

# **Compulsive Sexual Behavior and Pornography Use**

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Compulsive sexuality and pornography use are fueled by shame, past wounds and emotional patterns that are often beyond our conscious understanding. Because the treatment of these patterns has often been pathologized by professionals in the field, such problems can often become worse if not treated by a compassionate and very knowledgeable professional. It is a damaging myth that all people who engage in compulsive use of pornography and sexual acting out are “addicts”. Use itself, is often an unknowing attempt to heal the self of underlying issues unknown to the user.

In traditional forms of therapy the compulsive user is immediately called an “addict” with little examination of the reason for use and the often frenetic activity that drives it. Being called an “addict” increases shame, guilt and confusion. These feelings can perpetuate a vicious cycle of use, shame, abstinence, and failure. The underlying reasons for compulsive use have not been addressed. Usually most professionals consider excessive porn use or acting out sexual behavior pathological and a period of complete abstinence from all sexual behavior is a common recommended practice. However, the behavior patterns always occur for a very good reason, such as an unconscious desire to heal the Self. In my many years of treating this problem I have never found complete abstinence a workable solution to these difficulties. This is irrational as it prohibits individuals from developing a healthy relationship to sex, intimacy and their own erotic needs and desires. I believe the approach to healing should always be one based on the uniqueness of each problem and individual. In my many years of working with these problems I have never found abstinence to work. This is like telling a person to stop eating. We all need sex just as we need food. In my early years as a therapist I focused on treating eating disorders with an individualized approach. Abstinence in these cases was as well irrational. People need to eat and it is obviously healthy to do so just as it is healthy to have sex.

## ***My Approach to Treatment***

The healing philosophy behind my work is to help you develop an understanding that the self expression of your sexuality that has worked in the past may no longer be work in the present. Your behaviors may have become out of control due to seeking out more extreme forms of erotic stimulation. The deeper you move into more extreme forms of sexual acting out or pornography use, the more your shame increases. The phases of therapy I use are threefold.

First I help you decrease your shame.

Next, I work to help you to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning behind your use by analyzing your sexual fantasies.

Finally, I assist you in changing your Erotic Template.

The Erotic Template is eloquently described in the book “The Erotic Mind” by Jack Morin, Ph.D. It does not mean that you stop having sex. It simply means that your sex life becomes more connected, intimate and ultimately much more satisfying to you and/or your partner. You begin to have the kind of sexual experiences that you ultimately have always hoped to have.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of what your compulsive behaviors may mean it is important to examine the sexual fantasies that drive your behavior as well as the type of pornography you look at with objectivity and acceptance. What you are attracted to in fantasy or through pornography use--also a form of sexual fantasy--always has deeper meaning. Sharing these intimate details of your sexual fantasies can be difficult and some people may feel shame and embarrassment. It is very important that the therapist you choose feels completely comfortable with their own sexuality and can talk about sex with personal comfort and knowledge. Your behaviors can become even more deeply entrenched if an environment of objective openness and compassionate acceptance is not provided.

## ***Sexual Fantasy Analysis***

Part of the healing process I use, I call Sexual Fantasy Analysis. Sexual Fantasy Analysis is similar to dream

analysis. Sexual fantasies are similar to dream states. This is one of the reasons they are so hard to break out of. Pornography use as well is a form of fantasy which often produces an altered state of consciousness. It is like entering a dream. All dreams as well as sexual fantasies have much deeper meaning than that which appears on the surface. It is rare that we can see ourselves objectively in this type of analysis as many aspects of the fantasy much be understood and it is hard to see the trees through the forest and the intricate meaning behind the fantasy.

We all have sexual fantasies. Sexual fantasies are normal and healthy. Sexual fantasies often lead to orgasm and exist to help us heal. The deepest wounds in your past as well as the most difficult problems in your life are often expressed in the form of sexual fantasy that leads to orgasm. Following are a few simplified examples of how sexual fantasy analysis can help you to heal compulsive sexuality, pornography use, the wounds in your past, and the most difficult patterns in your personality that you may wish to change.

Not all, but some people with extreme self-hatred or perhaps an abusive or neglectful past may entertain fantasies, look at pornography, or act out generics that involve physical abuse of the self or another. Upon orgasm there is a temporary relief from the pain in one's past or present with the act of orgasm offering an attempt to overcome, heal, or conquer the deepest wound. Orgasm provides a temporary relief, and a feeling of overpowering our past abuse through the feeling of being in complete control of our experience as well as the timing, details and symbolic representation of the fantasy details the lead to orgasm. Frenetic pornography use that occurs over and over again is an attempt to heal our past or present experience. This is why it is so unfortunate that such behaviors are often called "addictive".

Due to confidentiality concerns, I cannot give explicit examples of just how Sexual Fantasy Analysis has worked with my clients, often in astounding ways and with quick results. Compulsive sexual behaviors often subside quickly once the sexual fantasy or pornography fantasy is looked at in detail and understood. Many are astounded at how accurately a sexual fantasy may be related to a long held feeling of inadequacy, anxiety, insecurity, fear, or past and present relational wounds.

Another example of a healing sexual fantasy may occur if a child has been unconsciously or consciously emasculated or demeaned sexually by an important attachment figure in their past. The result of this type of abuse may lead to a propensity for sexual fantasy which involves control, abuse or dominance over women. In some cases the opposite may take place where the fantasies are such that they involve a man being dominated or abused sexually by a woman. Many details are often involved in figuring out just how such a trauma in ones past or present may lead to sexual acting out.

The depathologizing process of analyzing sexual fantasy is one I have felt honored to be a part of with the many clients I have worked with. I have witnessed people changing not only their compulsive behaviors with sexuality and pornography, but also their long held patterns and beliefs about themselves and their lives that have been keeping them from being fully alive in every day life.

My next article will focus on the healing process that the partner of the sexually compulsive person goes through. How she/he is involved as well as evolves as their relationship heals. Following healing, relationships that were formerly distant and broken become more deeply intimate, as well as sexually satisfying for both partners more so than they have ever been in the history of their relationship.