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The Joy of (Sober) Sex As It may have taken a few weeks, or several years, but in time we will have a romantic and/or sexual encounter and not think of crystal meth once. We wake up to a wonderful fact: We can be sober—in the moment and in our right minds—with a partner and not want to jump out of our skin.

Eventually, if we are fearless and thorough, a completely different paradigm for sexuality and romance can emerge. Many of us can attest that the quality that comes to exist in every aspect of our lives, sex and romance included, makes the standards we had in our using seem pale and insignificant. Whatever it was we found so compelling appears as a joyless, feverish sand trap of pain and emptiness. At times we wonder that it ever held such power over us.

Even before this comes to pass, the journey often provides a few gifts: estimable moments devoid of shame and remorse, glimpses into what our sexuality could be, and awareness that we are making progress. These experiences keep us confidently walking the path of sobriety.

In moments of doubt, have faith in our collective experience around this issue. Hang in there. Call another addict when you feel you might do something you will regret. We find that imperious urges and discomforts are greatly diminished and often completely removed when we share them with our fellows. Prayer and meditation might feel like the last activities we want to engage in but prove to be excellent tools as well.

Connection In active addiction, our lives were strictly compartmentalized. Because relationships and friendships were too difficult or too painful, we often satisfied our need for intimacy in drug-driven sexual encounters. There are those of us who did the opposite,

banishing thoughts of connection from our minds entirely. Eating disorders, obsessive cleaning, interminable fidgeting with mindless projects are all behaviors that work as well as sexual compulsion to create profound spiritual isolation and depression.

Our sober lives—even our sober sex lives—have a new spiritual center. One member recalls his sponsor saying he should “bring God back into the bedroom.” And why not? We can take our Higher Power everywhere we go. Sobriety allows all kinds of connection to become possible again, beyond sex. We found new sober running buddies and rediscovered bonds with non-using friends. Some of us have reconnected with our families, showing up for birthdays and even enjoying holidays that used to make us nuts. Each day we’re sober, we are given the opportunity to explore healthy intimacy with our families, friends, and ourselves. It is perhaps the hardest and most rewarding thing we do. With the support and wisdom of the fellowship, we learn to face everything and earn the gift of having nothing to hide.

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NEW YORK CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS

**SEX IN
SOBRIETY**

“We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone’s sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We’d hardly be human if we didn’t. What can we do about them?...We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given, and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.”

—Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 69*

Sexuality is a controversial topic. Crystal Meth Anonymous has no opinion on your sex life—our primary purpose is to lead a sober life and to carry the message of recovery to the crystal meth addict who still suffers. But issues around sex and relationships have triggered relapse in many an addict. In early recovery many of us have found ourselves in euphoric recall of our using behavior. Feeling hungry, angry, lonely and tired, some of us have sought solace among risky people, places and things; or we got on a romantic rollercoaster before we were ready, and it threw us on the tracks.

Crystal meth addicts did not invent compulsive sex or romantic dysfunction, and we’re not the first people to have complicated feelings about it. Everyone has sex problems regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation or tax bracket. The question is: How can we enjoy our God-given need for intimacy without sinking into morbid reflection and fear, or worse, relapsing?

Instinct Sexual desire, like the need to eat and sleep, is a powerful natural drive. As addicts, unfortunately, our natural instincts have been warped. Many of us remember being up for days at a time and skipping meals for whole weeks when using. Our craving for the drug distorted what we thought was necessary, acceptable and sane. Some of us starved ourselves of affection and touch and set aside the tricky question of intimacy altogether. Others fell deep into sex addiction, violating the

trust of our relationships, setting aside our value systems, and hurting our bodies and spirits. Whatever behavior we engaged in while high, we found ourselves profoundly alone.

As we work our program and connect with other addicts, a healthy disposition with regard to sex and intimacy can be restored. The speed of the process can vary greatly from addict to addict. We must remember, especially those of us in early recovery, that we have created a situation where normal and healthy behaviors do not feel right or satisfying, *for the moment*.

Time Rewiring our brains for healthy living—and loving—is not something we could do on our own. We needed the help of our sober friends, the Steps and our Higher Power. Above all, we needed time: time to let our neurons get back in sync; time to make healthy, sober connections; time to find out who we really were once the constant cry for crystal subsided.

Relapse Prevention Many CMA members who have relapsed say the problem was sex, whether it was searching for it, altering our associations with it after years of using crystal meth, or feeling we had altogether lost the ability to connect sexually with others. Sometimes sex can trigger addictive thoughts or behaviors in us even when we feel pretty stable in our recovery. Here are some of the tools we use to avoid relapsing over it:

1. People, places and things. As long as sex and crystal meth are linked in our minds, we hold on tight to this tool. Whoever or whatever it is—a certain partner, a website, a club, pornography—if it makes us think about using, we stay away.
2. HALT: Hungry, angry, lonely, tired. If we find ourselves fantasizing about drug-driven sex, we stop and ask ourselves if we are in HALT. Usually some unsatisfied healthy need—for food, sleep or company—is hiding

behind our preoccupation.

3. Put sex on the shelf. Growing confident about intimacy sometimes happens without us worrying about it. Given that sex is a physiological process, some of us find it helpful to imagine we have an actual physical injury. Our sex drive, like a broken arm or a twisted ankle, needs to be in a cast for a while so it can heal. As such, some of our sponsors suggest abstinence for the first 90 days or more.
4. Hold off on major changes. Getting involved romantically—or the opposite, getting out of a marriage or other long-term relationship—can be incredibly stressful in early sobriety. Those of us who dove right into major entanglements, defying the suggestion to “keep it simple” for a while, usually regretted it. Or we threw everything into a new boyfriend or girlfriend and found we had a new drug of choice. Many of us who impulsively broke up with our partners found we were unable to deal with the vulnerability of being alone.

A New Sexual Ideal As we stay sober, continue to work the 12 steps, and attempt to practice these principles in all our sexual and intimate affairs, we begin to accumulate sober references and understand what makes us tick. With the support and guidance of our sponsors, we start to wash away the associations from our using days and develop a sexual ideal that works for us. Some of us seek outside help: Professional counseling and other types of support programs exist to help us deal with whatever problems might be keeping us from enjoying a healthy sober sex life.

Every intimate encounter becomes an opportunity to be more honest, considerate, and loving; our changing inclinations (and they will change) pull us away from situations that leave us, or others, feeling hurt, jealous, or bitter.

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