



FREEDOM FROM **SEX ADDICTION**

— A Self-Help Workbook —

ITC
IMPULSE
TREATMENT
CENTER

Freedom from Sex Addiction

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Introduction

This workbook is designed to answer your questions about what is commonly known as “sex addiction” and to provide you with a roadmap if you are considering a journey towards change.

The change journey starts with (1) learning what sex addiction is and isn't; (2) identifying your sexual thoughts/urges/behaviors, where they come from and what triggers them; and (3) understanding how these thoughts/urges/behaviors around sex may have become a problem in your life.

Your journey starts with this workbook but this workbook alone may not be enough to create permanent, satisfying change. Addiction is an intimacy disorder, distorting or disrupting relationships. You may eventually find you need help to deal with relationships – help that includes individual therapy, group therapy, and/or a support group to aid you in recognizing what prevents you from feeling connected to yourself and others.

Recovery from sex addiction may begin with stopping impulsive, compulsive or destructive sexual or romantic patterns of behavior, but it doesn't end there. No one can live a life based on deprivation. True recovery is based on getting what you really want – the good feelings about yourself and your place in the world -- that addiction only momentarily supplies (and at great personal cost).

We are interested in hearing from you on your journey, wherever it takes you. Please let us know how this workbook helped (or could be more helpful) by calling us at 925.280.6700 or emailing us at impulsecenter@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

The Staff at Impulse Treatment Center

CHAPTER 1

What is Sex Addiction?



Sex addiction is often viewed as an illness that shares many qualities with alcoholism and chemical dependency. Over time, sex addicts lose control over their behavior. More and more stimulation is needed to achieve the same results. Risks mount and so do consequences. Oftentimes the addictive nature of the behavior is not noticed until the addict tries to stop or limit the substance or behavior in some way.

Sex addiction can take many forms: compulsive masturbation, compulsive use of pornography, compulsive anonymous sex or serial affairs, exhibitionism, voyeurism, frotturism (non-consensual touching/rubbing), incest and rape.

What are signs and symptoms of sex addiction?

Sex Addicts Often....

- Live secret lives steeped in lies and shame
- Pursue sexual interests obsessively, despite personal and financial risks
- Use sex to relieve or escape anxiety
- Find it hard to connect feelings of intimacy with sexual behaviors
- Violate their own ethical, moral and professional principles

Other signs you may notice over time

- Loss of control of sexual impulses
- Loss of discrimination toward sex objects or partners
- Preoccupation with the search for sexual outlets
- Increased sex drive that is neither emotionally satisfying nor pleasurable
- Ritualization resulting in a trance-like state, oblivious to negative consequences

What is the difference between a sex addict and a person with a high libido?

People with high libidos may enjoy sex frequently and in a variety of different ways. They do not hide their need for these frequent sexual encounters. They do not make promises of fidelity knowing they do not intend to keep them. They do not have secret email accounts or post their pictures on dating websites as “single and available” when they are not. They do not lie to the people they love about what they do with their free time or expose them to STDs. They do not go without food, sleep or medical care, take financial or legal risks to engage in sex.

After reading the previous pages, list any concerns you may have about your own sexual thoughts/urges/behaviors:

.....

.....

.....

.....

CHAPTER 2

Do you have a problem?

Only you can decide if your sexual thoughts/urges/ behaviors are out of control (although your spouse, friends or employers may have strong feelings about this as well). Start with the following screening questions to help you gain a clearer understanding of whether or not you have a problem:

Do you ever.....	
Become irritable if sex is not available?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Believe that sex is your most important need?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Keep secrets around buying pornography and/or visiting adult websites?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Struggle with others telling you "All you think about is sex!"	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Spend excessive time planning for or engaging in sexual behaviors?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Lie to get sex?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Put yourself and others at risk by engaging in unsafe sex?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Need to be sexual with strangers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Lie to cover up sexual acts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Feel at times that your sexuality is out of control?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Swear off certain sexual behaviors but then find yourself repeating the behavior anyway	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Worry that your secret life might be revealed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

If you answer "Yes" to three or more of these questions, your sexual expression may be out of control and have the potential to cause you (and your family) harm.

