

# New Holistic Approaches to Overcoming Unhealthy/Compulsive Sexual Behaviors in Marriage

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## OVERVIEW

The following provides an expanded perspective and more holistic approach to treating sex addiction/unwanted, compulsive, or out-of-control sexual behaviors. Pornography issues in a marriage do not always indicate an addiction. This is not just a sexual issue but has mental, emotional and relational components as well. While the 12 steps “addiction recovery model” and related approaches are very helpful in the overall healing of the heart and soul, the following additional approaches may be needed as well.

1. **Mindfulness** – the ability to slow down, be more present and notice your internal and external environment through the senses without judgment. Learn to notice what your body is feeling and what your mind is thinking. Reduce the need to disconnect from yourself to manage or escape negative emotions. (Search for “mindful” on my [Resource Page](#).)
2. **Acceptance & Self-Compassion** – accepting thoughts and feelings even when they are negative; practicing self-acceptance and self-compassion.
3. **Process Trauma & Betrayal** – processing and healing the trauma of betrayal within the relationship. The help of a professional who specializes in addiction recovery will likely be needed. Using the self-help [EFT tapping tool](#) can also be invaluable. (Search for EFT tapping on my [Resource Page](#).)
4. **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)** – used to increase psychological flexibility—embracing your thoughts and feelings rather than fighting or feeling guilty about them.
5. **Emotional Intelligence** – the ability to identify, address and regulate specific emotions. Unhealthy compulsive behaviors are often used as an emotional coping system to numb or escape emotional discomfort.
6. **Connection & Vulnerability** – recognizing both partner’s pain without making one’s more valid or important than the other. How can each spouse can look at their role in the current relationship and make changes toward greater connection instead of greater isolation. (“The opposite of addiction is connection.”)
7. **Healthy Sexual Development** – developing healthy sexuality for both spouses. Invites both spouses to gain healthy sexual information and look within themselves to embrace and develop sexual wholeness. Move from fear, shame and blame regarding sex to openness and understanding as you learn more about each other’s differing sexuality. Sexual issues are relationship issues. (See my resources – [“Characteristics of Healthy and Unhealthy Sexuality”](#) and [“First Steps for Him & Her in Creating a Sextraordinary Marriage”](#) and [“How to Embrace Your God-Given Sexuality.”](#))
8. **Addressing Underlying Issues** – Stress, Depression, Anxiety, Bi-polar, Trauma, Shame, Childhood issues, Narcissism, Emotional/Social skill deficits, OCD, ADHD, etc. (“Porn use may be like the ‘cough’ of an underlying ‘cold.’”)