of two directions.

Either they'd hate sex and will not have anything to do with the opposite gender for the rest of their lives — or they will be addicted to sex.

I took the second route: *I became a sex addict.*

For many years, I was in bondage to masturbation, pornography and sexual fantasies.

Paradoxically, this was happening even as I rose in my responsibilities as a young Catholic lay leader.

People were flocking every time I preached but none of them knew the terrible guilt that was eating up my soul.

I hated myself.

I totally abhorred what I was doing, but it was as though I was irrevocably chained to this habit.

Every time I fell, I'd run to confession, but only to fall again two or three days later.

I'd ask God for forgiveness but I'd fall into sin the very next day.

I felt completely helpless.

There were times when I'd fall into sin and hate myself so much because I was going to preach in a few hours.

I felt like a total hypocrite.

But it seemed as though I was shackled and forever condemned to this sick way of life.

I couldn't reconcile the fact that I was falling repeatedly on the same sin while at the same time being aware that deep within me, I loved God.

Why did I feel so powerless against my sexual urges?

I felt dirty all over.

And I despised myself for being so filthy.

Chapter Four

ADDICTION: A HUNGER FOR LOVE

But even before I was sexually abused, I already hated myself.

It wasn't a conscious thing, but a hidden infection deep within me.

Like pus that wasn't being drained, my hatred towards myself developed into a gangrene that was slowly destroying my life.

And why did I despise myself?

Because as people abused me, unconsciously the constant refrain in my mind was, "Perhaps you deserved it." This is irrational thinking. But this is the insane logic of many victims of sexual, physical or even psychological abuse.

That we were abused because it was our fault.

That at our very core — minus our talents and achievements — we were probably very, very *unlovable.*

I now realize that all addicts — whether those

addicted to drugs, or alcohol, or money or sex — hate themselves. They don't love themselves and therefore intensely *hunger for love.*

And because the addict cannot find love (or he doesn't see it being given to him or rejects it because he doesn't love himself), he'll find a ***substitute.***

And the easy substitute — it could be anything, from narcotics, to nicotine, or even material things or fame — becomes his addiction.

Chapter Five

MY DRUG WAS LUST

All these years, I've begun to realize how much I tried to seek that love.

It was incredibly exhausting trying to please people all my life — to win people's love — and thus, I escaped by seeking sexual pleasure.

Lust was like a drug to me: it made me forget about my inner pain.

Unknown to me, sexual pleasure simulated the intense feelings of being loved — something I was deeply searching for.

My sexual fantasies were all the same. I'd think of beautiful women attracted to me and seducing me.

And because I was forced by an adult to have sex in order to "belong," or else I "suffer the consequences," and because I seemed to "allow" myself to be abused so that I wouldn't lose the friendship of people I held in high esteem — it became a destructive pattern that I unconsciously repeated.

Psychologists say we tend to ***repeat*** destructive patterns in our lives because they work — they seem to give us what we are searching for. (More on this later.) It made me escape the pain of hating myself.

So if I was sexually abused, why not sexually abuse myself some more?

Because there, I would "belong," find love and acceptance.

Sheer idiocy.

But unconsciously, I believed it.

And any addict, no matter what he is addicted to, believes the same lie.

Chapter Six

DYING EVERY DAY

I have an approval addiction which is as strong as my sexual addiction.

It has the same insane logic — if I was abused sexually, why not allow others to emotionally abuse me as well?

Now note that it's quite normal to want approval from others.

But when this thing becomes the overriding, all-consuming motive for all that you do in your life, *you're sick.*

And this describes my situation very well: Every act, every word, every deed, every project, every gesture that I do is designed to make people like me. Every talk I give, every song I compose, every community I build, every article I write, every relationship I begin... it's all a desperate search for love.

If someone — especially one who is close to me — shows a sign of disfavor, disapproval or even just raises

an eyebrow, I melt. I panic. I die.

Because to an approval addict, ***someone not liking him feels like death.***

So for the longest time, I was dying almost every day because in every 24-hour cycle, I would meet someone who wasn't my fan. And everybody *had* to be a fan, or I would crumble within.

Thus, I also tried to avoid any kind of conflict with anyone.

I hated confronting people.

And consequently, I never got angry. Never. In fact, people praised me for being the most patient person in the universe.

Because of this, I felt I was very, very Christian and Christ-like.

But how untrue this was! (Now, I realize that it isn't very loving *not* to be angry when there's a need to be angry at the sin of others.)

It was an approval addiction, and it was a prison I couldn't escape from, no matter how much I tried.

Chapter Seven

THE EMOTION THAT DEFINED ME

Let me describe to you the most predominant feeling I had.

Many days, I would wake up already feeling uneasy, with a heavy but unseen burden, over my shoulders. Something was gnawing within me, like a dull blade scraping my insides.

For years, I really couldn't put my finger on what I felt.

On the surface, it was a mixture of fear, or even fright. Plus sadness, or even depression. It was terribly confusing.

Like if I was going to speak to a group of people that day, I'd have doubts infect my thinking. "Some of those people won't like me. Some will laugh at me." And I would cringe.

You may say that these are normal thoughts.

But I would feel this panic every day.

Like I said, everyone had to like me. Everyone had to be a fan.

Or I wouldn't be happy.

One day, all of a sudden, I realized I hit the nail on the head.

I knew the predominant feeling of my life.

I had a name for the cancer eating my soul.

Every morning, I woke up feeling ***ashamed.***

I was ashamed of ME.

I was ashamed of who I was.

This shame is the most common characteristic of people like me.

People who have been abused.

Or people who have been hurt badly.

Or people who have failed repeatedly — whether in their relationships, in school, in work, in business, even in their spiritual life.

Psychologists call it a shame-based personality.

That was me.

That was my world.

Every single day.

Chapter Eight

TO SPEAK NO EVIL IS EVIL

Mommy and Daddy loved me.

My parents are wonderful parents. They loved me very much, spent generous time with me and taught me to love God.

But like any other parent, they had weaknesses.

For one thing, they weren't physically expressive in their affection towards me. Hugging wasn't a family custom. Saying "I love you" to one another was never done.

Many family experts believe that hugs and physical affection between parents and their children are crucial. For example, they say that if the daughter is hugged by Dad and Mom every day, there's less likelihood for her to hunger for embraces from other men.

Perhaps because of my sexual abuse, I desperately needed Dad and Mom to embrace me often, to tell me verbally that I was loved and lovable. Perhaps that could have healed me more swiftly.

But you see, I also never told them of the molestation — until I was almost 30 years old. So they never knew. Actually, no one knew.

I was going through my hell alone.

Outside, I projected to the world that I was okay.

My disguise was so good, I deceived myself many times.

Why didn't I tell anyone?

Because my family had another weakness: They didn't like talking about emotional issues in the open, and instead expressed them in hidden, camouflaged or angry ways. (They were non-confrontational in the sense that they didn't discuss why they were angry.)

So I was simply applying our unwritten family code.

Don't rock the boat.

Don't discuss sensitive issues.

Don't talk about painful stuff.

So I didn't.

But that was the problem.

In the dark, sin festers and grows and multiplies.

In the light, sin withers and dries up and dies.

Let me tell you how light came to my life.

Chapter Nine

THE HEALING BEGINS

How did the healing start?

It began a long time ago when I came to God in prayer.

Feeling terrible about myself for my repeated sins, I wondered if, this time, He wouldn't forgive me. Because I felt it was just too much. I'd made so many empty promises. Asking for forgiveness again felt like slapping God's face.

How many times had I told Him I'd change?

How many times had I told Him I wouldn't fall into sexual sin anymore?

That I was giving up porn. That I was giving up creating X-rated movies in my mind. That I would not walk around looking at women with my eyes always at breast-level.

But as usual, I'd fall again and again and again.

So I went before Him and said, "Lord, I can't ask forgiveness from You anymore. I don't know if You'll forgive me this time."

Alone in the darkness of my room, I sobbed for a long time.

What happened next, I cannot explain.

Suddenly, I felt an embrace.

Not physically.

But I just *knew* that I was being embraced.

I was sure of it.

Through the embrace, **God was telling me that He was never going to leave me, *until I was healed.***

That He loved me no matter what.

The very thing that I hungered for — love — was now surrounding me like the pacific ocean.

The very thing that I was substituting sex for — love — was now the very air I breathed.

I had many experiences like these, for I had many ups and downs in my journey.

Every time, His love pierced through my darkest nights.

For a long time, it was very difficult to put in words what I felt every time God embraced me.

Until one day, I read a true story in a book whose title I've forgotten but whose message has remained chiseled in my heart.

Let me share this true story with you, and you will know how God embraced me in my darkest hours.

Chapter Ten

UNTIL YOU GET HEALED

She was violent.

And been so for many years. Her psychosis was so severe the doctors in this mental hospital gave up treating her. After many years, she grew old in that mental institution.

Everyone gave up on her.

Everyone, that is, except one person: the janitor.

For some reason, he had taken pity on the old woman and wanted to help her.

But he didn't know how.

By that time, she had become catatonic. The whole day, she'd just stare at the wall and say nothing. She had locked herself in her own confused world.

