

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## 01. HOW DO I START A GROUP IF WE HAVE NOTHING AT OUR CHURCH?

If you haven't already, take some time to read the document at [puredesire.org](https://puredesire.org) called, "Developing a PD Ministry" (<https://puredesire.org/tools/>, under "Resources" and "Free Tools").

If your pastor or church staff are already on board, most churches have found the [Sexual Integrity 101 video course](#) as the most effective way to introduce the concept of Pure Desire groups.

If your pastor or church staff are not yet on board, set up a meeting where you can share your passion, your story, and why Pure Desire groups will help the church. Pastors may also call Pure Desire and speak with our Executive Director about specific questions they may have.

One additional resource would be to contact the Regional Group Advisor (RGA) for your area. This person can share with you, or with pastoral staff, about the experience of running groups in their own church. They will also be a main point of contact moving forward. <https://puredesire.org/regional-group-advisors/>

Allowing someone who is experiencing healing in their life and marriage to share a testimony is an effective way to get others to consider a group.

## 02. WHAT DO WE DO IF WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH LEADERS?

Once Pure Desire groups are up and running, most churches find that the groups reproduce more leaders for future groups. An essential element of freedom is learning to "pay it forward" and taking sweet revenge on our enemy. The materials challenge group members to become group leaders as a way to do this. But you may find a shortage of leaders at the beginning of launching the ministry, or when attempting to make the ministry public to the whole church.

If you are looking to start several groups at once, the best approach is to have a "turbo group" first. This group is done by invite, and every person in the group is a potential leader of future groups. The turbo group will go through the [Sexual Integrity 101 Course](#) (quick start) or one of the other workbooks (slower start) with a staff member or ministry leader. Upon completion of the turbo groups, multiple new groups can begin.

Another method is to look for other churches in your area who are running Pure Desire groups. At times, you may be able to train up new leaders by sending them to these groups, or direct people from your church to group there until you have leaders ready. (In all PD groups, participants are encouraged to take Pure Desire back to their home church.)

## 03. WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO MULTIPLY THE GROUP?

When a group consistently has more than eight showing up, the group should divide up to make sure that everyone has time to share.

The most common method is for everyone to begin together, sharing their group check-in. Then, for discussion time, the group will divide up into two or three smaller groups to share the homework. The ending commitment to change can be done together again.

Another option is if two or three people are ready to start together, explore options for launching a brand new group.

## 04. WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE SOMEONE ON PAROLE OR PROBATION?

Individuals on parole or probation CAN still participate in group with the following pieces in place:

- They must sign the Group Memo of Understanding. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- Get the parole or probation officer's (PO) name and phone number.
- Contact the PO to find out the conditions of his or her release.
- Find out if they can be on church property, or around minors, with or without supervision.
- Find out if they have any contact issues or living situation you need to be aware of.
- Make sure the church has a Reducing the Risk policy.
- Make sure someone on staff is fully aware of their situation and participation.
- Make sure the individual knows, if conditions of parole/probation are violated and shared in group, that information will be given to their PO.

## 05. WHAT DO WE DO WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT DO THEIR HOMEWORK OR MAKE CALLS AND HAVE ATTENDANCE ISSUES?

Homework completion and attendance are part of the Group Guidelines for every group, and phone calls are part of the Group Guidelines for every addiction recovery group. If someone is not honoring these commitments, they are violating the ground rules for a healthy group and it needs to be addressed.

*Group leaders must also enforce a practice that if homework is not completed, that person cannot share for that portion of the meeting.*

When one of these issues first begins to surface, it is good to take the whole group back to the Group Guidelines and remind them about why each one is a necessity.

If the situation occurs again with the same person, the group leader needs to pull them aside privately and find out what is happening in their life that is preventing them from following the Group Guidelines. They should then ask the individual to follow the group guidelines and also express that if the Group Guidelines continue to be ignored, that person will need to take a break from the group.

If this conversation doesn't lead to change, the group leader needs to ask the individual to step out of the group for a minimum of one month. After this time, the group leader can meet with the individual and find out if they are ready to commit to the Group Guidelines.

