

# I. THE COST OF SEXUAL ADDICTION

By Rev.Dr.Jerry Schmoyer

## A. DEFINITION OF SEXUAL ADDICTION

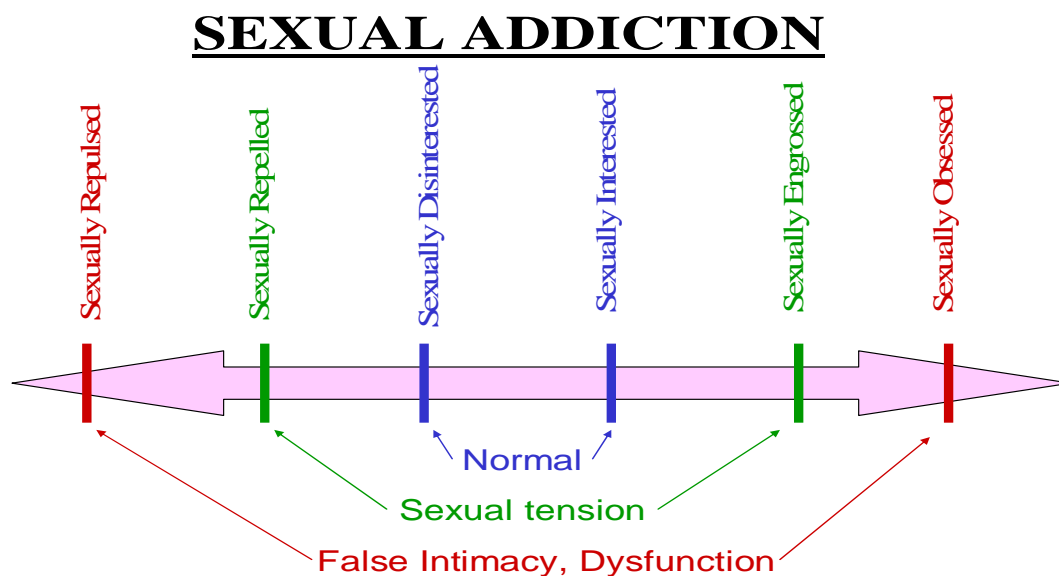
**LIE:** IT'S NOT A PROBLEM!

**TRUTH:** definition of sex addiction shows it is!

Addiction has been described as a compulsion beyond the 'normal' or 'average' range. It is a **habitual dependence on a substance or practice beyond one's voluntary control**. The root meaning of the word 'addiction' is 'enslavement, bondage.' Thus sexual addiction is bondage, a compulsion to sex. Sex becomes an end in itself. Instead of a means to an end (to enjoy and grow in a loving relationship with another), it becomes self-centered. It is the drug of choice to alter mood, mask pain and substitute for real needs.

Addiction doesn't apply to the adolescent discovering sex for the first time and feeling preoccupied with it. Not is the divorced person who uses his or her new-found sexual freedom to excel or the middle age man who goes on a binge because he fears growing old. It's not WHAT a person does but WHY that makes it an addiction.

The following graph explains it well. It is normal to be sexually interested, but sometimes a normal person can become disinterested for a time. Various reasons can lead to one being sexually engrossed or repelled. Sex can become too important, or one may develop a take it or leave it attitude. While not balanced or completely healthy, these attitudes certainly don't comprise addiction. However when one is sexually obsessed in that sex must be obtained at any and all costs, when it is more important than real intimacy, then it has become an addiction.



Those who are sexually repulsed, who feel sex must be avoided at all costs, aren't addicts but have a serious problem as well. Sexual anorexia is an obsessive state in which the physical, mental, and emotional task of avoiding sex dominates one's life. Like self-starvation with food or compulsive dieting or hoarding with money, deprivation with sex can make one feel powerful and defended against all hurts. It is not our purpose to cover this type of dysfunction at this time.

