

BECOMING

*A Guide to Recovery from
Sexual Addiction While Helping
Your Partner Trust Again*

FRANÇOISE MASTROIANNI

Becoming: A Guide to Recovery from Sexual Addiction While Helping Your Partner Trust Again

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Dedication

*I dedicate this book to the love of my life, Dan.
I love you now more than ever.*



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Note from the Author

This book includes real life stories *used with permission*, drawn from my personal experience and the experience of several of my clients. To maintain the anonymity of others, in some instances I have changed client names, any identifying characteristics, and details of events.

Every story included is intended for educational purposes only and illustrates the heart and healing behind each individual's journey as they committed to recovery and engaged in the hard work of becoming who they are meant to be.

My wish for anyone who struggles with sexual integrity issues is that you hold on to the hope of recovery and begin to rebuild your life in healthy ways—both for you and your partner.

Introduction

"You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, have sharp edges, or must be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints, which is very shabby. But these things don't matter because once you are Real, you can't be ugly, except to those who don't understand."

***The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams**

This book is about sexual integrity issues and the recovery process from compulsive behaviors that stretch beyond a one-night stand or a single emotional or physical affair. I write to the man whose sexual behaviors and thoughts are out of control, negatively impacting his life financially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, and relationally, especially with his partner. I'm not writing from the place of some of the great writers and psychologists in my field, but rather as a licensed clinical professional counselor, pulling from my own personal experience and that of my clients. I've also received several certifications in the field of trauma and addiction. The clients I refer to have been in the trenches of sexual addiction and difficult times, but they have also experienced a change of heart and healing. Consider my writing as a letter that gives you hope and an understanding of yourself, your partner, and how this addiction impacts both of your lives. My hope for you is that you open your heart and mind to a recovery process to help you move through your trauma and addiction and help your partner in the aftermath of sexual addiction-induced trauma.

I am writing from my heart and hoping that you will receive this letter as though we were sitting across from one another. Consider Robert, whose heart has been shut down and ripped open from the indiscretions and losses of his sexual addiction. He began to heal and have hope, only

to be torn up again. He is caught in a web of divorce and co-parenting, while still in love with his ex. They text at least twice a day, and she shares stories of the new love in her life. Robert has a hard time telling Missy how hard it is to hear her stories of the man she is about to marry; he feels needed and a part of her life, and he wants to stay connected to her in any way possible. He loves that she can confide in him. I intervene and encourage Robert to tell her the truth about his feelings for her—to set communication boundaries and to stay connected only through matters directly concerning their daughter. Giving redirections like that are so hard to say when I see Robert suffering. Recovery work is not linear; it's up and down and all over the place. As I come alongside and walk through the journey with Robert, I respect his choices and understand how difficult it is for him. I pray for him in our sessions and check in on him. I cannot be present with you in the same way I am with Robert, so instead, I write this for the hurting hearts that have similar stories.

Grab a cup of coffee and settle into a quiet place where you can focus your attention on what I would like to share with you.

This is a letter about *becoming*—becoming who you can be without *breaking easily*, becoming who and what you were meant to be and do *once you are real*. Becoming takes us to a level of maturity, knowledge, emotional intelligence, and spiritual wisdom. It is never without cost and unexpected consequences. This *becoming* happens over time; it's a process of growth and development of the true self. This work requires endurance, commitment, and a rigorous loyalty to the process as you start to put off the old, false self and put on the new, real self.

The shedding and elimination of behaviors, habits, and patterns that have destroyed and stripped you of the old self will also “cleanse us from all wickedness” (1 John 1:9 NLT). The dark stains that have robbed you of a life you could be proud of become the very thing that compel you to pursue a lasting change of heart and mind. To gain the resilience and control to overcome obstacles and keep you doing the right thing requires dedication and the hard work of embracing your recovery. I hope that while you're reading my letter you will find your way back to the *real you*. This is also a guide to help you and your partner heal. Personal healing is hard work—the hardest work you will ever do. For your partner, healing is just as hard, though different. For her, the discovery and disclosure of your actions feels like an explosion with the debris blown in every direction, and

she is left not knowing how to put herself and life back together. After you have been caught in your betrayals, secrets, and lies, it will take time and a lot of energy on your part to help her facilitate her healing while working your own recovery program. You should want to stop the undesirable behaviors; otherwise, they will get in the way of the healing process. This is easier said than done, which is why this work takes rigorous commitment. It's a difficult process, but it's well worth the effort to move forward and help your partner heal from the avalanche of your indiscretions.

Sexual addiction can be isolating, causing one to withdraw from social activities, friends, and family. The Bible warns us about this: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10). The challenge of putting off the disingenuous false self is in striving and straining to discover the man you were created to be under all the layers of pain, addiction, and discomfort in your life. As you are *becoming*, you will discover strengths you didn't know you had, as well as the ability to overcome weaknesses. Transforming your heart and mind will make you a courageous man of integrity, one who knows how to walk away from evil and walk the way of a righteous man. We are most vulnerable in our grief and sorrow, yet we will find the courage to discover the truth that sets us free. Recovery is not just about meetings, twelve-step programs, or relapsing; it is more about showing up with courage and believing in the process, and knowing that you are doing the right thing even when you cannot predict the outcome.

As you embark on this journey of recovery and healing, finding the lost parts of you, you will begin to experience freedom from the bondage that trapped you into believing lies. Embrace your recovery, and trust in yourself as you do the work. Only you can choose to have control of your life and be a man with dignity and integrity as you evolve into your new identity. You won't want to return to your old ways after you have experienced what the new you looks and feels like.

The Velveteen Rabbit tells us that those who break easily are not the overcomers who endure life's trials. Going through trials and tribulations of this nature can feel like a tornado spiraling out of control, but trials teach us what redemption looks like when we can accept, learn, and grow through them—instead of running from ourselves and using countless

coping behaviors to cover the pain. Developing endurance in suffering, without groaning or complaining, will help us find our new selves and redeem what was lost. What we become in the process of *becoming* reflects the work it costs to shed the old and embrace the new.

