



# Disclosure Writing Guidelines

## Guidelines for Writing a Disclosure for Relationship Partner

### Before You Begin:

As you prepare to write a disclosure to your relationship partner, the following assumptions are made:

- You are ready to be 100% honest with your relationship partner.
- You are ready to stop acting out. **DO NOT GO THROUGH THIS PROCESS IF YOU ARE NOT SURE YOU WANT TO STOP YOUR COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIORS.** Otherwise you will need to repeat this procedure at a later time and create additional, unnecessary trauma for your spouse, as well as unnecessary expense for yourself.
- You have already given a First Step in a 12-step meeting. *(This may or may not be the case for a client who is doing a Three-Day Intensive.)*
- Your relationship partner is already in therapy or is willing to enter therapy. This therapy should be with someone who is skilled at working with spouses of sexually addicted individuals and have training and experience with betrayal trauma (such as a CPTT, APSAT, CHFP).

**NOTE:** If you have engaged in sexual behavior that you think might be reportable (i.e. sex with a minor), please contact the CHFP facilitating your disclosure directly so we can discuss how to include this in your disclosure.

### Where to Begin: Hope & Freedom Clinical Disclosure Template

One of the most helpful things in preparing a disclosure is to construct a timeline. We've provided you with the [Hope & Freedom Clinical Disclosure Template](#) to help you with this process.

The template includes a grid to help you recall all sexual behaviors throughout your life to the present. You can add more rows to this table if you need more space. You will use this information to inform the writing of your disclosure. Following this grid is a template to help guide you through writing your personal disclosure.

Age	Month/Year	Sexual Event	Location	Frequency/Duration	Others Involved
Pre-Birth					
0-1					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

**CLINICAL DISCLOSURE DOCUMENT**

Write in second person, speaking directly to your partner. Use "I" statements. Do not include emotions, opinions, or judgments.

**SECTION 1: CHRONOLOGICAL DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR**

List ALL behaviors chronologically. Each entry should follow the same format. Color code and provide the appropriate structure from the color key. The content will be reviewed and approved by your therapist. Do not change the formatting.

When first (or 2nd) met (YEAR AND DATE RANGE) | (SEXUAL EVENT) | (LOCATION) | (DURATION / FREQUENCY) | (WHO YOU DISCLOSED) | (HOW & WHEN YOU DISCLOSED) | (HOW YOU BEHAVED) | (HOW YOU FELT)

**SECTION 2: LAST INSTANCES**

Do not repeat what you have already disclosed. Do not include details of the last instance.

The last time I had penetrative sex was (DATE) | (HOW LONG) | (HOW YOU FELT)

## When to Begin Writing Your Disclosure

**Start writing your disclosure today!** The best disclosures are written over a period of several weeks, writing for an hour or so per day. Disclosures done hurriedly over a day or two usually result in a failed polygraph exam because much tends to be left out. The average disclosure takes about 20 hours to write if done properly.

### Length and Detail of Disclosure:

- This disclosure covers your entire sexual history. That's right, your entire life... Birth to present!
- There is not one right length for your disclosure. Most of them run 12 to 20 pages.
  - If your disclosure is less than 10 pages, start back with your timeline and see what else you can recall.
  - If your disclosure is more than 20 pages, you need to go back and take out the extraneous detail. Remember, this is an account of your acting out, not a novel. Unnecessary details need to be left out. Extraneous narrative details may make such a vivid picture your partner may have difficulty ever forgetting it as well as appear as minimization of acting out behaviors. Lurid details will often only serve to hurt your partner and should be carefully considered. Figure out how to tell your partner the facts without dragging them through the muck of your acting out!
- The disclosure needs to be very specific to include all of your acting out behavior. When in doubt, include the details. It will be easier to cross it out if it is too much than to recall at the time of disclosure.
- Do not include any expressions of love, apology, or pleas for forgiveness.

### Tips for Formatting Your Disclosure:

- This work will be easier if you use a computer since there will likely be several revisions. When you are done, PRINT this out TRIPLE SPACED so you have room to add edits that occur during our therapy session just prior to disclosure. You are working on an ongoing draft that will be edited until your final draft will be printed. Changes that I suggest do not reflect a failure on your part but are simply part of the process.
- Only bring one copy to your disclosure.

