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Counseling Solutions at SMI

Sexual Addiction, Common Questions

I am a Certified Sex Therapist. That means I help people who are having trouble with their sexuality. That could mean anything from sexual enhancement or sexual dysfunction for married couples or problems with sexual addiction.

Many of my clients are sexual addicts. While sexual addiction can be experienced by either gender for the purposes of this article I will use male pronouns and discuss the problems most often experienced by women who are married to sex addicts.

Let us begin with a simple definition. **An addiction is an activity that you use, even periodically, to avoid real relationships, problems, or pain. You that know it is wrong, you have tried to stop but can't, and it is hurting yourself, your relationships, or employment.**

The addicts' wives ask many good questions. I will discuss some of them here.

How does sexual addiction get started? Often the sexual addict gets introduced to sexual behavior too early or has been sexually abused as a child.

Are there different kinds of sexual addiction? There are not different kinds of sexual addiction but there are different levels. Level one consists of masturbation, heterosexual relationships, pornography, strip shows, prostitution. Level two consists of exhibitionism, voyeurism, indecent phone calls, and indecent liberties. Level three consists of child molestation, incest, and rape.

Can the sexual behavior get worse? Yes, the sexual behavior can get worse and often does.

Should I be concerned for my children? Yes. While many sexual addicts will not hurt anyone, they can and I would prefer to be safe than sorry. You cannot safely predict what a person will do. A general watchfulness is important. I also recommend an age appropriate discussion with the children about sexual predators.

How come I have never noticed the sexual behaviors? Generally there are two reasons. First, addicts can be very sneaky. Secondly, many wives don't want to see or recognize the behaviors. A lot of wives report to me that they had previously discussed with their husbands his sexual problem and thought it was over. They never followed through to see if indeed it was over.

I am an attractive woman. Why am I not enough for him? That is a very common question. The frustrating thing is that no matter how nice, attractive, or sexy you are it does not matter. In the case of an affair, the other woman is often less attractive than the wife. The problem is with him. It is his lack of character, his immaturity, his desire to emotionally run away. A number of wives even do sexy dress up and perform unwelcomed sex acts, and watch the porno moves with their husbands in order to “keep them home.” This will not help even if they tell you it will. It is the addict’s way of using yet one more woman only this time it is their wife.

Is there anything that I could have done to see it coming and prevent this behavior? The best prevention would have been sexual abstinence prior to marriage. I say that because he would have acted very immaturely over that one and you would have known there was a maturity problem. But you are in it now so is there anything you could have done to prevent it? Yes and no. Yes, in that you may not have been as watchful as you could. No, in that it is really his problem not yours.

Is there anything I can do? Yes. You can drag him into counseling. Yes, drag him in if you have to. Any addiction is too important and too devastating to wait for the addict to make up his mind about changing. An addict cannot change on his own. That is a lie he will tell you. Do not believe it.

Will the addiction be cured? I am very cautious about this answer. Remember simply stopping the behavior, even for a long time, does not mean a cure. What I tell my clients is that there is every hope for a more mature husband, a happier marriage, and not living in fear while being watchful.

E mail me at DrRivest@bellsouth.net, with a comment on how this article has benefited you or what other topics you would like me to write about, and I will send you information on getting a free phone consultation.

For more information go to: www.MarriageCounseling.org.

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