

SEXUAL ADDICTION IS A CHEMICAL ADDICTION.

As such it is no different from other chemical addictions usually associated with so called recreational drugs and certain prescription medicines. However, in sexual addiction the source of the chemicals is one's *own body chemistry*. In a similar manner the sexual addict has developed conditioned responses to emotional pain, lust, orgasm, shame, depression, and other experiences that trigger higher dosages of various biological chemicals.

The addict has become biologically locked into a cycle of reflexive behaviors that fail to ease the anxiety caused by imbalances. The body chemistry of the sexual addict has learned to manage stress and so the addict through repeated abuse is conditioned to transfer much of their emotional pain into this cycle. The imbalance for some people can be more addictive than codeine or cocaine. They develop an absolute need for more anxiety and an incontestable need to repeat a ritual to temporarily ease that anxiety. The sexual addict has a psychological and chemical addiction to cope with their emotional pain, and requires a series of repeatable behaviors in order to survive the pain.

Often the pain from earlier years has been so effectively avoided that the addict may actually be unaware of what they are avoiding. Each repetition of the cycle creates a stronger need for the next repetition as it simultaneously traps the accumulating emotional pain where it is neither properly felt nor resolved.

There is a tendency to feel that all sexual energy is positive, god given and therefore justifiable. However, certain types of behavior are unhealthy, indicative of addiction, and definitely can serve to harm, sometimes irreparably, real sex, real relationships, reputations, and financial condition. While our society has strived to accept a wide range of behavior in the name of freedom, and train people to be non-judgmental in the name of empathy, the effect may create a situation where troubled behavior goes unchecked and the person completely unassisted and isolated.

The perpetual cycle works much like this:

- Emotional pain relating to previous persistent abuse, possibly triggered by present pain, begins to surface and the addict feels an unexplainable obsessive need for lust.
- An occasion of lust triggers the obsessive need to numb the pain and feel the high right now.
- The addict may attempt to resist but resistance proves futile. Sooner or later the addict acts out their behavioral ritual(s) of the addiction.
- After acting out the high disappears and the addict feels shame.
- The shame is buried in hopelessness or resolutions to never do it again.
- For a short while the addict feels free. Denial of the addiction is powerfully reinforced.
- Withdrawal sets in.

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In addition to distorting sexual needs and emotional needs, the addictive mindset also distorts responsibility. The addict often feels responsible for a wide variety of circumstances for which they bear little or no actual responsibility. This overburdens them with shame. Then in an unhealthy compensation to this, the addict will also refuse to accept responsibility for various circumstances that are the direct result of their behavior. This drowns them in shame and obstructs their ability to embrace a healthy sense of guilt. Let us make a useful distinction between the shame an addict feels and the guilt they fail to experience. Shame is the feeling that one is worthless as an existence, whereas guilt is the recognition that one's behavior is unacceptable. Shame is fuel to the fire of addiction, but acceptance of guilt is a strong reality check that permits recovery to begin and continue. This form of shame is useless and destructive; but in contrast, guilt is powerful in enabling both humility and determination while overcoming.

Sexual addiction is many things. The most critical is that sexual addiction is a system of misleading denial that is reconfirmed each pass through the cycle enabling the sexual addict to rationalize that he or she is not a sexual addict at all. The substructure of denial is supported in certain phases by pretending that the addictive behavior is simply a choice. However, the addicts' "choices" take place in a context of combinations of other factors which are a powerful force that is either totally denied or greatly underestimated.

Denial is the number one enemy of the sexual addict. Without overcoming denial, there is no hope. The recovering sexual addict will resort to denial continuously. Those guiding the addict through recovery will find denial to be one battle that will resurface repeatedly. It will often be necessary to win this battle in stages and by managed degrees. Denial is not entirely negative. It protects the addict from insanity, suicide or various other radically hopeless behaviors.

The sexual addict might only admit to as much of the addiction or related issues as they are able to cope with. This can be sufficient. All behavioral addictions are attempts to medicate an unresolved pain. Although moral intentions govern our voluntary choices, they do not control the behavior of others, our own genetic makeup, or the need to resolve pain. Since addiction involves many internal and external factors not subject to our choices, only a small portion of the addiction formula involves the addict's free will. The free will options are sadly limited. It is possible in severe cases that after the level of emotional pain have exceeded the genetic threshold, that voluntary ability, in regard to the addiction, is limited to the choice to get help.

