

Sexual Addiction

Discovering Recovery in Community

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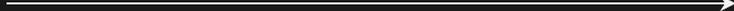


What is sexual addiction?

Compulsive, uncontrollable sexual behaviors or urges that persist despite negative consequences, often used to cope with emotional distress. It interferes with daily functioning, relationships, and well-being, resembling other behavioral addictions.

Carnes, P. (2001). *Out of the Shadows - Understanding Sexual Addiction*. Hazeldon.

Sexual Addiction is an intimacy attachment disorder



Compulsive sexuality impairs
one's ability to experience
true intimacy

Flores, P. J. (2011). *Addiction as an Attachment Disorder*. Jason
Aronson, Inc.

Instead of connecting with others, addicts use sex to....

AVOID EMOTIONS

Avoid emotional pain, vulnerability, or the fear of rejection.

Avoid dealing with difficult feelings and problems that normally happen in close relationships.

Instead of connecting with others, addicts use sex to....



CONNECT SUPERFICIALLY

Even though addicts engage in numerous sexual behaviors or encounters, they struggle to establish meaningful connections with others.

Sexually addictive behaviors

According to the Cleveland Clinic, any form of compulsive sexual behavior to illicit a “high”:

- Pornography
- Masturbation
- Strip Clubs
- Massage Parlors
- Prostitution
- Affairs (sexual or emotional)
- Cross-dressing
- Voyeurism
- Exhibitionism
- Cruising
- Flirting

Sex addiction: Causes, symptoms, treatment & recovery. Cleveland Clinic. (2024, May 1).
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/22690-sex-addiction-hypersexuality-and-compulsive-sexual-behavior>

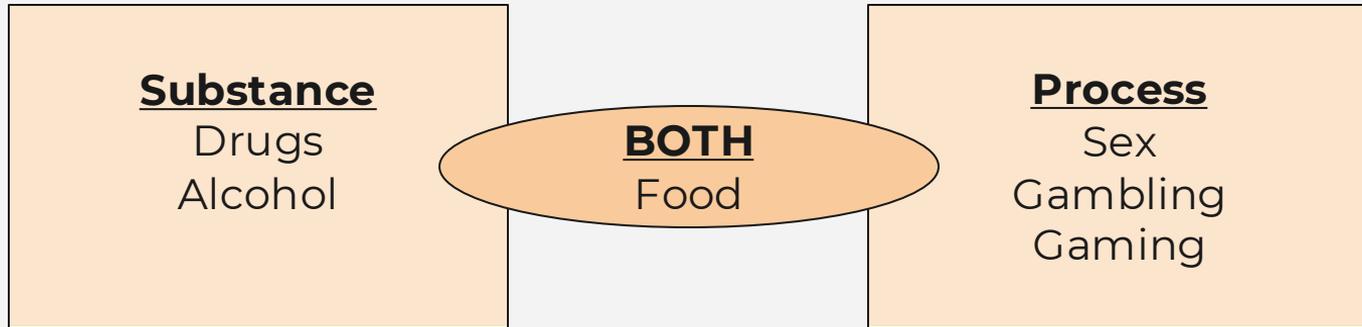
“Sexual addiction is not simply an obsession with sexual activity, but rather an intimacy disorder rooted in emotional avoidance, superficial connections, and objectification.”