But the janitor decided to do what he could. So after mopping floors and wiping windows for eight hours, this kind man would enter her room carrying a chair with him, sit beside her, and stare at the wall with her.

He did this for 30 minutes every day — 30 minutes of total silence.

One afternoon, after performing this ritual of love for six straight months, he entered her room again carrying his usual chair, sat down beside her and got ready for another quiet 30 minutes.

It was not to be so.

That afternoon, for the first time in years, the old woman talked.

The next day, she talked some more.

After a few months, she was released from the hospital — a healed woman.

Why was she healed?

Because there was one man who through his actions, told her, "Listen, lady. I'm going to stay here beside you. I'm never going to leave you. **I'll sit here with you *until you get healed.***"

I was reading this story and I wept.

"This is what I felt!" my soul screamed within me, "This is how I got healed!"

Let me tell you why.

I experienced what that old woman experienced.

But this time, it wasn't a janitor who showed me love.

God was the one who was telling me, "My son, I'm going to stay here beside you. I'm never going to leave you. I'll sit here with you *until you get healed."*

And I did get healed.

I really did.

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Chapter Eleven

GOD'S HUMAN FACE

One day, a little boy was given his own bedroom.

Mommy tucked him into bed and said good night.

But as Mommy was about to leave, the little boy said, "I'm afraid, Mommy. Don't leave me."

Mommy went back to him and kissed him.

"You're not alone, dear. God will be with you," she smiled.

"Okay," the little boy mumbled.

When the mother was walking out again, the boy said, "Can I have a God with skin on His face?"

Many times, for us to see God's face, we need to see a human face.

I was healed not only through prayer but I saw God's love through a group of people that I met every week.

In one meeting, I finally blurted it out, "I'm a sex addict."

I didn't really know how they would respond.

After all, I was their leader.

Would some of them actually leave the prayer group?

Would some of them reject me?

But it was a risk that I had to take.

Because I wanted to be healed. Badly. I was sick and tired of my addiction.

I started sharing my sins. My weaknesses. My molestation as a child.

The tears fell.

Mine.

Theirs.

When I finished sharing, the small group of people in front of me rushed towards me and embraced me.

No one said anything.

Perhaps because no one knew what to say.

We just wept and hugged each other for a very long time.

Finally, one person said, "We love you, Bo. Sin no more."

The following week, I met this group again.

When it was my turn to share, I said, "I fell again."

They hugged me again and said, "We love you, Bo. Sin no more."

Every week, I'd meet them and I'd say the same thing. "I fell again."

But one special week, I came to them with a smile.

"I didn't fall this week."

They rushed towards me, hugged me, and said, "We love you, Bo! Sin mo more!"

The healing was happening.

Chapter Twelve

I WASN'T DESPERATE ENOUGH

When I hid my sins and addictions — when I denied that I even had a problem — I remained in darkness. And the "power of the lie" grew within me, robbing me of joy and peace and blessing.

And when I tried to avoid facing my past hurts—the sexual abuse I suffered in my life — I too was running away from the truth.

I didn't like to face the pain within me — I just wanted to go on with life and to move forward.

Forget the past, I advised myself.

Just love God and do the right thing.

But my bondages, like hidden monsters, were getting bigger and stronger — the result of not facing my inner pain.

When I buried the dull throb of hidden wounds, and ignored it as though it wasn't there, ***I did not feel my desperate need for God.***

And that was exactly what happened to me.

But when I faced the pain squarely, and entered fully into the emotions of my grief, my anger, and my shame because of what happened, *I saw God in a totally new way.*

He was big enough to heal me.

I didn't know that.

Because I didn't know I was sick in the first place.

Chapter Thirteen

WANTED: FAILURES

As you read this book, you might be wondering what all this has got to do with you.

"I don't have a sexual addiction," you say.

But you see, I'm speaking to anyone who has experienced any failure in his life.

I want to talk to failures, or to people who believe they are.

If you've been cheated and betrayed by your best friend, your spouse, your parents, I'm speaking to you. If you've been abused — physically, emotionally or spiritually — by anyone, I'm speaking to you. If you have a habitual sin that has plagued you all these years and you seem powerless to remove it, I'm speaking to you.

If you think there's no more hope for you, listen well.

I don't speak from a vacuum.

I don't speak from lofty principles I've read in a book.

I'm speaking from firsthand experience.

I've learned that ***God can build from failures.***

His construction material isn't always the best, because He's a carpenter that "makes do" with what's available. And what's available in our torn-down lives isn't very nice.

Stephen Covey was the first one to coin the term "McGyverism" from that old TV series *McGyver*. It means the ability to "make do," to become creative and use ordinary scrap material to make wonderful things.

I believe God practices McGyverism to the hilt.

He does it best with "failures" like you and me.

He took my painful past, even my sinful bondages, and created… is still creating… something beautiful: a broken, humbled man that is desperately in need of God's grace. (And being a God of compassion and tenderness, He responds to my cry of need.)

Chapter Fourteen

FACE THE PAST

To face your failures and not to run away from them.

To admit where you were hurt and reenter the volatile-yet-unfelt emotions that are connected to these past events.

Perhaps you need to set aside time from your busyness.

Frantic activity is another drug that we use to run away from the truth of our past. Addiction to it is called workaholism.

Sit down, keep quiet for a couple of days, and pray for the Lord to point out areas of deep hurt in your life.

Write down whatever comes to your mind.

They can be tiny things like being rejected by friends, or being scolded by your parents unjustly. They can be big things like being abandoned by an alcoholic father, or being controlled by a pathologically insecure, possessive mother.

Most of us need friends to be with us in this journey toward inner healing.

Pray that God will give you understanding, wise and loving companions in this most unique pilgrimage of faith: visiting the torn-down ruins of your soul, where you can both touch the obvious work of evil as well as the hidden brilliance of God within you.

Facing your past isn't easy.

It requires that we accept the fact that we have been recreating the toxic homes of our childhood…

Chapter Fifteen

ACKNOWLEDGE HOW WE RECREATE OUR HOME

Let me tell you a story.

Julia[1] is a battered wife.

The first time I met her, she had reddish-blue bruises on her face.

Her husband had hit her again with his fist.

Her eyes were pretty, but they swam in pools of profound sadness.

"Tell me about your childhood," I asked her.

At first, Julia shared happy stories. Cooking with her Mom. Playtime with Dad. Vacations as a family. But slowly, through gentle prodding, it came out. As a child, her father beat her up frequently.

Many nights, he'd come home totally drunk. She'd hide from him but he'd call for her. And if she said a word, he'd strike her. If she remained silent, he'd strike her just the same.

[1] *Not her real name*

I'm sure you're asking: *Why did she marry someone who would also beat her up? Isn't that insane?*

Friends, Julia's case is more common than you think.

Because 60 percent of abused wives were also abused children.

Why does this illogical thing happen?

Simply because it *isn't* illogical.

You see, you and I have a ***homing instinct.***

What we defined as home in our childhood will be the place that we'll subconsciously go back to again and again.

Even if that *home* was a horrific place.

We end up *recreating* it because that's what we considered home.

Let me give you another example before I proceed with my story.

Chapter Sixteen

OUR HOMING INSTINCT

I have tried to help many people rise from poverty.

One of the biggest obstacles I faced was this *homing* instinct.

Here's how it works.

The people I tried to help were born poor. At the very core of their being, they defined themselves as poor. If I gave them a new home or a scholarship or a tiny business, a part of their unconscious minds rebelled. Something screamed within them, "This is *not* me! This is *not* my home!" Fear of the unknown set in. And suddenly, they wanted out.

So they *sabotaged* their new path.

They got into drugs again.

Or they got pregnant out of wedlock.

Or they married an irresponsible bum.

So they lost the scholarship. They lost the house. They lost the tiny business.

By doing so, they recreated what they had gotten used to.

They went back *home.*

Even if that home was called poverty.

On the other hand, I was dealing with another kind of poverty…

The poverty of love.

Chapter Seventeen

GROWING IN AWARENESS

We tend to hide the bad things of our lives under the rug of our memories.

But to be healed, we need to grow in ***awareness*** of our old home and how we recreate it in our lives today.

Remember Julia? The first time I talked to her, Julia could talk only about her happy childhood experiences. It was only through really listening to what lay between the lines that I discovered — and that she finally admitted — that her father beat her. She had pretended for so long that everything was okay, she no longer knew the ugly truth of her past.

I can identify with that.

For a long time, I never knew that my being sexually abused as a child and my sexual addiction were connected.

Much later, I realized I was recreating my home: I was abused, and I continued to abuse myself. I was simply recreating my home.

Why didn't I think they were connected?

Because for a long time, I never thought my being sexually abused was a big thing.

That's what I mean by growing in ***awareness*** of your old home.

To grow in awareness of your old home — how it really was, not what you thought it was — you need to be brutally honest with yourself.

It takes a while to know *what* your old home was, and how you recreate that home now.

You have to accept first of all that this is part of your past.

To face it, and embrace it as part of your history.

In my experience, the moment I admitted to trusted friends that I was sexually abused and sexually addicted — something happened to me. For the first time, I felt free — for truth sets us free.

Suddenly, I felt I had a way out.

