

THE CURE OF SEXUAL ADDICTION

by Rev. Dr. Jerry Schroyer

A. FOR THE SPOUSE OF AN ADDICT (HOW TO HELP)

1. STARTING TO STOP

If you suspect that your partner is a sex addict, chances are you've already tried to change their behavior. Ultimately, though, no one can recover from an addiction unless they accept that they have a problem and want to change.

When you first found out you were more than likely paralyzed by fear. The lie "It will never be the same" started playing in your mind. While the process is painful, the truth is that now there is the potential for things to be far greater than they were in the past.

Feelings of being betrayed are also common. You wonder if you'll ever be able to trust them again – or to trust anyone for that matter. As you show anger and hostility or withdraw (or both) the addict feels compelled to turn to his addiction for 'help' all the more.

Being the partner of a sex addict is painful and confusing, but there's help available for you too. As well as individual therapy, there are a growing number of support groups. Get help: personal or group. Make sure you talk to someone that is qualified in this particular problem. Don't wait until you confront your mate – start counseling immediately.

If you feel there is a danger of STDs or AIDS then you have every right to stop sexual relations. Don't withdraw from the emotional relationship – that needs to be increased. You can withdraw from the physical relationship for your own protection, though.

Watch for feelings of guilt. "If I'd have" Is very common. You are not the primary cause of this, it started before you ever met. You are not the one to solve this – only the addict can do that. Still, it's good to seriously look at yourself and see where you may have contributed so you know what to change in your life.

Confronting your mate can be hard, for usually addicts are very controlling and dominating and marry people that can't and won't stand up to them. This is where your change needs to start.

Plan your confrontation carefully. What is your goal and purpose? If you just want to hurt them back you can certainly do that for their greatest fear is for your mate to find out. The shame and guilt will be overwhelming. Try to be honest and open, but also supportive and understanding. Lay a framework of trust and love. Remember, it's all about him, not you. Your time will come later with your counselor. Now you need to be more concerned about helping him than about getting revenge for the hurt he's

caused you. It takes a lot of maturity to be willing to surrender your right to your own rights.

When you bring this up realize that you may only know the tip of the iceberg. The problem may be much bigger than you realized. You can't really be prepared for that, but you can be aware so you aren't surprised.

THE CONFRONTATION ITSELF It's best to plan when and how to intervene in your mate's addiction. Seek the advice of a qualified counselor or qualified pastor to plan this step. Make sure any children in the home are taken away and properly cared for. Having a respected and trusted authority figure present can be very helpful. Remember to keep the focus on his problem, not your hurt. Wait until you can talk without losing control of your emotions or getting carried away in anger.

If the addict admits to the problem and agrees to treatment do it immediately, don't wait. Plan your options before your confrontation. Many good options are listed at the end of this document.

If they won't admit to the seriousness of this, don't be surprised. Don't push but don't give in. Don't try to argue him into admitting it's a problem. The more loving and understanding the easier it will be for him to admit his failure and need. Give him time to think and respond. Continue the conversation later.

Don't be satisfied with his remorse, guilt, tears and promises to stop. He is like a child whose mother has caught him with his hands in the cookie jar. If he could stop he would have stopped long ago! He needs serious and qualified help to get to the root problem, heal and grow, and then stop. This won't happen until he takes a brutally honest look at his own heart and need so that he accepts and recognizes his own sin instead of blaming others.

Remember that sexual sin is not the problem; it is the symptom of a deeper problem which must be worked through. When the focus is just on the outer behavior the real cause is missed and things don't really change. At best he'll switch addictions, but he'll never be free to grow into the human being God created him to be.

2. STAYING STOPPED

Having initially realized the problem and gone through the first confrontation, it's important to stay focused and keep your eyes on the goal of working through his root problems. Thus counseling for each of you is essential. You must have your own individual counseling for you have many issues to deal with if real intimacy is to be achieved. You have issues about your mate's addiction, about how that has hurt you, and about how you have contributed to his problem. These things won't go away on their own.

You can best help the addict by love and support – tough love as well. The issues involved must be faced and worked through. This is a long, painful process but well worth the effort. You can't do it for him; he must do it for himself. He needs someone else to hold him accountable, make sure he has someone in this role. Your role is to support him, to be his

cheerleader. You cannot be his mother who patrols and checks up on him! Your love and support will fan the spark of what is right in him.

