

Treating Sexual Addiction



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Relevance & Background

- An estimated 16 million Americans suffer from this affliction (Carnes, 2009).
- There were an estimated 17.6 million Alcoholics in 2002 (US Institute of Alcohol Abuse, 2002).
- 87% of addicts have more than one addiction (Carnes, 1991).

Relevance & Monetary Costs

United States Industry Revenue Statistics (Internet Filter Review)

- Billions spent on sexual behaviors (2006)
- Video Sales & Rentals \$4.28
- Internet \$2.50
- Cable/PPV/In-Room/Mobile/Phone Sex \$2.19
- Exotic Dance Clubs \$2.00
- Novelties \$1.73
- Magazines \$1.00
- **US porn revenue exceeds the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC**

Why?

- What makes successful, established, and sometimes very powerful people, risk everything?



Prominent Figures with Sex Addiction



- Frm. President Bill Clinton (Monica)
- Frm. Governor Eliot Spitzer (Prostitution)
- Frm. Rep. Mark Foley (Email- sexually explicit IM)
- Frm. Senator Larry Craig (Bathroom Sting)
- Jesse James (Sandra Bullock)
- David Duchovny (Self-admission)
- Michael Douglas (Self-admission)
- Mary Kay Laturno (Sex with 6th Grade Student)

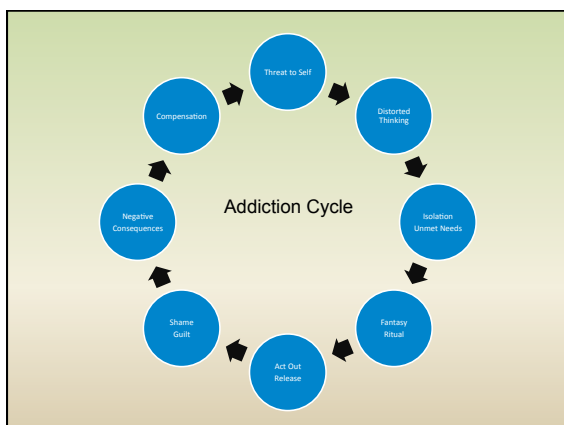
- **What were your reactions to these events?**

Why Do We Call it an Addiction?

- **Addiction:** Compulsively engaging in a behavior to produce a stimulating, numbing, or fantasy-like state of being.
 - 1) because it feels good
 - 2) in order to medicate away pain and anxiety.

This is true in the case of sex, drugs, alcohol, gambling, or food. It is characterized by mental preoccupation and out of control behavior and has two hallmarks:

- **Tolerance:** Needing more and more of a substance or behavior to obtain the desired effect.
- **Withdrawal:** Unpleasant physiological and psychological changes that occur after stopping an addictive behavior. This eventually becomes a third reason someone uses—to avoid withdrawal.



Different Types of Addictions

- Alcohol and Drugs – Substance Addiction

Goal: abstinence

- Sex, Food – Process Addictions

– Goals:

1. Stop unhealthy behaviors
2. Deal with underlying issues - causes
3. Begin healthy relationship to the process



Differences



- Alcoholism and drug addiction easier
 - Don't have to walk into a bar – **External**
- Compulsive sexuality more difficult
 - Carry the drug dopamine with self – **Internal**

Sexual Addiction

- Sexual addiction is defined as a pathological relationship with sexual activity
- The primary goal of sexual activity is to regulate mood and meet unmet needs
- Sex addiction is not about sex, instead it is a effective, yet compulsive mechanism for escape and coping
- Sex addiction causes measurable physical changes in the brain that mimic the brain functioning during early trauma



The Ten Criteria



1. Acting out a pattern of out-of-control sexual behavior
2. Experiencing severe consequences due to sexual behavior, and an inability to stop despite these adverse consequences
3. Persistent pursuit of self-destructive behavior
4. Ongoing desire or effort to limit sexual behavior
5. Sexual obsession and fantasy as a primary coping strategy
6. Regularly increasing the amount of sexual experience because the current level of activity is no longer sufficiently satisfying
7. Severe mood changes related to sexual activity
8. Inordinate amounts of time spent obtaining sex, being sexual, and recovering from sexual experiences
9. Neglect of important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of sexual behavior
10. Withdrawal

- The presence of 3 or more indicate sexual addiction

Factors of Sexual Addiction

- Sex Addicts have Common Traits:

- Dysfunctional Families
- Trauma
- Abuse/Neglect
- Maladaptive Relationship with Sex



Etiology



- Sex addiction is a solution to other problems
 - An effective/self-destructive defense against traumatic events.
 - Keeps feelings out
 - Parental, sibling, or peer abuse
 - Abandonment, anxiety, stress and pressure
 - Normalize sexual abuse

Family



- **Family Type**
- Sex Addicts come from families that are:
 - Rigid (77%) – inflexible, controlling, oppressive
 - Disengaged (87%) – detached, uninvolved, and emotionally absent.
 - Thus they come from environments where failure to bond was the norm.

Trauma and Sexual Compulsion



Sex and the Brain



- Sex, porn and masturbation can be addictive because these activities affect the reward circuitry in the primitive part of the brain. "The Limbic System"
- Scientist watching brain scans of men having orgasm concluded that the scans resemble those of people shooting heroin.
- Bart Hoebeel a psychologist at Princeton University said:

Highly palatable foods and highly potent sexual stimuli are the only stimuli capable of activating the dopamine system [reward circuitry of the brain] with anywhere near the potency of addictive drugs.



Sex and the Brain

- Studies indicate that food and sexual interests share a common pathway within our brains' survival and reward systems.
- Brain changes translate into a sex addict's preoccupation with sex and exclusion of other interests and compulsive sexual behavior despite negative consequences.
- The biochemical model helps explain why competent, intelligent, goal-directed people can be so easily sidetracked by sex.
- The addicted brain fools the body by producing intense biochemical rewards for this self-destructive behavior.

Which would you choose?





Rewards



- Sex “lights-up” our reward circuitry since it is directly related to our survival
- The immediate and powerful “rush” is our brain “rewarding” us to survive
- The porn industry knows how to hijack this small portion of the primitive brain known as “the reward circuitry.”

Why Use Sex?

- Sex is Used to Gratify Needs
- Deal with Threats to the Self
- Mood Regulation
- Sober from Drugs and Alcohol - Resort to sex to calm feelings of anxiety, etc.
- Deal with the Unresolved
- Avoid Self Hatred, Self-Doubt
- Promote Self-Worth
- Reenactment of Abuse



- **It is not about the sex, it is about trying to find a connection, comfort and safety all while simultaneously avoiding a real connection**

Treatment

- Arrest Behaviors
- Access Support
- Assess Causes
- Treat Causes
- Treat Relationship
- Restore Intimacy



Questions?