The journey of profound awareness can begin today if you choose to begin today.

Chapter Eighteen

WHAT YOU CAN FEEL, YOU CAN HEAL

Awareness isn't enough however.

Some people are aware intellectually. "Yes, I was abused. That really happened."

But out of habit, they brush aside their deep hurts and anger to one side. They never allow themselves to *feel.*

But emotions are the windows to our soul — and ***what we feel, we can heal.***

And what we don't feel, we can't heal.

So I needed to allow myself to grieve over the abuse.

I needed to get angry, to feel the hurt, to cry for a life gone wrong.

I did all these before a God who listened to my anger, a God who embraced me in my shame, a God who held my hand and sat beside me in my pain…

And I did it before trusted friends who understood me, accepted me *as is, where is.*

And when the time was right, I let go…

I let go of the anger, I let go of the grief, I let go of the pain…

Chapter Nineteen

ALLOW YOURSELF TO GRIEVE

I hated being emotional.

I prided myself for being a cerebrally-oriented, pseudo-stoic male.

I rarely shed tears.

But today, I realize that God had a purpose for my capacity to grieve. To weep. To shed tears of sorrow. He didn't put in my ability to mourn for nothing. It has a crucial purpose: for the healing of my wounds.

Do not be afraid to weep for your failures or your hurts.

Grieve before the Lord.

Grieve before others and allow the comfort of the Lord to enter you richly.

Jesus was one powerfully emotional being.

He wept when a dear friend passed away.

He cried in desperation at the garden of Gethsemane.

He screamed in pain at the cross of Calvary.

I love the Psalms more than ever now because the psalmists were so honest about how they felt. When the psalmists were angry at God, they really got angry!

And what is shocking is God didn't seem to mind!

He wanted them to be honest with what they felt.

It was as though He was telling them, *"Go ahead. Feel what you feel before my Presence. These emotions, no matter how dark, will bring you to the place where you will seek me more. And then, I will heal you."*

Sometimes, we force people to forgive those who have hurt them.

For someone like me who never gets angry, I didn't need someone to tell me to forgive — that was easy for me to do — but I needed someone to tell me to get mad at those who had abused me!

I also don't believe that we should force people to forgive "now" those who have hurt us, whether they feel like it or not, especially when it comes to abuse victims.

These people need to go through the emotions of anger and grief, without short-circuiting this natural process with a quick, instant "I-forgive-him-and-forget-about-it" fix.

After feeling the anger, and presenting themselves to God with their inner rage, I believe that forgiveness towards others will be more genuine and free when the right time comes.

We need to be more respectful towards this natural emotional pace as well as the unique movement of grace in each person's life.

Chapter Twenty

SEEK LOVING FRIENDS

Talk about your past.
Share it with trusted friends.
Confess your sins.
Make yourself vulnerable to them.
Live in the light.
Embrace the truth.
And allow people to love you in your weakness.
For once, ***be real.***

I've realized that the best way of loving others isn't simply to do acts of service for them. Love is much deeper than doing a lot of nice things for one another.

Love is about intimacy, and intimacy doesn't happen until one courageously removes masks. As a Catholic leader, I believe that the best service I give my flock is to become real to them.

As I write this book, some people may want to return all my earlier books that they had bought — in disgust. (Sorry, no refund!) Former "fans" will reject me as a big

disappointment because I no longer fit their image of one very holy person.

But sharing with you about my weaknesses is a risk I'm taking because it's the only way I can be loved genuinely.

Fans can applaud, cheer and laugh at my jokes — but only friends can really love me.

I share my true self because there will be a remnant left behind: people who'll love me more now because I'm honest enough to give my naked self to them. As fellow strugglers, they'll embrace me fiercely and tenderly.

And deep down, that's what all of us are searching for.

Chapter Twenty-One

SEEK GRACE DESPERATELY

All these stages will bring you to the best place for your heart to be in: broken and wounded and needy. Unless cracks appear, His healing grace cannot trickle in and heal what needs to be healed.

Because you see how much you need His love, His power, His touch, His glory, it becomes easier for Him to move. For the great physician has not come to heal those who are well, but those who are sick. **Who *know* they are sick**.

So see the cancer of your past and fathom the ugliness of what was — and cry to God for the healing that only He can give.

Seek this grace in personal prayer.

Seek it among friends who know you and who can pray for you, especially for inner healing, healing of memories, deliverance, etc.

I strongly suggest that you seek friends who themselves are in their own inner pilgrimage, who are fellow-strugglers and who know they are.

Seek also God's grace in counseling.

Or in 12-step groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Co-dependents Anonymous, Sex-addicts Anonymous, Workaholics Anonymous, etc., depending on your particular difficulty.

The important thing is to seek grace with *desperation.*

Chapter Twenty-Two

RECEIVE LOVE

Someone who has failed feels very unlovable.

Anyone who has been hurt, especially in childhood, unconsciously thinks that he was hurt because he deserved to be hurt — because bottomline, he really is unlovable.

Many people hate themselves more commonly than we believe. (Note: We think selfish people love themselves. On the contrary, many selfish people are selfish because they're insecure and haven't been loved, even by themselves.)

But this is what grace does: As we seek God, we see intense, unconditional, gentle love flowing towards what we consider to be a very unlovable creature — ourselves. And this ocean of love is surrounding us, immersing us forever.

My prescription: ***We need to allow ourselves to be deeply loved.***

I recommend times for regular quiet prayer where you simply allow the affectionate gaze of God to rivet you, hold you captive and imprison you in the wounds of His heart.

Do not hold back.

Use your imagination to picture the greatest truth of all time: Let Him carry you and sway you as a mother does a child.

Imagine yourself as a baby or at the age when you were hurt.

Let Him sing to you a love song as He does this.

This isn't fiction.

This is the deepest desire of His soul, the plan of His heart from the very beginning of time.

We also need to learn how to receive the imperfect love of people around us, but acknowledging at the same time that there's always the risk of getting hurt anew.

Finally, we need to love ourselves — as an invitation from God to love what He loves. If He loves us so very much, why shouldn't we do the same?

The Bible says, "We love because He first loved us."[1]

And this is so true.

We cannot love God or others without first being overwhelmed by His powerful love for us. But this applies also to loving ourselves.

I don't believe we can simply decide to one day love ourselves and go on from there. We have to first of all be loved by someone else, to tell us that we're lovable.

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[1] *1 John 4:19*

That Someone is available, now.

And when you recognize how much you are loved, you begin to have the courage to move on — not escape.

Do what is most loving to God, to others and to yourself.

Do so, one day at a time.

Chapter Twenty-Three

REVISIT OLD TRUTHS

What old truths?

The crucial need to repent and take responsibility.

Repent of your addiction, no matter what the habitual sin is.

Though it is true that it was fueled by the violence and abuse of others, it was still a repeated choice that you made through the years. You decided to give in to it every time you fell. You sinned against yourself, others and God.

See the Lord's hatred for your sin and His jealous love for you. Own that hatred and claim that love. Ask for His forgiveness. Yes, repent of your sin.

I know what you're thinking right now: "I've tried this so many times before and it didn't work. I kept falling back into the same old dung heap."

That's why I placed this here, as the last step.

I sincerely believe that before repenting, we first of all have to receive His love. And we have to be brought to that place where we're desperate for that love.

In the Gospels, Jesus proclaimed repentance to tax collectors and prostitutes but only after He gave them His friendship, eating meals and fellowshipping with them. He first of all loved them in a way that no religious leader did.

Next: Take responsibility. Make choices. *By grace.*

Choose to do the right things: Avoid temptation, strengthen your relationship with God, put order in your life, reconcile with those whom you are in conflict with, etc.

Again, I hear you. "I've tried this before. Didn't work."

But that's not what I'm talking about.

That's why this is the last step.

This won't be "will-power" Christianity, because as an addict trying to cut clean, you've failed miserably doing it on your own.

Because now, at the core of your being, taking steps to overcome your sin *by His grace* is no longer a pious platitude — as something you say to sound theologically correct, believing at the back of your mind that it'll actually be your own effort that'll do the trick.

No more. You're broken now. Very broken. You know.

It has to be God, first. Second. And third.

And you, very humbly and fearfully, taking responsibility for the areas over which He gave you power *to choose.*

Chapter Twenty-Four

THE ANSWER *ISN'T* JUST TO CONTAIN SEXUAL ENERGY

Sexual energy *is* energy.

Sexual passion *is* passion.

This is what I mean:

Containing my sexual desire was only half the answer.

Or I'd be like a rampaging bull tied up and fenced in. I'd still be snorting and growling in the cage, waiting to erupt within.

If I wanted to overcome sexual temptations, I needed to learn to *rechannel* my sexual energies.

And that means pursuing great dreams in my life.

Here's what I mean: I realized that sexual energy is energy, and I could use all that passion for great things.

In 1937, Napoleon Hill wrote the classic *Think and Grow Rich.* The book is about creating wealth, but in chapter 10, he talks about the mystery of "sex transmutation."

From his study of history and the biographies of the most successful men, he claims that they were "highly sexed" individuals. He believes that they were able to "transmutate" their sex energy to creative energy — fueling their accomplishments to great heights. He mentions men like George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, William Shakespeare and Abraham Lincoln, among many others.