Of course, without God's help it is impossible to do these things. We can't really forgive, love, or show love without His presence in our lives working through us. Only God's supernatural presence in us by His Spirit will enable us to have love, joy, peace and all the fruit of the spirit which God promises to provide (Galatians 5:22-23).

That's a short summary of what you can do to help yourself and your addict mate. But what if you who are reading this is the addict, what can you do to help yourself?

B. FOR THE ADDICT HIMSELF

LIE: IF 'THEY' WERE DIFFERENT (It's Their Fault)

LIE: NOTHING WORKS FOR ME!

LIE: I'LL NEVER BE FREE FROM THIS!

LIE: I'LL ACT DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME.

TRUTH: There can be victory over sexual addiction but that freedom only comes from within the person himself when he is willing to pay the price to change.

1. STARTING TO STOP

No simple solution, but this A-B-C-D approach should really help.

a). ADMIT THE PROBLEM

LIE: IF 'THEY' WERE DIFFERENT (It's Their Fault)

TRUTH: No one forces you with a gun to your head! Own responsibility, must admit it.

Addictive lust feeds on the darkness of denial. "I'm not an alcoholic. I just drink to sooth my nerves – or to feel more relaxed." "I may masturbate a lot, but doesn't everyone at one time or another?" "I know I work too late, but it's only until I get more settled in my job." **Deception**

is the ally of lust in that it allows us to serve both mammon and God and make it look as if all is well. Deception makes the lies seem like truth.

It's hard to face the truth and shame in ones self, but that is the only path to freedom. As Jesus said, "The truth shall set you free." Until the addict admits it was their choice to sin and not the fault of someone else or some 'disease' there can be no healing. The 12-step programs all start with step 1, admitting that they are powerless over their compulsiveness and that their life has become unmanageable (Romans 7:17-18; Psalm 116:19; Jeremiah 9:23-24; II Corinthians 12:9).

Unlike Adam who blamed Eve and Eve who then blamed the serpent God had made (Genesis 3), we must acknowledge our own responsibility for our sin (Psalm 139:23-24). Only then can we confess it to God and be cleansed in His sight (I John 1:9) so we can begin to be healed from our destructive patterns. Accepting God's forgiveness and forgiving ourselves follows, but isn't easy (Psalm 103).

Admitting the problem includes realizing one is using sex to substitute for a legitimate need. It is meeting a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. Thus the addict must be willing to part with his unhealthy patterns. It's more than wanting to be free from the pain, it means being willing to pay the price to get the final product of health and wholeness. Most addicts want to escape the negative consequences of their sin patterns but don't go far enough in recognizing the deep roots that need to be removed if real recovery is to take place.

The addict must be willing to endure emotional pain or anxiety instead of escaping or deadening it with sex. He must be willing to do without intimacy instead of substituting for it with sex. He must live with unmet needs, unmasked pain, boredom, and intense cravings for your sexual substitute. Freedom comes, but only when one is willing to pay the price (Matthew 5:29-30).

b). BELIEVE THE TRUTH (not lies)

LIE: I'LL NEVER BE FREE FROM THIS!

TRUTH: You can be free from this – many others have been freed from worse than you!

SEX ITSELF IS NOT SINFUL Just like money (I Tim 6:10), sex itself is not sinful. It is our attitude to it and use of it, the place it plays in our life. It, too, is a God-given gift to serve us, but nothing for us to serve. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed, for sin hadn't entered (Genesis 2:22-25). Godly sex in marriage is pure and good (Heb 13:4; Song of Solomon 7:1-11) and God watches and approves of a husband-wife sexual relationship (Song of Solomon 5:1). Sex not with one's mate is what is sinful (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; Lev 20:10; Prov 6:20-28).

SIN STARTS IN THE MIND Sexual thoughts of anyone other than one's wife are wrong and forbidden. Entertaining them leads to adultery (James 1:13-16) and in fact is itself adultery (Mt 5:27-28). Once one starts down a greased sliding board stopping is almost impossible. Sexual sin must be defeated when the first thought enters (II Cor 10:5). Knowing when they usually hit helps, too. It may be after a fight with ones wife, completing a successful business deal, feeling alone, when anxiety strikes, etc. Knowing what triggers the thought pattern is very helpful.