The key, of course, is balance. A legitimate, God-given desire can become unhealthy the minute we make a God of it. Food, for example, is fine to use and enjoy, but to worship it makes it an idol. That's the point of the pork-chop illustration.

Like with alcohol and other addictions, sexual addicts may not always be acting out their addiction. They can go long periods of time without indulging, the binge. They can't stop finding themselves periodically caught up in their sin, however. They can rationalize it away, but they can't permanently stop it. So they believe the lie that 'It's not a problem.'

But to a large percent of the population it is a problem. Studies show anywhere from 3% to 10% of the population can be defined as sex addicts. Twenty-five million men use online pornography. There are 5 million pornographic web sites, more than any other category.

Still, while sex addiction is a problem, it's not THE problem. It is really a symptom of a far deeper problem. That problem needs to be realized and worked through for there to be true and lasting victory over addiction. But that won't happen until the seriousness of sexual addiction is realized. It's a lie to think that "It's no big deal!"

## **B. SYMPTOMS OF SEXUAL ADDICTION**

**LIE: IT'S NO BIG DEAL.**

**TRUTH: Symptoms show it IS a big deal!**

It is easy to confuse normal sexual desire and conduct with addictive compulsion and gratification. A person can have a stronger-than-normal sexual appetite and not be an addict. Here are some characteristics of addictive sex that help distinguish the two.

**1. Addictive sex is done in isolation.** This does not always necessarily mean that it is done while physically alone. Rather it means that mentally and emotionally the addict is detached, or isolated, from human relationship and contact. The most intimately personal of human behaviors becomes utterly impersonal.

**2. Addictive sex is secretive.** In effect, sex addicts develop a double life, practicing masturbation, going to porn shops and massage parlors, all the while hiding what they are doing from others – and, in a sense, even from themselves.

**3. Addictive sex is devoid of intimacy.** Sex addicts are utterly self-focused. They cannot achieve genuine intimacy because their self-obsession leaves no room for giving to others.

Fear of true intimacy - Inability to relate to women in an honest and intimate way despite deep loneliness. Pornography pays scant attention to men's needs for sensuality and intimacy while exalting their sexual needs. Thus, some men develop a preoccupation with sexuality, which powerfully handicaps their capacity for emotionally intimate relationships with men and for nonsexual relationships with women.

**4. Addictive sex is devoid of relationship.** Addictive sex is "mere sex," sex for its own sake, sex divorced from authentic interaction of persons. This is most clear with regard to fantasy, pornography, and masturbation. But even with regard to sex involving a partner, the partner is not really a "person" but a cipher, an interchangeable part in an impersonal – almost mechanical – process. As more and more of addicts' energy becomes focused on relationships which have sexual

potential, other relationships and activities -- family, friends, work, talents and values -- suffer and atrophy from neglect. Long-term relationships are stormy and often unsuccessful. Because of sexual over-extension and intimacy avoidance, short-term relationships become the norm.

**5. Addictive sex is victimizing.** The overwhelming obsession with self-gratification blinds sex addicts to the harmful effects their behavior is having on others, and even on themselves.

**6. Addictive sex ends in despair.** When married couples make love, they are more fulfilled for having had the experience. Addictive sex leaves the participants feeling guilty, regretting the experience. Rather than fulfilling them, it leaves them emptier.

**7. Addictive sex is used to escape pain and/or problems.** The escapist nature of addictive sex is often one of the clearest indicators that it is present. Though acting out sexually can temporarily relieve addicts' anxieties, they still find themselves spending inordinate amounts of time in obsession and fantasy. By fantasizing, the addict can maintain an almost constant level of arousal. Together with obsessing, the two behaviors can create a kind of analgesic "fix." Just as our bodies generate endorphins, natural antidepressants, during vigorous exercise, our bodies naturally release peptides when sexually aroused. The molecular construction of these peptides parallels that of opiates like heroin or morphine, but is many times more powerful.

