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**RETRAINING THE BRAIN**

Your brain has been conditioned neurologically to seek pleasure through sexual acting out. Because of repeated fantasy, images, excitement, and sexual acting out, strong neurological pathways have been created in your brain. As this happened, healthy and normal sexual responses and excitement, along with healthy pathways became weaker. Now when you see or think about things that are sexual, arousing or erotic, your brain goes down these unhealthy “super-highways” automatically – it becomes a trained response. The brain seeks the rush of chemicals (endorphins and enkephalins) that occur through sexual arousal and orgasm. This is highly addictive to the brain.

Part of recovery involves retraining your brain to not go down these unhealthy neurological pathways. The brain needs to be re-conditioned to think healthier thoughts after seeing something that is sexual, erotic or arousing. Try as you may by avoiding sexual content on televisions, by internet filters and accountability programs, you will not be able to avoid seeing all sexually provocative images. To change your automatic thoughts and teach your brain to go down a healthier mental/neurological pathways, follow these steps when you see anything sexually arousing:

1. Blink your eyes quickly and discreetly. In the millisecond that your eyes are closed due to blinking, turn your head in another direction, so that when your eyes open you will not be looking at the sexually provocative image or person. The blink temporarily disrupts both the image and the neurological reactions that are beginning to take place.
2. During the blink and turning of the head, tell yourself (aloud or silently if in public) “STOP!!”
3. Immediately after telling yourself “STOP!!” think or say a replacement thought. This thought can be accompanied by a mental picture of your partner, Jesus, a Bible, or another safe image. The replacement thought needs to be memorized and needs to worded exactly the same each time. The thought can be:
   1. a scripture such as “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” Philippians 4:13
   2. a scripture or combination of scriptures reworded to make it personal to you such as “I choose to flee lust and sexual immorality” 2 Tim 2:22 and I Cor. 16:18
   3. a personalized thought such as “That is not my wife, I only think of my wife in that way.”
4. Follow these steps each time confronted with unhealthy sexual thoughts, fantasies, or seeing sexual images. Using the exact same wording and replacement thought will eventually cause the brain to think that thought automatically when it comes in contact with sexual content.