These lies must be recognized for what they are: *lies!* They must be replaced with the truth.

LIE 1: I'M NOT WORTHY

TRUTH: God has created me as equal to all others, worthy in His sight

LIE 2: NO ONE WOULD LOVE ME AS I AM

TRUTH: I am lovable by God and others just as I am

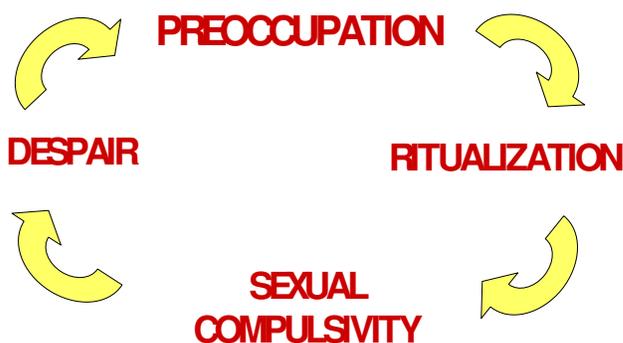
LIE 3: OTHERS NEVER MET MY NEEDS

TRUTH: Perhaps key people in my life have failed me, but others can and do meet my needs

LIE 4: SEX IS MY MOST IMPORTANT NEED

TRUTH: Intimacy, love and acceptance is my most important need

It's also important to believe that the addiction cycle can be broken. It must be broken at the first part; the preoccupation that leads to ritualization must be stopped. Identify triggers and lies associated with this cycle and then replace them with healthy coping strategies and tools. Plan in times of strength for times of weakness. Professional counseling can help with this process.



SPIRITUAL ELEMENT

Deeply imbedded within every man's soul are two intensely related passions that demand fulfillment – sexuality and spirituality. God created sex to be a source of pleasure as well a deeply spiritual expression of marital love. Thus a Christian's relationship with God is often equated with a husband/wife

relationship (Hosea 1-2; Ephesians 5, Revelation 21).

Mankind is created to worship; to look for something to put in first place in their lives and turn to in order to have their needs met. In the case of sex addicts it is sex that becomes their idol, what they turn to. There is a 'hole' in each of our hearts that only God can fill. The addict tries to fill it with their addiction, but it never works so they feel driven deeper and deeper into their sin to find what they are looking for.

Many stay defeated by their addiction because they don't believe they can ever have victory over their sin. In their own strength they can't. God doesn't remove our lust but He gives us power to overcome it. We are a new creation (Rom 6:1-7) and have a power greater than sin within us to help us (Romans 6:8-14) if we let him. That is our free will choice. In order to have victory, though, often demonic footholds must be broken. They can come from sexual sins our fathers or grandfathers committed (Exodus 20:5), or from sexual unions we formed in the past (I Cor 6:16). In either case those openings must be put under the blood of Jesus.

So the second step in recover is to believe the truth, not lies. Faulty beliefs must be replaced with healthy ones. Good, solid, mutually fulfilling intimate relationships are possible and can be built. This is more than a change in behavior, though. It means an inner change; a change in heart is needed.

c). CHANGE YOUR HEART

LIE: I'LL ACT DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME.

TRUTH: Meeting legitimate inner needs in a healthy way brings healing, not changing external behavior.

Change your heart; don't just try to change your actions! White knuckling it doesn't work with any addiction: drinking, smoking, drugs, gambling, etc., and it won't work with sex, either. The addict must allow himself to process and grieve past losses and hurts. Many people need to be forgiven, including one's self.

Ask yourself: What significant current or past wounds am I ignoring in my struggles with lust? Many times a lust problem is easier to bear than a deep wound that seems impossible to erase. For example, Craig found that he often gave in to sexual fantasies after phone conversations with his critical and demanding father. His sexual addiction masked the lonely wounds and anger related to his parent. Honesty and repentance are crucial to change. The ultimate antidote to lust, however, is love. It is very, very difficult to destructively lust after someone you love.

