

## Addicted to Sex?

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Most people say they love sex and it frequently occupies their thoughts. They often want more, and are unhappy or anxious when they have to do without for extended periods of time. If the subject were drugs, alcohol or gambling we would be concerned about their “obsession,” but sex is a natural, healthy biological process – so we celebrate their healthy sexuality.

But what about when a line is crossed, when your interest in sex starts to get in the way of normal daily functioning? How about when you realize you’ve spent the last six hours looking at pornography online, or video chatting with others in an attempt to have a sexual experience? How about when you realize you don’t have money for the rent or you’ve maxed out your credit cards due to the prostitutes or hotel rooms you’ve paid for? How about when you’ve lost another job due to violating Internet policies or from coming in late due to staying out all night seeking sexual experiences? Or when the most important person in your life leaves you because you’ve broken too many promises to change your behavior?

Whether or not this behavior meets the scientific criteria for an *addiction* or an *obsession*, we at The Buehler Institute aren’t too concerned with labels; we are here to help people change behavior that is impairing their lives. We don’t judge people or proselytize any particular moral sexual philosophy – only you can decide what is acceptable sexual behavior. What we do is assist you when you decide that your behavior has become “out of control,” and harmful to yourself, your relationships, your occupation.

Not sure your sexual activity is affecting your life in a negative way? Here are some areas to consider:

**Work:** lost jobs, embarrassment by co-workers; lost promotions; fewer awards, general distraction and lost productivity.

**Money:** high cell phone charges; inability to purchase things you want/need because money is going towards sexual activities; no savings or retirement funds; creditors calling.

**Relationships:** spouse has left you, less or no contact with your children; have less time to maintain relationships that used to be important to you; disappointed parents; deceiving your partner or children about money you've spent; you've begun isolating yourself.

**Health:** less sleep than necessary to function at your highest level; sexually transmitted diseases; constant fear of being discovered causing anxiety and depression, overweight and stressed, constant sweating.

**Time:** excessive hours on-line; driving and looking for activity; waiting, waiting, waiting for that connection or that view through a window; less time to spend with your spouse and children; ultimately, lost years of your life.

**Other:** lost reputation; anger at yourself and others; feeling helpless and hopeless; overall loss of self-worth that affects all areas of your life.

(Thanks to *The Sex Addiction Workbook* by Sbraga and O'Donohue, 2003.)

If you meet three or more of these criteria, or if any one of them is causing great impairment or anxiety, please give us a call at The Buehler Institute – there is help for you.

Another area that we at The Buehler Institute are especially cognizant of is the high prevalence of co-occurring addictions with regards to sexual compulsivity. Many people with sex addictions also struggle with problematic drug and alcohol use, gambling,

shopping and even computer gaming and extreme sports. One addiction often feeds or triggers another, and getting lost in one area will find us wandering around in another. Understanding this dynamic, and a thorough explanation of how and why addiction is a brain disease, with chemicals responding similarly in all of these areas of compulsion will help us make sense of our behavior, and to understand why the interventions we apply will help balance all areas of your life.

If this article resonates for you, please call The Buehler Institute at 949-271-6330. We promise a supportive, non-judgmental environment in which you can explore and heal your sexuality.