Consequences Inventory

To understand how your sexual behavior may be affecting you, it is also helpful to evaluate the consequences of the choices you have made around sex. These consequences may be positive as well as negative. Take a moment to fill in the following inventory around different areas of your life.

Area Impacted:	Positive Consequences	Negative Consequences
Physical Health
Emotional Health
Self-Esteem (How I Feel About Myself)
Relationship (Partner)
Relationship (Family)
Professional
Finances
Legal

What is happening to me when I am triggered into sexual thoughts/ urges/behaviors?

Sex addicts may react automatically or impulsively to situations in their life and be unaware of their arousal patterns and responses.

Look back at your last three sexual experiences and fill in the chart below to gain a better understanding of what is happening to you.

	Where/When/ What	Feelings Before	Thoughts Before/During	Feelings After	Time/Money Involved
<i>Example:</i>	Looked at porn while working at office	Bored, discouraged, like a failure	Curious, excited, entertained	Numb, non-productive	2 hours, maybe more. Free this time.
1.					
2.					
3.					

It may be helpful and instructive to use this chart, or one like it, to track your behavior over a week or longer. Then take a look at your chart and evaluate the following:

1. What patterns do I notice:

.....

.....

2. Do the risks and consequences balance out the gains?

.....

.....

CHAPTER 3

Is There a Solution?



The desire to change is a powerful force. You do not have to live forever with the consequences of compulsive/ impulsive sexual thoughts, urges and behaviors.

Research has shown there are five stages to the change process. If you have successfully used this workbook to this point, you have already moved through the pre-contemplation and contemplation stages and are about to enter Stage 3 — the preparation stage — where you prepare to make an actual change.

In preparation, it is helpful to create a goal. Do you want to stop all sexual behavior? Stop only specific behaviors? Limit some or all? Gain control of your fantasies? What are your choices?

A. Stopping all sexual behavior

Stopping all sexual behavior can be a helpful initial goal. It can give you time and space to see what feelings emerge and to calm your inner world. It can give you a chance to get to know yourself and your needs (aside from your sexual needs).

It is important to realize that, as an addiction, sex is more similar to food than to alcohol or drugs. We can learn to live without alcohol or drugs, but the need to eat and express ourselves as sexual beings cannot be permanently eliminated without dire consequences.

When making changes in these arenas we have to find some way to discern what behaviors are healthy for us, and what are not. If you are going to have stopping all sexual behavior as your initial goal, we recommend a trial period of 30 days.

B. Stopping specific behaviors

In creating a recovery plan that includes stopping specific behaviors, it is helpful to be able to go back to your consequences inventory and review which behaviors caused the most negative consequences. If you have been arrested for soliciting prostitutes and your partner is threatening to leave you because of it, this may be a behavior you want to stop. Other behaviors, such as looking at online porn, may not have carried as many consequences. You may want to leave that alone for a while, at least until you have a chance to see how the change process is working for you.

C. Limiting sexual behavior

The Four Circles is adapted from a process developed by Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) to help limit sexual behavior in a way that feels “sober.” Behaviors are organized according to whether they are addictive (inner circle), healthy (outer circle) or somewhere in between (middle circle). A fourth circle, containing feelings, sits between the outer and middle circles (see diagram on page 9).

It's not always easy to tell if something should be in the inner circle or not. Typically, inner circle behaviors are those that:

1. You can't stop when you want to
2. You keep secret
3. Would have negative consequences in your life if revealed
4. You use to numb yourself from difficult feelings
5. Lack real intimacy or respect for others or yourself

