S.A. LIFELINE FOUNDATION
Recovering Individuals • Healing Families

Understanding and Creating Bottom Lines in Sexual Addiction Recovery

Everyone who has lived in long-term recovery has one thing in common: they've committed to firm, clear bottom lines that govern their conduct around their addictive behaviors and actions. The first step on your own path to recovery is figuring out which bottom lines are right for you. With sexual addiction, that's more complicated than it is with drugs or alcohol, where the bottom line is simple — stay away from the substance. Each person has to figure out, on their own, which behaviors send them down the obsessive-compulsive path that leads to acting out sexually in an inappropriate way. Getting there starts with an honest look at the patterns, situations, and behaviors that put you at risk.

> *"That's because one can go through the motions of having a totally appropriate and natural sexual experience with their spouse or partner that's healthy, caring, loving, nurturing, fulfilling, etc — and then turn around 2 hours later and end up masturbating to online pornography. Or fantasizing about the college student who waited on you at the coffeeshop. Or flirting with the cute guy who delivers overnight packages at your office or home. Or stop at the adult bookstore on the way to work. Or on the way home. Or during lunch. Or any of hundreds of other types of sexually-charged scenarios that can easily present themselves to folks who are either looking or trolling for these types of opportunities."*
>
> A recovering addict — confessprogress.wordpress.com, 2010

Some common 'No' bottom lines

- No viewing online pornography
- No flirting with women
- No sexually-charged movies or television shows
- No checking out women's bodies — only look at people from the chin-up
- No lying
- No watching TV alone
- No staying up late
- No social media
- No private correspondence with any woman other than spouse (text/email/phone calls)
- No one-on-one business meetings with women
- No aimless browsing of the internet
- No going to the mall alone
- No going to beaches or pools

Some common 'Yes' lines, or top lines (healthy living behaviors)

- I will attend two 12-Step meetings each week.
- I will do daily Step Work.
- I will reach out to my Sponsor when I am triggered, preoccupied or upset.
- I will check-in daily with my wife, partner, or sponsor.
- I will take accountability when my wife or partner has a trauma reaction.
- I will take a time-out when I feel myself losing my temper with my partner or children.
- I will take a daily inventory and when I am wrong I will promptly admit it.
- I will work to be humble, honest, and accountable in my daily interactions.
- I will practice gratitude daily in a gratitude journal.

Learning to Live a Positive Sobriety

The White Book teaches that in order to live in long-term recovery, we cannot simply create a bunch of "no"-statements that we wish to avoid. This can even create the opposite effect — similar to the idea of "whatever you do, don't think about a white elephant right now!"

We have found it helpful to combine "No" bottom lines with "Yes" lines — top lines — the recovery behaviors which we commit ourselves to as we choose to live in recovery one day at a time.

Responding to Your Partner's Boundaries

It is imperative for you to understand that the best thing that can happen for your long-term recovery is for your wife or partner to begin their own recovery. As you begin to set bottom-line behaviors for your own recovery, you will need to understand that your wife will be establishing her own boundaries for safety. Many of these boundaries may have something to do with your behavior.

While your gut reaction may be to rebel, to get defensive, or to pick a fight, please remember that your wife's boundaries are truly —

> *"The most loving thing she can do."*
>
> Rhyll Croshaw — *What Can I Do About Me?*

Every qualified therapist understands that a betrayed wife needs healthy personal boundaries to find her own recovery, and solid relational boundaries to support the eventual recovery of the marriage. Your wife's boundaries can become your best friend in recovery.

If you can learn to hear and accept your wife's boundaries with humility and respect, and make an honest effort to provide her with a sense of safety by choosing recovery behavior one day at a time, you will be making huge investments toward the eventual healing of your relationship. You will need to be patient with the effects of trauma that both she and you are now dealing with, and always remember that you are the cause of the trauma she is now experiencing.

Steven Croshaw, founder of S.A. Lifeline, shares:

> *"I have apologized countless times, but apologies are far too insignificant to even begin to make amends for my lies, deceit, and betrayals. I recognize that my actions must include not only working my own recovery, but thoughtfully supporting Rhyll in her efforts of healing from the wounds I have caused."*
>
> Steven Croshaw — *What Can I Do About Me?*, p.150

Be patient and consistent here. It took years of your deceit, manipulation, and betrayal to create your wife's trauma. It may take years to heal it. Listening with empathy and respecting boundaries will be your best friend here.

Start defining your own bottom lines

Use the space below to build the ‘No’ and ‘Yes’ lines that support your recovery. Keep this page where you can return to it.

My ‘No’ bottom lines

My ‘Yes’ lines (top lines)