Consider the art of Kintsugi, an old Japanese method of repairing broken and shattered pottery bowls with gold and silver. The cracks are filled with precious gold, which adds beauty to the sharp and broken edges. After the repair, the bowl is more beautiful and valuable than before *because* of the work and value of the repair. This is a beautiful metaphor for the redemption possible in your life. We can never be beyond restoration and reparation from our brokenness or addictions.

The damaged self needs a refining furnace to remove the impurities of the unwanted behaviors that have hurt you and others along the way. It requires a sincere brokenness and a willingness to do the work of repairing the wreckage in our lives. *Becoming real* requires tolerating discomfort even when your natural inclination is to quit. By choosing a less traveled path, you break new ground to make way for changes in your life. It's like taking a jackhammer to a hardened heart and watching it crack, crumble, and dissolve the inner and outer walls. It's about rearranging your life to rid yourself of the undesirable behaviors that took control of you and stole the love and peace you once had for yourself and others.

This journey is not for the man who is contemplating his next hit. It's for the man who makes a choice to put away the old and embrace the new. This change not only impacts your process of *becoming*, but also matters to the people in your life that have been affected by your choices. You will become the man you know you are and want to be. You will have the integrity to do the right thing for yourself, others, and God.

There will be days, amid decisions to repair and help your partner heal, when you will need to revisit your heart condition and intention to change. You may want to convince yourself that the work is too much: *"This is too hard, I can't change, I can't be what she needs me to be, I am not enough."* But this is your new reality: don't even entertain the idea of giving up—not today, not ever. You deserve better. She deserves better.

Giving up and walking away will only bring a new set of problems. This journey is transforming, and transformation is necessary for a change of heart. Remember it is the incremental movements that matter for a lasting change. Your partner will also be making changes. Look for them,

be attentive, and give credit. Some changes will be small, and others monumental, like asking you to move back home after staying with your parents for the last three months. But mostly, it will be small steps at a time, and these steps will build your confidence and your capacity to live differently. Experiencing the successes and freedom from the bondage that has held its grip on you comes from taking control of your life and not walking in shame.

Understanding Sexual Addiction

The sexual integrity issues I address refer to lack of control over your thoughts and conduct around sexual behaviors and sexual compulsivity. If you picked this book up out of curiosity and concern of whether you have an addiction, this is for you, too. If you are cheating on your partner but do not have a fully developed sex addiction, this could give you an understanding of your behaviors and help prevent that addiction from developing.

The parts of you that have been lost to addiction long to find their way back to your heart. Addiction entices, promising great rewards while tricking you into believing its lies. It's persuasive, telling you that you deserve whatever you want. It seduces you, gripping you with its powerful claws. Does all this sound too familiar? If you have fallen into the stronghold of a sexual addiction, it likely does. Addiction is powerful. It is manipulative, secretive, shaming, devious, and cunning. It is no wonder if you ask yourself: *"How did I let it get so far out of hand?"*

This journey is for the man who wants his life to be better and stronger, in control of his choices, focusing on relationships that matter to him. This man understands that neither he or their partner simply *get over it*; they must go under, over, and through the avalanche that has pummeled their lives. This man is willing to turn himself inside out and go through the process of what it means to walk through the fires, while tearing down the layers of addiction that drives the selfish and prideful path of destruction. If you are this man, make sure you know the road map that leads to a successful journey.

It's important to note that I do not prefer to use the term *sex addict* associated with sexual integrity issues. This term was dated over thirty years ago and has not made it to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of

Mental Disorders (DSM-5). I prefer using terms like *"a man in recovery with an intimacy disorder, or sexual integrity issues"*; as far as I am concerned, a man in process of working on his recovery program has a compulsive disorder around sexual thoughts and behaviors, which can sometimes be diagnosed as part of another mental health issue. Yet, I do believe while in the throes of sex addiction behaviors, it is an addiction. Merriam-Webster defines addiction as *"a compulsive, chronic, physiological or psychological need for a habit-forming substance, behavior, or activity having harmful physical, psychological, or social effects and typically causing well-defined symptoms (such as anxiety, irritability, tremors, or nausea) upon withdrawal or abstinence: the state of being addicted."*¹

The secrets and lies behind an addiction spread like a deep, open wound that continues to ooze infection to other parts of your mind and body. Slowly and over time, shame becomes a central focus, strips you of important things and relationships that once mattered to you, and convinces you that your actions won't hurt you or anyone. Living a secret double life is exhausting and harder than the pain of change. But I am convinced that change is possible based on my experience working with some of the most wounded and damaged men I've treated. They have done the hard work of putting behind the old, have not given up, and have wanted to make things right. No more compartmentalizing. No more living a double life. They have examined their hearts and rescued themselves from any further and impending destruction. Their lives have been changed forever.

I am a licensed clinician and certified sex addiction specialist. I have been trained to work as a trauma specialist in the areas of Hypnotherapy, Somatic Experience, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). I implement all these tools when working with individuals or couples. Most of the men I work with walk into my office with shame and disgust because of what they have done, where they have been, and how they have violated their principles and values and given in to evil. Some are prideful, selfish, and narcissistic. It takes humility and courage to admit what you've done, rather than to stroll in and say, *"She wasn't there for me, she didn't meet my expectations, she cares more about the kids than she does for me, she wouldn't have sex with me, I don't love her anymore."* Regarding your partner's side of things, if there is any ownership on her part, in due time, in her process and healing, she'll own what is hers. But not until you transform your heart and behaviors will she start to trust

you again with her heart and feel safe enough to acknowledge behaviors that may have been hurtful on her part. Now, in the early stages of grief and discovery, she will be overcome with grief. If you get stuck in a place thinking you're a victim because of a reaction she's having to something you said or did, you will not give the relationship a chance to repair. You have been the perpetrator and offender, and she is the victim trying to make sense of her new reality from the pain and trauma you have induced by violating your marriage vows.

The men I see in my practice are men who fear losing their partner, family, or job and desperately want to do whatever it takes to get as far away from the secrets and behaviors that have kept them in bondage to sexual sin. Believe it or not, being found out gives you a sense of relief, in some ways. It's exhausting to live in hiding and deceit. Having to cover your steps, forgetting what you said, compartmentalizing, and covering up more lies only nurtures anger and self-righteousness. Men that live like this take on a life of deflecting the truth. This cycle of emotional, verbal, and physical abuse further takes over as a cover-up for the addiction.