TAKE A STAND FOR PURITY IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS Starting in our mind we must make sure all our thoughts are pure (Phil 4:8-9). We must commit ourselves to keep unhealthy sexual thoughts out (Job 31:1). We can't just remove what is wrong, we must replace it with what is right. Pure thoughts must replace impure. Listen to Christian music or tapes of the Bible. Memorize scripture verses (Ps. 25:3-4; 101:2-3; 119:9-11; Mt. 4:4; 18:3-11; Jn. 17:19; Eph. 6:10-16; Heb. 2:12; I Jn. 3:8; 4:4). In order to really purify our thoughts it is often necessary to get to the root cause and work through the childhood pain which keeps us from real intimacy so we need the false intimacy that sexual sin seems to provide. Ask God to show you what you need to remember. Get insight into how that affects you today. Forgive those in the past who have hurt you. Pray for God to heal, forgive and restore.

The fourth and final step to victory is to remove the roadblocks to real intimacy. This is risky for those who have been hurt but totally essential to complete healing and restoration.

d). DEVELOP REAL INTIMACY

LIE: NOTHING WORKS FOR ME!

TRUTH: That's an excuse to stay in sin – you're not worse than others or beyond help!

Recovery from sexual addiction is essentially a journey from enslavement to lies & isolation. Instead that is replaced with the promised land of true intimacy with self, God and others. The ultimate antidote to lust, however, is love. It is very, very difficult to destructively lust after someone you love. It is very hard to lust after something that does damage to someone you love. Lust is a consuming and absorbing possession of someone in order to dull our own pain rather than a delighting in and enhancing of another.

An engaged couple may look at one another with enormous passion and keen anticipation of their merger as one flesh, but if love prevails, then they would refuse to do anything that would mar their individual or corporate beauty. In the same way, a man and woman who work

together may enjoy one another's physical or personal beauty, but if love prevails, then each will long to increase one another's beauty rather than stain it by the violation of destructive lust.

LEARN TO DEVELOP TRUE INTIMACY WITH YOUR WIFE/MATE By developing true intimacy the need for the false substitute will lessen. This takes total openness and honesty, being vulnerable to hurt and rejection. Accept your wife as she is and ask for God's love for her. Pray that your sexual needs would be met with her (Prov 5:15-19). Enjoy her body as God intended it (see article 4 in this series). Spend lots of good time with her, relating and loving her as God wants you to do. Learn from her how to be intimate emotionally and spiritually.

DEVELOP A CLOSE, SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD Without the wisdom and power of God's Spirit we cannot understand and defeat sin. Only an intimate relationship with God can meet our needs so we don't have the same pull to meet them with a substitute like sexual sin. Jesus was tempted in all ways we are and overcame by depending on God (Heb 4:15).

Again, counseling with a mature, qualified Christian counselor is essential to fully develop these things in life. Yes, changing is hard but not impossible. After the initial motivation to change comes the even harder part – continuing on when stress and difficulties arise. Many make the commitment to stop and change, but find themselves unable to stick with it.

2. STAYING STOPPED

LIE: I'LL NEVER BE FREE FROM THIS!

TRUTH: Freedom is available for all who are willing

GOAL: sexually pure when no sexual gratification comes from anything or anyone but mate (in a way mutually satisfying and healthy for both)

Like other types of addicts, some sexual addicts may never be "cured." Sexual addicts achieve a state of recovery, but maintaining that recovery can be a lifelong, day-by-day process. The Twelve Step treatment approach teaches addicts to take their recovery "one day at a time" - concentrating on the present, not the future.

VARIOUS OPTIONS If you recognize you have a problem with sexuality there are various options available to you.

12-Step Programs such as Sexaholics Anonymous, apply principles similar to those used in other addiction programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous & Narcotics Anonymous. However, unlike AA, where the goal is complete abstinence from all alcohol, SA pursues abstinence only from compulsive, destructive sexual behavior. By admitting powerlessness over their [addictions](#), seeking the help of God or a higher power, following the required steps, seeking a sponsor &

regularly attending meetings, many addicts have been able to regain intimacy in their personal [relationships](#).

Strengths of 12 step programs include acceptance from others who also are overcoming guilt and shame, support and accountability and a resource to help relearn and educate in healthy ways of living. Negatives of 12 step programs include trying to bring about these changes by ones own strength because God Himself isn't directly referred to and included. Often the goal is just to stop the addictive behavior ("36 days sober!") instead of getting at the root problem and working through it so a healthy life can replace what was.