Set Your Goal

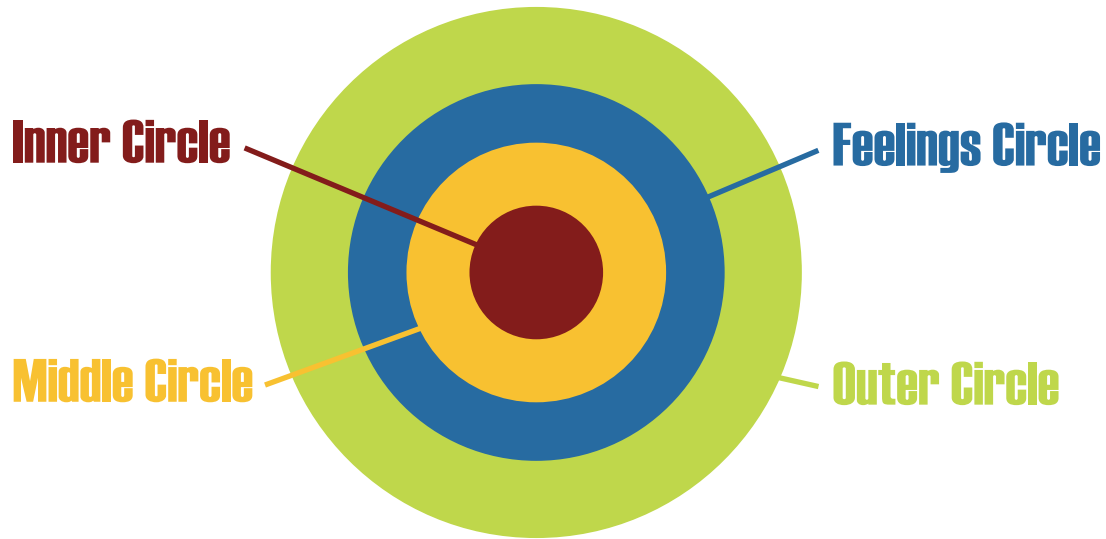
Choose one of the options below as your goal by marking it, dating it and signing your name. This will act as your personal contract with yourself to help you focus on your commitment to change.

1. Complete abstinence for (length of time), OR

2. Stopping specific behaviors

• Types of sexual behavior allowed:

• Types of sexual behavior NOT allowed: , OR



2. Limiting Sexual Behaviors/Four Circles (concept adapted from Sex Addicts Anonymous, www.sexaa.org)

Inner Circle (Red) — Compulsive (List):

.....
.....
.....

Middle Circle (Yellow) — Questionable behaviors that cause me much less of a problem but should be watched. These are behaviors that may lead me back to my inner circle (List):

.....
.....
.....

Feelings Circle (Blue) — Feelings that move me towards middle and inner circle behaviors. (For help with making a feelings list, see Appendix):

.....
.....
.....

Outer Circle (Green) — Things I do to enhance my life, that keep me engaged with others and in reality. (List):

.....
.....
.....

Dated:

Signed:

CHAPTER 4

Staying Stopped



There is an old adage in the recovery community:

Stopping is not the problem. The problem is staying stopped.

This adage applies to sex addiction as well as any other. Why is it so hard to stay stopped? The answer is triggers, both internal (unexpected, unwanted thoughts and feelings we carry within us) and external (people, places and things over which we have little control).

Some examples of internal triggers include:

- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of overwhelm
- Anger or anxiety
- Disappointment/Expectations about yourself
- Disappointment/Expectations about someone else
- Boredom and restlessness
- Feelings of deprivation/envy
- Need for revenge

Sexual thoughts, urges or behaviors are frequently a way to escape these kinds of feelings. Describe one or more recent situations where internal triggers provoked sexual thoughts, urges or behaviors.

Situation	How I felt	Thoughts/Urges/Behavior

Some examples of external triggers include:

- A sexually explicit scene in a movie
- Passing a street where a hookup took place
- Any reason to be on Craigslist
- An evening at home alone with no one watching and nothing to do
- Sitting at a bar
- Noticing an attractive individual

Describe a recent event where you experienced, saw or heard something that triggered sexual thoughts, urges or behaviors.

Triggering Experience	Thoughts/Urges/Behavior

The ability to identify and manage triggers is the key to staying stopped from sex addiction. Each time you are able to avoid acting on your triggered thoughts and feelings, you gather strength for the next time. Just because you have a sexual impulse does not mean you have to act on it. With practice, your impulses will weaken.