I've also trained as a Partner Trauma Specialist, Gottman, and Emotionally-Focused Therapy. Because this type of work is relational, it goes beyond working with the individual with sexual integrity issues. Sexual Addiction is relational trauma. The partner and the relationship need attention to work through the relational trauma and recovery for the healing process.

If you're asking yourself: *"How did my life get so out of control? Why do I do these things, knowing how much they hurt my partner?"* Hang on, keep reading. I hope to bring you some clarity and a better understanding of yourself throughout this letter. You have a lot left in you, don't ever give up on yourself, and you matter way more than you may know.

Trusting God Through Your Trials

I will walk you through the transformation process of *becoming* the person you were meant to be, but only you can choose to walk the journey that will change the narrative of your life.

My relationship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit has transformed me into the woman, wife, mother, grandmother, friend, and counselor I am today. I am also the partner of a man who was caught in

the trap of pornography. Without my relationship with God, I would not be where I am in life now after all the chaos and mess that traumatized and interrupted my life. I grew up Catholic and appreciate the path it led me on. It gave me an understanding of the Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and since then I have accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

I have never regretted my decision to give my life to Him. I continue to sin and do things my way more often than I would like; pride and selfishness take precedence over seeking what He would have for me. But thankfully this happens less and less as I grow and mature in Him. The more I know of Him, the less I see of me. I love that the Bible, the Word of Truth, tells me that He will never forsake me. I am humbled by the fact that He is a forgiving God who loves each of us enough to draw us to Himself. He desires to give us his very best no matter what we've done and what our story is.

I make no apologies for the word of God; I speak the truth as I know and understand it. I am not proclaiming to be a theologian; you will come across Scripture in this book, but please don't take offense: I am writing from a place of the heart. The Bible speaks for itself; God's words are transforming, powerful, and life-changing.

Throughout my experiences as a Christian, I have sought to learn and seek Him first, be attentive to what He is directing, guiding and wanting me to learn through the twists and turns of life. I have become introspective, reflective, analytical, and discerning of what God would have for me in trials, triggers, sufferings, and tribulations. Some of my hardest struggles in life have turned into my most profound and teaching moments because they have taught me what it means to fully surrender my heart, life, and commitment to Him. I have learned to turn toward Jesus's heart and become more and more dependent and in love with Him. I know I can't get through life without trials and tribulations, but knowing I have God to comfort and give me the courage and strength I need is where my hope comes from. When I kick and scream, wanting my way, I look and feel just as messy as anyone else who is full of themselves. Left to have it all on my terms has often shown to be destructive. I've learned to trust Him in these difficult moments, knowing He only wants what's best for me.

Being a partner has taught me endurance and patience as I practiced leaning into the unknown and putting my trust in God. Not trusting in my Heavenly Father brought out the darkness that I didn't like about myself,

such as, *"I don't need anyone; I can do this on my own, I'm strong; you will never hurt me like this again, you will hurt too, you won't get away with this."* But I know, without a doubt, and choose to believe that He sees me and my heart. I know that only He can heal and transform me, and He is the ultimate comforter. Frederica Mathews-Green, quoted in Peter Scazzerro's book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Day by Day*, speaks to the transformation process in Christ: "God's presence in us is like the fire in the burning bush. It gradually takes us over so that although we remain fully ourselves, we remain the way God originally intended us to be . . . We never lose our identity, but we are filled with God like a sponge is filled with water."²

Even if we have different spiritual beliefs, I hope you do not dismiss my letter as another religious farce that leads to nowhere. I don't want you to miss out on something that could be helpful and life-changing in your healing and recovery journey. I don't claim to have any special gift or talent that changes lives, but ask yourself: *"How might my life change if I were transformed and experienced the freedom of becoming the man I am meant to be and not have addiction control me?"*

Before I go any further, *thank you*. I know that you may never get the full depth of your partner's pain, but the fact that you're reading my letter means something to someone somewhere and somehow. You will probably ask yourself, *"What could she know about what it's like for a man to have sexual integrity issues and go through the recovery process?"* As a woman, I can't know the full depth of what it's like for a man to walk through this journey. What I do know is that I've sat with men like yourself, who have been in deep despair, sobbing like children while wishing they could go back in time and change the past, feeling so bad about themselves for hurting their partners and themselves in the way they have. My hope is to come across both as a female therapist and as a friend that cares enough to share my heart in a letter to you. As a partner, I've been on the receiving end of a sexual integrity issue, and as a therapist, I've heard from all aspects of the pain that this addiction induces and have seen the path of destruction it takes on when given full reign. I know that my husband did not intentionally set out to hurt me, and, *if you're holding this book*, I think you might say the same in your situation. My hope is that what I share with you will be helpful from a woman's perspective, as well as a therapist's.

It is my pleasure to walk alongside you in this journey of *becoming*.



Chapter 1

A COMMITMENT TO RIGOROUS HONESTY

"Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead . . ." Philippians 3:13

The journey through your recovery process will have its ups and down. Most likely, you've not started the recovery process before, but if you have, it's still another opportunity for growth and working through some core issues. I will be giving you step by step directions for recovery. It will be like learning a new culture and language. Personal transformation is required in this new lifestyle. You'll make plenty of mistakes but remember mistakes are an invaluable lesson and an opportunity for growth. Mistakes can be our greatest teachers.

In 2002, I discovered my husband's secrets, lies, compulsive behaviors, and sexual integrity issues, which had been hidden for decades. I was devastated at the discovery. I had no clue, which speaks to how cunning and manipulative compulsive behaviors can be. He kept his secrets for over 30 years of our marriage. He had bouts of being in and out of his addictive behaviors. There were times when I knew something was off

with him. I would ask what was happening, and he would lie and deny any part of my suspicions. His lies made me think that I was crazy to even ask. I walked away from these conversations with him feeling confused and ashamed for asking.

