

# Addictions That are Hard to Talk About – What Happens if We Shed Light?

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# Objectives

- Understand/basic knowledge of sex addiction and compulsive sexual behavior
- Identify different types of sex addiction
- Understand the relationship between sex addiction and attachment
- Prevalence and power of Internet pornography

# Is compulsive sexual behavior addiction?

- In January 2020, the ICD-11 accepted sexual compulsion as a diagnosis
- Definition is very similar to substance abuse/addiction.
- For example, engaging in sexual activity at the expense of other areas of life, attempts to control it, continues despite negative consequences, engages although it provides
- Recovery mimics recovery from substance abuse; early recovery 3-5 years
- Carnes 1983 published a book called Out of the Shadows, which raised the issue of how to address and diagnose

# Compulsive Behaviors

- Constantly seeking new sex partners
- Having frequent sexual encounters
- Compulsive masturbation and pornography

# What Makes an Addiction an Addiction?

- Preoccupation
- Loss of control
- Directly related negative consequences

# Differentiating Sex Addiction

- Escaping reality
- Sex addicts in particular

# Compulsion Vs. Addiction

- Pleasure and anticipatory fantasy
- Behaviors without these factors can be compulsive, but do not qualify as addictions.
- Carrot on a stick

# Cognitive/Emotional Symptoms

- Obsessive thoughts of sex
- Feelings of guilt
- Escaping or suppressing unpleasant emotions like loneliness, boredom, low self esteem, shame
- Secrecy
- Rationalization
- Indifference to regular partners
- Anonymous sex
- Disconnect intimacy from sex
- Absence of control in many aspects of life

Carnes 2000-2001, Carnes & Schneider 2000, Coleman et al 2002



# Attachment Styles

- Fraley, Waller, Brennan (2000):
- Secure
- Insecure
- Anxious
- Avoidant

# Attachment Theory & Sex Addiction

- Bowlby (1979-1982)
- Early attachment experience affect personal and social life –
- Recent developments attachment theory
- Uytun et al 2000
- Secure attachment = low chance of addiction to sex
- Individuals addicted to sex looking for activity without emotional relationship, have anxious or avoidant attachment

## 2 Types of Sex Addicts

1. Classic

2. Contemporary

# Contemporary SA

- Pornography = cocaine?
- “Addiction is addiction is addiction” (Schneider 2005)
- Variation
- Comorbidities

## Kuhn and Gallinat (2014)

- Negative association between reported pornography hours and gray matter volume

# Sex Addiction: Impact

- A survey of 350 self-identified sex addicts in the UK revealed the most common issues associated with SA:
- 70.5% experienced shame
- 65% experienced low self-esteem
- 49.8% had mental health issues
- 46.5% lost a relationship
- 26.7% reported sexual dysfunction
- 19.4% struggled with serious suicidality

(Weiss 2015)

# Pornography - Impact

- Patrick 2021:
- 2018 survey
- Research has found a connection between viewing pornography and intentionally unethical behavior
- Consumption also has disastrous effects on productivity

# Childhood Abuse & Sexual Addiction

- According to Slavin, et al. (2021, Current Addiction Reports)
- Reviewed 21 studies to find an association between significant childhood abuse and sexual disorders
- Most studies found a significant association.
- Estimates of compulsive sexual behavior average 3-6% of U.S. adults.
- But distress related to difficulty controlling sexual feelings, urges and behaviors exists at much higher rates
- Sexual impulsivity acknowledged by 14% of Americans (18% of men, 7% of women)
- Survivors of childhood sexual abuse inherit faulty scripts about sexual behavior that facilitate engaging in risky sexual behavior. (Castro 2019)



# Childhood Abuse & Sex Addiction Cont'd

- Theorists suggest that victims of childhood sexual abuse attempt to take back lost control by doing this (Gold and Haufner 1998)
- Carnes, 1991: 39% men and 63% of women in treatment for sex addiction reported childhood sexual abuse, as compared to 8% of males and 20% of female control
- Delmonico, 1996– 78% reported CSA
- Schwartz & Southern (2000) found that 57% men and 76.2% of women reported CSA when seeking treatment for cybersex
- Faree (2002) found that 81% of men and women in treatment for sex addiction reported CSA, 72% reported physical abuse, 97% reported emotional abuse

### 3 A's

- The recent rise in sex addiction is due to, in part:
  1. Accessibility
  2. Affordability
  3. Anonymity

# Stigma, Sex Addiction

- Like other addictive behaviors, sex addiction is widely stigmatized and misunderstood.

## Like Any Other Addiction

- Neuroimaging on CSB shows overlapping mechanisms underlying CSB and non-sexual addictions (Kowalewska et al. 2018)