## 06. WHAT DO WE DO IF WE HAVE A MAN OR WOMAN IN CRISIS?

It is okay to take extra group time to help someone going through a crisis. Here are some helpful points to keep in mind:

- Discern their readiness to share: if they are shut down, don't force them into the open. If they need to talk and want to process with the group, allow some time for this.
- Make sure everyone gets to share their group check-in. It is appropriate to say, "Michael, you've had quite a week. Why don't we finish the group check-ins and come back to your specific situation."
- Remind the group that our role is to listen, ask exploratory questions, and on occasion to share how it relates to our story. The group does NOT give advice or try to fix each other.

- Be sure to direct the individual to additional resources. In most cases of crisis, the group is not equipped to provide all the support needed. Recommending counselors, pastors, or other support structures is vital. Check out Pure Desire's document, *Group Referral Criteria*, on the Tools page (<https://puredesire.org/tools/>) for guidelines on when a counselor may be needed.
- As a leader be sure to keep their sharing, and the conversation focused. Don't allow rabbit trails or unnecessary details. Keep the focus on the current crisis and what needs to be done in the immediate context for their growth or safety.
- Consider if someone else in the group has walked through a similar situation and then try to connect those two for a meeting outside the normal group time.
- The person may choose to unload this information right at the end of the meeting, having spent the whole time getting up the courage to share it. It is important to show empathy for what is happening and to respect the time for the rest of the group. A leader might say something like, "What you have just shared is so important and the few minutes we have left would not begin to address this crisis. We will pray for you right now as a group and I (as the leader) will meet with you right after group, or at a time that is convenient for you to think through how we can help you further."

## 07. WHAT DO WE DO WHEN THE LEADER RELAPSES?

A relapse is not the end of the change or growth process. It is important to consider if the relapse was a one-time event that was responded to in a healthy way, or if the relapse represents a return to a pattern of unhealthy behavior, thus re-engaging in the addiction.

**Example 1:** The leader strays too far on his computer late at work one night, views porn, and masturbates. But that night he calls a group member and confesses. He shares with his wife within 24 hours and begins implementing her safety plan (or Recovery Action Plan). He re-evaluates his list of guardrails and makes appropriate changes. He approaches his pastor and shares about what happened, and confesses to the group at the next meeting.

In this example, the leader who has relapsed shows a number of positive signs of health: honesty, consequences, and repentance. In this case, a week or two off from leading will help him address his own story, and then he could continue leading the group.

**Example 2:** A leader strays too far on his computer late at work one night, views porn, and masturbates. He feels ashamed, deletes his history, and heads home. He avoids any deep conversation with his wife that night. At group, he lies about his FASTER Scale and avoids sharing about the issue. He has another relapse that weekend. He doesn't make any phone calls that week, and misses the next leadership training at his church. After two weeks, he opens up to his wife after she hints that something has come up on his accountability report.

In this example, the leader responded in the familiar, addictive way of covering up, hiding, and ignoring. Even though he eventually came out of it, this pattern shows a lack of maturity and growth. In this case, the group leader needs to step down from leading a group, but he should still participate, for at least six months until he has re-established consistent sobriety.

In this case, a polygraph would be recommended before returning to group leadership.

A relapse involving more in-depth behavior, such as an affair, visiting a club, or a massage parlor, even if it is one time, will also necessitate the group leader stepping out of leadership for a minimum of six months and typically requires additional clinical counseling.

Around one third of addicts in group, leader or not, need clinical counseling to break free of addiction. Continued relapse is an indicator that further help is needed in addressing trauma or attachment issues.

The same general principles can be applied with female group leaders who are recovering from addiction. The response to the relapse is the most important factor in whether they need a brief break for self-examination (Example 1) or a 6-month break to re-establish sobriety (Example 2).

## 08. IS IT OKAY TO HAVE FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE SAME GROUP (FATHER/SON, IF SON IS OVER 18)?

If it is at all possible to have them in separate groups, that would be better. Even when family members have a very positive relationship, they often fail to realize how deep and honest the sharing will be. In almost all family relationships, one or the other will feel pressure to not share certain things, or to perform well for the other. Either situation is dangerous.

