



Sexual Addiction: The Pathway To Treatment Part II



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Part one of the sexual addiction article discusses the behaviors of those affected by the condition. It may be helpful to recall that sexual addiction includes the excessive focus and preoccupation with sexual behaviors that may be high risk and occur in various forms of sexual activity.

The sex addict often has distorted thinking that actually rationalizes their behaviors and perpetuates the problem. Treatment begins with a professional who is trained in the assessment, intervention and treatment of sexual addiction. Usually people with the disorder reach out for help once they are faced with the loss of something of value to them such as their marriage, job or legal consequences.

Sexual addiction may occur by itself or with other disorders. Assessment of sexual addiction includes identifying co-existing disorders and to not incorrectly identify sexual addiction as some other psychiatric disorder. Treatment depends on accurate identification of the problem in order to determine the most suitable treatment plan. The pathway of the treatment process is to intervene, treat and modify the sexually addictive behaviors. The beginning of the pathway is to set realistic goals and for the affected person(s) to believe that it is possible to recover.

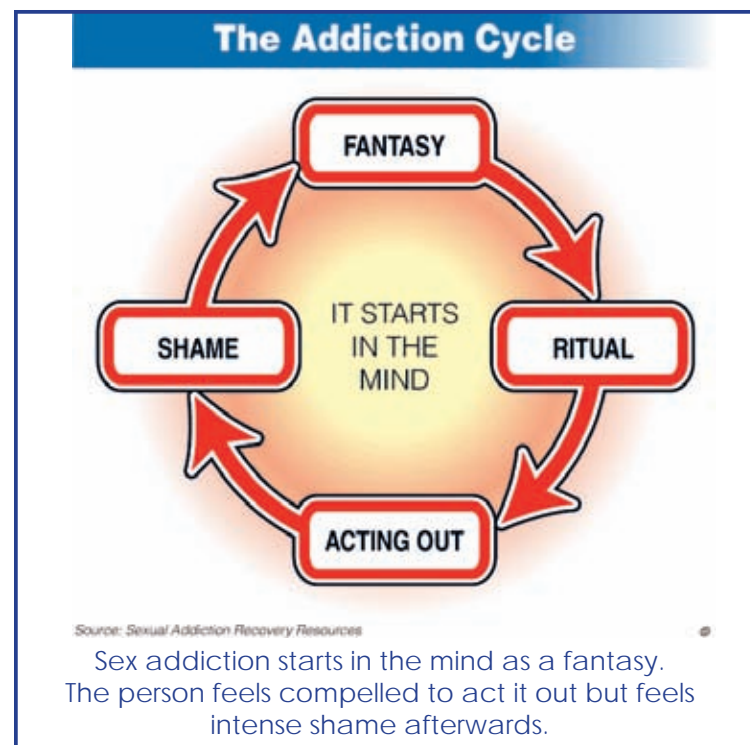
Intervention

The process of intervention is to identify the thoughts that predominate in the sexually addicted person and the triggers that set them into action. Getting at these thoughts requires a thorough psychiatric evaluation and the investment of time by those seeking treatment. It is not impossible to recover but it is a process that requires one to be actively engaged in their treatment and to follow the boundaries set in the course of the treatment plan. Since sex addicts often seek help because of a triggering event, these events must be managed as well. For instance a marriage in trouble because of the sex addicts' behaviors, a job on the line or a pending legal action will require that the affected person learn how to navigate these stressors while in treatment. Subsequently the objective of treatment is to mitigate the offending behaviors, manage the underlying causes of disruptive behaviors and enable the person(s) affected to live a life free of malicious and/or self-destructive conduct.

Treatment

A person in treatment for sexual addiction should not be alone. We have already said the sex addict usually reaches out only after a life-threatening or life-altering event such as loss of marriage, job, or a legal crisis. Once the sex addict is exposed they are usually full of regret and may lose hope they can heal. Family, friends or those closest to the addict should be involved. Individual, family and/or marital counseling may be a crucial part of treatment.

Treatment is aimed at helping the sexually addicted person to develop healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors. It is not aimed at a life free of sexual activity but free of deviant sexual behavior. Treatment for sexual addiction is long and involved in order to help the addict control compulsive urges and acting on them. Medications may be required



depending on the individual but whatever the treatment plan, it has to be tailored to the needs of the individual and their family.

Recovery

Recovery from sexual addiction can be described as modifying one's self-damaging sexually addictive behaviors to healthy sexual behaviors and personal satisfaction. The target behaviors range from mild to severe and include masturbation, multiple affairs, multiple sexual partners, unsafe sex, consistent use of pornography, prostitution or use of prostitutes for example.

Recovery is a life long process that begins with admitting the problem exists. Its underlying causes include but are not limited to genetics, trauma, child abuse and co-occurring conditions that lie at the core of the sexual addict's compulsive behaviors. But even when compulsive behaviors cease for those in treatment, the havoc caused by those behaviors has usually left a path of destruction along the way. Reconstructing one's life from the affects of sexual addiction is a daunting task that will not happen as quickly as one may desire. It is hard and it is tedious; it is also one of the reasons treatment plans engage family members

and often family and/or marital therapy.

Recovery requires getting the appropriate treatment from a trained professional. The professional works with the sex addict to help them form healthy sexual behaviors and learn how to achieve personal satisfaction without the malicious behaviors of sexual addiction. Simultaneously, recovery requires getting at the reasons the addictive behavior is there in the first place. No one treatment is for everyone but there are evidence-based courses of action that have been successful for those who are willing to invest the time, effort and sincere belief they can overcome sexual addiction. We are glad to help you explore the best course of action for you. Please contact our office and regain control of your life.

Being alone in all this is scary and unnecessary. Treatment for attaining these life goals is available. We are glad to assess and provide professional care for you or your loved one for these debilitating concerns. Please contact our office directly at (609) 484-0770 for help and details.

CHARLES MEUSBURGER, MD

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