There was no more confusion when I found pornography all over the computer, and yet, he swore up and down it wasn't him. This may sound familiar to you if you were caught in the scandal of lies. I was deeply hurt for both of us. For him—because he couldn't share his secrets with me and had held onto them for so long. And for myself, that I had been betrayed and lied to by the man I loved and trusted since I was sixteen years old. I was thankful that he had been found out and the truth was out. It was so daunting; how could I have not known? Was I that stupid that I could not have picked up on it? What other secrets were there? Were there more? Was I not good enough? I felt his remorse and wanted this to go away as much as he did. He couldn't deny it anymore. He came clean and admitted that he had been looking at pornography and lying to me about this issue for years. In a crazy way, it was a relief for both of us. Now we could begin to do the hard work of repairs over the months and years ahead of us. I was thankful for the way we would now talk for hours, exploring what was broken in him, myself, and our relationship. He wanted to understand why he would continue to do these things, knowing it was hurtful to me. He wanted to know more about the core issues that led to his coping mechanism of turning toward pornography.

Sexual addiction is different from other addictions. Drinking alcohol, for example, is socially acceptable; yet, it can also be an addiction, and many of us have a friend or family member who's had treatment for this. A *sex addiction* gets a bigger rap, since there are so many layers of it from pornography to child pornography, prostitution, love addiction, exhibitionism, voyeurism and much more. The fallout of a sex addiction, at its worst, is broken relationships, families torn apart, diseases, and sometimes prison time.

Early on I felt betrayed, abandoned, rejected, alone, and ashamed. I believed I could never be enough compared to the images my husband had examined up close and personal. It crushed my heart and spirit and made me think, "*What parts of him do I know and don't know?*" It's a hard reality that the more you love, the more it hurts, and the longer you love someone, the harder it is to get through the hurt and betrayal. My husband

was my first true love; there wasn't anything I wouldn't do for him. I was crazy in love with him. Discovery was a deep cut that reached far into the depths of my heart. *"How could he openly look into my eyes and lie to me?"* I needed time, empathy, understanding, and community with other women whose hearts had been broken, whose lives were torn asunder, and who were in shock: and emotionally fragile. My heart ached and felt like I had been through open heart surgery. I hurt and grieved the loss of the love I believed I knew and was afraid to open up again to a man who for so long could look me straight in the eye and lie.

Some of you might be thinking, *"All men look at pornography,"* or say, *"That's nothing; I've done a lot worse than that."* I get it; skin-to-skin sexual integrity issues are a whole different situation. My heart goes out to the many women whose husbands have been with prostitutes, visited massage parlors, had sex with minors, had sex with men, and much more.

Those realities are devastating and traumatizing for these women. Some leave their marriages, and others try hard to stay, forget, forgive, and move forward. But for many of the women that stay, there isn't a day she isn't reminded of her broken heart. Only time and support can heal and soften the intensity of the pain. However they do it, they move on as best as they can. But there is a scar that will last a lifetime and always hurt. Many will feel tainted no matter what they do. If they do leave, the past impacts their future relationships, making it hard to start over and trust again.

I am not minimizing the pain and trauma for the women whose husband's issues around sexual integrity are *just* pornography and masturbation. It all hurts. The underlying issues for each man going through this are similar, no matter how they are expressed. You will read about all kinds of sexual integrity issues and the impact on the heart, mind, and body in this letter. I want you to understand the trauma and the loss of the reality she once knew and how you can help her heal. We will also talk about shame, but it is important to know early on that when you are in a place of shame, it will only get in the way of helping her heal and the focus you need to work a healthy recovery program.

My work was affected; I thought that not only as a wife, but as a therapist, I should have seen this coming. How could I help anyone else when my marriage was suffering? What was wrong with me? And yet, I knew that his issue with pornography wasn't about me, and I refused to take any blame for that. I had not brought this into our marriage and knew nothing

of my husband's addiction before we were married. I knew of his early traumas and could certainly empathize with what it must have been like to be forced out of his childhood home. His dad was a wounded vet from World War II, unable to work, and had post-traumatic stress disorder. His mother worked her fingers to the bone raising a large family. There was emotional and physical abandonment by his dad. As a child, he would cry himself to sleep, longing for love and attention. Unfortunately, at a young age he found his dad's magazine stash; it filled the gap left by loneliness, boredom, and childhood wounds. These wounds will be discussed more in a later chapter.

The more we talked about our childhood losses and trauma, his actions started to make sense to me in a new and different way. I truly cared and felt sorry for the things he went through and the trauma he went through growing up. It didn't excuse his behavior but made a whole lot of sense as to why and how he turned to what he did. Pornography was comforting as a young boy, and it was an invitation to comfort in times of stress and feelings of abandonment as an adult. He is a man with many victories in his life. as a young boy he experienced the thrill of being a wrestling champion, winning all the meets. He got to compete at state but only remembers how lonely he felt getting off the bus alone and walking home in tears as he carried his trophy. No one was there to cheer him on or to celebrate him. Unfortunately, this story and the feelings of loneliness and abandonment are far too familiar to the hurting men and women that have found comfort in the lure of a sex addiction.

My husband was a junior in college studying civil engineering and I was nineteen when we got married. I put him through school while working as a hairstylist. We accepted Jesus as Lord of our lives soon after we were married. We both wanted to study the Bible, and together we enrolled in a Bible college for one year. We loved studying the word of God together. Dan continued his studies in Bible for another two years in the Chicago area while I was home with our babies, learning what it meant to be a Christian, a wife, a mother, and a Bible student.

The church expected Dan to take on leadership, but Bible college does not prepare you to teach Sunday School, lead a small group, work, do home projects, and be a husband and family man, *all at once*. While all that was going on I tended to our family and home. Life got difficult and exhausting for both of us. In doing good things for the church, we lost

sight of our vision and mission to grow in Christ and be more like Him. I'm not putting blame on the church for our setbacks. I wish we could have been strong enough to say no to some of the church related requests that took a lot of Dan's time away from his family. We needed that time to grow in the knowledge and principles of the word of God and raise our family. The stress of being overworked in all directions, physically and mentally, over time led to my husband's demise and fall back to his coping strategies with pornography. His addiction came with guilt and shame and kept him from showing up and being honest, while hiding the deepest parts of himself.

