

# IS IT ADDICTION?

## Criteria for Determining Sexual Addiction

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**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.*

### 5 - Cs for Understanding Addiction

1. **C** raving -- psychological or physical
2. **C** ompulsion to use -- can't **C** ontrol it
3. **C** ontinued use (can't stop) despite adverse **C** onsequences.

Reference -- *The Porn Trap* by Wendy Maltz; and  
Yourbrainonporn.com

### P-A-T-H-O-S – Sex Addiction Self Assessment

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

Reference -- Patrick Carnes, 2012 *Journal Addictive Medicine*

### 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 ...**

often learned in youth, that has become hardwired into the brain over time. The compulsive behavior tends to have more control over us than we have over it.

2. **Compulsive Behavior** -- a pattern of repetitive, out-of-control behavior; you know it's self-destructive, but you can't stop
3. **Efforts to Stop** -- unsuccessful repeated attempts to stop the behavior
4. **Loss of Time** -- significant amounts of time lost doing and/or recovering from the behavior
5. **Preoccupation** -- thinking a lot about, obsessing about or because of the behavior
6. **Inability to Fulfill Obligations** -- the behavior interferes with work, school, family, friends, etc.
7. **Destructive** -- destroys relationships, self-respect, etc. and causes negative social, legal, financial, physical consequences
8. **Continuation Despite Consequences** -- failure to stop the behavior despite having problems because of it (i.e. social, legal, financial, physical)
9. **Escalation/Tolerance** -- need for behavior to be increasingly more intense, more frequent or more risky to increase the buzz; progressive
10. **Losses** -- losing, limiting, or sacrificing valued parts of life such as hobbies, family, relationships, and/or work
11. **Withdrawal** -- stopping the behavior causes considerable distress, anxiety, restlessness, irritability, or physical discomfort
12. **Medicative** -- used to alter/escape/numb feelings ("B-L-A-H-S-T," pain/trauma, etc.); self-soothing, self-medicating, mood-altering; seeking pleasure

Reference -- Dr. Patrick Carnes, Dr. Mark Laaser, Dr. Michael Sytsma

### 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

### 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.)

### 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

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

### 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/sex-addiction-test>
- SAST Assessment & Recovery Resources -- <http://www.recoveryzone.com/tests/sex-addiction/SAST/index.php>

SAST Score Range	No Addiction	Addiction
0 - 4	89%	11%
5 - 8	90%	10%
9 - 12	77%	23%
13+	4%	97%

#### 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:

- W-SAST Assessment -- <http://www.sexualrecovery.com/resources/self-tests/wsast.php>