

DUCKLOW'S

# OUT OF CONTROL (SEXUALLY COMPULSED)

Most people who think that they are “sexual addicts” are probably not. They may be angry, lonely, compulsed towards some sexual behaviours, overly guilty with what they have done, but they are probably not “addicts.” They are more likely “obsessive compulsive.”

In the addiction model, counting the days and months of being “clean” defines sobriety though the addict is never considered fully healed. She is always an alcoholic or an addict. Now there is a problem or two here: if the named “sexual addict” is married then, unlike alcohol or cocaine use, (s)he is expected to engage in sexual behaviours with her spouse. So sobriety for those sexually compulsed is measured more precisely – that is, clean of undesirable sexual behaviours while engaging in desirable sexual behaviours.

Sexual arousal and expression is considered “normal” and adult sexual intercourse is considered a “need” (more than a “want”). Married, adult sexual intimacy is respected, expected and desirable, even sacramental to some.

In counterpoint to this, sexual addiction is a phenomenon where the person (usually male) engages in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior despite increasing negative consequences to self and others (usually the female spouse). In other words, a sex addict will continue to engage in harming sexual behaviors despite facing potential infection risks, possible financial ruin, overwhelming guilt and shame, shattered covenants, hurt towards children and extended family or even arrest.

He or she is out of control. And stopping sex with one’s loved partner is not the answer.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders (DSM-IV) describes sex addiction as “distress about a pattern of repeated sexual relationships involving a succession of lovers who are experienced by the individual only as things to be used.” According to the manual, sex addiction also involves “compulsive searching for multiple partners, compulsive fixation on an unattainable partner, compulsive masturbation, compulsive love relationships and compulsive sexuality in a relationship.”

The emphasis is on compulsion (behaviour) following an obsession (this is, an intrusive thought).

Think of sexual compulsion this way: first comes the trigger or the temptation. Following this comes the thought that intrudes into one’s consciousness. Then comes the behaviours or the compulsion to satisfy this thought that has produced such a need. Eventually, the “out of control” person becomes obsessed with filling a hunger or temptation.

DUCKLOW'S

6420 FOX STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, BC V7W 2C4  
WWW.THEDUCKLOWS.CA | 604 921 9542

What this definition does not well emphasize is the hurt and harm that this causes the one with the disorder and his or her intimates. Seldom have I seen such grief, angst and guilt as with people with unwanted erotic thought intrusions and predictable behaviours resulting from those thoughts. It is like slavery, a kind of bondage to the worst of one's self. And the spouse or partner feels remorse, anger, hurt and resentment; often struggling with ending the relationship with someone she loves.

Counselling or therapy is helpful and necessary but is usually not sufficient. Healing comes through being involved in a community of family, friends and faith as well. Physical well-being is important and this involves eating well, and exercising out of doors (and outside the gym). Antidepressant medications are effective for both anxiety and depression and need to be considered. This, of course, will involve you speaking with your medical doctor and complying with her prescription.

Depression associated with these addictions and compulsions is difficult but is tolerable and, in fact, most depressions diminish and fade in about a year's time and never return. There are kinds of depressions that exist like a part of a person's personality and this needs to be handled, tolerated and worked through.

Some think of compulsions and addictions as a battle and if this competitive metaphor works for you, then use it. Others think of this life experience as an "uncomfortable witness" to one's life and this to be accepted, appreciated and understood. You will find your way in working with your experience that is uniquely you.

You might as well be an expert in this venture, so I have listed some books and websites that I want you to approach. Some of the resources are spiritually focused and some are in the broader social and professional community. Let me know what you found helpful and make your own recommendations as well.

1. Here is where to begin. It is a story about a man in a "Manhole." It is very powerful and true. It is not appropriate for children or youth. You will find this in the web site "BrainPhysics." <http://www.brainphysics.com/manhole.php>
2. I would like you to subscribe to the couple version of X3Pure. There is a \$100 cost to it but it is a good and worthy commitment. You can find it at <http://www.x3pure.com/>.
3. K9 Web Protection is a free and very effective web program to assist in the control and elimination of cyber pornography. You can find it here: <http://www1.k9webprotection.com/>.
4. You might also wish to read the Florida State web site on compulsive cybersex behaviour -- <http://flfamily.org/get-help/porn-addiction/>. There are good resources here.
5. Perhaps you would value reading "The Male Brain" and "The Female Brain" (both by Louann Brizendine) to understand a bit more about sexuality and brain physiology. Recommended.
6. Patrick Carnes (<http://www.gentlepath.com/home.php>) is one of the early researchers and teachers.

7. Read something on marriage and Family Systems Theory – I recommend Ronald Richardson’s “Couples in Conflict.” Here is the Amazon.ca address: <http://tinyurl.com/lmblc38>

8. Participation in a sexual recovery group (If you contact me at the email below, I may be able to recommend a group for you.).

So now you have started. The road to freedom is exciting and fraught with hopefulness! I look forward to working with you on your success.