Sexual addiction is not the only addiction that does not consume an external substance. Gambling, compulsive spending, anxiety, cleaning and various other activities can be addictive.

Repression

Many with these addictions have attempted some form of repression to deal with or quiet their desires. Often, the urges do not stay repressed, at which point, the addict accepts and renews again his or her compulsive behavior. Unassisted repression involves no contract, no outward admission, and is probably doomed before it starts. Rational therapy takes the approach to teach the difference between addiction compulsions and healthy natural sex drive.

Acting on addictive desire leads to frustration, anxiety, guilt, and destroyed relationships. Acting on healthy sexual feelings is profoundly wonderful. By being able to experience both feelings and choose which to act on, you actually increase your sexual enjoyment. They use the meetings as a social event to advertise their compulsive sexual behavior. Religious counseling and psychotherapy also are geared to repressing the desire, along with prayer and implications of moral threats and guilt.

Psychotherapy revolves around behavioral change and diversion, such as taking a cold shower to divert, deflect, or repress. If any treatment is successful, the real reward and victory comes from enjoying sex with your partner.

We have evolved to a societal view that sexual urges of almost any variety are acceptable, that if it feels good, do it, and there should be no guilt or shame associated with any activity that gratifies. This simplistic view ignores the devastating consequences to one's emotion, relationships, finances, and sense of shame and guilt.

The most devastating consequence involves the human relationships that are torn apart by one partner's choice of an addictive behavior or object over the partner. A sexually addicted person will have great difficulty engaging in real sex preferring the "safe confines" of the addictive activity.

We now know enough about addictions and brain chemistry to recognize that addictions are actually experienced as an abnormally interrupted biochemical cycle. This definition is rather obtuse but once understood is a key to making sense of addiction's foolishness. A chemical substance (it makes no difference if it is foreign or native to normal biochemistry) becomes inserted or radically increased in the human body in such a manner that its removal or reduction does not permit a return to "normal" in specific biochemical cycles altered by the presence or higher than normal presence of the chemical substance. Normal biochemical cycles lose flexibility.

An example of a non-addictive interruption of a biochemical cycle is carbon monoxide poisoning. When a person breathes carbon monoxide, it interrupts the normal breathing cycle. However, when oxygen is again available and the carbon monoxide removed, the cycle returns to normal with minimal adjustment provided

brain damage has not yet occurred. Carbon monoxide can be deadly but it is not addictive.

On the other hand, when a person becomes addicted to a drug, that drug or one of its metabolizing byproducts interrupts at least one but often dozens of biochemical cycles in such a manner that when the drug is removed from the system, the biochemical cycles are unable to adjust back to normal and the self-sustaining functions of the body are halted or slowed down.

This creates a naturally produced anxiety and sense of dread that will not go away until the cycles finally return to normal or the dependant drug is reintroduced. Finding a way to return to normal biochemistry without reintroducing the addictive agent solves the problem but only from a purely biochemical perspective. What this means is that certain behaviors can be ritualized and addictive. Even though some proponents of the behavior addiction camp have exaggerated or misstated some of the other facts -- shopping, lying, risk taking, sex and other ritualized behaviors can be, for some people, highly addictive. They are unable to stop these behaviors long after they want to and long after wisdom would scream at them to cease.

Not all behaviors can be addictive; the behaviors associated with addiction are those that involve some coping element that relies upon, fantasy, excitement, satiation, or control. Sex addiction usually involves the first three and occasionally involves the fourth as well. As a result, the cognitive processes of sex addiction interrupt more biochemical cycles than any other behavioral addiction.

The apostle Paul, when writing to the Christians in Rome, correctly and biblically identified sin as something in him but not something that was him. Even John told us that If we deny that sin is in us, we are deceiving ourselves. *HOWEVER*, if we identify sin as a part of our human essence, we abuse ourselves and speak unacceptably ill of God's image.