I also believe that successful men who weren't able to tame their sexual urges could have been more successful men if they did.

The Bible itself is replete with examples. King Solomon's multiple foreign wives were his downfall, ultimately breaking up his kingdom into two warring factions. And Samson's Delilah cut his hair and delivered him to slavery. And King David — the man whose "heart was after God" — actually murdered a good man when he couldn't contain his lust and committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Here's the point.

You can waste your sexual energy for wanton sexual pleasure and possibly become a full-blown sex addict, destroying your life and robbing from your loved ones the blessing of your life.

But you can also use your sexual energy to create business success.

You can use your sexual energy to build a loving family.

You can use your sexual energy to love God.

You can use your sexual energy to attain great achievements.

You can use your sexual energy to live life to the full.

By the way, if you're married, you can use your sexual energy to love your spouse sexually! I do now, and I realize how sex is indeed very beautiful.

Let me now tell you how to rechannel.

Learn to live a fantastic life
Log on to www.bosanchez.ph

Chapter Twenty-Five

LEARN TO RECHANNEL SEXUAL ENERGY

How do you *rechannel* your sexual energy as fuel to fulfill your dreams?

First, this rechanneling happens *naturally* as you stay ***focused*** on fulfilling your dreams. You don't have to think about it in order for rechanneling to take place. You don't have to *will* it to happen. *It just happens* — as you remain focused and passionate about your dreams.

When you daily remind yourself of your goals through prayer, reflection, visualization; when you daily get inspiration wherever it may be found — through mentors and books and seminars and experiences; when you daily work at your plan — inch by inch, moment by moment… When you do all these things, the rechanneling happens naturally. Sexual energy within you becomes added genius, passion, drive, inner fuel to fulfill your dreams. (See *Action Twelve* on page 129.)

Second, this rechanneling happens *more consistently* when you develop all areas of your life — that is, when you attain ***balance.***

Your dream shouldn't be lopsided — primarily on the professional or financial aspect of your life. You need to aim to grow in all areas — in your spiritual life, in your relational life, in your intellectual life, in your emotional life.

As you attain balance, you become whole. Every part of your life becomes in synch — not one area is out of line.

You gain a new sense of dignity and peace.

You gain a stronger desire for discipline and balance.

You gain your life back.

Chapter Twenty-Six

HAVING NEW LABELS

Labels are powerful.

I believe that we wear invisible labels around our necks.

Little placards that say who we think we are.

We made those labels.

We made them through our childhood experiences, through what our parents and family thought of us.

And obviously, even if these labels are all totally incorrect, we become the labels we give ourselves.

There was a time when I labeled myself "Evil."

There was a time when I labeled myself "Shameful."

There was a time when I labeled myself "Not worthy to be loved."

Through the years, I became all that, even if they were all lies.

But slowly, God has been replacing these little placards hanging around my neck.

The new labels now read wonderful things:

"I'm blessed!"

"I'm loved!"

"I'm terrific!"

"I'm a blessing!"

Each day, I live by these powerful labels.

However, this has to be balanced by another principle I learned in my journey towards healing…

Chapter Twenty-Seven

HEALING NEVER STOPS

After many years, I've overcome my compulsion to look at pornography, to masturbate and to indulge in sexual fantasies — *but the inner struggle continues.*

And though my approval addiction isn't totally healed, I'm now able to confront people when that's the most loving thing to do: to tell them I'm angry and tell them why.

But I too am experiencing the love of God, I believe, in a greater way. Slowly, He's healing me of my deepest wounds.

Healing will never be complete.

It will continue until the day I die.

For an addict to say "I'm *completely* healed" is *not* a good thing to say.

It will lower my guard.

It will make me relax my resistance.

It will make me overconfident.

In the highly successful Alcoholics Anonymous program, the alcoholic who hasn't touched a drop of alcohol for 25 years will still introduce himself to the group as, "Hi, I'm John, and I'm an alcoholic."

Because the healing process never stops.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

BE BROKEN TO BE HEALED

I feel that the best way to end the first part, *My Story In Blood,* is with a song — a song that I wrote with a lot of tears as well.

In the song, I asked God to deliver me from all my lies — the lies that I told myself that everything was okay — the lies that robbed me of my desperation for God.

I wish I was in front of you now, so I could sing it for you — and we could sing it together to God.

You can get hold of my album *Miracles Are On The Way.* In it, you'll find my song, "Break My Untrue Heart."

In the meantime, I want you to read the words below.

And make it your earnest prayer.

BREAK MY UNTRUE HEART by Bo Sanchez

Come, oh God, and search my heart
Break all things unbroken yet in me.

Come, oh God, into my inmost parts
Break all things in me not built for You.
Break all things in me not built for You.

Break this, oh God, my untrue heart
And my other loves and lords and lying dreams.
Break this, oh God, my untrue heart
And the rival gods and pow'rs within my soul.
Take my heart home, conquer me alone
My God.

PART TWO

ACTIONS TO FREEDOM

CREATE THE FUTURE YOU DESIRE

This is where the book gets *really* bloody.

Reading doesn't set you free.

Action does.

For the next part of the book, I'll guide you on *what you can do so that you can gain your freedom.*

Friend, your future awaits you.

What kind of future you will have is really all up to you.

It can be glorious. It can be disastrous.

The choice is yours.

Are you ready to choose what kind of future you want?

If you are, turn the page.

Learn to live a fantastic life
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Action One

BE HONEST FOR A CHANGE

Getting real is step number one.

Denial is your first obstacle to change.

The alcoholic will say, "I can stop anytime." (Not just now.)

The person with an eating disorder will say, "Food likes me."

The credit card junkie will say, "Just give me time. I can pay everything."

The rage-aholic will say, "It's not me. It's the stupid people I live with!"

The chronically jobless person will say, "I just can't find my passion…"

The hyper-sensitive person will say, "It's their problem. They don't love me!"

The gambling addict will say, "I know my limits!"

The sex addict will say, "This is normal. Everybody is doing it."

Listen.

If you don't want to get real, throw this book away.

You can read it a thousand times — and nothing will happen if you don't accept your problem and say it out loud…

"I'm alcoholic. I can't control my drinking anymore!"

"I'm overweight and I'm eating myself to death."

"I can't control my spending. Somebody please take my credit cards away!"

"I'm having a problem with uncontrolled temper. It's destroying me."

"I'm irresponsible. That's why I can't hold a job."

"I'm lazy. That's why my marriage and family are suffering."

"It's not them. All my relationships are suffering because I've got a problem."

"I'm hooked to gambling. I can sell my shirt and ruin my family."

"I'm addicted to sex."

"I'm falling into emotional adultery. I'm not faithful to my wife in my heart."

Here's the central issue: ***Admit that you can't control yourself anymore***.

Let me help you by giving you some questions.

Answer them as honestly as you can… Even if the

questions and your answers are somewhat repetitive, keep hammering the bitter truth until it wakes you up.

Have you been hiding a secret sin? What is it?

Where are you failing in your life?

What personal weaknesses are causing your failure?

What bad habits are destroying your life? What bad habits are hurting others?

How many times have you tried to control these bad habits in the past? How many years have you been trying to overcome them?

If you will *not* change your bad habits, describe your future. Picture yourself 10 years from now still with the same failure. What do you see?

Action Two

WRITE YOUR STORY IN BLOOD

You may not be a writer but I want you to write your life story.

Start when you were born.

And then write the most significant moments in your life, both positive and negative.

What were your greatest joys?

What were your deepest hurts?

When did your bondage begin?

What influenced you to have this bondage?

How did this bondage mess up your life?

How did it affect your health?

How did it cause accidents?

How did it make your relationships suffer?

How did it hurt others?

How did it make you lose many opportunities for growth?

How did it make you miss blessing others?

How did it make you waste many years?

It's now your turn to write your story with your blood.

Just keep writing every day until you finish it.

This may take a week.

Don't write for style, grammar, complete sentences or legibility.

Just write. Put symbols or drawings if you can't put it into words.

Doing this will accomplish the following:

- It'll be a vivid tool to "getting real" even more — part of Action One.
- It'll lead you into deeper levels of awareness of your original home. (See Chapter 15.)
- This will also be part of your grieving process. (See Chapter 18.)
- Finally, it will also be a powerful motive for change: It will give you enough reason to say, "No more. I've had it. I won't destroy my life all over again."

MY LIFE STORY

Action Three

STOP BLAME

If you're unhappy right now, be accountable.

If you're not earning enough money, be accountable.

If you're in bondage to an addiction, be accountable.

If you're overweight, be accountable.

If you're marriage is going nowhere, be accountable.

That doesn't necessarily mean you *caused* your misery — for it's possible that someone else did. But that doesn't change the fact that you're still accountable. Meaning, you can respond negatively or positively to the problem, thus *creating* your life.

Let me give you an example.

If someone abused you sexually, you could choose to be miserable forever.

If your husband is an alcoholic and beats you up regularly, you could choose just to take the blows for the rest of your life until he dies or you die.

Or, you could seek help, get out of that destructive situation, start winning in life and be a healer for others.