## C. CHARACTERISTICS of SEXUAL ADDICTION

1. **REPETITIVE** – daily or monthly, anything that repeats it self
2. **DEGENERATIVE** – need more of the activity to satisfy, 'tolerance' is developed
3. **UNMANAGEABLE** – do things don't want to do, powerless to change
4. **MEDICATIVE** – change feelings, brain chemistry altered to feel good
5. **DESTRUCTIVE** – destructive consequences, divorce, disease, financial loss, job loss, etc.
6. **DENIAL** – secrecy, isolation

## D. BEHAVIORS

**LIE:** SO WHAT? EVERYONE DOES IT!

**TRUTH:** NOT everyone is doing it, and if they were doesn't make it right!

## 10 TYPES OF COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

1. **FANTASY SEX** – no relationship with people, just all in mind, fantasy is cornerstone of sexual addiction, very powerful motivator
2. **VOYEURISM** - also nonrelational, nonparticipants, but search for sexual objects in real or cyber-world, but don't to get past looking
3. **EXHIBITIONISM** – showing self not part of sex play but ALL of it, control another's attention by own appearance
4. **SEDUCTIVE-ROLE SEX** – relationships are about power and conquest, use sex, flirt, perform, romance tools to 'win' – once get attention move on to next conquest

- 5. **TRADING SEX** – no bonds, relationship – trade sex for money, gift, etc (reliving childhood sexual abuse)
- 6. **INTRUSIVE SEX** – using others without their permission, touching on bus, obscene phone calls, etc. steal sex because think no one would respond as they want
- 7. **PAYING FOR SEX** – sex with no intimacy, no relationship
- 8. **ANONYMOUS SEX** – no relationships or intimacy, meet someone online or pick up in bar, fear important factor for associate sex with fear from abuse when young
- 9. **PAIN EXCHANGE SEX** – pain, degradation, humiliation, can't relate, deserve pain, pain pays for guilt of enjoying sex
- 10. **EXPLOITIVE SEX** – distorted courtship, rape because can't relate and have rage issues, also by 'winning' another just for the purpose of sex, boss forcing employee; by pastors, counselors, police, teachers, etc.

## INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY

Internet pornography is one of the most obvious and fastest-growing forms of sexually addictive behavior. Twenty-five million men use online pornography. There are 5 million web sites and 372 million pages of pornography on the web site, making it the largest use of the internet. 60% of all internet visits involve sex. Child porn alone brings in over \$3 billion. Having a PC with internet access is like having your own personal porn shop in your home!

This is especially tempting to men, for men are hardwired to visual stimuli. Men receive a chemical high from looking at pictures of nude women. When their eyes lock onto images of nude women, pleasure chemicals (epinephrine, etc) bathe the limbic pleasure centers in the brain, and because it feels food, they want to come back for another hit (look). When these hit the bloodstream, they lock into the memory whatever stimulus is present at the time of the excitement. Thus men remember pictures and things seen for years and years. Pleasure and highs come through their eyes.

Jesus warns in Matthew 5:27-28: ***"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*** For men, looking is part of the sexual encounter.

It's often hard for women to understand this about men. The closest they can come to understanding is to think of how they are affected when they see a large box of luscious chocolates sitting on the table in front of them. Most women will be greatly tempted and distracted by the chocolate and find it hard to concentrate on anything else while it is there. This is similar to what happens in a man when he is visually stimulated.

Internet pornography is very appealing as well as very dangerous because it is so accessible and can be accessed in total privacy. Viewers can be anonymous and have no need of personal interaction. Chances of discovery are minimal. The cost is affordable. The internet also allows the viewer to move quickly from one form of sex to another in a short time. It used to take time to progress to deeper and deeper forms of sexual behavior but now that can happen very quickly. Of course lies abound about internet sex as well. Listed below are a few:

## LIES ABOUT INTERNET SEX

- 1. IT'S NOT REAL** – so there are no consequences?
- 2. IT DOESN'T HURT ANYONE** - but feeds an industry that hurts many of women and innocent children, in addition it cheats your mate of your attention
- 3. DOESN'T HURT ME** – all the studies and statistics show it does
- 4. I CAN STOP ANY TIME I WANT, I JUST NEED TO TURN OFF THE COMPUTER** - try it for a month and see what happens!
- 5. I JUST USE IT OCCASIONALLY. IT DOESN'T INTERFERE WITH OR JEOPARDIZE THINGS IN MY LIFE** - ask your wife, children and boss what they think and see what that say!