Gold taken out of the ground is filled with impurities. Man in this fallen world is also filled with impurity. Just as the heat of fire purifies gold, spiritual struggle and development helps to purify us. None of the impurities removed from gold were ever a part of the gold. In a similar manner, none of the sin in man is a part of man. Before moving on, allow me to briefly express my view of this issue. Sin is a foreign dynamic, which like addiction, interrupts the design of God's image. In the bible, human nature was human nature before sin entered into the picture and will still be human nature long after sin is gone. Sinful reality and human nature may be intertwined and co-existent, but they are distinctly separate realities.

Early Development

In our childhood, when people feel a disconnected with our closest relations- our parents, peers, or even ourselves, - many tune out with fantasy and

masturbation. We desired the objects of the fantasy and lusted after them. We desired the lust to be returned. The pornography and prostitution businesses recognize this and have mightily capitalized. The internet allows this urge to be satisfied in real time, with full motion, full sound high speed interactivity. Unfortunately, this may serve an even more attractive refuge for those looking for a fantasy safe harbor.

The escape included sex with self, promiscuity, adultery, dependency relationships, and more. The intrigue, tease, and sense of doing something forbidden added to the appeal. The only release was from doing it. The activity produced remorse, guilt, pain and a detachment from reality.

The problem has physical, emotional, and spiritual elements. The turning point comes with the admission that the addiction has taken over and that we are powerless, and that the consequences have been devastating and exceptionally hurtful to those around us.

The Dog Returns

“As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.” Proverbs 26:11 (NKJV)

This ritual of regurgitating my past, leaving it behind me for the umpteenth time, then returning to it again and again, as if I had hoped to find comfort and familiarity there.

There is a direct correlation in this verse to the habit-filled lifestyle of any addict, but especially for addict. The word in the original Hebrew text that is translated *dog* in Proverbs 26:11 is *keleb*. This is the same word that is used for *dog* in Deuteronomy 23:18. “You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God.” (NKJV) But in this passage of scripture, the word *dog* is a euphemism for *male prostitute* or by extension, a sexually immoral person.

Proverbs 26:11 could read, “As a sexually addicted and perverse person returns to the regurgitated filth of his past, so a stupid person repeats his foolishness.” How many times would I bring up the ugliness of my past and spew it out in front of myself—thinking, hoping, and praying that this would be the time that it finally disappeared? How many times would I repeat my foolish activities? Spiritually and physically poisonous habits had characterized my past. The emotionally dead place in my innermost being that was vacated when those habits were vomited up, was never doctored or tended to; never replaced with a godly, psychologically sound personality. I would return to see where I had been. I wanted familiarity. I was comfortable with the stench of a sick lifestyle that had been all I had known.

But why? Why did I continue in the destructive ways of my past? Why did I repeatedly return to a past that held no future for me but death? Probably for the same reasons that most addicts do—because Satan, knowing the ways that neuro-chemicals and hormones in the human brain can work together with a variety of societal factors, targeted us for destruction.

Humans are designed with a reward system in place. Hunger, thirst, safety or survival, and sexual activity are activities that are naturally rewarding. When we sense hunger, we reward our bodies with food (something pleasant) to avoid starvation (something that would be painful). Dopamine, endogenous Opioids, norepinephrine, and serotonin are some of the neuro-chemicals that are involved in the natural operation of this reward system. At the same time the physically rewarding activity is taking place, memory functions in the brain are associating the source of the pleasure with the pleasant feelings. In the pornography addict, for example, images that are being viewed during masturbation are burned into the memory at the point of physical release (the reward). In short, that reward then reinforces the desire for another dose of norepinephrine (adrenaline) that was released during the previous period of sexual activity. Soon that desire becomes a need, and the cycle has begun. Our bodies tell us that we have a need. We participate in an activity that supplies that need. Our bodies then reward us for having supplied that need, and then the cycle is repeated.

The complete neuro-chemical process that takes place as we become addicted is too complicated to spell out in this short article, but perhaps you can see that there is much more to our downward spiral and our insistence upon returning to the regurgitated remains of our past activities than we have been led to believe. Some people believe that addiction is a spiritual problem only. “Just get over it!” they say. Then there are those who say that it is only a physical problem. “My addiction is a sickness. I’ll always have to fight this disease,” they would have us believe.

