

Sexual Addiction



A Christ-Centered 12-Step Recovery Group
addressing addictions and those affected by them

The Problem

Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.
1 Corinthians 6:18 (NLT)

In the beginning, God created man and woman with the wonderful gift of sexuality. Since the Garden of Eden, however, we have seen ourselves as naked and ashamed. Sex addicts live with condemnation and shame. Many are practicing Christians who attend church regularly -- and they can be found in the pulpit as well as in the pew. For those who suffer from sexual addiction the problem goes far beyond just an occasional stimulation, thought or fantasy. They are addicted in the same way as an alcoholic or cocaine addict. They cannot stop the compulsive behaviors on their own.

Because we are in a society that trashes sexuality and does not treasure it, we find ourselves as Christians wrestling with exactly the same problems that people outside the church face. As Christians we are not "bullet proof" to the lust of the flesh and to the fiery darts of the enemy, as many fallen Christian leaders can attest to from their own struggles in the area of sex. One report maintains that about one out of ten Christians suffer from sexual addiction. Another suggests that up to 50% of male Christians are affected by pornography. Most people suffer from some problems in the area of sexuality, whether married or not. Our gift of sexuality can be a difficult thing to understand because the society in which we live promotes so many unhealthy attitudes.

Studies have indicated that sexual addiction is harder to break than chemical dependence. In fact, recent studies show the effects of sexual addiction to be as strong as those of heroin addiction. The sex addict soon faces the same problems of unmanageability and lack of control in their lives as his (or her) substance-abusing counterpart.

Like alcoholics, drug addicts and compulsive gamblers, sex addicts employ typical defenses such as denial, rationalization and justification in order to be able to continue to engage in their behaviors, while blaming others for the resulting problems. Diagnosis and subsequent treatment can be skewed by denial of the type, amount or consequences of sexual activity. Misdiagnosis can also occur due to mood disorder symptoms that the shame and stress of living a double life can facilitate. Some sex addicts have been misdiagnosed with related, but inaccurate psychiatric disorders. Sex addicts have been diagnosed as having Bi-Polar, Obsessive Compulsive, Generalized Anxiety or other disorders which can be seen to hold some characteristics of compulsive sexual behavior by definition, but do not appear to be the underlying condition for most sex addicts. In fact, with appropriate intervention and cessation of addictive sexual behaviors, along with shame reduction and a building of more healthy coping mechanisms, other compulsive or "mood disordered" symptoms will often discontinue or be greatly reduced on their own.

What's the Big Deal?

Whether it be strip clubs, prostitutes, Internet porn or phone sex lines, the sex industry preys on two sets of people: the consumers (the buyer) and the consumed (those involved in its production). Viewing pornographic websites, buying or downloading movies or purchasing magazines add to the demand for pornography. Each video that is viewed increases the demand for more releases. The consumer of pornography may not be doing anything illegal, but they add fuel to the inferno that is the sex industry. And sadly, it is fueled by the human souls who are involved in its production. Pornography and the rest of today's sex industry dishonor the image of God in an individual by treating him or her as a sexual object to be consumed directly or indirectly.

Am I "in Control"?

From the DSM-IV psychiatric manual, the Criteria for an Addictive Disorder include:

- Frequent engaging in the behavior to a greater extent or over a longer period than intended
- Persistent desire for the behavior or one or more unsuccessful efforts to reduce or control the behavior
- Much time spent in activities necessary for the behavior, engaging in the behavior or recovering from its effects
- Frequent engaging in the behavior when expected to fulfill social, occupational, academic or domestic obligations
- Continuation of the behavior despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent social, financial, psychological or physical problem caused or exacerbated by the behavior

Sexual addiction and compulsivity can also be defined as sexual behaviors which involve "escalating patterns of sexual behavior with increasingly harmful consequences." These consequences might include:

- **Social** – Loss of marriage/primary relationship, friendships, social networks due to sexual preoccupation and behavior
- **Emotional** – Depression or anxiety are common due to the shame, secrecy and lowered self-esteem of sexual addicts
- **Physical** – Injury due to frequency and type of behaviors; sexually transmitted diseases are common
- **Legal** – Arrests for sexual crimes (voyeurism, lewd conduct, etc.), loss of professional stature or licenser for sexual misconduct or sexual harassment
- **Financial** – Costs of pornographic materials, use of prostitutes, phone or computer sex lines; Loss of productivity, creativity and employment

How to Get Help

The topic of sexual addiction is one of the most difficult subjects that anyone will ever have to wrestle with, and even more difficult to talk about. It is absolutely necessary, however, that these secrets get out -- whatever they are. One must find a caring pastor, a close friend, or a compassionate counselor to begin talking and getting at these hidden things of the heart.

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

Recovering addicts require external sources of social reinforcement and support in order to change lifelong patterns of behavior. One very important tool utilized toward these goals is group therapy for sex addicts. Another primary resource for sexual recovery is participation in 12-Step groups. Functional meetings of at least one of the following programs can be found in any major city and some in more rural areas as well. All provide the basic principles of honesty, integrity and spirituality long successful within Alcoholics Anonymous, while adapting that process to the specific needs of the sexual recovery population.

Overcomers Outreach uses the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Holy Bible to discover the wisdom of God and apply His teachings to our daily lives. We claim Jesus Christ as our "higher power" and share our trials and victories with one another in a confidential and secure environment. We meet weekly in loving support of one another, not as a substitute for, but rather a supplement to other 12-Step groups. We are non-professional and non-profit, and we welcome anyone who is not opposed to our general method of recovery, whatever his or her presenting problem.

So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NLT)

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