Helping Your Partner Heal

If you have just revealed your sexual integrity issues to your partner, she will be experiencing a deep grief and loss of a reality she thought she knew. Your partner needs all of you to be there for her—emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Because of the trauma inflicted in the aftermath of betrayal, you can't afford to miss an opportunity to help and make amends as quickly as possible. Later in the book, I will introduce you to an amends matrix, developed by Jason Martinkus in his book *Worthy of Her Trust*. It's a great read and a great way to make a thorough repair.

Your partner experiences trauma symptoms that disorient her and most men are not equipped to help regulate their partner's disoriented mind and dysregulated body, as well as understand how her body holds trauma and is easily triggered. Unfortunately, it's hard enough controlling and containing yourself when your partner is dysregulated. In most cases, it does not go well unless you take the time to help and understand yourself to understand her and her trauma symptoms.

In those early months of discovery, my husband was not able to be there for me like I needed him to be he went into the *shame tank* and had little to offer me in terms of support. Shame robs us of a fully equipped mind, body, and spiritual integration. This is true of most reactions when caught in lies and deception; the gut reaction is to move away because, as Curt Thompson said, shame is the "leveraging effect that anticipates abandonment."³

I am telling you these things because your partner desperately needs you to allow her to grieve and that includes sitting in the loss and trauma

with her. The many phases of grief include her anger and bargaining with herself to stay or leave. She is trying to make sense of her new reality. It's crazy-making for her; she has most likely not ever experienced a relational rupture in her adult life with a significant other. In the aftermath of this fracture, she needs to know that she's got control of something. She needs to know you can be there for her, grieve with her, cry with her, and know you won't minimize or shame her for having feelings and a reaction to her pain. She wants to know that you will do your best to build trust. Love her, be patient and kind, and humbly accept her and where she is at in her pain. In some of my worst moments, I said things to my husband I didn't know were in me and did things I never thought I would do. Most of us are not trained or prepared to know exactly what to do in moments like that. It's hard to see someone in the reaction of their trauma, especially when you know you're the cause of it. There isn't anything about this process that is easy. But believe me when I say she desperately wants to know that you can take the hits and face them head-on without running in the other direction. What she is saying is, *"Show me what you're made of—do you love me? Are you big enough to handle me now?"* But you can't do this part on your own; you can't be there for her in a helpful, loving, and empathic way without the help and support of others. It's an illusion to believe you don't need help. You may have kept secrets on your own, but you only need to look at where and how it landed to know it didn't work so well.

You need the companionship of mature brothers who have walked this path and a counselor who has expertise and training in sexual addiction and trauma. It is essential to have several close men who can hold you accountable. These would be men with whom you can trust your heart and thoughts. This, too, will take time; something many of us are uncomfortable with. It takes practice, patience, and rigorous honesty with yourself and the help of accountability partners.

Your partner also needs help and support, but it requires you to take the initiative. Although you are hurting and overcome by shame, you are the wounder, and she needs you to take up your armor and be a soldier willing to fight for her and the marriage. Please don't leave her on the battleground bleeding and wounded by herself. In Doug Weiss's DVD *Helping Her Heal*, he explains that many men's response to their partner's pain is like shooting her with an Uzi gun, and while she's on the ground bleeding, you're complaining about how you hurt your finger. Weiss states that until you understand the pain and trauma that you caused, she will

always desperately want to be understood. She wants you to know the pain she is in. Weiss says, "She needs you to stand under her and hold the weight of what she can barely hold."⁴ Getting caught is shameful and humbling, and those feelings can certainly be overwhelming. However, with practice, consider these times that are out of your comfort zone as an opportunity for growth and teachable moments. Tell her you are willing to learn and do what it takes to help her heal.

The marriages that have endured and grown through the pain and suffering in this process of healing and recovering are the ones that have gone deep into the depths of their own pain and emotional injuries. They have looked at why, when, where, and how the traumatized self was traumatized. Patrick Carnes states, from an ongoing project started in the '80s, that the likelihood of an abuse history while working with sex addicts was astounding. His findings show that 81% of sex addicts had experienced sexual abuse; 72% had experienced physical abuse; and 97% had experienced emotional abuse.⁵

I trust that you will choose to help yourself in order to help your partner. Many find it too difficult to stay in this battleground with their partners, especially while facing their own battles. *"I can't do enough for her; I'll never be what she wants or needs me to be; I can't stand to see her hurt so much."* But you can choose differently now than when you were in the throes of your addiction. You were not the man you are today, nor the man you are transforming into. The in-between work matters: you don't get to be the man who experiences freedom, change, love, and forgiveness without all the effort and exertion it takes to "become, it takes a long time, that's why it doesn't happen to people who break easily."⁶

It may be exhausting sometimes, but you are capable of the ongoing transformation that is required for radical change. Remember that change is step-by-step, and each step matters. Your efforts make a difference in the here and now as transformation occurs. Wherever you are in your process matters; turn those difficult moments around for a teachable, life-changing moment that matters in the long run.

It is difficult for some partners to stay; they are so afraid of getting hurt again. To open their hearts and believe you, trust you, and simultaneously wrap their minds around the discovery and disclosure. It can take months, years, and even more than that. It also can depend on whether she has had other traumas in her life around sex, abuse, and betrayal. Whether

she stays or not, do your own work, be the best you can be, and doing the work will change you inside and out.

I want to encourage you in your current state to know yourself, be a student of self, and be known to others as you integrate new and old discoveries in this incredible journey of *becoming*, embracing the pain of recovery, and helping her heal.

You Are Worthy of Forgiveness

I would like to say a word to the man reading this letter that has accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior; perhaps you never fully understood what that meant for you. Maybe you are curiously asking, "*Why would God forgive someone like me?*" Whoever you are, wherever you are in your walk with Him, Jesus took our sins and made us right before God as He hung on the cross. He gave us eternal life and made a covenant to take away our sins. "For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already . . . And I will forgive their wrongdoings, and I will never again remember their sins" (Hebrews 8:11-12).

