

What Does “Protecting Yourself” Mean?

Protecting yourself is important so that you don't return to making poor choices that bring heartache and pain. Being purposeful about protecting yourself is the only way to do this. Let's look at this in steps.

Step 1 *Have an accountability partner.* It's easy to fall back into old patterns, so find a person whom you can talk to and who will ask you the hard questions. The addictions that are involved in sexuality, pornography, and dating are deep to the core, and you need someone to encourage and hold you accountable .

Step 2 *Next, you have to take steps to remove yourself from the place in which you are tempted.* If pornography is your issue, then set up filters on the internet to prevent you from accessing those sites, or make a rule never to browse the internet while alone. If relationships are your weakness, then remove yourself from the dating scene until you are stronger. If you struggle with loneliness, then keep off of dating apps that deepen your feelings of loneliness.

Step 3 *Get healthy.* If you're unhealthy, you are only going to attract someone who is unhealthy too. So, *the most important thing you can do is to get healthy yourself.* Spend the time you need getting healthy, working on you, getting your act together, and working on your character. Then slowly reintroduce yourself back into the concept of relationships and dating.

Step 4 *Guard yourself.* The other thing I'm going to suggest that you do is to guard your heart, guard your eyes, guard your mind, and guard your body. Don't allow yourself to get into situations that can tempt or hurt you. Also, if you're dating someone whom you have not met in person whom you don't know, and no one knows about the relationship, please, please, please never meet them in a private, secluded place. Always meet them in a very public place, and always let everyone know the details, such as where you're going, whom you're meeting, and when you're expected back. Also consider taking someone else with you on your dates until you know the person you're dating really well. And never agree to meet up alone with someone you've been talking to online, ever.

Step 5 *Share your boundaries.* Share your values with whomever you're talking to or beginning to date. Do it from the very beginning. Have an open, honest conversation about:

- What your boundaries are
- What your intentions are
- What you value
- The respect you expect to get from them
- What you intend to give them

If it is too hard for you to have a mature conversation about where your boundaries are, about what your values are, about what you expect out of relationships, of how you expect to be treated in a relationship, *then you're not ready to be in a relationship.*

The Payoff

“Do all of these things, and the reward at the end of this, if you will do this, what you get in return when it comes to being healthy yourself and having healthy relationships, is far worth every bit of pain, tears, and struggle that you'll have to go through to do this right.” *Pam Stenzel*