



the portage path behavioral health reference guide to: **Sexual Addiction**

Sexual addiction is a sexually-related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment. It is characterized by a relentless search for sexual gratification without regard to consequences or personal safety. The National Council on Sexual Addiction Compulsivity estimates that 6-8 percent (16 - 21.5 million) of the American population are addicted to sex.

Sexual addiction is often compared to other types of addictions. Sex (like food or drugs in other addictions) provides the "high" and addicts become dependent on this sexual high to

feel normal. It is important to know that there is no one behavior that defines sexual addiction. Addictive sexual behaviors may include: compulsive masturbation, compulsive heterosexual and homosexual relationships, pornography, prostitution, exhibitionism, voyeurism, indecent phone calls, child molesting, incest, rape, and violence.

Sexual addiction has been known to have a powerful affect on a person's thoughts, feelings, physical health, behavior, and basic overall functioning. The addiction progresses gradually in stages during which time the addict becomes increasingly detached from friends, family and the real world. Ultimately, the addictive cycle ends with serious consequences, such as legal, financial, and/or personal distress. The SexHelp.com. web site lists some of their most common consequences:

Signs & Symptoms

- A pattern of out-of-control behavior
- Severe consequences due to sexual behavior
- Inability to stop despite adverse consequences
- Persistent pursuit of self-destructive or high-risk behavior
- Ongoing desire or effort to limit sexual behavior
- Sexual obsession and fantasy as a primary coping strategy
- Increasing numbers of sexual experiences because the current level of activity is no longer sufficient
- Severe mood changes around sexual activity
- Inordinate amounts of time spent in obtaining sex, being sexual, or recovering from sexual experiences
- Neglect or important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of sexual behavior.

- **LOSS OF PARTNER OR SPOUSE**
- **SEVERE MARITAL OR RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS**
- **LOSS OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**
- **UNWANTED PREGNANCIES**
- **ABORTIONS**
- **SUICIDAL OBSESSIONS**
- **SUICIDAL ATTEMPTS**
- **EXPOSURE TO AIDS AND VENEREAL DISEASE**
- **LEGAL RISKS FROM NUISANCE OFFENSES TO RAPE**

The onset of this addiction often begins in middle childhood to early adolescence. There is no exact cause for sexual addiction, but research has shown a high correlation exists between childhood emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.



How Are Sexual Addictions Treated?

Before sexual addiction treatment begins a thorough medical exam should be encouraged at the beginning of treatment (as sexual addicts can often be inattentive to self care) and also may need testing to discern the potential existence of sexually transmitted diseases.

There is no one form of treatment that has been proven most effective. Often, a combined treatment approach is used in working with the person who has a sexual addiction. For example, some of the psychiatric medications can be helpful in reducing sexual drive or in decreasing sexually intrusive thoughts. These medications may also allow an individual to consider consequences before acting out on a sexual urge or impulse. In addition to medications, treatment almost always involves therapy or counseling on a regular basis. There are also self-help group programs for people with sexual addictions, which are modeled after the AA 12 step programs.



Are You A Sex Addict?

- by *The National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*

1. Have you made promises to yourself to quit some aspect of your sexual behavior?
2. Have you made efforts to quit a type of sexual behavior and failed?
3. Do you have to hide some aspects of your sexual behaviors from others?
4. Have you attempted to stop some parts of your sexual activities?
5. Have you ever felt degraded by your sexual behavior?
6. Has sex been a way for you to escape your problems?
7. When you have sex, do you feel depressed afterward?
8. Have you felt the need to discontinue a certain form of sexual activity?
9. Has your sexual activity interfered with your family life?
10. Have you been sexual with minors?
11. Do you feel controlled by your sexual desire?
12. Do you ever think that your sexual desire is stronger than you are?

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call Portage Path and find out how we can help:

Web Site www.portagepath.org

Appointments 330-253-3100
800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

Support Hotline 330-434-9144
888-434-8878



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