If no other groups are available, and both family members fully understand the challenges they will face in being in the same group, it may be considered. In this case, it is good for the leader to check-in with each individual to see how the arrangement is working.

If both family members have already been through a Pure Desire group, and thus know what to expect, and are still okay with being in the same group, this situation is more acceptable.

## 09. WHAT DO WE DO AFTER *SEXUAL INTEGRITY 101*?

The *Sexual Integrity 101* video course is meant to be an introduction to sexual addiction groups and recovery. The best next step is to connect people to the appropriate group for long-term change and freedom. Most churches will have an extra week at the end for everyone to celebrate what they have learned, and then to hear about the groups offered.

- **Seven Pillars of Freedom:** For men with sex/porn addiction issues
- **Living Free:** For college-aged single men with sex/porn addiction issues
- **Top Gun:** For teenage boys who struggle or want to learn how to resist
- **Betrayal & Beyond:** For women who have been hurt by a husband's addiction
- **Hope for Men:** For men who have been hurt by a wife's addiction
- **Unraveled:** For women who struggle with love, sex, and relationship issues
- **Behind the Mask:** For young women (14-25) who struggle with self-worth or addiction issues
- **The Genesis Process:** For men or women who want to work on changing any other troubling behavior. Groups should be for men only and for women only.

If this is the first time of using the *Sexual Integrity 101* video course, waiting a few months and then running the *Sexual Integrity 101* video course again for those who missed it can be effective. Have someone from the first showing share about their experience as a way to encourage participation.

At this point, if you haven't already, connect your group leaders to the Pure Desire Regional Group Advisor who can provide coaching and support for new groups (<https://puredesire.org/regional-group-advisors/>).

## 10. WHAT DO WE DO WHEN WE ARE FINISHED WITH SEVEN PILLARS, OR ANOTHER PURE DESIRE GROUP?

Many group members will find that they need to go through the group experience at least twice. The first time through, many group members are in the midst of crisis and damage control. The second time through the material will help them learn and grow more. Until someone is at the one-year mark of maintaining sobriety (no relapses), they need to continue with a weekly group.

For those who are experiencing a track-record of sobriety, they can and should consider leading or co-leading a group in order to help others. “Paying it forward” in this way not only helps replicate the groups, but it also brings a new level of learning and understanding for the leader.

Many churches will use *The Genesis Process* as a secondary group for those who have completed *Seven Pillars of Freedom* or another Pure Desire group. *The Genesis Process* builds on many of the same principles, but approaches change from a different angle that supplements and strengthens what group participants are learning and putting into practice.

## 11. WHAT DO WE DO IF WE HAVE A PASTOR IN THE GROUP?

Most pastors will find that being in a group at their own church for their first group experience is very challenging. Attending a group in another city, or online, can give the pastor the anonymity he or she needs to be completely honest and stay out of performance mode. After the pastor has walked through a group and begins to experience freedom, they can be the one to launch groups at their church.

If the culture of your church is transparent enough for a staff member to join the group, he or she must follow the Group Guidelines and participate like everyone else. Pure Desire groups cannot be audited: everyone does the work.

If the pastor is not the leader, he or she needs to make sure they allow the group leader to lead. For the purposes of the group, the pastor is under the authority of the group leader and the church, no matter what role they have in the church.

## 12. WHAT DO I DO WITH A GROUP MEMBER WHO IS ALWAYS SHOWING UP, HAS HOMEWORK DONE, AND HAS PHONE CALLS MADE, BUT IS IN CONSTANT RELAPSE?

In this case, determine if three essential tools are in place:

- **Relapse Prevention Tool:** This three circle diagram defines what relapse is, what the guardrails are, and what healthy behaviors they have committed to. This plan should be in writing and known to the individual's spouse (if applicable) or group.
- **Safety Plan (Or Recovery Action Plan):** This tool defines what specific steps will be taken after a relapse. This involves both logical consequences and predetermined action steps. If the individual is married, the spouse will also have some steps they may need to take. Couples have found that the better the safety plan they have in place, the less they actually need it.
- **Battle Plan (Or Escape Plan):** This tool gives specific, concrete steps that need to be taken when the individual is triggered and senses a relapse might be imminent. These action steps help the individual break out of their addictive cycle.

