IS IT ADDICTION?
Criteria for Determining Sexual Addiction
Compiled by Laura M. Brotherson, LMFT, CST, CFLE (Rev 3/2017)

Sexual Addiction is often called Sex, Love or Relationship Addiction. The addictive behaviors may include addiction to pornography and/or masturbation (i.e. sex with self), sexual acting out with others (i.e. frequent casual sex, repeated affairs, prostitutes, etc.), or addiction to "love"/relationships/attraction/the feeling of being "wanted" or "desired" (i.e. repeated emotional/sexual affairs, etc.). It's the underlying compulsive/addictive cycle more than the particular self-medicating "drug of choice" that constitutes addiction. Because of the similarities of the addictive cycle, this information may be helpful in understanding any type of addiction or other compulsive behavior (i.e. drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, etc.). The addictive cycle may even lead to a substitution or alternating of one compulsive behavior for another. Even if the compulsive behavior has stopped being demanding, controlling, manipulative, or putting sexual pressure on one's spouse can all indicate that the underlying causes of the compulsive behavior are still present and need to be addressed.

P-A-T-H-O-S − Sex Addiction Self Assessment
1. **P - Preoccupied** -- Do you often find yourself preoccupied with sexual thoughts?
2. **A - Ashamed** -- Do you hide some of your sexual behavior from others?
3. **T - Treatment** -- Have you ever sought help for sexual behavior you did not like?
4. **H - Hurt Others** -- Has anyone been hurt emotionally because of your sexual behavior?
5. **O - Out of Control** -- Do you feel controlled by your sexual desire?
6. **S - Sad** -- When you have sex, do you feel discouraged/depressed afterwards?

Other Sex Addiction Criteria –
What Makes it an Addiction?
1. **Loss of Control/Unmanageable** -- behavior in which you do more than you intend to or want to; powerlessness

~ UNHEALTHY MEANS OF COPING ~
To understand the nature of addiction without demonizing the person involved, you might think of the behavior as an:
- unhealthy
- stress-managing
- self-medicating
- mood-altering
- COPING MECHANISM ...

Other Indicators of Sexual Addiction
- Depression related to acting out and/or sexual aversion
- History of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse; early sexualization and sexual distortions
- Sexual behavior is defined in self-medicating terms (i.e. intoxicating, tension relief, pain reliever, sleep aid)
Persistent pursuit of high-risk or self-destructive behavior
Sexual arousal is higher to high-risk or self-destructive behaviors than to safe sexual behavior
Other addictions needed in conjunction with the sexual behavior to achieve the desired effect (i.e. alcohol, substance abuse, gambling, eating disorders, compulsive spending)
Deception around one's behavior
Addiction present among other family members
Extreme self-loathing due to compulsive behavior
Having intimate relationships where sex is avoided
Past and present crises due to sexual behavior
Diminished pleasure for routine sexual experiences
Comes from a "rigid" and "disengaged" family

Reference -- Dr. Patrick Carnes, Clinical Management of Sex Addiction, p. 12-13

Characteristics of Those with Sexual Addiction

- lonely, isolated, lacking accountability
- shame, self-loathing
- narcissism, self-focused
- repressed anger
- family of origin traumas
- co-dependent/dependent personality
- intimacy/connection disorders; marriage difficulties

Reference -- Dr. Patrick Carnes, Clinical Management of Sex Addiction, p. 12-13

Negative Core Beliefs of those with Sex/Love Addiction

1. I am a bad, unworthy person.
2. No one would love me as I am.
3. No one will meet my needs.
4. Sex/Love/Relationship is my most important need. (It's how I feel loved, and it's what I can always count on to comfort me and be there for me.)

Reference -- Dr. Patrick Carnes, Clinical Management of Sex Addiction, p. 12-13

Negative Consequences of Addictive Sexuality

- Dishonesty and lying
- Betraying those who love and trust you
- Neglecting and damaging family relationships and friendships
- Losing track of and wasting time
- Wasting resources of time, money, love and talents
- Sex becomes the central organizing force of life
- Ignoring/denying negative consequences to continue the behavior
- Violating personal values/beliefs despite wanting/pledging to stop

Reference -- Dr. Patrick Carnes, Clinical Management of Sex Addiction, p. 12-13

If It Isn’t Sex Addiction...What is it?

- a non-addictive habit
- lack of discipline
- a non-addictive means of meeting needs
- obsessive/compulsive behavior
- ADHD induced behavior
- Bipolar induced behavior

Reference -- Dr. Michael Sytsma, Advanced Sexual Addictions Counseling course packet, Institute for Sexual Wholeness

ADDICTION ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Take the Sexual Addiction Screening Test (SAST)

SAST - for Men / W-SAST - for Women

SAST - For Men
The Sexual Addiction Screening Test (SAST) is designed to assist in the assessment of sexually compulsive behavior which may indicate the presence of sex addiction. Developed in cooperation with hospitals, treatment programs, private therapists, and community groups, the SAST provides a profile of responses which help to discriminate between addictive and non-addictive behavior.

It is strongly encouraged that you pursue diagnosis and treatment with a trained professional. This assessment is designed to help you decide whether you should seek further help.

Click the links below to take this brief assessment for men:

- SAST Assessment -- http://www.sexhelp.com/am-i-a-sex-addict/sasttest

SAST Score Range

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For Partner's
Partner Sexuality and Sex Addiction Survey. If you are or have been in a relationship with someone who has a sex addiction, you have inevitably been affected by your experience. This screening survey is part of a research study being conducted by Dr. Stefanie Carnes which aims to learn about how partners of sexual addicts are sexually affected by their relationship(s). Participating in this survey can bring you clarity about your own sexual health and provide you with a brief report about your own sexuality.

W-SAST - for Women
The Women's Sexual Addiction Screening Test (W-SAST) is designed to assist women in the assessment of compulsive sex/love addictive behavior.

Click the link below to take this brief assessment for women:


Stress, Shame, Secrecy & Self-Loathing are the Lifeblood of Addiction.