Here are some of the ways sex addicts learn to manage sexual impulses and urges:

1. **Know Your Triggers** — Knowing what feelings and situations typically trigger you is one of the primary ways to support change. Awareness of a potential trigger that lies ahead can help you plan ways to take care of yourself and stay committed to your recovery goal (see chapter 5).
2. **Postpone, Postpone, Postpone** — If you can postpone acting on your sexual thoughts or urges for a period of time – anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour or longer – the impulse will often pass. It is helpful to have a list of things you can do to postpone taking action on triggered feelings.

Imagine what your list of postponing behaviors might look like:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

3. **Get Some Support** — It also helps to talk to someone who won't judge, like a friend or family member who struggles with their own problems. A 12-Step program is another place to get support, including telephone numbers to call when you feel the urge to act on a trigger. You can also ask other members how they deal with triggers.

Who can you talk to when triggers come up?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

4. **Carry a List of Consequences** — Carry a list of consequences of your old acting out behavior in your wallet or some other easy-to-reach place. Make sure the list contains all the consequences you have already suffered in the past, as well as the consequences that await you in the future.

Reading the list not only provides a sobering reminder of what is at stake if you act on your impulses/urges, it also provides an interruption to the automatic response system and perhaps a reminder to do something different this time.

Dealing with Denial

Addicts commonly use various forms for denial to bolster their desire to act on triggers. Especially useful forms of denial include **justification**, **minimization** and **blame**. Put a check-mark by the forms of denial that get in your way of clear thinking:

- I work hard, I'm entitled.
- Just one time won't hurt anyone.
- No one will ever know.
- I can control this.
- But it makes me feel so much better.
- She/he made me do it.
- It's a simple release of tension.
- It's no big deal.
- Nobody's perfect.
- I can't stand being bored.
- Nothing is ever going to change so I might as well.
- I'll start over again tomorrow.
- Since I'm powerless, I might as well.
- Other:



Your friends or therapist may be helpful in identifying additional patterns of denial that have escaped your attention. Ask them for feedback and list it here:

.....

.....

.....

Recognizing your triggers and denial patterns are the first step in denial management.

Replacing unhealthy behaviors (with their negative consequences) with new habits that actually get you what you want, is the next step toward stabilizing recovery.

CHAPTER 5

Creating Lasting Change



Identifying Avoidance

Addiction is often used as a way to avoid painful feelings like shame, guilt, fear, or helplessness. Addiction also helps us avoid painful realities (a lost job, an angry spouse) and needs that we are sure will never be met.

Even some of the negative consequences caused by your addiction can function as a distraction from your painful feelings, needs or the realities of life.

Spend some time listing feelings/needs/realities you were avoiding with your addiction and the results:

I avoided

Results of avoiding:

I avoided

Results of avoiding:

I avoided

Results of avoiding:

Avoidance is sometimes a good choice for self-care, as in the case of avoiding old acting-out locations or triggers. However when avoidance is the **ONLY** coping tool in your toolbox, it becomes a serious problem.

Healthy coping is active – it’s about trying new things. Unhealthy coping is passive – it’s waiting, killing time, mindless activity. Recovery from sex addiction often starts by developing healthier avoiding strategies but keep in mind that you are still avoiding and avoiding often leads to more avoiding and eventual relapse.

Healthier Avoiding Strategies that have worked for other sex addicts include the following. Check off strategies that might work for you or add your own (remember, you need more than one!):

- Watching television
- Reading
- Working longer hours
- Getting a second job
- Cleaning/organizing
- Playing video games
- Going to church
- Attending a support group
- Playing Internet games
- Other:

Healthy Coping Strategies offer new ways to identify and deal with feelings, needs and painful realities. They entail a risk, but a fairly small one. After all, you have identified the considerable risks involved with your sexual acting out behaviors. Check off strategies that might work for you, then add some more ideas of your own to the list:

- Tell the truth to a therapist or sponsor
- Let yourself feel
- Talk to your friends about your feelings
- Learn how others cope with feelings
- Write in a journal
- Keep a gratitude list
- Start exercising regularly
- Practice calming rituals like yoga or meditation
- Attend 12-Step meetings for sex addiction (SAA or SLAA)
- Get assessed for depression or anxiety
- Take more time to relax
- Develop new interests or hobbies
- Volunteer helping others
- Other:
- Other:
- Other:

Remember to H.A.L.T.