If any of these three tools are not in place, and in writing, help them construct what is lacking. These three “legs” become the foundation of a winning plan.

Two other tools that should be used are available at [puredesire.org/tools](https://puredesire.org/tools): Addictive Hot Spots and Crash Site Analysis.

If all three are in place, and proving ineffective, the group member needs to be directed to a Pure Desire Clinician, or another Sex Addiction Therapist (CSAT or PSAP) for additional support and trauma recovery. Trauma, especially early childhood trauma, is most often the ingredient keeping them trapped. A professional therapist can walk them through these areas. (The majority of Pure Desire clients are online; location is not an issue.)

## 13. WHAT IF AN INDIVIDUAL FEELS READY TO LEAD A GROUP, BUT THEIR SPOUSE DISAGREES?

The spouse can often see the level of growth and freedom more accurately than the recovering addict, and their doubts or concerns need to be taken seriously. Anyone leading a group without the spouse's full support is in a very unstable position. If the spouse is also pursuing their own health, they are accurate in their perception more often than not.

If possible, meet with the couple together in order to hear the spouse's concerns and see how the individual responds to them. If the spouse's issues are more fear-based, help construct a plan for the new group leader that will sustain their own personal growth. If the spouse's issues are legitimate concerns about on-going actions and behaviors in the marriage, hold off on making the individual a group leader. If the couple has not been through counseling, this could also be recommended through Pure Desire or another CSAT.

## 14. MY WIFE WILL NOT GET IN A GROUP, AND SHE IS ALWAYS QUESTIONING ME.

A wife who has experienced betrayal will often need to talk to someone else about the group, such as a woman who has experienced the same thoughts and feelings. She may not believe her husband, she may not truly feel she needs to be in a group or struggling with her own addiction issues. All of these issues could make her hesitant to join a group.

Very often, a wife's trauma profile is all about pain avoidance.

One idea is to send a letter written by another wife, to the wife of all new guys in a group, telling a bit of her story and explaining what the group did for her. Often, a wife says no because this is “his problem.” But she misses out on how his problem interfaces with her needs/hurts as a woman. If she will step into the group process, it will change her life, too, and make the marriage better. Having this vision cast by another woman is crucial.

[Pure Desire Stories for Women](#), [Peace Beyond the Tears](#), and the [Sexual Integrity 101 video course](#) may help her see and believe that it would be beneficial to the entire family if she participated in healing too.

## 15. HOW DO I GO ABOUT FINDING A GROUP?

Your first stop is the Pure Desire groups map on our website (<https://puredesire.org/join-a-group/>).

If this doesn't reveal a group in your area, look for the Regional Group Advisor (RGA) for your state. The RGA is often working with churches who have groups but have not yet put them on our website. (Find your RGA here: <https://puredesire.org/regional-group-advisors/>.)

If the RGA for your area doesn't have any recommendations, **consider joining a [Pure Desire online group](#). These groups are fee-based and led by a trained, certified group leader.**

After this, contact our Women's Group Coordinator or Men's Group Coordinator by calling them 503.489.0230, option 5. They may be able to help you locate a group or work with you to start a group in your church.

## 16. IS IT OKAY TO SHOW *SEXUAL INTEGRITY 101* TO BOTH MEN AND WOMEN AT THE SAME TIME?

*Sexual Integrity 101* was created to raise awareness of the factors that contribute to unwanted sexual behaviors. Men and women who struggle with sexual brokenness or have experienced betrayal can gain a greater understanding of the elements driving the behaviors and how to find freedom.

This video course can be used as an on-ramp to starting Pure Desire groups in your church. A successful approach could include:

- A "come and learn about sexual integrity" opportunity that is informational and educational.
- After watching each session, the discussion groups should be separated by gender. Well-trained discussion leaders are crucial.
- Support of the church leadership is essential.
- When the church has a history of transparency and dealing with hard topics in a safe environment, they are more likely to be successful.
- The issue of healthy disclosure is addressed in the course but reinforcing the importance of "Full Disclosure after six months of sobriety" is imperative. We don't want couples going home and peppering each other with questions that lead to an unhealthy, staggered disclosure.
- A class presented to educate parents in this area.