They made a survey of the top 100 leaders of the past 100 years — from Winston Churchill to Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa. This is what they discovered. Seventy-five percent of them were either raised in poverty or suffered a major physical handicap.

That's why you can't say, "I had too many trials in my life — that's why I'm a failure."

Friend, can I ask you a question?

Who have you been blaming for your failures in life?

Many have blamed their past

"I come from a poor family."

"I was molested by a drunkard uncle."

"My parents were not the affectionate type."

"Every day, my father would tell me I was stupid."

"I can't wake up early because I'm basically a lazy person."

"As a kid, I only had two toys. Two!"

"I come from a broken family."

"I had a grandmother who dominated me."

Some of these you wrote in your life story in Action Two, and that's good.

Because knowing about your painful past experiences is useful for healing yourself.

But remember, they don't remove your responsibility.

I repeat: You still have the choice to respond negatively or positively to these painful situations.

Many have blamed the devil

I remember talking to a married couple who were constantly fighting with each other and were on the brink of separation.

The husband said, "Bo, do you think our marriage is suffering because of the demonic things in our house?"

"What demonic things?" I asked.

"Someone told us that some of our wall décor are from Africa and may have voodoo influences."

This kind of talk exposes a common belief among Christians that the devil is to blame for all our difficulties. I had to tell them, "Look, your marriage is what it is now because of the pride and selfishness of two people. And the devil may have nothing to do with it except to laugh every time you destroy each other with your words!"

I told them that changing wall décor is easy. And they can do that if it gives them more peace. But what they really need to do is to change their inner character and bad

habits — like disrespecting each other, calling each other names and taking each other for granted.

Many have blamed others

I can never forget my conversation with a member of our prayer group who fell into adultery. It's one for the books.

The husband told me, "I got tempted because my wife is such a nag. I arrive from work tired and hungry but what do I get when I come home? An angry wife that gives me sermons for dinner! Who wouldn't be tempted to have an affair?"

At that point, I knew this man wouldn't change soon.

I was about to tell him that though his wife may have weaknesses, every other wife on planet earth has weaknesses too — but it's the husband's vow to remain faithful no matter what.

But I couldn't butt in. Because he was still in his blaming rampage.

"And you know what, Bo? I realized I fell because you weren't there for me."

My eyes widened, feeling like someone had hit me in the solar plexus.

"What?"

"Bo, you're my prayer group leader. But you didn't follow me up. You didn't pastor me closely. You failed in giving me group support for my spiritual life."

I looked him in the eye and said, "I won't talk to you again until you stop blaming others for your sin. Unless you accept your responsibility, you'll never change."

I walked out of the room.

This blaming game is more common than you think.

Students blame their failing grades on their inept teachers, their happy-go-lucky friends and the nice shows on TV.

The poor blame their poverty on the President of the country.

Smokers with cancer blame Phillip Morris and have the gall to sue the company — and actually win! (I'm not a fan of Phillip Morris. But this kind of absurd thinking spawns this blame system in our society.)

And I'm sure you've read this in the news: That obese people have brought McDonalds to court for making them obese!

Here's my action plan for you today.

So that you can discover how you've been blaming your failures on others, write down below who or what you've been blaming for your problems now:

1. I've blamed my _____
2. I've blamed my _____
3. I've blamed my _____
4. I've blamed my _____
5. I've blamed my _____

Now, say this aloud: *Though it's true that those above influenced me, IT WAS I WHO CHOSE HOW TO RESPOND TO THEM IN THE WAY THAT I DID. I WILL STOP BLAMING OTHERS. I NOW BELIEVE I AM ACCOUNTABLE.* ***I HAVE THE POWER TO CHOOSE AND CREATE A BEAUTIFUL FUTURE.***

Action Four

TELL GOD ABOUT YOUR REALITY

In the very successful movement called Alcoholics Anonymous based on the 12-Step Method (see Appendix C), the first step is to acknowledge that on our own, we can't overcome our addiction. The second step is to admit that we need a Higher Power. And the third step is to turn our will and lives over to this Higher Power.

For Christians, that Higher Power is God.

Write now a letter to God.

1. Tell Him About Your Past

Yes, grieve before Him about your loss and failures.

Tell Him your problems and seek His help with *desperation.*

Tell Him how uncontrollable your life has become.

Tell Him about the garbage that you want removed from your life.

Tell Him about what you want changed.

Believe me, there's power in prayer.

But don't end there.

2. Give Your Will and Life to God

You've tried controlling your life and addiction and it didn't work.

Now, let God take over.

Give Him your *will.*

Give Him your entire life!

That means taking His road and not yours.

Remember: You're *not* passing onto Him your responsibility for your life.

You're still responsible!

What you *are* doing is letting God be God in your life — finally! And you're deciding that you'll cooperate and co-create your life with His help.

And God will be there — ready to supernaturally intervene in your life.

Even before you write your love letter below, He's already supplying you with *all* the resources you need to make your life beautiful.

All the love.

All the courage.

All the faith.

All the patience.

All the friends.

Use the power that He is giving you.

Tell Him now…

MY LETER TO GOD

Dear God,

Love,

Action Five

CHOOSE ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

Getting rid of an addiction by your lonesome self is possible.

Immensely difficult, but possible.

It has been done by a few.

Some of my friends got rid of their drinking, or their smoking, or their gambling, or their womanizing on a single day through a Life in the Spirit seminar or a prayer meeting. And they haven't touched their addictions for over 20 years.

It *seems* as though they did this all on their own.

But the truth is, (1) they were dependent on God, (2) they were surrounded by a community for these past 20 years, and (3) through their service to God, they changed their self-labels or how they defined themselves.

For some people, these three elements are enough.

But for many people, getting rid of an addiction isn't as easy.

If you're part of this second group of people, I recommend three options.

1. Go to Regular Counseling

Talk to a trained counselor, a priest, a nun or a spiritual lay leader. *Pay for it if you have to.* Because having another human being know your problem and having someone to whom you're accountable will be a big help in your healing. See Appendix A on how to get in touch with counseling centers. Or you may know of counselors or spiritual leaders who can help you.

2. Join a 12-Step Program

According to a *Newsweek* article, there are over 15 million people in 500,000 self-help groups in the US alone — Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Bulimics/Anorexics Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, Spenders Anonymous, to name a few. All of them use the 12-Step method of recovery (see Appendix C). You'll not only have regular meetings, you'll also gain a "sponsor" or someone you can lean on when crisis — big or small — hits you. This person is someone who's already gone

down the road to recover for some time and can guide you. See Appendix A on how to get in touch with some of these groups. But sadly, there aren't many groups in the Philippines.

3. Form a Support Group

You can form a small group around you whose deliberate goal is each person's healing and growth. You need a group of loving friends, or wounded healers, that will be with you through your journey towards healing. Naturally, if all of you have the same addiction, it won't work without one or two members having walked down the road of healing for a few years already. Some prayer communities are organized around small cell groups — and it's possible that this can become your Support Group. Some of them however won't work out — if the culture of the organization doesn't have the qualities I'll describe below — *available*, *accepting*, and *accountable.*

Especially *accepting.*

The religious community or organization must have a culture of accepting the humanity and weaknesses of its members. To be forgiving. To be merciful. To never treat failures as second-class citizens.

QUALITIES OF A SUPPORT GROUP

The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) movement is largely successful because of the community of broken people who meet regularly, share their failures openly, accept each other unconditionally and confront each other lovingly.

Let's discuss the three qualities needed for such healing relationships.

1. Available

Accountability Partners should be available to meet regularly.

At the start of their healing journey, many alcoholics go through "90 meetings in 90 days." That means that in their first 90 days of not drinking, they attend AA meetings on a *daily* basis. That practice gives the person fantastic community support during the beginning stages of healing.

Daily may not be practical for some of you, but having a weekly meeting may be the minimum necessary for this kind of healing relationship. To supplement this, phone calls can be made to the Support Group, especially during crisis moments.

And here's how long-term this can be: Alcoholics who haven't touched alcohol for over 20 years still attend AA meetings every so often — just to remind themselves

of the horrors of the addiction and how they can fall anytime.

2. Accepting

In AA meetings, they begin by saying, "My name is Joe. I'm an alcoholic."

By listening to others' vulnerability and weakness, people gain confidence that they're not alone experiencing their problem. That there are others who suffer just like them.

And by also listening to the successes of other people, you gain encouragement — that if they can overcome, so can you.

And despite sharing all your secret sins, Accountability Partners still accept you as a human being.

They don't condemn you, ostracize you or reject you.

They embrace you in your weakness and love you until you get healed.

They believe that *only love heals.*

3. Accountability

And of course, these relationships are built on honesty.

You will promise to be accountable to these people and *honestly report to them your successes and failures in your journey of healing.*[1]

---

[1] *If you have an addiction to pornographic websites in the internet, get a free software (see APPENDIX A) whose function is to record every time you log onto a pornographic website and email this fact to your Accountability Partners. You have no escape! It will give you more reasons to stay clean.*

This accountability also includes receiving *tough love* from your Support Group.

Your accountability partners will gently correct you when they catch you drifting from your commitment to change, or when you lie to them, or when you're blaming others for your failures.