H.A.L.T. is an easy way to remember to never get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. Decades of recovering individuals have demonstrated that these are the issues that increase the risk of relapse.

When you forget to H.A.L.T., clear thinking becomes muddled and old addictive behaviors suddenly look like reasonable ways to take care of yourself. Why make your recovery harder than it has to be? Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired is the time to remember you are especially vulnerable to old ways of coping, and need to pay special attention to your self care.

Self-Acceptance and Forgiveness

What holds denial so firmly in place for many addicts is the overwhelming shame and guilt that emerges once the full impact of their behavior is acknowledged. Self-acceptance and forgiveness are crucial if the addict is to move into a full and active recovery. Self-hate doesn't motivate us towards positive change, it only fuels the addictive impulse.

The first step in self-acceptance and forgiveness is to be able to say you no longer act on your sexual impulses/urges/fantasies, and the ability to demonstrate to yourself, your family and friends, that you have begun an active journey of change. Notice the word "demonstrate" rather than "promise." Active addiction is full of promises. The change process is about demonstrating new behavior: "walking the walk" rather than "talking the talk."

Being in contact with other recovering sex addicts is an important part of building self-acceptance and forgiveness. Hearing others struggle to understand their addiction and make sense of their lives often helps us to start making sense of our own.

What am I doing to demonstrate self-acceptance and forgiveness for myself:

.....

.....

.....

Is there anything else I might be willing to try?

.....

.....

.....

Dealing with Slips

It is important to remember that addiction is a highly relapsable disorder. For many addicts, slips – a full or partial return to old acting out behavior – seem to be a part of recovery. If attended to openly and honestly, slips can tell you what part of your recovery process needs to be strengthened. Perhaps you have become too isolated, or have feelings you didn't realize you were still avoiding. Perhaps you had "reservations," a portion of your addiction that you failed to identify so that you could hold it in reserve.

Slips are a sign of failure only if you refuse to learn from them.

For every slip, ask yourself "What could I have done differently?" Talk to your support people and make a plan.

Remember, recovery is a journey, not a destination. By taking the time to go through this workbook, you have made an important start.



CHAPTER 6

Resources that Support Lasting Change

As stated in the Introduction, this workbook alone may not be enough to create permanent, satisfying change. If you have done the exercises and tried some of the techniques listed here and are still struggling, then you may need additional help. Here are some resources that support lasting change:

Books

Sex Addiction 101: A Basic Guide to Healing from Sex, Porn and Love Addiction (2013) Robert Weiss, LCSW

Cruise Control: Understanding Sex Addiction in Gay Men (2013) Robert Weiss, LCSW

Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction (2001) Patrick Carnes, Ph.D.

Lonely All the Time (1998) Ralph Earle & Gregory Crow

Untangling the Web: Sex, Porn and Fantasy Obsession in the Internet Age (2006) Weiss/Schneider

The Porn Trap (2009) Wendy Maltz and Larry Maltz

Male Sexuality: Why Women Don't Understand It-And Men Don't Either (2010) Michael Bader

No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Shame (2002) Marnie Ferree

Women, Sex and Addiction (1989) Charlotte Kasl

Facing Love Addiction (2003) Pia Mellody

Ready to Heal: Women Facing Sex, Love and Relationship Addiction (2008) Kelly McDaniels

Naked in Public: a Memoir of Recovery from Sex Addiction and Other Temporary Insanities (2015) Stacy Sprout

12-Step Resources

SAA (Sex Addicts Anonymous) www.sexaa.org

SA (Sexaholics Anonymous) www.sa.org

SLAA (Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous) www.slaafws.org

Sex Addiction Treatment

Impulse Treatment Center www.impulsetreatmentcenter.com

Northern California's oldest and largest outpatient treatment center

Society for Advancement of Sexual Health (SASH) www.sash.net

National organization of professionals working with sex addiction, includes referral base and research/articles

The Meadows www.themeadows.org

Inpatient Sex Addiction Treatment Center in Wickenburg, Arizona connected to Pia Melody, Claudia Black, Terrance Real, et al.