## **WOMEN SEX ADDICTS**

While sex addiction used to be exclusively a male problem, that is changing. Now 25% to 33% of all sex addicts are women. Women are more relational in nature so their behavior focuses more on chat rooms and using sex as a substitute for real intimacy. Some woman feel sex is 'dirty' and that they must suffer to enjoy it. Being used is all they deserve. Often sexual abuse when young started this pattern in them. Unfortunately, though, younger women are becoming addicted to sexual behaviors similar to men.

Thus the lie "So what, everyone does it!" doesn't make it right. Even if 'everyone' does the behaviors we have mentioned, that doesn't make the behaviors healthy and beneficial for growing relationships. Let's look at another lie.

### **E. OTHER ADDICTIONS & Sexual Addiction**

**LIE:** AT LEAST I DON'T \_\_\_\_\_ (Drink, Use Drugs, Gamble, Smoke)

**TRUTH:** Addiction is addiction, no one 'better' or 'worse' than others

The justification behind this lie is that 'my sin isn't as bad as it could be so I don't have to change.' Not only is that faulty reasoning, but the premise that one sin isn't as bad as another is incorrect. All addictions are compulsions. While the dysfunction may take different forms, the damage is still being done. Sexual addiction also produces a chemical 'high' to cause one to feel 'normal.' The addict is self-focused and uses others to attain his needs.

Sex can become addictive in a similar way to alcohol and illegal drugs. During sex, our bodies release a powerful cocktail of chemicals that make us feel good. Some people get addicted to these chemicals and become obsessed with getting their next fix - their next sexual high. As with other addictions, the body also gets used to these chemicals, so the sufferer needs increasing amounts of sex to achieve the same buzz.

Studies show that 87% of those who are addicted to sex are also addicted to other things as well.

**FOOD AND SEX** 38% of sex addicts also struggle with an eating disorder. Sexual addiction is an escape, a search for counterfeit intimacy, so medicating ones self with food is common.

**ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND SEX** Alcoholics doesn't cause sex addiction. It is a separate addiction that works with sexual addiction. 42% of male sex addicts and 50% of female sex addicts also have problems with chemical dependency. 50% to 70% of cocaine addicts have problems with sexual compulsions.

**WORKAHOLISM AND SEX** These addictions are very common and complement each other. It's not surprising that 28% of sex addicts also struggle with compulsive working.

**EMOTIONAL ILLNESS AND SEX** Depression, bipolar disorders, obsessive-compulsive behavior, etc., are compounded by sex addiction.

So saying that sexual addiction isn't a problem because it isn't as bad as other addictions is faulty reasoning as well. One of the more common and damaging lies is that the addict can stop any time they want.

## F. Cycle of addiction

**LIE:** I CAN STOP ANY TIME I WANT.

**TRUTH:** powerless to stop and stay stopped



### THE ADDICTION CYCLE

Not everyone who struggles with sexual sin is an addict, but just like with alcohol or smoking or drugs, when a person isn't able to stop on their own they are addicted.

First there is a **PREOCCUPATION WITH SEXUAL THOUGHTS.**

Thoughts start running

through the mind, bringing a mild rush of adrenaline (James 1:13-14). The adrenaline rush gets addictive, as does the escape from reality the thoughts bring. We assume acting on our thoughts will be the solution to our problems. This is where the cycle must stop. If we don't bring our thoughts captive (II Cor 10:5) at this point it will be much harder later in the cycle.

