

Is There Really Such A Thing As Sexual Addiction?

People often times "scoff" at the notion that one can have a sexual addiction. They understandably feel that sexual misbehavior is the result of a society that believes in immediate gratification. Most people don't understand sexual addiction and they have no idea that people who suffer from this disorder are ABSOLUTELY unable to stop on their own.

Hyper-sexuality or sexual addiction is a condition where people partake in sexual behaviors that are both compulsive and obsessive. People who have this disorder have tried numerous times to stop the behavior but find themselves returning to chronic affairs, one night stands, compulsive pornography, exhibitionism, voyeurism, prostitution, and other out of control sexual behaviors. These actions are interfering in their normal routines and despite the consequences, they continue to take the risks. The condition progresses and gets worse with time until a crisis of some sort occurs.

- I have met with many clients who have logged on to porn at work despite the fact that if they get caught it will mean an automatic termination.
- I have worked with women who have experienced sexually transmitted diseases which has resulted in divorce. It is not uncommon for a sexual addict to be sexually anorexic with her husband so it frequently is an automatic message to the husband that there was infidelity going on in the marriage.
- I have treated men who needed drugs to be able to engage in sex with prostitutes. One man explained that he had been beaten and robbed several times when returning to the neighborhood that insured him a sexual encounter. The crazy thing is that his compulsion was so strong that he kept going back. This man taught in a large university and had been recognized many times for his academic achievements but he was unable to refrain from his on-going use of prostitution.

Sexual addiction is considered a process addiction and will not go into remission without the support of a treatment regimen that addresses the physical, emotional, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual components of the addict. It like all other addictions requires that you work with a certified addictions specialist (CSAT--Certified Sexual Addictions Therapist), be in frequent and regular 12 step meetings for sex addicts, have a sponsor, work the steps quickly, and identify healthy behaviors that will fortify and strengthen the addict's recovery. Many times recovery can be enhanced if the addict participates in a treatment program that allows them to do psychological work that has contributed to the need to medicate with sex. When a client has experienced trauma in their childhood, they may need the safety of a residential setting to get to the source of psychological pain. I believe that residential treatment allows the client to focus on his/her life in a way that is difficult if one is trying to juggle one's daily routine.

If you think that your sexual acting out is resulting in more secrets, lies, excuses and problems, I would encourage you to talk to a professional who will help you assess what options are out there for you. Once you admit that this is something you can no longer handle on your own, you must realize that you need to do what it takes to get healthy and to resume a normal life. If you are lying to your spouse, or

unable to get through a day without "acting out," and hiding your behaviors, you are likely getting involved in increasingly riskier behaviors that will only worsen over time. There is help out there but you can't do it alone. I know that the fear of addressing your addiction comes with much shame but truly you can overcome these behaviors and become the person you want to be!

Admitting that you have a problem is the first step so follow your gut and let someone know who is experienced in this difficult problem. Learn how to be authentic and transparent and feel the relief of getting the support you deserve.