

COMMENTARIES ON THE CHARACTERISTICS MOST OF US SEEM TO HAVE IN COMMON

Characteristic 14:

Trying to conceal our dependency demands, we grew more isolated from ourselves, from God, and from the very people we longed to be close to.

Many of us are from backgrounds where fusion, enmeshment and codependency were present in our families of origin. Whatever the origin, we became dependent rather than independent individuals, emotionally at least. We carried these dependency traits into our adult lives and relationships. As sexual compulsives, our pressing need for validation also made us dependent on others for a temporary feeling of self-esteem. This drove many of us into a familiar way of life which was habitual but seldom satisfying. We became adept at concealing our sexual activities from others. Hiding our behaviors and lying about them became second nature to most of us. We felt the need to conceal anything we thought might cause us embarrassment or shame. Most of all, we feared that if others saw our character defects, it would lead to humiliation and rejection.

Many of us went to great lengths to conceal our sexual behaviors, sometimes even disguising our daily activities. We tried to cover our tracks, hiding our pursuits from partners, family, friends, and work colleagues. Some of us created false personas, or fabricated identities, trying to convince others that we were more than we were, mysterious and fascinating. Perhaps we became social butterflies seeking to be the person everyone wanted to know. We hid behind this curtain, determined to make sure that nobody knew who we truly were. We found ourselves avoiding difficult situations instead of negotiating to get our needs met. We were loners but pretended not to be. These coping mechanisms developed gradually in support of our sexual compulsion. We failed to understand that concealing our true nature from others would isolate us from ourselves.

Many of us compartmentalized our lives in the search for sex, concealing our deficiencies and compulsive demands. Projecting a false image, and the maintenance required to sustain it, increased our separation from ourselves and others. We often walled off our behaviors in an attempt to disguise them, showing one side of ourselves to the world while veiling our secret life. We spent more time and energy searching for fleeting excitement by acting out sexually. Those sexual moments, however brief, provided temporary validation that soon disappeared after the sex was over.

We often felt shame about our compulsive behaviors, but were powerless to stop them. We had no innate skills to help us resolve this conflict. We chose to hide things from ourselves and the notion of taking a personal inventory, thereby getting

to grips with our reality, was too painful to contemplate. Yet, we lived in fear that something or someone would expose us.

Our search for sexual connection and affirmation often became more of a ritual and less of a choice. As long as friends and family were not aware of what we were doing, we felt we could continue our deception and somehow manage our lives. We may have pushed other people away, whether it was a long-time friend, parent, or partner. Our increasing and unceasing efforts to find connection solely through sex, our continuing inability to form healthy relationships, or our ever-growing avoidance of sex and true companionship, left us more and more disconnected, isolated and alone.

Our unreliability and unavailability eventually led to the breakdown of our friendships and ties to our community. The demands of friendship got in the way of our having sex whenever we wanted. Seeking out sex was second nature to us, and we became less interested in non-sexual relationships. The people, places, and things that once brought us joy, no longer did. Our isolation continued to increase, separating us from family and friends. Any time and availability we may have had for God, a Higher Power or our spirituality diminished as we grew more and more self-absorbed. Many of us instinctively knew that our acting out was taking us further away from any spiritual connection. We may have told ourselves we were too far gone, and we didn't believe anyone could help us, not even a Higher Power. Our obsessive attempts to apply a sensual cure to a spiritual disease left us separated from God, and in dire spiritual condition.

Meeting the demands of our compulsion and the fear of being exposed as a fraud kept us trapped in a repetitive cycle of acting out. No matter how much sex we had, we felt a growing emptiness – a "hole in the soul." Most of us failed to recognize that we had few boundaries regarding our sexual activities. This lack of boundaries had created barriers that separated us from family, friends, and community. In short, we had orchestrated our own abandonment. We were avoidant personalities, unwilling to address our problems, even though we disliked their symptoms and could foresee their consequences. As long as we were acting out and lying to just about everyone in our lives, we would never attain the connection, love, and acceptance we so desperately needed.

In Recovery

Our needs are no longer so insistent as we develop fuller relationships with our Higher Power and our fellows. We take responsibility for ourselves and our lives. We become present in our lives and available to others. We come to value our independence as individuals, even when in a relationship with another. We repair our relationships with ourselves, our Higher Power and those close to us. We resume or develop healthy hobbies, pastimes and activities. We restore or improve our work, home and social lives. We find healthy and wholesome connection. We live with integrity and project an honest image of ourselves, with sex as but one element of our existence, not its center.

(Extract from "The Characteristics Most of Us Seem to Have in Common"
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