



Sex Addiction

Are You Sexually Addicted?

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Sexual addiction is very common. In this article, you can go through a checklist to determine if you are sexually addicted or using sex addictively.

Addictions fall into two categories: substance addictions - such as food, drugs, alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine - and process addictions - such as TV, compulsive exercise, anger, obsessive thinking, controlling behavior and sex. Sexual addiction, or using sex addictively, is like any other addiction: it is using something or someone to fill you up or take away your pain. Whether you are sexually addicted, or using sex addictively, depends upon the frequency with which you use sex to fill yourself up or take away your pain.

Are you sexually addicted, or using sex addictively? Identifying with just one of the symptoms listed below may indicate a sexual addiction or a tendency to use sex addictively.

- I (occasionally) (frequently) use sex to feel good about myself.
- I (occasionally) (frequently) use sex to fill up the emptiness within myself.
- I (occasionally) (frequently) use sex to take away my aloneness.
- I (occasionally) (frequently) use sex to take away my anxiety.
- My sexuality is my identity.
- I think about sex most of the time.
- I often have trouble concentrating on other things due to my preoccupation with sex.
- I have an intense need for sex with my partner. If my partner doesn't want to have sex with me, I get angry or withdrawn.
- I sacrifice important parts of my relationship for sex. My sexual needs are more important to me than the relationship needs.
- My sexual needs, and my reaction when I do not get what I want, are interfering with my relationship with my partner.
- I have a compulsive need for sex with many partners.
- The pursuit of sex makes me careless of my own welfare and the welfare of others.
- I am chronically preoccupied with sexual fantasies.
- I am promiscuous.
- I am a compulsive masturbator.
- I have a compulsive need to masturbate while viewing pornography.
- I am a voyeur.

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- I am an exhibitionist.
- I feel controlled by my sexual desires.
- The only time I feel powerful is when I am imposing sex on someone.
- I am attracted to children.
- I act out with children.
- I force people to have sex with me.
- Hurting others turns me on sexually.
- Being hurt by others turns me on sexually.

Obviously, there are many different levels of sexual addiction. Sexual addiction, like all other addictions, comes from the empty wounded part of ourselves.

Throughout childhood and adolescence the ego part of ourselves - our wounded self - learns various ways to attempt to have control over getting love and avoiding pain. Many adolescent boys, as they start to masturbate, learn to use some form of sexuality to pacify their fears of rejection. Girls may learn to use their sexuality as a way to get love, as well as to avoid rejection. When a substance or behavior works to fill emptiness, take away loneliness, get attention or avoid pain, it often becomes an addiction.

If you identified with any of the above, you might want to consider that you are using sex to avoid personal responsibility for your own feelings. While it may make you feel good for the moment, in the long run it lowers your sense of self-worth. Anything you do to pacify yourself, rather than take responsibility for thinking and behaving in ways that enhance your positive sense of self, is self-abusive and self-abandoning. It would be akin to telling a child to watch pornography or masturbate when the child is feeling badly, rather than attend to the child's real needs. When you use an addiction to pacify your painful feelings rather than attend to them, you are abandoning yourself - your inner child.

Next time you want to act out sexually, perhaps you would be willing to stop for a moment and move into Step One of Inner Bonding - tuning in to your feelings. Are you feeling sad, alone, empty, depressed, rejected, abandoned, anxious, scared, angry, lonely, helpless or heartbroken? Instead of pacifying yourself with sex, you might want to move through the steps of Inner Bonding, noticing what you are telling yourself and how you are treating yourself that may be causing you to feel badly and to want to act out. You might want to learn how to bring in a compassionate spiritual Source of love and

comfort to fill the emptiness and aloneness, and nurture the painful life feelings of loneliness, heartbreak and helplessness over others. Learning and practicing the Inner Bonding process is a powerful way to heal your addictions.

Self-Judgment and Sexual Addiction

By Dr. Margaret Paul

There are many reasons for sexual addiction. In this article, discover how self-judgment and the resulting inner tension may be a major reason behind much sexual addiction.

Harv called me for phone consultations because his wife, Nancy, threatened to leave him if he did not get some help.

"I must be all messed up with my sexuality. I constantly want sex with my wife and she is fed up with it. When she won't have sex with me I'm angry and sullen. I love my wife and I don't want her to leave, but I can't seem to help myself. I'm very confused about all of this. Is it wrong to love your wife and want sex with her? Is it my problem or hers? Is there something wrong with her sexually that she doesn't want more sex with me?"

Harv filled me in on his background. He grew up with a highly judgmental and controlling father. It seemed like no matter how hard Harv worked on their farm and at school, it was never good enough for his father. As we worked together, it became apparent that Harv had learned his lessons well. His father's voice was constantly in his head, judging him for not working enough. And he beat himself up unmercifully if he made a mistake, telling himself with his self-judgments how inadequate he was.

"You certainly messed that up." "You are such a jerk." "You never do anything right." "What's the matter with you?" His wounded self was totally in charge, trying to have control over getting Harv to do everything right in order to get others' approval.

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The ubiquitous self-judgment meant that his inner child felt constantly abandoned, which created intense aloneness and emptiness within Harv. This made Harv dependent upon others to fill him up and make him feel good.