MY ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

Check which option or options you'll take.

_____ *I will go to regular counseling.*

Make phone calls now using the telephone numbers in Appendix A. Or look at the spiritual leaders that you know — lay leaders, priests, nuns — who may be willing to help you. Ask if there is a fee. Ask for schedules and places of meeting. Write them down in your calendar. Do it now!

_____ *I will join a 12-Step Group.*

Make phone calls now using the numbers in Appendix A. Ask for schedules and places of meeting. Write them down in your calendar. Do it now!

_____ *I will form a Support Group.*

If you choose the third option, write down below the friends who will help you in your path to healing. Pray that God leads you to the right persons. Designate them as your Accountability Partners. Note: All male or all female composition work best in these Support Groups, especially when sexual issues are being addressed. But exceptions are possible.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Finished writing their names?

Call them up.

Tell them about your problem and how much you want to change. Ask if they can be your Accountability Partners. If they're not available or if you feel condemned by the person — or if the person doesn't think you have a problem and doesn't take you seriously — choose someone else.

But if they say yes, set your first meeting.
Make those phone calls now.

Action Six

SHARE YOUR REALITY CONSISTENTLY

Establish regular meetings with your Accountability Partners.

If you've taken Option #1 or #2, you need to attend your meetings with the 12-Step program or with the counselor.

Don't miss your meetings!

If you chose Option #3, do the following:

1. Share Your Goal

In your first meeting, share again your goal of healing and ask if the group is willing to help one another reach this goal.

2. Discuss the Qualities in Action Five, Plus a Few More…

- Availability

As much as possible, members will be present

in the regular meetings. Members can also be "on call" when a crisis or severe temptation occurs at anytime.

- Acceptance

  Each person will accept each other *as is, where is.* Members will not condemn but listen with compassion.

- Accountability

  Honesty about one's failures is essential, or no healing can take place. In each meeting, members will share transparently how they did with regard to their issue or bondage since the last meeting.

- Trustworthiness

  Everything that will be shared in the group will be held in strict confidence. You want the members of the Support Group to be people you can trust.

- Toughness

  You need people who will be compassionate and yet, at the same time, see through your denials and deception — and call it so. People who can confront in a loving way.

3. Discuss the Flow of Each Meeting

- Prayer

  God is your source of healing. Pray in any way that suits your group. You could sing, or pray the rosary, do meditations, or read Scripture. Pray for one another.

- Honest Sharing

  Each person takes turns sharing the ups and downs concerning their problem or issue since the last meeting.

- Loving Feedback

  Members first of all listen and accept each other's sharing. Usually, they encourage each other. Sometimes, when there's a need for correction, they ask in question form. The goal is to let the person herself discover her own mistake. For example, if a person is blaming someone else for her failure, members in the group can gently ask, *"Let me say what I think you're saying, and tell me if it's right. That you fell into your bondage last week because your friend hurt you. That it's your friend's fault…"*

- Topic Discussion
  You can take turns reading chapters of this book or other books found in Appendix B. Discussion and comments can follow after.

4. Discuss Frequency, Time and Place of Meeting

Discuss the practical details of the meeting. Support Groups usually meet once a week, and connect with each other through phone calls between meetings.

Action Seven

WORK ON YOURSELF DAILY

You want to work on your freedom and healing every single day!

In AA, they have a motto: *Be sober one day at a time.*

So if you meet with your counselor once a week, that doesn't mean you forget your work for your healing the rest of the days.

You work at yourself every day!

I have a few suggestions on what this daily work means.

1. Prioritize Your Healing Daily.

Don't begin anything new that will take away your focus on recovery.

Cut down on work so you'll have time for Counseling or Support Group meetings. Earlier, I shared to you how a recovering alcoholic sometimes has to attend 90 meetings in his first

90 days. That will take a lot of time from his work and family. But that's the sacrifice he needs to make. Because the best way for him to love his family is to get healed. And for single people: while on recovery, *don't start a new romantic relationship.* People who have done so find it disastrous. Wait for a year before getting into a new love relationship. Your healing comes first!

2. Nourish Your Spirit Daily.
Get nourished spiritually. Pray and read Scripture every day. If you're Catholic, attend Mass as often as you can and pray the Rosary. Join a weekly prayer group. Having a strong relationship with God is now your strongest weapon against your bondage.

3. Read Spiritual Books or Listen to Spiritual Teaching Tapes Daily.
Read books listed in Appendix B. Read other inspirational books. If you're not a reader by nature, listen to spiritual teaching tapes. Saturate yourself with stuff that will make you a better person.

4. Call Up Your Sponsor, or Counselor or Support Group Friends Daily.

Having a daily connection with the persons who are helping you get out of bondage reminds you of your goal: To get healed. Talk to others who can inspire you to personal growth.

But do strike a balance: You're responsible for your healing — not anyone else! Don't pass on the responsibility of your own recovery to your Counselor or Support Group friends.

5. Write a Journal and Read Your Life Dream Daily.

Write down the significant events in your day and write down your feelings as you go through these events. By writing it down, you lessen your chances of denial — because it's easier to catch yourself lying on paper. This journal will be your resource material for your sharing to your Counselor, or Support Group.

In *Action Twelve*, I will guide you on how to write your Life Dream. Once you write it down, be sure to read it every day.

Learn to live a fantastic life
Log on to www.bosanchez.ph

Action Eight

LOVE YOURSELF DAILY

People who are in bondage don't like themselves.

Many hate themselves to their very core.

Many are ashamed of themselves and wish they were someone else.

Many hide their true self and wear masks all day — until they no longer know who they really are.

But to be free from bondage, you need to love yourself.

You need to see yourself the way God sees you — a beautiful person made in His image. You need to change your self-label and declare how special you are!

If you genuinely love yourself, what would you do?

- You'd meet your spiritual needs adequately and consistently. That means you take time to nourish your soul through prayer, Scripture, community and service.

- You'd say no to anything or anyone that harms you — and that includes all addictions that make you a slave, not a person.
- You'd actually walk away from relationships that degrade or demean you. You *declare your boundaries.* You realize that by tolerating other people's hurtful ways, you're not actually loving them but encouraging their selfishness.
- You'd throw away anything in your life that doesn't make you grow as a person. Like watching four hours of TV a day. Or unhealthy eating habits. Or pornography. Or disorderliness. Or workaholism.
- You'd seek out the best stuff that will inspire you, that build you up, that make you a better person, whether that be experiences, or books, or seminars, or retreats, or prayer meetings, or movies and/or relationships.
- You improve your inner character daily. By becoming more honest. Responsible. Courteous. Respectful. For example, if you have a family, you strive to become a more loving spouse and parent each day.

25 WAYS TO LOVE MYSELF

Make a list of the ways you can love yourself.
Believe me, it'll take time and practice to love yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____

20. _____
21. _____
22. _____
23. _____
24. _____
25. _____

Do them! Practice them one at a time.

Action Nine

ASK FORGIVENESS AND MAKE AMENDS

Total healing can only come if you do two things: If you ask forgiveness from people whom you have hurt — and forgive all those who have hurt you.

Let's tackle the first one.

Review your Life Story in *Action Two.*

Who are the people that you have hurt or offended or victimized?

Can you think of others that you didn't write down in your Life Story?

Write their names below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Many of these people are very close to you: Your parents. Your spouse. Your children. Your friends. The best way to make amends is to show the changes in your life and to love them now as a new person.

Think how you can ask for forgiveness. You can call them up. You can write a letter. Or you can meet with each person face to face.

Sometimes, we can no longer apologize because the person has died or you've lost contact with them. Try to be creative. If you never showed love to your parents — and they have already died — you can look for old relatives that need care. Visit them and care for them. Bring them out on dates. Call them and cheer them up once in a while.

Once you've done this, move to the next step: forgiving others.

Action Ten

FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE HURT YOU

You need to forgive.

If not for their sake, *for yours.*

Write a note. Call them up. Or visit them.

Say, "I forgive you," and tell him that the past is past.

After which, make a decision not to bring it up again.

Sometimes, renewing contact with the one who hurt you isn't wise or practical. A decision in your heart before God would then be enough.

But as I said earlier in this book, don't rush into forgiving people.

Especially if you have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused.

My message: Respect the natural process that includes stages of anger, grief, and ultimately, forgiveness.

For some people who have been hurt deeply, forgiving isn't possible yet. So ask God for the ability to

forgive *one day.* But be honest with Him that you're having difficulty now.

He will respect that natural process too.

Victims of abuse need to go through the process of anger because this is important for declaring and rebuilding their violated boundaries. For serious abuse, a person needs to say, "What you did with me was wrong."

Some people don't want to say that. Usually the very timid and self-effacing will say to the offender, "What you did was really nothing. I'm okay. Forget about it…"

But if the sin is major, that's *not* forgiveness. How can you forgive someone who hasn't been declared guilty? You need to declare him guilty for violating you — and then, you can forgive him.

So go through the stages. And your aim is to reach that final last stage where you forgive from the heart.

And remember: God isn't asking that you produce *feelings* of forgiveness.

He's asking that you make a *decision* to forgive.

Believe me, the feelings will follow.

