

Understanding and Eradicating the Addiction





This workbook contains exercises, tools and information designed to help you overcome the addiction for good and begin to heal the core of what fuels it. All of the information you will be filling in should also be shared with your wife.

The more she is included in the process with you, the closer and more connected you'll be. The end goal is to not only resolve and permanently eliminate the addiction, but we also want to build trust, connection, and strength in the relationship.

Introduction

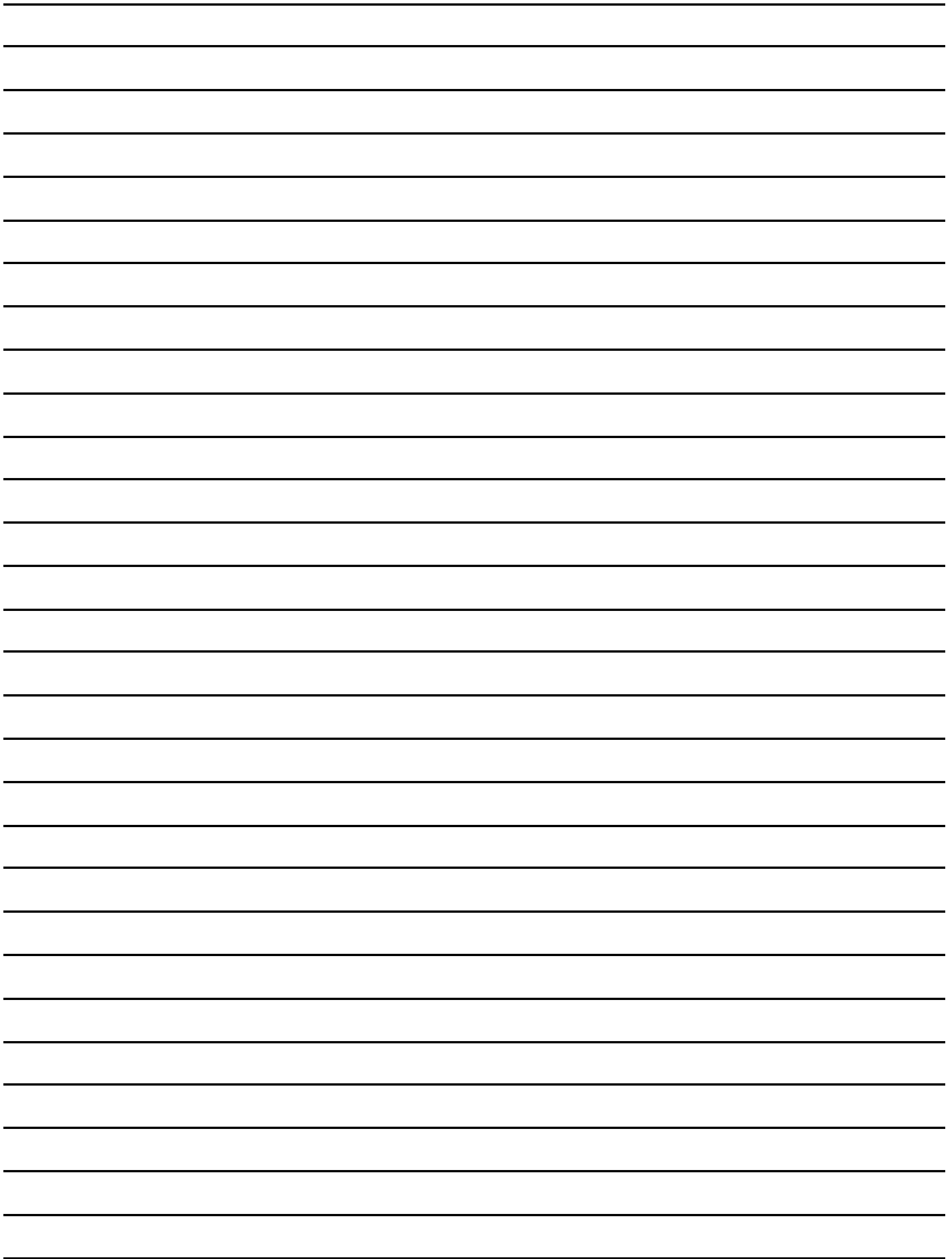
THE NARRATIVE

Understanding the development of the addiction can help you view your situation through a more compassionate and understanding lens. It can also help your wife see that your actions aren't about her or a result of some deficiency in her. We want both of you to separate yourselves from the behavior because you are not your behavior! This separation helps to challenge and counter the shame you might feel around the addiction and get your needs met in a healthy way.