As we worked together, Harv became aware of the knot in his stomach, of aloneness and emptiness, that he felt whenever he judged himself. And he became aware of the fact that whenever he felt this knot in his stomach, he wanted to have sex to release this stress. As a child, he had learned to masturbate as his way to release the stress he felt from his father's constant judgment of him. He became addicted to using his orgasm as his way of managing his stress. Now, in his marriage, he was addicted to his wife releasing his tension. He believed that it was her job to provide this for him, since she was his wife.

Naturally, this did not lead to Nancy feeling loved by him or attracted to him. In no uncertain terms, she told him that she felt used by him and was no longer willing to have sex with him unless there was emotional intimacy and connection between them. She told him she was turned off by his neediness and was unwilling to just be a source of release for him.

Harv had not realized that his tension was being caused by his own self-judgments. He believed that his tension was caused by outside circumstances, such as problems at work or disapproval from other people. As he started to become more aware of his inner system, he saw that each time he judged himself, he felt that knot, and each time he felt the knot, he wanted sex to release it.

As we explored his beliefs about why it was so important to judge himself, he learned that he believed if he didn't work hard enough or if he made mistakes, he was a bad person. He felt he needed to judge himself to get himself to work hard enough and not make mistakes, in order to be a good person.

As long as Harv believed he was a bad person if he didn't work hard enough, he would judge himself to get himself to work harder and do things right. Through our work together, Harv learned to embrace his essential goodness - his caring, compassion, gentleness and tenderness. He was able to see his wonderful qualities in his relationships with his small children, whom he dearly loved. When he learned to define his goodness internally, instead of externally through

his work and performance, he was gradually able to let go of his self-judgments.

As a result of his Inner Bonding work, Harv is no longer using sex addictively. He approaches Nancy for sex only when he is feeling happy, peaceful and loving. He has discovered that there is nothing wrong with Nancy's sexuality - that she is wonderfully passionate when feeling loved rather than used!

Using Sex Addictively

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Find out what to do if you are using sex addictively - to avoid anxiety, take away stress, fill up emptiness or get validated.

Robert consulted with me because his wife, Andrea, was no longer interested in having sex with him. "Andrea says she feels objectified when we make love, and I don't know what that means," he stated. "I love her and I don't think I see her as an object."

"Well, when you want to make love to her, why are you wanting to make love? What is motivating you?" I asked.

As we explored this question, it became apparent that Robert's desire for Andrea was generally motivated, not only by his physical need for sex, but also by his need to be validated by her and to relieve his stress. No time in his discussion with me did he say he wanted to make love to her as an expression of his love for her. At no time did he state that there were many ways he enjoyed sharing his love with her, such as spending time together, sharing fun, affection, cuddling. His focus in being with Andrea was in having sex with her, and if she didn't want to, he was generally angry or withdrawn. While he professed that he was expressing his love when I asked him about it, his behavior was anything but loving.

"So, if she doesn't feel turned on to you, and would rather cuddle or spend time together in some other way, that's not okay with you? You don't stay loving with her unless she does what you want?"

"Yeah, I guess so. I guess that's what I do."

Robert was quite distressed to learn that this is why Andrea felt objectified, and also to learn that he was using sex addictively. Anything we use outside ourselves to relieve stress, validate ourselves and fill ourselves up can become an addiction. In Robert's case, he was using sex to avoid dealing with his stress and low self-esteem. He was using Andrea and sex as a Band-Aid to temporarily alleviate anxiety. And, he confessed, he went further with his addiction. He would masturbate to pornography and attend expensive strip clubs in his efforts to avoid responsibility for his own feelings and needs. Underneath his addictive behavior, Robert felt deeply insecure and afraid much of the time. Rather than dealing with his fears and insecurities, he was using sex, just as someone else might use food, drugs or alcohol.

As long as Robert was coming to Andrea needy rather than loving, there was nothing for her to feel turned on to. Andrea wanted their sex to be an expression of their love for each other, not a way to relieve Robert's anxiety or fill his emptiness, and she had reached the place in her own growth where she was no longer willing to be used by him.

Fortunately, Robert was motivated to do the Inner Bonding work necessary to heal his sexual addiction. Through his work with Inner Bonding, Robert was able to establish, for the first time in his life, a connection with a spiritual source of love and guidance. Through learning to work with his spiritual guidance, he was able to begin to heal the limiting beliefs he had absorbed as he was growing up, about his adequacy and worth. As he began to discover the beauty within him - his gentleness, integrity, creativity and ability to care about others - he began to feel much better about himself. He learned to speak up for himself in work and social situations, as well as with Andrea. As he learned to be loving with himself, the emptiness within him that led to his neediness gradually diminished. The more he was loving with himself, the more powerful he felt, and the more he was able to express his love to Andrea. When the day came that Andrea actually felt his love rather than his neediness and emptiness, her sexual feelings for Robert returned.

Robert's desire for pornography and strip clubs gradually vanished, as he learned to take full responsibility for his own feelings and needs. He still loves to make love with Andrea, but he no longer gets angry and withdrawn if she is not turned on. He no longer needs her to take away his anxiety or validate his adequacy. He is no longer using sex addictively.