



Disclosure Writing Guidelines

Guidelines for Writing a Disclosure for Relationship Partner

Before You Begin:

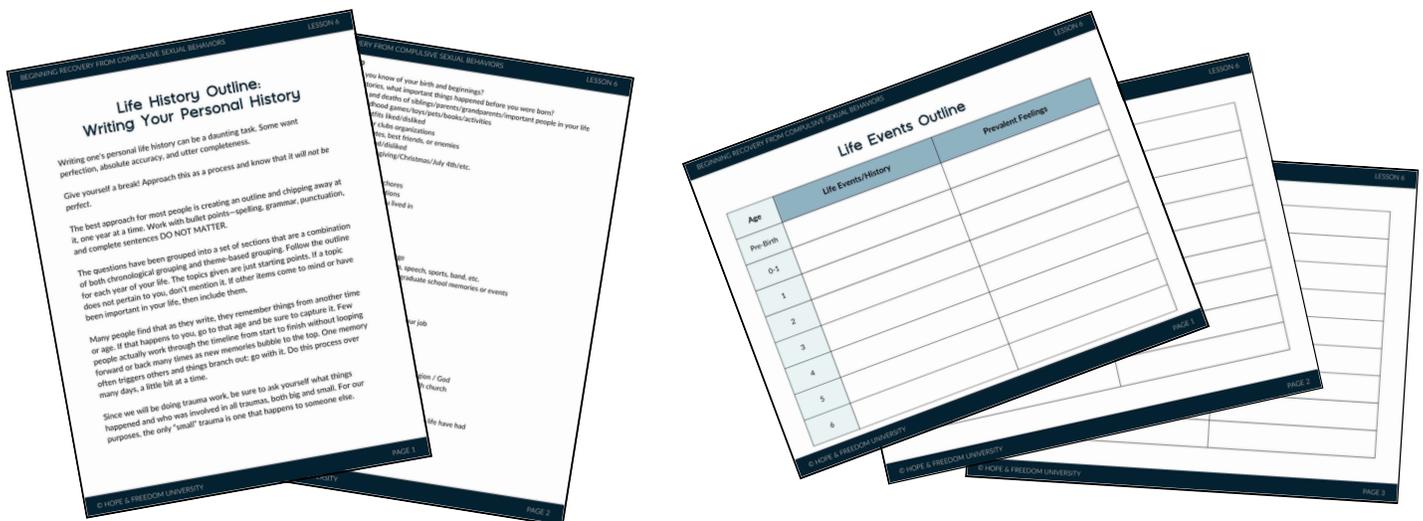
As you prepare to write a disclosure to your relationship partner, the following assumptions are made:

- 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.

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

Where to Begin: Life History Outline

One of the most helpful things in preparing a disclosure is to construct a timeline that includes all of the major events of life. We've included the Life History Outline and Spreadsheet to help you think through this process. For each year, add a very brief description of major events. These events are not going to be part of the disclosure, but they will help you identify when various sexual behaviors took place.



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!
- 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 details may make such a vivid picture your partner may have difficulty ever forgetting it. Lurid details will only serve to hurt your partner. Figure out how to tell your partner the facts without dragging her/him through the muck of your acting out! This means using proper terms, not slang or being vulgar.
- However, the disclosure needs to be very specific as to your acting out behavior.
- 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 as to have room to add edits that occur during our therapy session(s). Please understand that you are working on a first draft that will be edited. 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

1. 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.
2. Include all sexual behavior throughout your life to the present. This includes every sexual behavior with both males and females.
3. 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.
4. 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.

5. Using the timeline referenced on page one, recount behavior chronologically year by year. Give timeframes for all behaviors. *For example: "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.**
6. 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.
 - a. **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.*
7. 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:
 - a. If your relationship partner knows the person
 - b. You still have contact with that person
 - c. You work with or used to work with that person
 - d. If your relationship with that person covered a significant amount of time, or
 - e. Your partner has had any contact with that person.
8. Use clinical or anatomically correct terms rather than slang. For example, use the terms "breasts," "masturbate," "intercourse," etc., instead of various slang terms.
9. Do not say, "I had sex." You have to specify the sexual behavior in which you engaged. Specific language like "oral sex," "vaginal intercourse," "anal intercourse," and "sexual touching" are more appropriate.
10. Use "I" statements to focus on your addiction and behaviors.
11. 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 vaginal intercourse and received unprotected oral sex. I also gave her oral sex which was unprotected."* Speak directly to your partner because you will be reading this to them during the disclosure.
12. 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...."*
13. 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."*
14. Include any person you kissed or hugged that was more than a friendly greeting.
15. 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."

16. Eliminate all minimizing language. Words like "only" as in "I only had protected sex" should be changed to something like, "I engaged in intercourse."
 - a. **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."*
17. 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.
18. Leave out references to orgasm, both yours and your acting out partner's.
19. Leave out all feelings, such as "It scared me," "I didn't like it," "I was sad," etc.
20. 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.*
21. Give details (date, with whom, etc.) of your last sexual acting out.
22. Give details (date, with whom, etc.) of your last sexual conversation other than with your partner.
23. Give details of all anonymous sexual encounters.
24. Give listing of arrests as well as any other encounters with law enforcement officers relative to sex addiction.
25. 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.
26. Give date and details of the last time you intentionally viewed pornography or did any cybersex activities.
27. Provide a complete list of all gifts given and received from sexual partners or persons you hoped would become sexual partners.
28. 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.
29. Include any STDs you have contracted or believe you have contracted.
30. 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 back to the Count the Costs of Addiction Calculator available in Lesson 2 of Beginning Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Behaviors.)
31. 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.

32. List all instances of abuse toward your relationship partner and/or their or your children.
33. Identify all instances of betrayal violence—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.”*
34. 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).
35. 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*”).
36. 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. Then compare what you have written with the directions given here. Some items answered will be embedded into your disclosure, others may have a separate section or category.

You will be reading this to your partner, so be sure to write it in a way that will make sense when it is read aloud.

Read your disclosure aloud to yourself before the Intensive.

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 (2003):

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 for the next three years, paid using my personal debit card.

Age 24 (2008):

I visited a strip club while on a business trip in Dallas. 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.” That belief allowed me to continue acting out.

Age 27 (2011):

I registered for a dating site while married to you and listed myself as “separated.” Over the next three months, I communicated with five different women via text and email. I met two of them in person for dinner, and with one of them, I engaged in kissing and mutual sexual touching in her car. This happened twice, in June and July of 2011. I spent approximately \$220 on dinners and drinks and used cash to avoid being found 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 vaginal intercourse and received unprotected oral sex. This occurred in our home while you were away. I lied to you about staying home to work on a freelance project. This was my first paid sexual encounter. I used a fake email and prepaid phone to arrange it. I discarded both afterward.

Betrayal Violence 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.

Betrayal Violence 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.

Betrayal Violence 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.