Dr. Kim Buck
Certified Sex Addiction Therapist

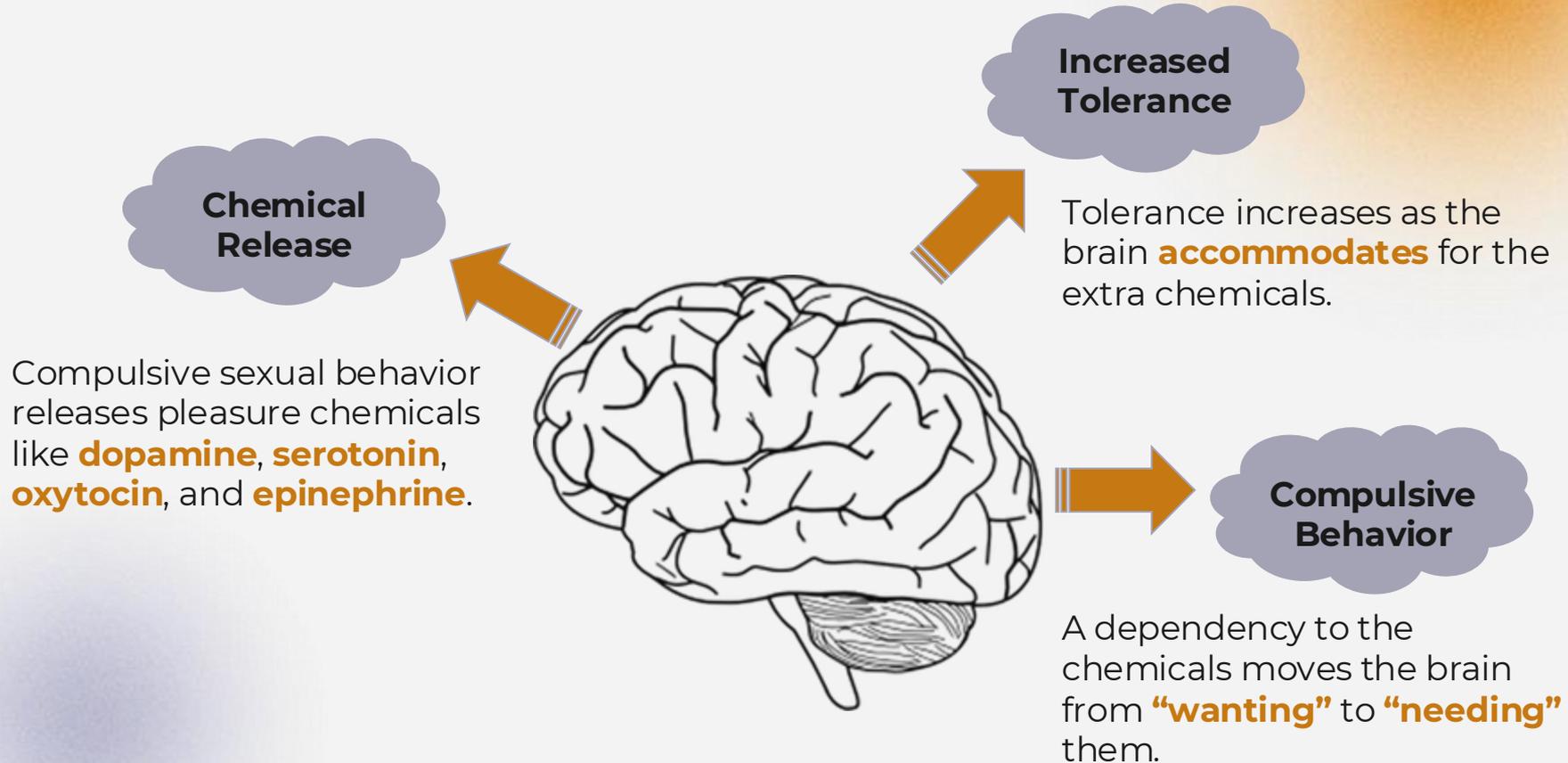
There are two types of addiction

Substance addiction **ingests** chemicals.

Process addiction **produces** chemicals.