### Step-by-Step Guide to Writing Your Disclosure

- If you have already given a First Step, you may use that as the basis for your disclosure. Rewrite this using the following guidelines. If you have not prepared a First Step, don't worry about it. Just follow the directions below.
- Include ALL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR throughout your life to the present. This includes every sexual behavior witnessed and experienced with both males and females. It means relationships AND acting out.
- Do not include thoughts or fantasies. Focus on behaviors instead. However, if you have masturbated to fantasies of family, friends, neighbors, work associates, etc., identify each person that you fantasized about during masturbation.

- Do not include any sexual behavior that involves your current spouse. She/he knows this already. We are not going to put your partner's life on display or under scrutiny during the disclosure. An exception to this is if you have pressured your spouse to engage in your addictive behavior.
- Using the timeline referenced on page one, recount behavior chronologically, age by age, date by date and year by year. Give timeframes for all behaviors. *For example: "At 22 years old, in October 1989 - I went to a strip club for the first time. I spent \$150 dollars and engaged in the following behaviors..."* Please follow this carefully: you will begin each of your acting out behaviors with the **date** of the acting out. Be as specific as you can. **Every entry should start with an age, then with an age and year once you reach adulthood.**
- Each entry should be consistent in format. For example, sexual encounters should include flirting/grooming, kissing, sexual touching, oral/vaginal/anal sex, where these acts happened, how many times per encounter, and how many episodes. Costs per episode should be included where applicable.
 

**Note:** *Be sure to go back through your personal and business phone records, credit card statements, and email history to help you recreate your timeline and add pertinent details.*
- When speaking of acting out partners, refer to them as "the woman" or "the man." However, in the following cases, use full name of acting out partners:
  - If your relationship partner knows the person
  - You still have contact with that person
  - You work with or used to work with that person
  - If your relationship with that person covered a significant amount of time, or
  - Your partner has had any contact with that person.
- Use clinical or anatomically correct terms rather than slang. For example, use the terms "breasts/genitals," "mutual masturbation," "oral sex," etc., instead of various slang terms.
- Do not say, "I had sex." You have to specify the sexual behavior in which you engaged. Specific language like "sexual touching", "oral sex," "vaginal sex or intercourse," and "anal sex or intercourse," are more appropriate.
- Use "I" statements to focus on your addiction and behaviors.
- When speaking of your relationship partner, use second person. *For example: "When YOU [rather than using your partner's name] went out-of-town on business in April of 2015, I called an escort service and hired a prostitute for two evenings. I engaged in sexual touching, received unprotected oral engaged in unprotected vaginal intercourse. I also performed oral sex which was unprotected."* Speak directly to your partner because you will be reading this to them during the disclosure.
- Avoid any statements that may tend to shift the blame of acting out to your relationship partner. *For example, rather than saying, "When you got mad at me on August 1, 2015, I went to a massage parlor and..." Instead focus on your behavior: "On August 1, 2015, I went to a massage parlor and..."*
- Take responsibility for your behavior. *This first example does not take responsibility: "When I was in San Diego in March of last year a prostitute propositioned me. I did not want to have sex. She insisted and I finally gave in." Taking responsibility would be like this: "March of last year I was in San Diego on business. I paid a prostitute \$200 for vaginal intercourse. I also engaged in oral sex."*

- Include any person you kissed or hugged that was more than a friendly greeting. Be specific when referencing people your partner personally knew or knows.
- Do not talk about what you DID NOT do. For example, if you went to a strip club and engaged in sexual touching, you say that. If that is the complete account of your sexual behavior, you let the sexual touching phrase stand on its own. You do not add, "And I did not have intercourse." For the most part, any sentence that includes the word "not" most probably will not be included. An exception to that would be, "When you were out of town last month, I did not go to the 12-step meeting like I told you. Instead I stayed home and looked at pornography on my computer and masturbated to the images."
- Eliminate all minimizing language. Words like "only" as in "I only had protected sex" should be changed to something like, "I engaged in intercourse."
 