We have all rebelled against God's word in one way or another. You matter to God; He has cleansed us of all unrighteousness and wants us to experience the grace He offers that sets us free from the bondage we carry. When we ask for forgiveness of our iniquities, He remembers them no more. You are forgiven! My prayer for you is that you live in the grace and knowledge of His word.

I am reminded of Joe, a friend of mine, who has a difficult time accepting that God loves him as he is, imperfect and flawed, as we all are. Joe struggles with forgiveness and will tell you that all he deserves are the crumbs that are dropped under the table. He thinks he is a wretched man for some of the things he has done. We were studying the Bible together, and he shared how he related to the Old Testament character Mephibosheth in the book of Samuel. When a shepherd boy named David, whom the prophet Nathan had prophesied would later become king of the Israelites, was anointed, the current king, Saul, was afraid. He tried in many ways to kill David, to avoid the prophecy from coming true. But Saul's son, Jonathan, was David's best friend. When Jonathan got wind of his father's schemes, he warned David and told him to flee for his life. These two young men had a covenant with each other.

Later, both Jonathan and Saul were killed fighting the Philistines at the battle of Mount Gilboa. Jonathan's young son, Mephibosheth, was taken into hiding to protect him from the incoming king, David. In the escape, Mephibosheth was injured and became lame in both feet.

But many years later, David remembered his friend's kindness and sought to honor Jonathan. He inquired about Jonathan's family: "Is anyone still alive from Saul's family? If so, I want to show kindness to them" (2 Samuel 9:3). When Mephibosheth was brought to David, the king, he bowed down in fear of him.

David said, "Don't be afraid! I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father Jonathan" (2 Samuel 9:7).

Mephibosheth couldn't hear this or take this in. He said, "Who is your servant, that you should show such kindness to a dead dog like me?" (vs. 8)

David welcomed Mephibosheth back to the royal court and gave him a place of honor, returning to him all the lands that had belonged to his grandfather Saul and providing servants to care for him.

I had never read this story before, and I was intrigued as to how Joe could say he only deserved the crumbs, since the end of the story ended with favor and royalty for Mephibosheth. Why couldn't he see that he deserved that same favor himself and live with the promise of redemption? Instead, he believed the lies he heard of himself as a child: "*You're no good; you'll never amount to anything, no one could love you, you're a failure.*" Throughout our adult lives many of us continue to believe the lies and hurtful messages we heard as children, and have a difficult time forgiving ourselves for things we have done; the lies are damaging and challenging to overcome.

When my friend Joe read the story Mephibosheth aloud (2 Samuel 9), he cried and truly believed he didn't deserve anything better. His wife gently put her hand on his arms and said, "*David the King invited him to his table and treated him as one of his sons; you don't have to eat the crumbs.*" That evening, as we gathered around our sweet friend, I pulled out a crown and robe I had in a costume pile, and we crowned our friend Joe with love. You, too, are robed in righteousness. You have been forgiven—no matter what you've done. He, our great God, is merciful and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Joe still struggles to grasp this truth; he has to remind himself that he has been forgiven and has a gracious God who wants him

to experience victory. We all deserve another opportunity to distinguish right from wrong and correct the wrong.

I've talked to men in tears with a repentant heart about the damage they've done, and the shame they feel about dishonoring their relationship with God, not knowing how to restore and rebuild what they believe is unforgivable. Don't let the evil one play havoc with your mind; all things and people are forgivable to God. If you can get to a place where you ask forgiveness of your sins, "He is faithful and just to cleanse . . . you from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Asking and accepting His forgiveness is essential in putting on the armor of God and fighting off the enemy. Acknowledging our sins and weaknesses is a first step, and as a Christian, I am thankful that I have personally experienced God's grace and forgiveness. Furthermore, I am better equipped to be there for others. "He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us." (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Let's meet Bob for a moment: Bob's sexual integrity issues were hidden for many years and the pain he caused his wife through "sexual sin" and lies was a lot for her to process. He came to therapy in search of answers, healing, and a path to forgiveness. As he began to heal, Bob also began to understand what it means to be aligned to God's will, experience remorse and seek forgiveness, and then accept forgiveness for himself. In a letter to his wife, Bob laid out a heartfelt apology:

*"I am sorry that I broke your trust and broke our marriage vows to you by having these relationships. I am truly sorry that I did not focus my attention on you, our marriage, and our family as much as I should have because of these relationships."*⁷

Bob's letter continued to outline the shame he feels for his behaviors and the regret he has for breaking his partner's trust and their marital vows. He also acknowledges the progress he's made in healing and his hopes to align his life with God's will and to lean into biblical guidance: "I have focused hard on being the man God wants me to be. I have committed to God to be the man He wants me to be." Bob took a long, hard look at the condition of his heart. He was filled with shame for his "disgusting and degrading behaviors." He understood that when you don't follow through on a promise to God, your spouse, and yourself, there is a break, a disunity,

and a disconnection from your heart to God's heart. God takes joy when we acknowledge our sins, because "He is faithful . . . to forgive us and cleanse us" (1 John 1:9).

I so appreciate how Bob owned up to his indiscretions: *"While I lied to myself, suggesting it is natural and part of being a man to act out, I have known it was wrong, which is why I feel so ashamed. I know my behaviors are not aligned with God's will for me."* It's between you and God to make it right. As a Christian, I understand I can do nothing to earn His merit. Jesus paid the price at the cross for my sins, and only when I get to a place where I am understanding what my sinful behaviors mean to Him, and hurtful to myself and others, can I truly ask for His forgiveness. He cleanses me from all unrighteousness. The cleansing process is meant to teach us to do what is right.

"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I treat and see each man who walks into my office respectfully, as a human who deserves the right to heal, gather information, and make choices for himself. I will walk you through the protocol of what it looks like to disclose your story, learn how to love yourself, love the significant people in your life, address your hurts and abuse, and learn the trauma model to help her heal in the aftermath of your sexual integrity issues.

If you are on board, hang in there. I want to help you heal as much as I want to help you help her heal. I want you to be successful, as you both deserve it!

Understanding Her Pain

The women I work with desperately want their men to feel their pain and take it away. Some of the men in my couple's groups say things such as, *"I wish I had known this stuff; it could have made such a difference from the get-go of our recovery and healing process."* Your partner matters, and what you say and do matters now and in the future.