By the way, forgiveness doesn't necessarily mean you'll go back to the same level of relationship as before. Forgiveness *doesn't* mean you have to open yourself again to be abused by the same person.

Action Eleven

HELP OTHERS IN THE PATH OF HEALING

Your healing will not be complete without reaching out and healing others as well.

After a few years on your road to recovery, you will bump into people who are also in a similar bondage. You can give them hope. You can invite them to your 12-Step Program, or introduce them to your Counselor, or your Support Group.

Helping people in bondage will help *you.*

How?

By reminding you of the horror of the addiction you came from.

And by reinforcing your new label for yourself: Wounded Healer.

You can also share your life story to others — *preventing* people from getting into the same bondage. Warn them of the evil camouflaged beneath it.

And volunteer in your prayer group or community or parish.

Do good.
Help the poor.
Serve God.
Live your mission!

And make this world a better place.

Action Twelve

DREAM YOUR FUTURE HOME

Remember the homing instinct I talked about in Chapter 16?

You now have to dream the new home you *want* to have.

Write it down.

Describe it in full detail.

For Julia, the battered wife in my story in Chapter 15, her dream was to live in a home without any fear.

Without hiding from a monster.

Without pretending that everything is okay.

Julia wanted a home where there was real love.

Aside from this damaged area, Julie dreamt of other things: financial freedom, spiritual health, great friendships, fulfilling work.

Because your imagination is more powerful than your intellect, describing your desired future with many details becomes a powerful force for change.

That is why I recommend that you read this dream ***every day.***

For Julia, reading this dream gave her the resolve to leave her husband — and tell him that unless he went to counseling and got help for his sickness — she would never go back to him again. She was resolute that her dream would come to pass.

She will have her new home.

She will have her new life.

Will you make the same choice?

Write your dream now!

First, imagine what it would be like if the failure or bondage in your life was gone. Describe your life, your feelings, your freedom, your situation…

Second, write your other dreams — for your spiritual life, your professional life, your financial life, your family or relationships… If it doesn't fit here in these next couple of pages, use another notebook or type it in your computer. But the important thing is to read this dream ***every day*** of your life!

Here are some questions you can answer to guide you in writing your dream.

About Your Spiritual Life…

- Do you see yourself loving God more? How?

- Do you see yourself loving others more? How?
- Do you see yourself more patient? More understanding?
- Think about the inner peace and joy you want. State this in your vision.
- Look at your service to God. Think how you want to serve five years from now.

About Your Physical Life…

- Will you be experiencing more well-being and resistance against diseases?
- Will you be more relaxed, enjoying less stress and tension?
- What kinds of food will you be eating to strengthen your body?
- What kind of exercise will you have?
- How else can you contribute to a healthy lifestyle?

About Your Intellectual Life…

- What rubbish will you not allow into your mind?
- What kind of books/literature will you be reading? How often?
- Will you be listening to teaching tapes?
- What seminars or retreats or courses will you be attending? How often?
- Will you be watching inspiring movies or plays?

- What kind of mentors will you have? Do you have an idea who they can be?

About Your Family Life…

- What kind of spouse will you be five years from now?
- What kind of mother or father will you be?
- What kind of son or daughter will you be to your parents?
- What kind of brother or sister?
- What kind of friend will you be?

About Your Financial Life…

- Describe your ideal job or business.
- Do you dream of having a profitable business?
- Do you see yourself debt-free from bad debts?
- How much will you be earning?
- How much savings or investments — and what type of investments will you want to have in five years' time?
- How generous will you be? What percentage of your income will you give to God?
- Who will receive your generosity?

MY LIFE DREAM

EPILOGUE

A PILGRIMAGE TO SACRED RUINS

A few years ago, I went to Greece and Turkey for a pilgrimage and traced St. Paul's missionary journey.

Most of the sacred sites we visited were actually ruins.

It was interesting. We flew thousands of miles and spent thousands of dollars to see what? Broken-down walls, crumbling pillars, statues with no heads, the rubble of the dusty past.

In one sense, they didn't look nice.

My friend, if you followed this book, you've just taken an *inner* pilgrimage to the broken-down ruins of your life — and they didn't look nice as well. You saw how you destroyed yourself and how others destroyed your life.

But beneath what was physically, psychologically, and even spiritually broken, you discovered the undying presence of God. Yes, they were sacred sites too!

You realize that He was there all along. He has never abandoned you!

Pretty soon, other people — pilgrims in need of healing — will come and visit your brokenness to witness God's Presence in your life.

Will you allow them to?

In this book, I just did.

I've become more real to myself, to others, and to God, and it has become a river of healing for many.

And my benefits? As I've become more real, God has become more real to me.

I know Him now more intimately than ever.

And friends have become more real as well, because honesty is contagious.

Thus, we see each other's painful yet glorious wounds, and so we heal each other by broken love, day by day.

It's been one exhilarating, horrifying, breathtaking journey for me.

So I ask you: Take the journey!

Your pilgrimage is not yet over.

Your beautiful future awaits!
Because your past does *not* define your future.



Bo Sanchez

P.S. I want to give you two of my inspiring E-books that will help you grow in your personal life — for FREE! Log on to www.bo-sanchez.ph. When you do, you also get The Bo Sanchez Soulfood Letter in your inbox each week — to inspire you to succeed in life.

P.S.2. Do you want to watch inspiring videos that will help you grow and manifest the goodness in you? Watch my daily "reality show" and other powerful talks on the internet at www.preach-erinbluejeans.com.

P.S.3. I've started a global, borderless, non-physical community called ***www.kerygmafamily.com****. If you want a mountain-load of great stuff for your spiritual growth, FREE, sign up — and get a chance to also support my ministry. (More information on the next page.)*

Prevent Soul Malnourishment.

Receive a Mountain Load of Blessings for Your Spiritual Life by Joining KerygmaFamily.com

FREE!

Here's what will happen to you when you join the Kerygma Family…

1. You shall receive *Kerygma* Magazine each month to inspire you to grow closer to God…FREE!
2. You shall receive Bo Sanchez's Novena to God's Love…FREE!
3. You shall receive daily emails of God's Word — *Didache*, *Gabay*, *Companion*…FREE!
4. You shall receive the KFAM Insider Notes to let you know what's happening in the ministry that you are part of…FREE!
5. You shall receive surprise gifts from Bo Sanchez at different times during the year — his way of saying Thank You to your support… FREE!
6. You shall belong to a borderless, global, non-physical community spread all over the world connected through prayer and the desire for personal growth…FREE!
7. You shall have the special privilege of supporting this expansive work of the Lord, which includes Anawim, a ministry for the poorest of the poor, and Shepherds Voice, a media ministry that uses TV, Radio, print, and the internet to broadcast God's love to spiritually hungry people worldwide.
8. You and your intentions shall be included in our intercession team's prayer.

To join the Kerygma Family, log onto www.kerygmafamily.com or call up Tel. (632) 7259999. Don't delay God's blessings for your life.



APPENDIX

Self-Help Groups, Counselors, and Organizations that may help you:

APPENDIX A

GENERAL COUNSELING:

Center for Family Ministries (CEFAM)
Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila, Loyola Heights, Quezon City
Tel. 426-4289 to 92 Fax: 426-4285

Light of Jesus Counseling Center
Tel. 995-0303 and 995-0740

MARRIAGE COUNSELING
EDSA Shrine
Tel. 631-5734

Marriage Encounter
Tel. 632-7478

Marriage Tribunal
Arzobispo de Manila
Intramuros, Manila
Tel. 527-5645

Retrouvaille (Rediscovery)
Columban Fathers, Singalong, Manila
Tel. 523-3361 / 525-0308

Marriage Encounter Foundation of the Philippines (MEFP)
Tel. 426-4206

HOMOSEXUAL COUNSELING

Bagong Pag-asa
#7 Mindanao Drive, 1780 Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City
Tel. 843-5018

COURAGE (c/o Joe Garcia)
CP 0917-8922257

Chit Villanueva
Tel. 842-9207

COUNSELING CENTER & TEMPORARY SHELTER FOR WOMEN IN CRISIS

Women Crisis Center
7th Floor, Penthouse
East Avenue Hospital
Tel. 926-7744 / 922-5235
Fax: 924-9315

Welcome House
1641 Zamora St. Paco, Manila
Tel. 563-6363
Coordinator: Sis. Jane Pineda

Good Shepherd Convent
1043 Aurora Blvd., Q. C.
Tel. 913-6433

Marillac Hills
Tel. 807-1585 / 807-1589
Telefax: 807-1587

Haven
Northgate Ave. Filinvest
Corporate Center
Alabang, Muntinlupa
Tel. 807-1586 / 88 & 90
Telefax: 897-1591 & 92
Contact Person: Remea
Catistisan

Women's Desk
PGH Tel. 524-2990 / 521-8450
loc. 3072

Regional Haven for Women
Lingo Solana, Cagayan Valley
Tel. (078) 824-8180

Other Counseling Resources in the Philippines…
Log on to *http://www.prolife.org.ph/page/directory*

RGS COUNSELING CENTER & SHELTER FOR WOMEN
Villa Maria Good Shepherd Sisters
P.O. Box 260, Banawa Hills,
Cebu City 6000