Compulsive Sexual Behaviors



Brain Chemicals

Dopamine

Serotonin

Oxytocin

Endorphins

Testosterone

Epinephrine



Common Withdrawal Symptoms

Difficulty Thinking Clearly

Mood Swings

Irritability

Sleep Difficulties

Depression or Anxiety

Genital Sensitivity

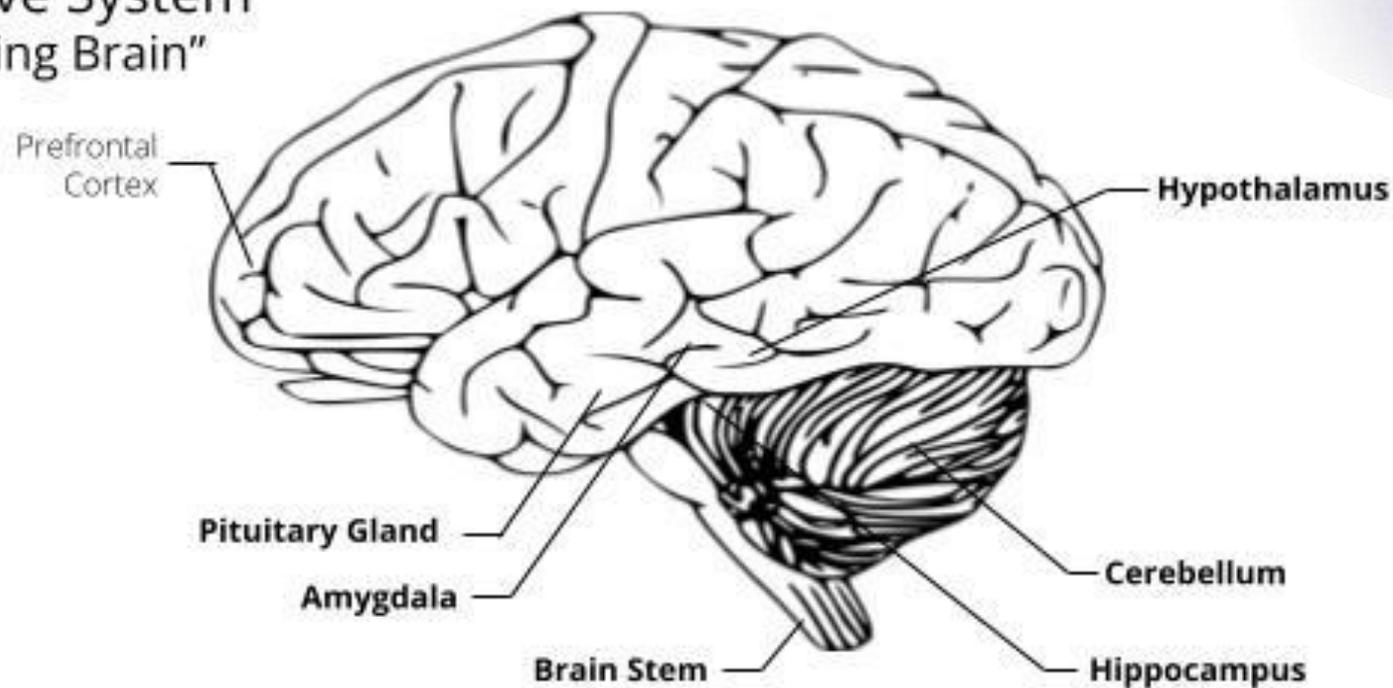
Appetite Changes

Headaches - Body Aches

Sore Testicles

Sweating - Skin Sensitivity

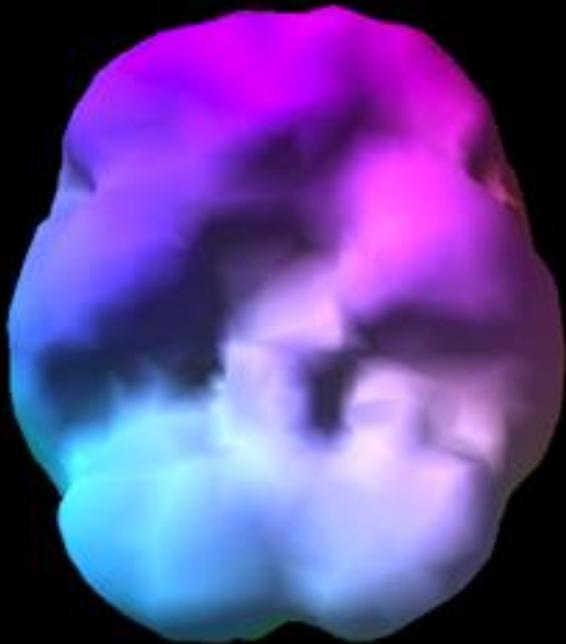
Executive System "Thinking Brain"



Limbic System "Feeling Brain"

Trauma response, emotion, and addiction live here.