When your wife discovered your sexual integrity issues, she was blindsided in all directions. It felt to her like an 18-wheeler had run over her. She could barely breathe and catch her breath. The discovery of your indiscretions put her in shock, bleeding out, wounded emotionally, physically, and spiritually. She needed and still needs you to be there to help put her back together from the shock and trauma of discovery. She needs you to shield her from the shattered memories of the past, lies, secrets and deceit you kept from her. She wanted to wake up and believe this was a bad dream. At the same time, she doesn't want to wake up from the aftermath of the sharp shards that remind her of the pain she is in.

After feeling enough guilt and shame over his addiction, Mark walked into the kitchen and suddenly disclosed to his wife Janna that he had been with prostitutes and going to strip clubs and massage parlors. Out of desperation from the guilt and shame, and wanting to end his life, he called a treatment center and left for help. He left and Janna was there gasping for air on the floor where she had collapsed. Broken beyond measure, she lay there in a fetal position throughout the night, unable to move or sleep.

Mark had gone for help and left no information for any contact. She had no clue where he was or how long he would be gone. She was in shock and suffered severely from the trauma of her new reality. It made no sense to her as she tried to grasp what had happened. She managed to find me online, and we set up an appointment as soon as possible. I kept her on the phone as long as possible while reviewing some basic details for her safety, yet she could barely take in what I was saying. Janna was hardly able to slow down and breathe. *"Just one at a time, just one breath at a time,"* I was saying, as she was hyperventilating telling me her story.

I called a sweet sister and partner to invite Janna to a fellowship of partners who had walked down a similar path. I would see Janna at her worst, shaking, sobbing, and barely able to say anything through her tears. She repeated, *"What am I going to do? I can't eat or sleep, and I have a child to take care of,"* as she rocked back and forth.

Her husband did the right thing by getting help. He knew he could not continue with the level of betrayal and addiction that led from one prostitute to another. But he was not able to face the agony that he was about to see his wife go through as he disclosed more of his indiscretions. It was cowardly; he shrunk in the face of devastation and the challenge of helping

her heal. Very few men disclose on their own, as he did; he deserves credit for that. He eventually returned from the treatment center three months later. There was minimal contact with him while he was at the center.

The repair was extremely difficult, as you can imagine, with all the trauma that comes from abandonment, along with leaving her to pick up all the pieces left undone and putting her in a position to do the clean-up on her own. While Mark was convicted of what he had done and committed to getting help, he had too much guilt and shame to honor his marital covenant at that time. He did not stay to help Janna through the early discovery stages. She needed safety and security, help with chores, family and work, and someone to take over while she got support and counseling. When you take ownership and start the road to recovery, you make a statement to honor yourself and your partner's pain. You are saying, *"I did this. I caused your broken heart, I betrayed you, and I take full responsibility for what I've done. I will do whatever is needed and possible on my behalf to be the husband I should have been to you."*

In the book *The Cry of the Soul*, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman capture the essence of how dealing with our emotions in these hard circumstances can lead us to God: "Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality; listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And the fact is where we meet God. Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice . . . We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God."⁸

Five years after finding evidence of Tony's betrayals, Suzanne reports that if Tony had not been able to endure some of her most challenging moments, she would not have stayed. This couple went through the process of rigorous honesty and speaking the truth in love, even when it hurt. Suzanne was in so much emotional pain that she could barely exist. She would fall on the floor into a fetal position. Tony and I would get her on the couch in my office, and I would do touch therapy while teaching him how to help her be in the here and now—a place she didn't want to be because her new reality was so painful. I would gently put both hands on her temples and move my hands around to her shoulders and hands. I constantly checked in with her, asking if she was all right with the touch. If you try this and have a partner who does not want you to touch her, be respectful; ask if there's anything you can do, bring her some ice, and stay nearby. Please don't go away; she wants you to know how much she's

hurting. Not all partners experience the trauma as Suzanne did but can probably relate to her experience. It is her new reality and yours as well. Stay, don't run. You need to stay present, and work at getting better at that; don't allow shame to take over and shut you down.

Giving in to shame will only keep the pretense and the mask on. It will hold you to the dark side that prevents your genuine, authentic self from helping her heal. If that's the case, you're setting yourself up for more failures and losses. Just look at the destruction you've already experienced in your life. If you refuse to do the work, you will remain trapped as a prisoner held in bondage to lies and deceit. You must be rigorously honest with yourself, God, and your partner. Honesty is a building block that ensures a foundation for acceptance and loving yourself and others. You now have the freedom to be free from the grips of shame. You are allowing yourself the experience of redemption in exchange for the agony of what evil wants to destroy in you. Rediscovering who you are without the wide range of setbacks while overcoming addiction is freedom and peace worth fighting for.

This doesn't mean your partner will notice, acknowledge or give you kudos for all your efforts. You can't expect to be praised or acknowledged for doing the right thing; if that's what you're looking for, you will be disappointed and defeated. The new behaviors you are putting on and the way you manage your life now is what she expected from you when she committed to being in a relationship with you.

She will consistently hurt. This kind of pain doesn't go away on its own, and she has mending and work to do as well. Think of this as a medical emergency. She's had open-heart surgery. Be patient; she's recovering. Throw your expectations out the door. I have heard way too many times, *"Why isn't she further along?"* She needs time and patience. Give her the time she needs. She so wishes she could feel the freedom you have from the sexual integrity issues, if you are no longer acting out. But that sense of freedom cannot be rushed.

The intensity of the pain subsides as she gets stronger and more courageous in her healing process. The frequency of the triggers that throw her back into the trauma slows down in due time. And in due time she notices and says: *"Hey, it's been a few days that I have not dwelt on his infidelities or thought about what my husband has done with other women."* That is a great victory for her. Also, her discovery is still fresh compared to the time

you spent acting out, and she is now just discovering it. Be patient and endure with love and kindness; it will grow you.

Transformation is a genuine conversion of the old you into the man you were meant to be.