If using the *Sexual Integrity 101* video course in this way, take this opportunity to invite those who are struggling or experiencing betrayal trauma into a Pure Desire group. Sign-ups should be anonymous so people feel safe to join a group. (Please, NO sign-up form in a room with a mixed crowd.)

If you have more questions about how to use the *Sexual Integrity 101* video course, please contact the Pure Desire groups team at [groups@puredesire.org](mailto:groups@puredesire.org).

## 17. HOW DO I WORK WITH SOMEONE IN A GROUP WHO IS DEALING WITH SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS?

It is key to remind the whole group up front that sexual addiction has the same root issues, but leads to different expressions. Only two to three percent of individuals struggling with same-sex attraction are battling with a gender identity disorder. The vast majority are wrestling with past trauma which is reflected in their arousal template. Encourage everyone to focus on the root and causes, not on what it has led to. Someone struggling with same-sex attraction doesn't need to announce his or her struggle up front. Give them time to start trusting the group, and the issue will reveal itself as part of sharing the homework.

The group leader and co-leader (or the groups ministry leader) should meet with the individual to determine if anything or anyone in the group is a trigger for them, and then create circumstances, if possible, that make the group a safe place for them.

Professional counseling may also be necessary to supplement their journey and help them face issues of woundedness or shame.

## 18. WHAT IS A DOUBLE BIND?

A Double Bind occurs anywhere a person is trapped between two difficult choices: the pain of changing and the pain of not changing. With a Double Bind, we recognize that the reason we stay stuck in addiction is because we have chosen the easier pain. If we can see the Double Bind, though, we can choose to face the pain that leads to health.

**Example 1:** Joe has been procrastinating on a really big project at work. As he avoids the project, he finds himself surfing the internet too much, and eventually acts out with porn. In this example, Joe's Double Bind is that facing the hard work of the project was painful, but going back to relapse is also painful. He chose the easier path.

**Example 2:** Judy has been yelling at her kids all day. Last night, she and her husband had another fight about finances that was unresolved. Today, her frustration continues to boil over toward the kids. Judy's Double Bind is that facing the pain of last night's argument requires her to be honest with herself about her weaknesses and choose to forgive. But to avoid that pain means taking out the anger on her kids. Either way is hard, but facing her own anger at her husband would lead to a healthier outcome.

## 19. WHY DOES PURE DESIRE RECOMMEND SIX MONTHS OF SOBRIETY BEFORE DOING DISCLOSURE?

When an addict first confesses, his or her motive is usually more about making themselves feel better and less about being completely honest. Most all forced or spontaneous confessions will only reveal some of the truth. An addict is so accustomed to deception and minimization that they aren't capable of telling the whole, honest truth. In this scenario, more truth comes out later. Staggered disclosure leads to greater pain and a prolonged recovery process.

In some cases, a full disclosure cannot wait. A **forced disclosure** occurs in the following circumstances:

- When a person is caught acting out by an important person in their life (spouse, parent, employer, etc.). Disclosure needs to occur around all the activities leading up to and involved in the behavior.
- When a person has been involved in illegal activity and the activity may become public (a spouse needs to know what legal ramifications may be coming).
- When an affair has been exposed. The spouse needs to know the truth around this circumstance in order to find safety.
- When a person is confronted with facts of his or her actions.
- When a person has an STD.

A Full Disclosure happens when the addict has been in recovery for at least six months. This disclosure focuses on the full sexual history and is fact-based (not feelings or fantasy-based). The disclosure should be in writing, and reviewed by a pastor, group leader, or Pure Desire clinician before being shared with a spouse. A description of Full Disclosure can be found in *Pillar 7 of Seven Pillars of Freedom*.

For the spouse of the addict, they also need to be in a Pure Desire support group. They can get input from their group leader before Full Disclosure. The spouse should write questions needed for healing and rebuilding trust. The spouse should have their leader, pastor or CSAT review questions. Spouses should ask only the questions that were written prior to the disclosure. If something unexpected is revealed at disclosure and the spouse didn't have anticipated questions regarding that circumstance, then the meeting should stop in order for the spouse to process and write out new questions. This area should be addressed at a later time.