**Note:** *If the sexual act was unprotected, say so because you need to take responsibility for the risk involved. If the sexual act was not protected, say, "I had unprotected intercourse" or "I received unprotected oral sex."*
- Be specific. Words such as, "some," "a few," "a couple," "occasionally," "the behavior increased," and the like are not specific. Give a number. If you are unsure as to the number, give a range such as, "between 7 and 10 times." The bottom number is the times you are sure you did this acting out behavior. The top number is what you are sure you did not exceed.
- Leave out references to orgasm, both yours and your acting out partner's.
- Leave out all feelings, such as "It scared me," "I didn't like it," "I was sad," etc.
- Be sure to include any and all instances of unprotected sex. *There is no need to say "protected;" it will be assumed when "unprotected" is not stated.*
- Give details (date, with whom, etc.) of your last sexual acting out.
- Give details (date, with whom, etc.) of your last sexual conversation other than with your partner.
- Give details of all anonymous sexual encounters.
- Give listing of arrests as well as any other encounters with law enforcement officers relative to sex addiction.
- If you were involved in any sexual abuse, incest, or molestation as a child, include a full account of the activities along with ages, dates, and the identity of the person(s) involved.
- Give date and details of the last time you intentionally viewed pornography or did any cybersex activities.
- Provide a complete list of all gifts given and received from sexual partners or persons you hoped would become sexual partners.
- Include the dollar amount of all money spent in acting out and include this with each acting out behavior. Make an itemized list of all expenditures at the end of your disclosure and include a grand total. Tell how you paid for those expenses. *For example: "I have a secret credit card and checking account...."* Include details of money spent on sex partners, including gifts.
- Include any STDs you have contracted or believe you have contracted and dates of testing with results.

- Include other costs of your addiction including transportation, hotel rooms, meals, alcohol, therapy costs, legal expenses, lost business, gambling losses, etc. (You may want to refer to the *Count the Costs of Addiction Calculator* available in Lesson 2 of *Beginning Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Behaviors*.)
- List all of the ways you have deceived your relationship partner. For example: lying about going on business trips, deception about how you have used a company expense account, any secret stashes of money along with the source of those funds, the existence of secret post office boxes and secret email accounts (provide a complete list), secret cell phone account (give the phone number and service provider). Provide a list of all screen names used on the Internet and all aliases you have used in your acting out.
- List all instances of abuse toward your relationship partner and/or their or your children.
- Identify all instances of integrity abuse—actions that distort, control, or harm your partner’s reality—including lying and deception, gaslighting (“You’re imagining things”), minimizing (“It wasn’t a big deal”), blame-shifting (“You pushed me away”), threats or manipulation (“If you keep asking questions, I’ll leave”), and hiding or withholding the truth. When identifying these behaviors in your relationship, be specific, honest, and own the impact, without excuses or justifications. For example, “When you asked if anything was going on, I lied repeatedly and made you feel paranoid for even asking. That was gaslighting.”
- Detail other addictive behaviors that are related to your sex addiction; for example, alcohol and/or drug use (estimate dollars spent) and gambling activities (give a detail of all losses and winnings).
- Give details about the amount of time you engaged in acting out (“I watched porn four or five days a week for thirty minutes to an hour each time and I masturbated to what I was watching”).
- What were the consequences of your acting out? How did your acting out negatively impact your life and that of your spouse, your family, and others?

## What to Do When You’ve Finished Writing Your Disclosure

- When you finish writing, go back and reread these instructions and check off each item as completed.
- You will be reading this disclosure to your partner, so be sure to write it in a way that will make sense when it is read aloud. Look for run-on sentences, grammatical errors, and items listed out of chronological order.
- If you need to address a longer period of time, you may do that as a subject header with a general statement of explanation, then give specifics following the guidelines.
- Read your disclosure aloud at least once to yourself before the Intensive.
- Send your draft to your CHFP for review.
- Schedule a consult with your CHFP prior to the clinical disclosure.

## Polygraph Exam

You will be given an opportunity to raise the level of your credibility by taking a polygraph exam after your disclosure. The polygraph exam will include questions such as:

- Is there anything about your sexual history you have not disclosed to your relationship partner?
- Have you purposely omitted any sexual behavior from your disclosure?
- Have you been sexual with any person other than what you have disclosed?

As you work on your disclosure, reread it in view of these questions.

**As long as your disclosure is open, honest, and complete, you will not have difficulty with the polygraph exam.** (However, you need to know that incomplete disclosures as well as disclosures that are not forthright result in failed polygraph exams and likely stifle treatment. If this happens, the result will likely recreate the crisis of indecision or require a higher level of care.)

Below is an example of how you should word and format your disclosure:

## **Excerpt of a Sample Clinical Disclosure**

### **Age 19-21 (2003-2005):**

During my first year of college, I began viewing internet pornography on a near-daily basis—3 to 5 times per week for 20–45 minutes at a time. I masturbated during these sessions. I did this when my roommate was away or late at night. I did not attempt to stop this behavior and did not tell anyone about it. I spent approximately \$15/month on premium access to adult sites paid using my personal debit card. This behavior and frequency continued for the next three years while at college.