“That means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone, a new life has begun! And all this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting men’s sins against them.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-19

Your First Task: Find a Group

One of the first assignments I give to the men I work with is to find a group where you can get support to start and stay on the path of recovery. It’s so crucial to your healing to have the feeling of belonging to a brotherhood. You need a safe place to be with like-minded men who want to have a change of heart. The men standing in the battleground, who are faithful and honest with their partners in their recovery process, experience personal and relational success. They are men who can be trusted: dependable and predictable. They are men who are working on loving themselves and learning how to love their wives—men who encourage one another to stay on the right and narrow path; men who own and take this *becoming* seriously are living a shame-free life and are experiencing success.

You can turn your life around with the help of a team there to cheer you on in the good times and sit with you in moments of despair. The team is there to help you stay grounded and press on to the values and principles that align with your heart. The team is not there to keep you in defensiveness, denial, or blame. I love the stories I hear about calling each other out of the darkness and into the light.

Some men aren’t ready to start their recovery journey. John would show up at his recovery group, reporting over and over that he had lost his sobriety, all the while not paying attention to the group’s advice for a different path. I, too, as his counselor, had been giving him the same advice: *“John,*

driving to work would be better than taking the train," I would say, *"It's too easy for you to fall back into your addiction."* John's issue was frotteurism; he would excitedly scan the train car for the pretty women and sit right up close enough to touch her legs or hips.

The group finally asked him to leave since their own sobriety was in jeopardy. They were triggered by his behavior, and it wasn't easy to hear John's story week after week, putting them in a position where their own fantasies could easily be set off. The group asked him to leave and come back when he was ready to commit to his sobriety and work his program.

Unfortunately, I also made the difficult decision to let him go as a client. Until he was ready to commit to the work it takes to be sober, it wasn't fair to the brothers, and I thought it was a waste of his time and his money to show up each week for counseling without the effort to work on his recovery and underlying issues.

In contrast to John, Ben was guarded, unaware of his emotions and vulnerabilities, and an extreme people pleaser. His dad wanted him to follow in his older brother's footsteps, choose a career that supports a family, and play it safe. This led to an upper management job after his college career. However, while he was in college, he partied hard, binge drank, and developed a pornography addiction. He married Felicia, and these behaviors were well hidden. Years later, when he got caught, Felicia discovered his stash in a hidden corner of the closet, and he was forced to tell her about his addiction to pornography. Over time, Ben's recovery program took on a new and personal meaning. Ben would say, *"I don't know how I got here; I come from a good family; my parents did a good job raising all of us kids."*

We delved into his family of origin wounds and the repeated patterns that kept him from understanding how *"playing it safe"* kept him from being true to himself. Telling others what he thought they wanted to hear and doing what they expected of him cost him a lot of losses by not being his true self. His pornography addiction was a coping mechanism that took him into a fantasy world and the illusion of having control of his life. He missed out on his true dream of being an artist, which could have had great potential for him. He wasn't practiced at making decisions independently; it was easier and not so risky to do what others thought he should do. If things didn't turn out as he hoped, he could secretly blame others and not own up to his flaws and lack of ownership. It wasn't until

Ben made the effort to be known to himself and the brotherhood that his recovery work started to matter from a change of heart. He admitted to himself and others his weaknesses and failures and made a point to remember his intentions to be true to himself.

Don't Give Up; Keep Going

You know you are moving in the right direction when there is something, even a small part, inside of you that is motivating you to do the right thing. For this, I commend you. Stick to the task, don't stray, and you will get to a place of healing in due time. Some experts say it takes up to five years to recover; focus on one step at a time. Don't compare yourself to others. You don't start this journey and arrive in five years. You are moving towards healing; while the pendulum goes back and forth, signs of progress and setbacks converge to the energy, wisdom, knowledge, and good sense needed for a deeper understanding and growth of oneself. Press on.

A verse to memorize—to help you get through moments of defeat:

"We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but we are not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies."

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

Your partner will see changed behaviors when you're constantly and consistently working on your program. This effort also translates into a trust that you are rebuilding with her; even if she doesn't notice the change of heart and behaviors and you don't hear her affirmation, do not give up on yourself or the hope of restoration. She will sense any lies, deceit, or manipulation. She has an even stronger sense of intuition now. She wants to believe you and hopes that this glorious light and power given to you by God will lead you and you won't give up and quit. We are called to live by the spirit of the living God.

Remember the words that Paul wrote to the Galatians:

“So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so that you are not free to carry out your good intentions. But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.” Galatians 5:16-21

God’s word is clear, giving us direction and the course of our lives. Living according to God’s plan, I believe, makes us much better human beings in all aspects of our lives.

You have a lot going on in your recovery, and relationally, you must know without a shadow of a doubt that rigorous honesty and empathy will help her heal. A vision for recovery and healing pursues a healthy, sober future as you navigate what you need to make empowering choices. Abandoning old behaviors and thoughts by replacing them with a new heart, renewed self, and new relationships will lead to the development of the committed true self.

QUESTION FOR YOUR HEART

Are you willing to commit to your recovery process? How might it make a difference for you?

About the Author



Françoise is known among her friends and clients for her compassion, listening skills, directness, fearlessness, wisdom and spiritual support. She spent years volunteering in community-based organizations as a counselor with Care Net Pregnancy Services, and local health department.

With her children launched, Françoise professionalized her skills and added to her life experience a Master of Science in Human Services Counseling from National Louis University. She attained licensure as a licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC), and has added many other certifications, including working

as a sexual addiction specialist, working with partners, somatic work, hypnotherapy, and other specialties to better equip, help, and treat her clients. Françoise has taught college-level courses related to her field and authored *Spouses of Sex Addicts: Hope for the Journey Workbook*.

In 2004 Françoise launched a private practice, New Reflections Clinical Services, specializing in alcohol/substance abuse, sexual addiction, body work and trauma. Individuals and couples have traveled distances to work with Françoise, and she continues to engage with compassion, wisdom and a deep understanding of God's design for human sexuality and marriage. These qualities and experiences have positioned Françoise to write this book with prayers that it will indeed provide hope and healing in some of the most powerful and deepest areas of life.

In her leisure time, Françoise enjoys painting furniture, hiking, cooking, spending time with family and friends, traveling, and reading.