

Problematic Online Sexual Behavior

Frequently Asked Questions about Problematic Online Sexual Behavior

Is my online sexual behavior out of control?

This question is complex and cannot be completely answered here. Look at the “Critical Questions to Ask Yourself” listed below to get a general sense if you may have a problem. Also, There are a number of short checklists and questionnaires to help decide if you should seek further help, but these should not be used to determine if your online sexual behavior is out of control. One such questionnaire can be found at <http://www.sexhelp.com> or you may wish to visit the National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity website (<http://www.ncsac.org>) for more information.

Is my spouse/partner’s online sexual behavior out of control?

You may wish to review the “Questions to Ask Yourself” below and respond to them as if you were your partner. Since you are asking the question, it may already be an indicator that there are consequences associated with your partner’s online sexual behavior...specifically, your relationship. Books such as *In the Shadows of the Net*, and *Cybersex Exposed* have chapters that address your situation. You may also want to consider attending supportive therapy with a counselor or psychologist, or attend a support group such as Co-SA, CoSLAA, or Al-Anon.

Are you considered sexually compulsive if you look at pornography once or twice a week or have had an affair?

Many people think that the type of behavior and how often you engage in a sexual behavior will tell you whether or not you are sexually compulsive, but this isn’t completely true. There are a number of things to consider. First, consider the critical questions listed below to get a general sense if you may have a sexual compulsivity problem. If you are already asking yourself these questions, chances are you have experienced some consequences as a result of your sexual behavior. Although frequency and type of behavior are two considerations, there are many others that you should discuss with a professional who understands the disorder.

I would like to talk to someone about my out of control online sexual behavior. What should I do?

First, you should be aware that not all helping professionals believe that sexual behavior can be compulsive. You should seek out an objective helping professional that can help you determine if your behavior is a problem based on your experiences. No therapist should try to talk you “into” or “out of” a particular disorder. Rather, therapists are there to listen and help guide you to a solution. You may want to visit the National Council on Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity website. The website lists therapists who accept referrals for sexual compulsivity issues and you may find someone in your area that can conduct a more comprehensive evaluation for online sexual problems.

Should people with problematic online behavior attend 12-Step addiction meetings?

One of the common key characteristics in this group of people is poor socialization skills, inability to relate to others, and avoiding relationships. Therefore, it is often best to attend some form of group while receiving treatment for out of control online sexual behavior. The group may or may not be a 12-Step group, but this setting can allow individuals to practice new ways of interacting with others and try new behaviors in a safe setting. There are five fellowships that provide 12-Step support for sexual compulsivity. Visit the NCSAC website (listed below) for contact information on these groups. You may want to spend some time researching the groups to find one that fits your needs. Attending a 12-Step group is free and it is often recommended that you attend at least six times before you decide if the group is right for you. Other options include other self-help support groups, church groups designed to address sex or pornography problems, or therapy groups. Support groups work best when accompanied by individual therapy with a professional counselor.

Do people with problematic online sexual behavior ever recover fully?

Most professionals believe that sexual compulsives can lead healthy, normal lives with appropriate treatment. However, most also believe that you can never be “cured” of the compulsion and will need to monitor and maintain certain boundaries around sexual fantasy and behavior. This is not to suggest that you will need to be in therapy for the remainder of your life, but it often takes several years before an individual is aware of the complexities of their problem and is able to maintain a relapse prevention strategy on their own.

<p style="text-align: center;">Critical Questions to Ask Yourself</p> <p>(1) Do I feel like I've lost the ability to control my online sexual behavior? (e.g., crossed lines I didn't think I would cross, set limits that I have failed to meet, made promises to stop a behavior and then continued it, etc.)</p> <p>(2) Do I experience consequences because of my online sexual behavior? (e.g., miss work or call in late because of acting out, risking my relationships, loss of spirituality, legal consequences, etc.)</p> <p>(3) Do I constantly think about online sexual activity even when I don't want to? (e.g., spend hours online looking for sexual experiences, dream about sexual behavior regularly, spend time preparing for online sexual behaviors, dwell on past online sexual experiences, etc.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Selected Referral Resources</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Internet Behavior Consulting Company (952) 210-5778</p> <p style="text-align: center;">National Council on Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity (770) 541-9912 ncsac@mindspring.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Meadows (800) 632-3697 meadows@themedows.org</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sierra Tucson Treatment Facility (800) 842-4487 outreach@sierratucson.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Johns Hopkins Center for Marital and Sexual Health (410) 583-2688</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Selected Reading Resources</p> <p>Carnes, P. (1983). <i>Out of the shadows</i>. Hazelden Publishing. (800) 328-9000</p> <p>Carnes, P.J, Delmonico, D.L., & Griffin, E.J. (2001). <i>In the Shadows of the Net</i>. Hazelden Publishing. (800) 328-9000</p> <p>Delmonico, D. L., Griffin, E.J., & Moriarity, J. (2001). <i>Cybersex Unhooked</i>. Gentle Path Press. (800) 955-9853</p> <p>Schneider, J. & Weiss, R. (2001). <i>Cybersex Exposed</i>. Hazelden Publishing. (800) 328-9000</p> <p><i>Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity journal</i>. (2000) Volume 7 Issue 1-2. Special Issue on Internet sexuality Taylor and Francis Publishers. (800) 354-1420</p> <p><i>Sex and Relationship Therapy journal</i>. (2003). Special Issue on Cybersex. Taylor and Francis Publishers. (800) 354-1420</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Selected Online Resources</p> <p>Internet Behavior Consulting Company http://www.internetbehavior.com</p> <p>National Council on Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity http://www.ncsac.org</p> <p>Patrick J. Carnes' Sex Help Website http://www.sexhelp.com</p> <p>Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity Information & Resources http://www.healthymind.com</p> <p>Center for Online Internet Addiction http://www.netaddiction.com</p> <p>Sexual Addiction Recovery Resources http://www.sarr.org</p> <p>Co-Addict/Partner Resources http://www.jenniferschneider.com</p>
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