The truth is that addiction is a spiritual problem with physical manifestations that cannot be overcome entirely without a divine touch from the God who created us. It is indeed a spiritual battle. This continued destructive behavior has its roots in the spiritual warfare that rages around us. But it is also a physical and psychological one. We are a spirit, we have a soul, and we live in a body. The three work together without our giving the process a second thought.

Symptoms of a sex addict

- Sexual acting out despite serious consequences and repeated attempts at control.
- Inability to stop (or powerlessness) despite adverse consequences, with frequent use of denial, rationalization, and minimization to hide both the problem and the underlying shame.

- Neglect or sacrifice of important social, family, occupational, or recreational activities because of sexual behavior.
- An ongoing desire or effort to limit sexual behavior.
- An inordinate amount of time spent in obtaining sex, being sexual, or recovering from sexual experience.
- Risk taking.
- Living a double life.
- Decrease in one's spiritual or religious life. A constant violation of one's value system.
- Endangering one's professional and family life.

Accountability

We carry our pride like a badge of honor. We use it for a shield against anything that might threaten our self-esteem. We hide behind it when other people attempt to offer suggestions which, if followed, would require us to change our courses in life. We know better than anyone else what is best for ourselves. After all, we managed to bring ourselves to the place in life where we are. And we will do a fine job of going on the next step.

Therein lays one of the greatest problems who are addicted face. Because they believe that they know what is best for them, and because they do not want anyone violating their personhood by telling them what to do, they continue blindly down the same road of destruction that brought them to the place where they are. That place may be one where, because of his pornography addiction, his marriage has fallen apart, his financial situation has deteriorated, and worst of all, his spiritual relationship has all but disappeared.

It is crucial to come to the understanding that they cannot fight this battle alone. Perhaps you are one who considers himself to be a "self-made," one who has fought his way up the corporate ladder - only to find that you were the only one there when you arrived. If you are an active you should consider that by yourself, you managed to crawl all the way to where you are. In the world of use and addiction, the ladder goes down, not up. It goes straight down into a pit that has the ability to totally consume any of us.

Accountability is often discounted as nothing more than a crutch, a place to hide one's own inadequacies. Objections to accountability are usually rooted in pride -

that same pride that says you don't need help. God takes a different view, though.

"As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."
(Proverbs 27:17 NKJV)

"Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:11-12 NKJV)

Admitting the need for accountability is not surrendering your individuality. It is not the sign of a weak person. It is not a crutch that might allow one to think he can walk without assistance when in fact, he can't. Instead, it is the sign of a man who is big enough to admit that he cannot do everything. Accountability is one of the most powerful weapons we have in the battle against addiction. The use of that weapon allows us to admit to our friend (our accountability partner) that we have come against something that, at least for a moment was more powerful than we were. It allows us to admit that we need help to fight that enemy, but in a way that brings no reproach. Ultimately, it provides support in a battle that simply cannot be fought alone.

Conquer Impure Thoughts

- 1) Begin a war that you expect to win.
- 2) Replace the secret pictures in the gallery of your mind, by visualizing the Word of God
- 3) Make a covenant with your eyes.
- 4) Memorize Scripture, and consistently quote the Word.
- 5) Remove hidden provisions for defeat. Romans 13:14 "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."
- 6) Reinforce your will by a bond of accountability to God.
- 7) Realize that winning a war means winning many battles.
- 8) Learn to live in the fear of God, which is the hatred of all evil.
- 9) Learn God's limitation to curiosity.
- 10) Use sensual thoughts as a springboard to Spiritual Victory.

I Peter 1:13 – “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

II Corinthians 10:5- “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

Isaiah 26: 3-“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

Philippians 4:8-“ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Proverbs 12:5- “The thoughts of the righteous are right; but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.”

God gave us emotions so we can feel good about the things we think about. Perverted emotions will feel good about doing something bad. Emotional problems are the inability to express healthy emotions. Satan is not a creator, but an extorter, who would do anything to have possession of our thoughts. There is no such thing as a failing Christian unless he quits before the victory is won. If there is any pleasure at all in something that is wrong, it is only temporary.

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