As you write how the addiction developed for you, be sure to include your emotional state as things progressed, include significant events or experiences that had a negative impact on you, your beliefs about yourself, and any painful feelings. Addictions are a means to cope with pain, so make sure that the emotional impact is included and the unmet needs you had during your childhood and beyond.

Example:

I was first introduced to pornography when I was 12 years old. During that point in my life and throughout most of my childhood, I wasn't getting my emotional needs met from my parents. They tried to support me and worked a lot, but I felt like I wasn't a priority. As I viewed pornography, I felt like I was able to escape into a fantasy world and not be affected by my home life or the difficulty I was having making friends at school. Growing up, I didn't feel like I really fit in anywhere, which was hurtful, and the time I spent seeking pornography increased...



THE CORE OF ADDICTION

Pornography or sexual addictions stem from two core areas – broken attachment (emotional disconnection and not getting emotional needs met) and negative beliefs about ourselves.

Uncovering and understanding the root of the problem provides clarity regarding how to process and heal it. The more you understand the things that drive the addiction, the more you can interrupt that pattern and get your needs met in a healthy way.

Attachment and Connection

We are wired for emotional connection. One of the most influential and important researchers on romantic relationships, Dr. Sue Johnson, says, “Emotional connection among human beings is like oxygen.”

That’s how critical connection is for our development, our happiness, and our wellbeing. Troy Love, LCSW, speaks about the six wounds that humans experience in life, the wounds of which impact us on a deep level. As a result of the painful events that create the wounds we experience, we often develop negative beliefs about others and ourselves.

The following exercise will help you to understand some of the wounds that might have been developed and the impact they’ve had on you. Fill out all of the wounds that apply to you and include the emotional impact the experiences had on you.

Example: Rejection – When I was in middle school, I was never included in any groups and sat by myself during lunch most of the time. People would ignore me or laugh when I tried to participate in discussions, and I felt like people didn’t like me. I often carried around a deep sense of self-loathing and sadness.

Rejection: _____

Neglect: _____

Betrayal: _____

Abuse: _____

Abandonment: _____

Loss: _____

As a result of these experiences or others, which shame-based beliefs did you develop? Circle all the apply:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| I don't deserve love | I'm a failure |
| I'm a bad person | I can't trust others |
| I'm worthless | I'm not safe |
| I'm not loveable | I am weak |
| I'm not good enough | I am inadequate |
| I'm flawed | Other _____ |

What are some of the ways in which you numb out the painful feelings connected to these beliefs? (Note: some of the behaviors you list might not be unhealthy or destructive in and of themselves, but just pay attention to the motivation behind choosing to do those activities. IE watching sports isn't bad, but if you're watching in order to escape unresolved pain, that's what you'll want to pay attention to in order to discover what you're distracting from, thus become clear about how to get the need met in a healthy way.)

Example: I watch sports or some other TV show to distract myself; I watch pornography in order to escape the pain of loneliness and inadequacy – I find a false sense of acceptance when I do this as I'm escaping and avoiding pain.

How do you try to compensate for the negative beliefs or try to get your needs met?

*Example:
In order to feel like I am good enough and for people to like me, I try to be perfect at everything I do. I have a façade that I put up that allows people to see only what I really want them to see. I overachieve at work and try to outsmart everyone else so I can feel good enough.*

In order to find acceptance and love, I distract myself by watching pornography or I seek attention from other women in an attempt to fill the void that I feel.

All of the painful beliefs, feelings, and experiences you’ve identified are often the triggers that activate the addiction cycle. When we mismanage the pain that we feel instead of getting it reassured or resolved, we act out in a variety of ways (addiction, perfectionistic, lashing out at others, avoiding, etc.,).

Connection is often the most powerful antidote to the pain that we feel as humans. Emotional connection is a result of vulnerability and letting someone else in on a deeper level – showing them the parts of ourselves that we fear showing. Getting acceptance and understanding, even at our worst, immediately softens the fear and brings comfort, which takes the charge out of the trigger we feel to act out.

In your marriage or romantic relationship, instead of being vulnerable, how do you cover up those painful feelings and beliefs you feel?

Example: Instead of being vulnerable, I avoid and isolate. I tell you that everything is fine, even though I know that it's not. It's scary to open up because I don't want my inadequacies to be seen by you. It scares me to not be seen as enough or accepted by you, so I hide these wounded parts of me to avoid rejection. Or I lash out and put the focus back on you, but it's for the very same reasons – I'm scared to be fully seen.

***Take the time to share your responses with your wife. We want her to see this side of you, which creates understanding, empathy, and connection. The more she knows about your struggles, the more she'll understand why you do the things you do when you're triggered. This will help her to see it from a new perspective.