Good Shepherd Sisters
200 Blas Chavez Velez St.,
APOVEL, Buluan
Cagayan De Oro City
Tel. (08822) 735-476

Good Shepherd Home
Greenfield St., Peñafrancia, Naga City 4400
Tel. (05421) 732-903 / 736-445

Good Shepherd Home
Gov. Forbes St., San Roque,
Legaspi City 4500
Tel. (05221) 23173 / (052) 480-7387 Fax: (052) 481-2384 (SAC Office)

Good Shepherd Sisters Reach Out Center
215 Camachile St., 8000 Matina, Davao City

Woman's Center
Tigatto, Davao City
Tel. (082) 440-2617

STREET CHILDREN & SEXUALLY ABUSED

Bukid Kabataan
Caritas Manila Bldg. 2002 Jesus St. Pandacan, Mla
Tel. 564-1831 to 36

Laura Vicuna Center for Street Children
#55 F. Manolo St., Cubao, Q. C.
Tel. 723-2342

Verlanie Foundation
Mulai cor. Sunrise, La Paz Village, Makati
Tel. 896-2289 / 895-5260
Fax: 895-5232

Bantay Bata 163
ABS-CBN Foundation
Mother Ignacia Ave., Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. 373-9178 / 288-1878

Childhope Asia Phils.
1210 Penafrancia St., Paco, Manila
Tel. 563-4647 Fax: 563-2242

Kanlungan
1625-A F. Agoncillo St., Malate, Manila
Tel. 526-1733 Fax:523-0825
Administrator: Ms. Sol Balbero

Lingap Foundation
105 P. Aquino Avenue, Longos, Malabon

12-Step Programs in the Philippines

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in Metro Manila:
Makati Medical Center
Mezzanine above 7th floor chapel
Mon 7:30 pm (NA)
Wed 7:30 pm (AA)
Fri 7:30 pm (AA)
Sat 7:00 pm (AA)
Sun 7:00 pm

55a 11th Street New Manila 3rd Floor (c/o Tato 722-8542)
Mon 6:30 pm (NA)
Wed 6:30 pm (AA)
Fri 6:30 pm (AA)

Philippine General Hospital
(Tagalog)

Manila Yacht Club
Roxas Ave.
Sun 3:00 pm (NA)

San Antonio Church Forbes Park, Community Center
Thu 7:30 pm (NA)

DDB Fairview
Sun 9:30 am (NA) (Tagalog)
Ateneo University, EAPI
Tue 7:30 pm
Tahanan Subdivision Better Living, Parañaque
Sun 5:00pm (AA)

Cebu
c/o St. Clements Church

Davao
Redemptorist Church
Sat 4:00pm

Al-anon and Nar-anon in Metro Manila:
For Spouses & Families & Co-dependents
Contact Meena: c/o 842-5712 or pager 141-154211
Prince of Wales Restaurant
Makati, Greenbelt
Mon 7:30 am (Al-anon)

55a 11th St. New Manila 3rd Floor
Fri 6:30 pm (Nar-anon)

San Antonio Church Forbes Park, Community Center
7:30 pm (Nar-anon)

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Forbes Park All-purpose bldg.
Thu 7:30 pm (Al-anon)

New Beginnings Rehab.
32 Canberra St . BF Homes, Parañaque
Sat 7:30 pm (Nar-anon)
c/o Emily C. @ 807-9446
546 Mangosteen St. Ayala-Alabang Village
Mon 6:30 pm (Al-anon)

Narcotics Anonymous
For more information, log on to *http://www.philonline.com.ph/~naphils/index.htm*

Sexaholics Anonymous
www.saphilippines@yahoo.com

Other Helpful Websites
Internet Pornography
Log onto www.xxxchurch.com/

Fires of Darkness
(www.firesofdarkness.com)
A Christian ministry that helps individuals escape pornography and seeks to restore marriages that have been damaged by it.

Pure Life Ministries (www.purelifeministries.org) A variety of programs directed at helping people break free from sexual sin.

Setting Captives Free (www.settingcaptivesfree.com)
A Christ-centered program to help deliver people from addictions to pornography and homosexuality. Features a free 60-day online course.

APPENDIX B

Book and References

For Alcoholics
The Recovery Book, by Al J. Mooney, M.D., Arlene Eisenberg, and Howard Eisenberg

For Codependents or Family and Friends of Addicts and Alcoholics
Love Is a Choice, by Robert Hemfelt, Frank Minirth, Paul Meier

For Spiritual Abuse
The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse, by David Johnson & Jeff Vanvonderen

For All Addictions
Healing Life's Addictions, by Archibald Hart

Wounds That Heal, by Keith A. Fournier

APPENDIX C

12-Steps Program
These are the 12 Steps or principles that Alcoholics Anonymous and a host of other groups (Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, etc.) use in recovery. Though it's a secular movement, Christians will be very familiar with the principles below.

Step One: Admitted we were powerless over our addiction—that our lives had become unmanageable.

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

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

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

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

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

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

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

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

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

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

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

BE PART OF GIVING GOD'S LOVE TO OTHERS!

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Preview of
7 Secrets to Real Freedom

Chapter 2

Why Do You Have Hidden Addictions?

Those who enter the gates of heaven are not beings who have no passions
or who have curbed the passions,
but those who have cultivated an understanding of them.
– William Blake

One day, I felt a sharp pain in my abdomen.

Was it gas? Or was it something I ate? Or were my ulcers acting up again? Or was it something worse like appendicitis?

After 30 minutes of pain, I suddenly had this crazy idea.

I released my belt buckle.

Immediately, the pain subsided. A few minutes more, it was gone.

So it wasn't gas, or food, or ulcers, or appendicitis after all. It was just my belt fastened too tightly! (Okay, it wasn't my belt. It was my vain desire to shrink my tummy.)

There are people who swallow a painkiller at the slightest pain.

Pretty dangerous, if you ask me. Especially if the pain was caused by ulcers, or a ruptured appendix, or a belt buckle.

Because pain is only a messenger from the body telling us there's something wrong.

It's foolish to kill the messenger. But that's what we do when we swallow painkillers. Pain looks like bad news, but it's not. It's just the messenger telling us that there's something wrong in our life.

Avoiding Painful Feelings

All addictions are painkillers.

Every single one of them.

Instead of facing the pain, we escape through our addictions so we won't feel the pain.

What are these negative emotions?

- Hurt: "I feel rejected."
- Depression: "I feel low." "I feel old." "I feel ugly." "I feel fat."
- Despair: "I feel my life is meaningless."
- Guilt: "I feel I'm bad." "I feel I can't meet the needs of my husband/kids."
- Anxiety: "I feel worried that bad things will happen."
- Fear: "I feel afraid that I will get hurt."
- Hate: "I feel angry at myself." "I feel angry at others."
- Shame: "I feel I'm not worthy to even exist."

My Biggest Emotion Was…

Let me share with you the emotion that ruled my life.

For years, I had this predominant feeling that was my constant companion. I really didn't bother to identify it. All I knew was that I felt sad. I felt lonely. I felt empty. I felt ugly and unworthy and separated from others… But for the longest time, I couldn't put a name to what I was feeling. All these words just didn't define the emotion that was eating me up.

Each morning, I woke up with this dreaded "nameless" feeling gnawing within me. Because this went on for years, I got so used to this empty feeling. I thought it was normal.

But here's what I knew. My thoughts were always about my humiliating mistakes — real and imagined. Like a guy who played one movie in his DVD player, and did nothing else except press the "rewind" button, I compulsively paraded my past embarrassing failures before me. And then I'd imagine how this or that person doesn't like me and is angry with me. And that same dreaded feeling would explode in my gut. It was my constant companion. It never left me.

Years later, after reading about someone's story who had exactly the same problem, I finally identified what it was all along: It was *shame.*

In psychological jargon, I had a shame-based personality.

I was ashamed that I existed.

I was ashamed that I was alive.

Everything I did was because of shame.

That was what my entire life was based on.

And so to escape my intense shame, I drowned myself in porn.

At least, these girls were smiling and disrobing for me. They must like me. My sexual fantasies were the same — these women were attracted to me.

For a moment, my shame disappeared.

But, after indulging in porn and masturbation, my shame deepened.

How could I, a servant of God, do such things?

But I couldn't control it. I kept doing it for years.

So I threw myself into Christian work — work that would make the world like me. As I said, my approval addiction was even more powerful than my sex addiction.

But 20 years ago, I took my first awkward steps towards healing.

It has been one long and exhilarating journey.

And this is what this book is all about.

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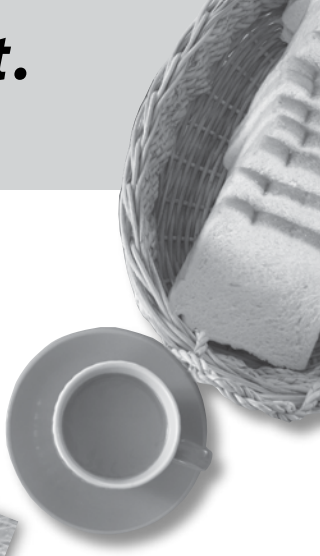
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