The **RITUALIZATION** stage of the cycle is when one starts acting on their thoughts. This usually takes a similar pattern each time. For men today it may include surfing the net late at night, hanging around a certain magazine stand or book store, going to a video store when the wife is away, walking past a certain secretary's desk or many other things. Thoughts of sin are conceived (James 1:15a) and grow. A ritual means don't have to stop and think or disrupt focus. This is a very important and necessary stage, not to be rushed. He can't be orgasmic all the time. This anticipation is sometimes better than the event itself for despair follows the act. Now all is positive and optimistic – this is what I need! During this time cares, worries, failures, stress, deadlines, responsibilities are suspended (medicated). He can't stop at this point, he is on his way down a sliding board – he must first stop his preoccupation with sex.

When we are stimulated emotionally – including being visually stimulated by sexually charged images, an automatic signal is sent to the adrenal glands. This starts in anticipation during this stage. A hormone called epinephrine is secreted into the bloodstream, which locks into the memory whatever stimulus is present at the time of the emotional excitement. This reaction causes us to involuntarily remember emotionally charged events, negative and traumatic ones as well as positive ones.

**COMPULSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR - ACTING OUT** usually follows the ritualization pattern. The sin is committed, in action or in mind. Then comes the GUILT & SHAME. As James says, sin gives birth to death (1:15b-16). Instead of life we get death. Instead of joy there is sorrow. Short-lived pleasure is replaced by a long time of pain. Emptiness fills us. We end up feeling trashed afterwards. We promise we'll never do it again. But before long the cycle is repeated.

**DESPAIR**, feeling of being trashed – hopelessness, powerlessness, guilt, shame, etc. – only escape is to medicate self so don't hurt – start again with preoccupation. Sex is his escape from pain. Person's values are broken and more shame results. Addicts experience intense mood shifts, often due to the despair and shame of having unwanted sex. Sexual addicts are caught in a crushing cycle of shame driven and shame-creating behavior. While shame drives the sexual addicts' actions, it also becomes the unwanted consequence of a few moments of euphoric escape into sex.

Two sets of activities organize sexual addicts' days. One involves obsessing about sex, time devoted to initiating sex, and actually being sexual. The second involves time spent dealing with the consequences of their acting out: lying, covering up, shortages of money, problems with their spouse, trouble at work, neglected children, and so on.

Clear examples of this cycle are seen in the Biblical accounts of Amnon with Tamar (II Samuel 13) and Samson with his 'wife' and Deliah (Judges 13-16).

## **WOMEN AND THE SEX CYCLE**

With many women who are addicted to sex, obsessive thought begins with planning how to attract a sexual partner. For example, Sandy spends inordinate amounts of time envisioning or fantasizing about attracting a partner. Her **RITUALS** include hours of shopping for seductive outfits, putting together outfits from her closet, meticulous bathing and shaving in anticipation of being sexual, cleaning her house and preparing coffee for the morning after, and even excluding thoughts of other matters, such as her bills or her child's school problems.

Her **PATTERNS** of obsessive thought circle around trying to judge, interpret, and analyze any responses to her, then carefully planning a reaction to the perceived responses. From an external view, these behaviors are all very much within the societal norms of female behavior. What cannot be seen by society or by the therapist, however, is the internal focus on thoughts of being sexual. Sometimes even the client herself cannot detect this obsessive focus, due to her inability to see through her own defenses.

Many sexually addicted women **fantasize about sexual abuse**, including being physically forced in some way to have sex, forcing someone else to have sex, or watching someone else being forced to have sex. Mary's fantasies include degradation or objectification, such as prostitution or being watched by someone while having sex. At first, these fantasies seem to portray a loss of the woman's power, but many times the arousal is associated with the power of being so irresistible or innocent that rapists, gangs, or authority figures cannot control themselves around the seductive powers of the woman. This appears to take away guilt/responsibility when she is 'forced.' Sex is seen as bad, evil.