Treatment Programs, either inpatient or outpatient, for up to 6 months are available and often have a high cure rate. They can be helpful because one is outside his normal environment where everything is controlled and his source for meeting his addiction is unavailable. By focusing on the problem all day every day great headway can be made. Still, it isn't always possible to go away for 6 months. Financially that can be very difficult.

Other Support Groups abound, both secular and religious. Many are listed in the pages at the end of this document.

Individual Counseling can be very helpful. In fact, most experts say a combination of personal counseling and group support meetings are essential for a sex addict to be freed from his addiction.

RELAPSE TRAPS

Watch for the traps that lead an addict back into his addiction. The habit of turning to the addictive behavior ('acting out') to meet inner needs, especially in times of stress or fear, is very strong.

Watch for feelings of **entitlement** – feeling you deserve or need reward because of the struggle you are going through. "I deserve something nice and this is what I deserve" is a lie to be avoided at all costs. A similar trap is allowing **resentment** for past or present hurts take over. They lead to self-pity and then entitlement.

Self-reliance ("I can handle this.") after a time of victory causes one to let their guard down. Falling back into sin is the usual result.

Also, watch for **stress triggers** – those things that cause you to start being preoccupied with sexual thoughts. Ask yourself what you are trying to escape, what is causing you insecurity or fear.

There are many and various traps that lead back to bondage. Watch for them. Learn to identify which are your greatest threats and what to do when they start to appear.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO OTHERS

Having victory all alone is very difficult if not impossible. One can stop but staying with it is very difficult. Often it is our pride which keeps us from forming accountability relationships. This pride issue keeps us in bondage to the sin. While we have all kinds of blocks against this, finding a godly person to support, encourage and hold us accountable is very important (James 5:16). Our fear of exposure and rejection, male pride and ego which tells us we don't need any help and ignorance of intimacy combine to keep us from reaching out to someone else. Individual personal counseling is a must as is attending a support group. Either in these formats or elsewhere an accountability partner is important. This cannot be ones' mate. A mate must build up and encourage, not ask the tough questions. It is too easy to fool a mate for they want to believe the best. They have too much riding on this to be objective and tough. If I can help anyone in this area please contact me and I'll gladly do what I can. Contact me at Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net, 215-3438-8086, 215 W. State Street, Doylestown, PA 18901.

James 5:16 says "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Part of this is **blocking explicit sites on your computer**. Several good options are suggested at the end of the paper. Covenant Eyes is excellent for use with an accountability partner. I subscribe to this and have my sons on it as well. It is an excellent way for us to hold each other accountable. Also, make sure your computer is in a main living area where everyone can see what you are doing and never log on when you are alone!

TV is another source that must be blocked. Dropping cable in your home and when you stay in a hotel is a good idea. The addict needs to get really tough to keep from being easily tempted to return to their addiction.

MY METHOD, which I teach to those I minister to, is initialed 'CB.' The **C** stands for CONNECT. I must connect with Jesus at the very start of every day for if my intimacy with Him isn't strong and healthy I won't be able to withstand that which comes my way during the day. I must start each day with a quiet time of prayer, reflection/meditation and Bible reading. The **B** then stands for BOUNCE. Throughout the day I must bounce every wrong sexual thought that comes into my mind or picture that comes into my line of sight or memory. I think of it as a bouncy ball or ping pong ball and can't let it stick or stop but must keep it moving and quickly replace it with wholesome thoughts. Quoting Bible verses that pertain to the situation are important ways to accomplish this. When Jesus was tempted He resisted Satan by quoting Bible verses. If He needed to do that to have victory so do we! This is the opposite of how a sex addicts mind has been working for years. It's not an easy transition but a very important one. Try my CB strategy and see if it doesn't help. It isn't the final cure for the addict still needs to work through their intimacy issues, but it can certainly help us to stay stopped.

PREVENTION HELPS

GUARDRAILS Just as dangerous roads have guardrails to protect drivers from plunging over the edge, so God has provided guardrails for Christian men to be able to safely navigate the curves and dangerous portions of life. These can keep us from plunging into sexual destruction.