Healthy brain scan

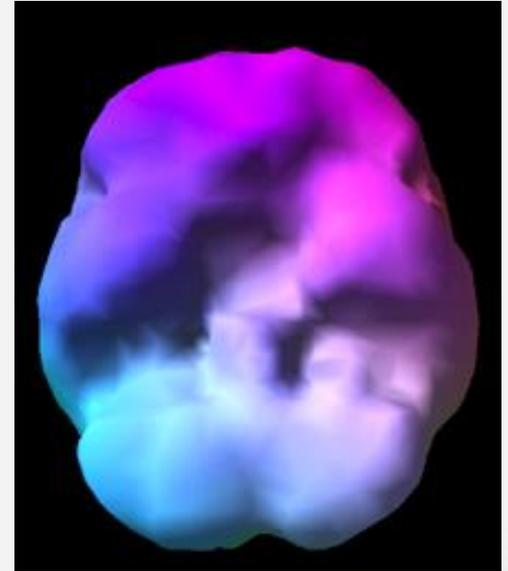


Addict-brain scan



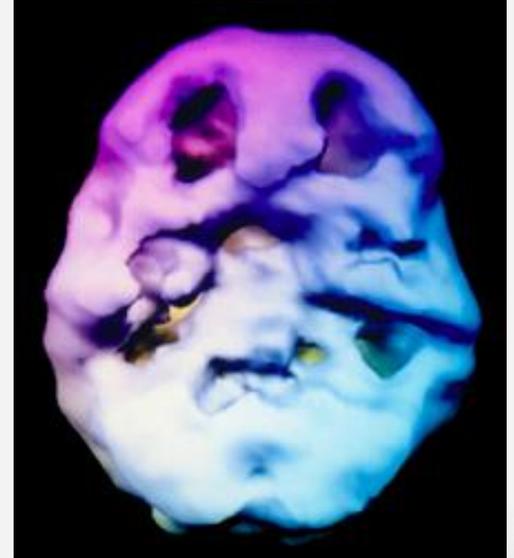
A healthy command center

- Governs emotions and internal supervision
- Good judgement and planning
- Problem solving and logical thinking
- Empathy, compassion, and spirituality
- Attention span and impulse control
- Ability to organize and plan ahead
- Good self awareness