### **Age 24 (2008):**

I visited a strip club while on a business trip in Dallas with colleagues Joe and Bob. I spent \$160 on private dances and alcohol. During the private dances, I engaged in sexual touching of the dancer’s breasts and buttocks through her clothing. I did not tell anyone about this and minimized it afterward, telling myself it wasn’t “real cheating.” I also witnessed Joe and Bob each have 1-3 lapdances.

### **Age 27 (2011):**

I registered for a dating site and created a free profile, I did this while married to you and listed myself as “separated.” Over the next three months, I communicated with three to five different women via whatsapp, text and email. I met two of them in person. I went to coffee with one of them, then discontinued messaging. I met the other woman at a bar in Austing, we left the bar and engaged in kissing and sexual touching in her car. This happened once in July of 2011. I spent approximately \$220 on coffee and drinks. I used cash to avoid you finding out.

### **Age 29 (2013):**

In March of 2013, while you were visiting your sister for the weekend, I hired an escort through an online classified ad. I paid \$300 in cash and engaged in sexual touching, unprotected oral sex, and vaginal sex. This occurred in our home while you were away. I lied to you about staying home to work on a project. This was my first paid sexual encounter. I used a fake email (joem@hotmail.com) and prepaid phone to arrange it. I discarded both a week afterward.

## **Integrity Abuse Example #1 – Deception and Gaslighting**

Throughout 2013, you occasionally asked if something was wrong or if I was hiding something. Each time, I denied any wrongdoing and said things like, “You’re being paranoid,” or “Why would you even think that?” This was gaslighting. I used those words to avoid consequences and to keep you confused. I understand now how that harmed your trust and made you doubt your intuition.

**Age 31 (2015):**

In November 2015, during a work trip to Chicago, I met a woman I had connected with on a hookup app. We met in my hotel room and engaged in oral sex and vaginal intercourse. I paid for her cab fare (\$35) and dinner (\$80). We also exchanged sexually explicit texts for several days afterward. I deleted the app and messages to cover my tracks.

**Integrity Abuse Example #2 – Withholding Truth and Manipulation**

When you later asked to see my phone, I told you the battery was dead and that I “didn’t want you to feel insecure” by looking through my messages. That was manipulation. I said those things to avoid being caught. I also told you I was at a work dinner during that encounter. That was a lie. I withheld the truth intentionally.

**Age 33 (2017):**

On multiple occasions between 2016 and 2017, I accessed pornography at work using a private browser on my phone. I masturbated during lunch breaks in a locked office or bathroom stall. I also used my work computer to access escort ads but did not follow through on contact. This behavior occurred approximately 2–3 times per week during that time. It affected my work performance and increased my secrecy at home.

**Age 35 (2019):**

On October 17, 2019, I visited a massage parlor that offered sexual services. I paid \$160 in cash. I received a nude massage and engaged in mutual masturbation with the woman. This was my last paid sexual encounter. I told you I was running errands that evening.

**Integrity Abuse Example #3 – Blame-Shifting**

When you confronted me later about changes in my behavior, I responded with anger and said things like “You never trust me,” and “You’re always criticizing.” This was blame-shifting. I used your concern as a way to deflect responsibility. That was wrong. My actions were deceptive, and I take full responsibility for choosing lies over honesty.

## Common Mistakes

*“The greatest lies are the ones we tell to ourselves...” - Dr. Milton Magness*

- *not proofreading and using proper grammar*
- *not reading it out loud prior to disclosure*
- *not keeping things consistent throughout*
- *not writing in second person, speaking directly to partner*
- *not including edging/masturbation if it didn't include an orgasm*
- *not excluding sexual details that include the partner*
- *not removing slang terms*
- *not being trauma sensitive*
- *not being thorough with details*
- *not including examples of manipulation, gaslighting, minimizing, half truths and omissions*
- *not removing vague language (often, sometimes, several, etc.)*
- *not including ages and dates*
- *not using bulleted sentences/paragraphs*
- *not removing run-on sentences that sound confusing*
- *not putting things in chronological order*
- *not adding page numbers*
- *not triple spacing*
- *not addressing all forms of denial (all guys do it, it was only...)*
- *not including everything... experiences, encounters and instances of sexual history*