A mood-altering level of excitement occurs for female sex addicts in seductive behaviors involving flirting, dancing, dressing, or otherwise personally grooming to be seductive. Some have several affairs going on at the same time, while others are monogamous but need a new relationship to get out of, or deal with, the loss of the prior relationship. **Seduction** is the key to the addictive cycle, even in preparation for sex with self, i.e., using flirtation, pornography, or sugary foods in preparation for masturbation. Pornography is only one of the commonly used printed materials that women sex addicts use. Others are sexual stories, sex manuals, or clothing catalogs that show swim wear, underwear, or lingerie. Videos and cable television are also used to achieve the mood-altering sexual high through visual stimulation. Exhibitionism is commonly an aspect of sexually addicted behaviors in women. This is a more blatant display than the subtle seductive behaviors described above: wearing no bra; having sex in a car or other visible place; sex with self or another in front of a partner; stripping at parties; or taking or posing for nude photos. Some sex-addicted women's exhibitionism seems to stem from behaviors modeled in their families of origin, while others seem to be in direct contrast to strict, rigid family rules about nudity or sex.

## STOPPING THE ADDICTION CYCLE

This addiction cycle must stop at the very start -- what we do with the first thought

## DOWNWARD SPIRAL

***Romans 1:24-28 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen. 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. 28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.***

***"Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more" (Ephesians 4:19)***

Sexual addiction is often progressive. While addicts may be able to control themselves for a time, inevitably their addictive behaviors will return and quickly escalate to previous levels and beyond. Some addicts begin adding additional acting out behaviors. Usually addicts will have three or more behaviors which play a key role in their addiction -- masturbation, affairs, and anonymous sex, for instance.

In addition, 89% of addicts reported regularly "bingeing" to the point of emotional exhaustion. The emotional pain of withdrawal for sexual addicts can parallel the physical pain experienced by those withdrawing from opiate addiction.

The ultimate question is not DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO WHAT YOU ARE DOING, the real question is, CAN YOU STOP? It's a lie to say "I can stop any time I want" -- that's just not true and that's what defines this as an 'addiction.'

One other lie that comes under this category of the cost of sexual addiction is the one that says 'there's no harm done -- I'm not hurting anybody.'

## **G. CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL ADDICTION**

**LIE: THERE'S NO HARM DONE! I'M NOT HURTING ANYBODY**

**TRUTH:** Sexual addiction is a bondage that destroys the addict as well as others close to him and used by him

- 70 per cent had severe relationship problems
- 40 per cent had lost a partner
- 27 per cent had lost career opportunities
- 40 per cent had experienced unwanted pregnancies
- 72 per cent suffered suicidal obsession
- 17 per cent had attempted suicide

- 68 per cent had been exposed to sexually transmitted infections

ULTIMATE RESULT of the addiction cycle: loss of family and job - no longer a double life is needed for there are no friends or family to lie to or protect, no job to keep – so why live? Suicidal thoughts dominate

**CONSEQUENCES FOR WOMEN:** Negative consequences might include unplanned pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, terror resulting from unprotected sex, or shame about behaviors that conflict with individual values. Additional red flags are tension or decreased productivity at work due to sexual behaviors with co-workers, complications or dramas due to secret relationships, depression or despair about inability to change sexual patterns, or violence in relationships. Other consequential problems may include unhealthy weight gains and losses, chemical addiction or other behavioral addictions aimed at medicating feelings associated with sexual behaviors or relationships, diverting from the therapeutic process by beginning a relationship, or sexual occupation or avocation such as stripping, exotic dancing, phone sex, or internet sex.

So it's clear to see that believing these lies about sexual addiction contributes to the bondage and defeat that comes with the problem. But before we can talk about a cure we need to better understand just exactly what causes sexual addiction.

The text "SEX ADDICTION" is rendered in a large, bold, 3D font. The letters are white with a dark grey shadow underneath, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The text is slanted upwards from left to right.