



# San Jose Counseling

## Successful Treatment Of Sexual Addictions

*Sexual or sex addiction, simply put, is the use of sex or pornography to address non-sexual emotional needs. Countless people from different cultures struggle with this condition, which not only disrupts their everyday life but also destroys it in the process.*

SEX ADDICTION WORKS AS A PROGRESSION. IF THE following situation sounds familiar to you or someone close to you then you are not alone:

- Your mind is bombarded with so many pornographic images that you find yourself distracted for hours.
- Your desire or drive to have sex, view pornography on the Internet or buy porn videos and magazines is so strong that you are willing to relinquish your primary responsibilities and obligations.
- As a result, you may be in financial debt and maybe out of a job and yet, you still continue to engage in sexual behavior that you know is risky.
- Not being able to stop the behavior despite numerous attempts and experiencing negative consequences

With access to pornography increasing online, sexual addictions are on the rise. The consequences can be devastating to not only the addict but also those close to him/her. It can leave an addict isolated, intensely anxious and depressed to the point of being suicidal. Low self-esteem, shame, hopelessness and despair are also common feelings experienced by sex addicts.

- 70% of sex addicts report severe marital or relationship problems
- 40% report the loss of a partner or spouse

The ramifications continue onto medical, financial and

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legal ones as well. Medical consequences may include HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as genital herpes, syphilis and gonorrhea. In addition, genital injury may result from excessive sexual activity or the use of foreign objects for sexual stimulation. Financial consequences of sex addiction may include the loss of one's job, getting sued over sexual harassment or sexual exploitation charges resulting in legal fees. Purchasing pornographic material, use of prostitutes, calling 900 phone numbers and traveling for the sole purpose of sexual contacts can create enormous debt in credit card bills and exhaust the financial resources of an addict often times to the point of bankruptcy.

Although this is not the case for all sexual addicts, for many addicts their sexual addiction has its roots in trauma endured during their childhood. According to Dr. Patrick Carnes in his book, “Contrary to Love” his research showed that 97% of sex addicts were emotionally abused, 72% were physically abused and 81% were sexually abused. Therefore, treatment will entail some form of counseling.

The addict has some options from which to choose such as: individual psychotherapy, Twelve Step programs or support groups. It is recommended that the addict pursue a combination of individual therapy in conjunction with Twelve Step program. As discussed in December's *Vanguard*, [Treat-](#)



ment of Trauma, many of the techniques to treat trauma can be used for successful recovery from sexual addictions, including Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). I have used this process in conjunction with the others mentioned in this column with my clients with great success.

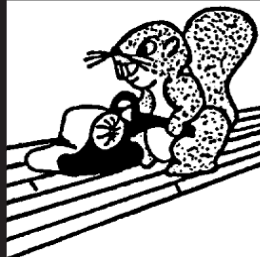
So once an individual decides to pursue therapy what will therapy look like? The goal of therapy will not revolve around abolishing sex altogether but rather to find alternate ways to cope with stress, anxiety or emotional pain. In other words, sex will be placed in its proper context. One of the first things accomplished in therapy is to understand the cycle of addiction. Here, the addict will get an understanding of short and long-term events that have contributed to his stress and anxiety.

Next, the therapist will help the addict identify some possible triggers (people, places, things, thoughts, feelings and behaviors that make one feel anxious or stressed and want to act out). Finally, due to the abuse in the addicts' family of origin, a majority of the counseling will entail grief work around the trauma and identifying cognitive distortions (errors we make in our thinking or thinking in extremes).

The use of targeted therapy with proven therapeutic modalities has provided us the needed tools to combat sexual addiction. This means there is good news. For those struggling with sexual addictions, they can recover and regain control of their lives. □

**Editor's Note:** *Invia Betjoseph is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFC 44618). He is the Founder and Director of San Jose Counseling, Inc., and the Co-Director of the LifeStar Program offered by the Addiction Recovery Center (ARC). He provides psychotherapy for individuals who are struggling with sexual addictions as well as couples who are experiencing emotional stress related to relationship conflict and extra-marital affairs. You may reach Invia at 408.920.1730, or email at [info@sanjosecounseling.com](mailto:info@sanjosecounseling.com), or visit his website, [www.sanjosecounseling.com](http://www.sanjosecounseling.com)*

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