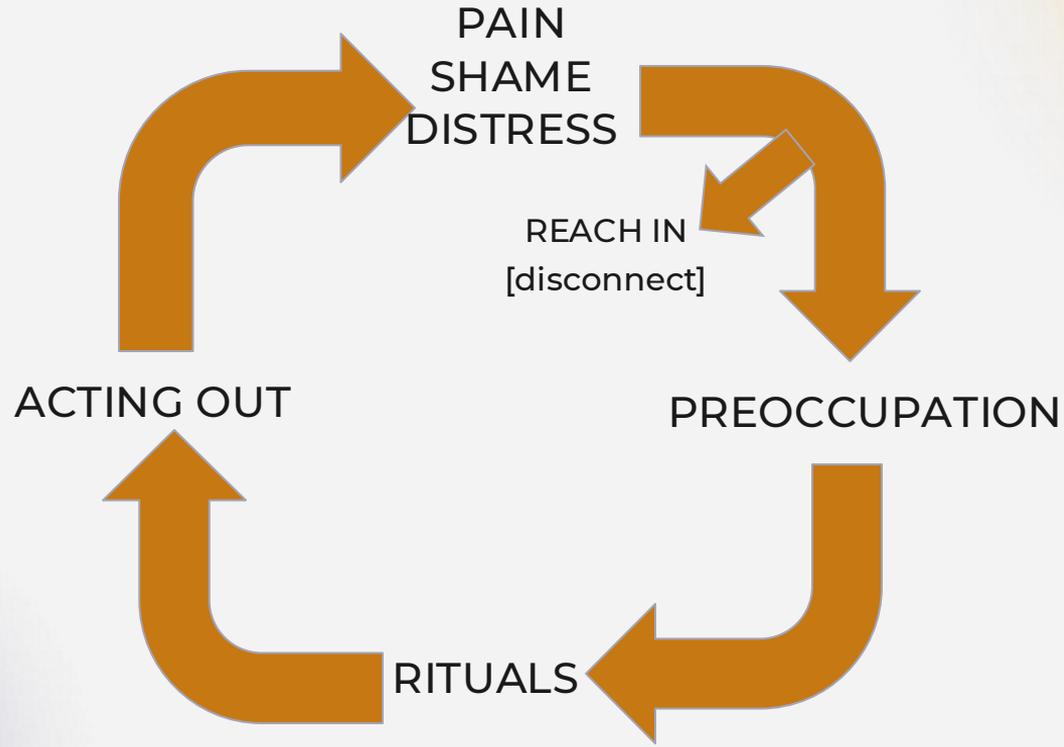


An impaired command center

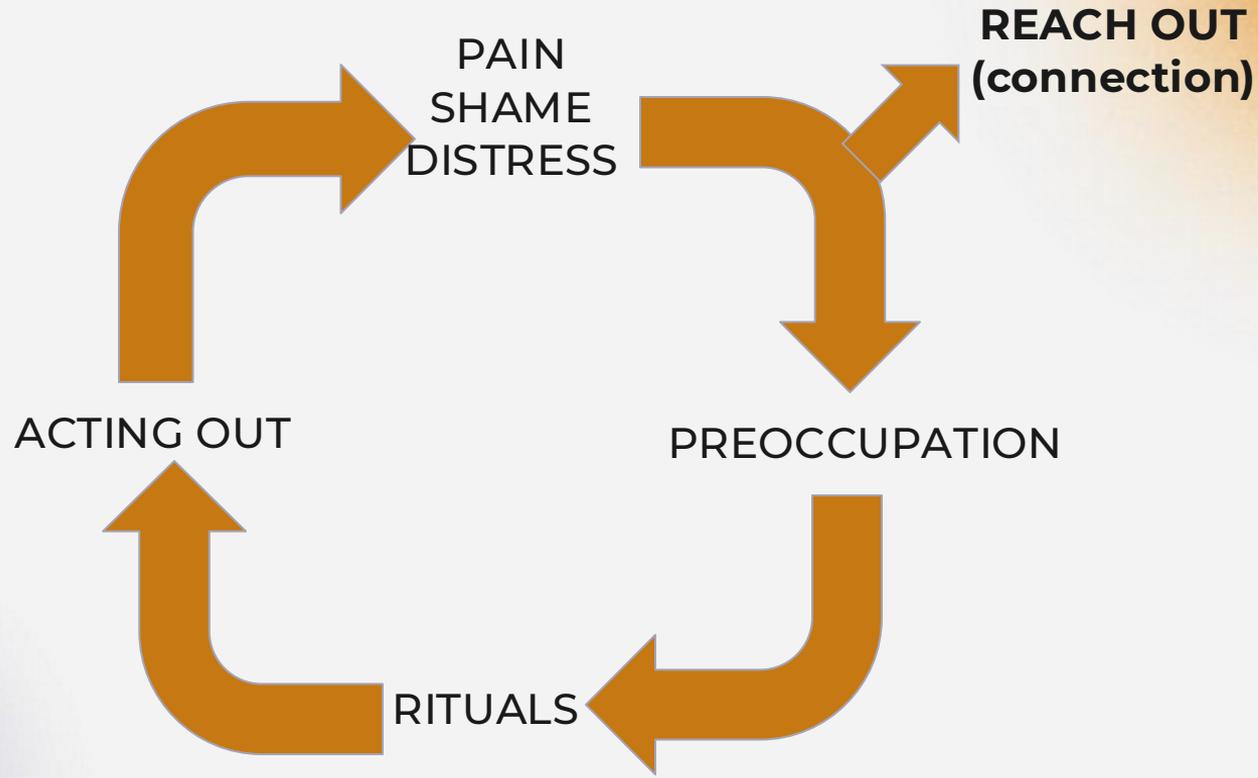
- Shortened attention span and impulsivity
- Increased tendency to procrastinate
- Increasingly disorganized
- Poor judgment and difficulty learning from past
- Decreased insight, empathy and emotional recognition
- Decreased social awareness
- Impaired empathic response, dulled feelings
- Ignoring or avoiding discomfort and emotions



The addiction cycle



To Escape the addiction cycle...



Toxic Shame vs Guilt

Toxic shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging - something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us *unworthy of connection*.

-Brené Brown

Shame-based core beliefs

“I am bad, unworthy and not good enough.”

“If anyone really knew me they wouldn't love me.”

“I can't depend on others to be there for me.”

“Life without this problem is impossible.”

Weiss, Robert, & Sack, D. (2015). *Sex addiction 101: A basic guide to healing from sex, Porn, and Love addiction*. Health Communications, Inc.

Successful Recovery

The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, it's connection.

Long-term success will require secure attachments with loved ones, family, friends and those who can support.

Gray, D., & Olson, T. (2012). *LifeSTAR Addiction Recovery Workbooks*. LifeSTAR Network.

Transparency

Transparency in recovery means being open, honest, and accountable about thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Developing transparency is a hallmark of recovery success.

Buck, K. (2024). *Sexual Addiction Betrayal Recovery - Phase One Workbook for Men*. SABR Program.

Authenticity

Authenticity involves being aware and real about feelings, thoughts, and emotions. It will be difficult to communicate transparently if you are not authentic. It fosters genuine connections and personal integrity.

Buck, K. (2024). *Sexual Addiction Betrayal Recovery - Phase One Workbook for Men*. SABR Program.



Successful Connections => Recovery

Recovery success requires connecting with others transparently and authentically.

The risk of connecting in these ways often chases addicts away from recovery.



Phases of Successful Recovery

1. Education - Gaining insight
2. Application - Developing sobriety
3. Integration - Emotional processing
4. Maintenance

Finding Recovery Support

Effective intervention is only as successful as the support and connection which the addict develops.

- Support Groups
- Counseling Groups
- Local church support
- Mentors
- Accountability Partners
- Family & Friends

Recovery Materials

Carnes, P. (2015). *Facing the Shadow: Starting Sexual and Relationship Recovery* (3rd ed.). Gentle Path Press.

Stringer, J. (2018). *Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveals Our Way to Healing*. NavPress.

Weiss, Robert, & Snow, E. (2024). *Porn Addiction 101 - Understanding and Healing from Porn Addiction*. Seeking Integrity, LLC.

Wilson, G. (2014). *Your Brain on Porn - Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction*. Commonwealth Publishing.

Kastleman, M. B. (2001). *The Drug of the New Millennium*. Granite Publishing & Distributing.

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