Pine Grove www.pinegrove-treatment.com

Dr. Patrick Carnes' inpatient treatment program for sex addiction in Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Del Amo Treatment Program www.delamotreatment.com

Southern California program offering treatment for Sexual Addiction and Sexual Offending Behaviors.

The Ranch www.recoveryranch.com

Gender specific treatment for male and female sex addicts in Nashville, TN

Life Healing Center www.life-healing.com

Gender specific treatment for male and female sex addicts in Santa Fe, NM

Inspired by Dr. Rory Reid and the workbook "*Freedom from Problem Gambling*" created by the UCLA Gambling Studies Program and the California Office of Problem and Pathological Gambling, Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, State of California.

APPENDIX

Feelings when your needs are satisfied

AFFECTIONATE

compassionate
 friendly
 loving
 open hearted
 sympathetic
 tender
 warm

ENGAGED

absorbed
 alert
 curious
 engrossed
 enchanted
 entranced
 fascinated
 interested
 intrigued
 involved
 spellbound
 stimulated

HOPEFUL

expectant
 encouraged
 optimistic

CONFIDENT

empowered
 open
 proud
 safe
 secure

EXCITED

amazed
 animated
 ardent
 aroused
 astonished
 dazzled
 eager
 energetic
 enthusiastic
 giddy
 invigorated
 lively
 passionate
 surprised
 vibrant

GRATEFUL

appreciative
 moved
 thankful
 touched

INSPIRED

amazed
 awed
 wonder
 JOYFUL
 amused
 delighted
 glad
 happy
 jubilant
 pleased
 tickled

EXHILARATED

blissful
 ecstatic
 elated
 enthralled
 exuberant
 radiant
 rapturous
 thrilled

PEACEFUL

calm
 clear headed
 comfortable
 centered
 content
 equanimous
 fulfilled
 mellow
 quiet
 relaxed
 relieved
 satisfied
 serene
 still
 tranquil
 trusting

REFRESHED

enlivened
 rejuvenated
 renewed
 rested
 restored
 revived

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APPENDIX

Feelings when your needs are not satisfied

AFRAID

apprehensive
dread
foreboding
frightened
mistrustful
panicked
petrified
scared
suspicious
terrified
wary
worried

ANNOYED

aggravated
dismayed
disgruntled
displeased
exasperated
frustrated
impatient
irritated
irked

ANGRY

enraged
furious
incensed
indignant
irate
livid
outraged
resentful

AVERSION

animosity
appalled
contempt
disgusted
dislike
hate
horrified
hostile
repulsed

CONFUSED

ambivalent
baffled
bewildered
dazed
hesitant
lost
mystified
perplexed
puzzled
torn

DISCONNECTED

alienated
aloof
apathetic
bored
cold
detached
distant
distracted
indifferent
numb
removed

uninterested
withdrawn

DISQUIET

agitated
alarmed
discombobulated
disconcerted
disturbed
perturbed
rattled
restless
shocked
startled
surprised
troubled
turbulent
turmoil
uncomfortable
uneasy
unnerved
unsettled
upset

EMBARRASSED

ashamed
chagrined
flustered
guilty
mortified
self-conscious

FATIGUE

beat
burnt out

depleted
exhausted
lethargic
listless
sleepy
tired
weary
worn out

PAIN

agony
anguished
bereaved
devastated
grief
heartbroken
hurt
lonely
miserable
regretful
remorseful

SAD

depressed
dejected
despair
despondent
disappointed
discouraged
disheartened
forlorn
gloomy
heavy hearted
hopeless
melancholy

unhappy
wretched

TENSE

anxious
cranky
distressed
distraught
edgy
fidgety
frazzled
irritable
jittery
nervous
overwhelmed
restless
stressed out

VULNERABLE

fragile
guarded
helpless
insecure
leery
reserved
sensitive
shaky

YEARNING

envious
jealous
longing
nostalgic
pining
wistful

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