1. A Strong Relationship with the Father is the first guardrail (Prov 5:1-2). A solid spiritual relationship with God is the surest protection against destruction. Invite God to examine your thoughts (Phil 4:8-9). Take captive any thoughts that aren't pure (II Cor 10:5) before they grow. Study and memorize Bible verses to help with the battle over lust (I Thes 4:3-8; Job 31:1; Prov 6:27; Mk 9:42-47; Eph 5:3-7; II Tim 2:22; II Cor 10:5; Psalm 139:23-24).

2. An Extreme Caution with Other Women is the next safeguard. Do whatever is necessary to keep yourself from being tempted in action or thought (Matt 5:29-30). Don't even allow yourself to look at another woman and lust (Job 31:1). Be careful, too, of any relationship with a woman where you enjoy and look forward to her company. Sexual relationships start as good friendships, but any male-female relationship that isn't totally brother-sister in all aspects can easily lead to sin.

3. A Wide-open Relationship with Our Brothers is another guardrail. We all need someone who loves us enough to challenge us to total purity (James 5:16). We need accountability, encouragement and prayer support which can only come from a close brother in the Lord who understands and cares.

4. A fulfilling Relationship with Our Wife is the final essential ingredient (Prov 5:15-19). If your relationship with your wife isn't what you'd like, it's up to you as the man to change that. Be the husband you need to be no matter how she responds. Pray and fast for her to be the wife you need. Pray daily for God to give you a love for her like you had in the past. Treat her as if you have that love, and God will quickly put it in your heart. Learn to develop a close intimacy with her. The grass always looks greener, but never is.

Billy Graham says "There must be firm control of the sex impulse. This God-given instinct has been dragged through the gutter by modern thinking, and we have made a cheap toy out of the most sacred gifts God has ever given to man. Our procreative powers need to be dedicated to Christ."

Be careful when the world, the flesh or the devil try feeding you some salt water. It may seem initially invigorating and refreshing, but it leads to death. Control your thirst for sexual things. Drink of the water God has provided (Prove 5:15-19) and don't even think about any other. Make that commitment now. Job says "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (31:1). Let's all make and keep that same commitment ourselves. Let's not wait until it is too late, like Samson. Let's do it NOW.

WRITE

Keep a treatment autobiography – write down what learning, how feel, insights, etc. daily

Write out your sexual history

Dates, events, sexual development, social, psychological and spiritual development, events & memories which significantly impacted you in these areas-focus on what developed you sexually

1. Break up history into segments (0-10 yrs old, 10-20, etc)
2. Include how you felt about your development
3. Include positive and negative events or memories
4. Record spiritual/religious influences on you sexuality, positive or negative
5. Include parental/family messages or attitudes about sex and specifically about your development... They may be overt or subtle and implied.
6. Describe your parents and families sexual values and beliefs
7. Describe any compulsive behavior in your family
8. Did you experience any abuse or neglect?
9. Describe your sexual education process: when and how you learned
10. Do you remember being held, touched and nurtured as a child?
11. What feelings could or couldn't be expressed in your family? How did these affect your sexual development?
12. Are you aware of any way you have used sexual activities to avoid relational pain?
13. How have you substituted sex for real intimacy?

PATIENTLY PERSEVERE

Think of your polluted mind as a pot filled to the brim with black coffee. Sitting beside the coffeepot is a huge bowl of crystal-clear ice, which represents the Word of God. Your goal is to purify the contents in the pot by adding ice cubes to it. Every cube displaces some of the coffee and dilutes the rest, making it a little purer. You can only putting one or two cubes a day, soothe process seems futile at first. But over the course of time the water begins to look less and less polluted and the taste and smell of coffee is greatly diminished. The process continues to work provided you don't add more coffee grounds.

PREVENTING SEX ADDICTION IN OUR CHILDREN

Children always watching, learn from us

Create an environment where your child can share desires safely

Use appropriate physical touch

Model positive intimate relationships

Model masculinity and femininity

Set appropriate intimacy boundaries

Be prudent; not all adults have pure motives

Provide sex education at an appropriate age

Show unconditional love

Always have an open line for dialogue so that any subjects can be talked about at any time