

Am I a Sexaholic?

This section will help explain what qualifies us as sexaholics. The writings in the Whitebook, in its unique explanation of sexaholism, are used by SA as an addendum to AA literature; It furthers our understanding. We have referenced the books *Alcoholics Anonymous 4th Ed.*, *Sexaholics Anonymous*, and *Recovery Continues* to help describe our illness. With this information, a newcomer can decide for herself if she is a sexaholic and would therefore benefit from what we have to offer.

What are Sexaholics addicted to? Lust!

Many of us came to Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) driven to total despair by our destructive sexual [romantic] thoughts and behaviors. Within the meeting rooms of SA, we discovered, to our surprise, that lust was the driving force behind our acting out. [Sexual lust is a thought or feeling that drives us to sexually abuse ourselves, others, or things. The spiritual sickness of lust wants sexual activity when it is not appropriate]. (Sexaholics Anonymous, Why Stop Lusting?, Page 1).

...the real problem in [this addiction] seems to be what we call lust—an attitude demanding that a natural instinct serve unnatural desires (SA 40-41).

General Aspects of Addiction: how individuals determine if they are addicted

The following three aspects can assist you in determining if you are a sexaholic: the physical allergy, the mental obsession, and withdrawal. These aspects in lust addiction produce ... “guilt, self-hatred, remorse, emptiness, and pain, and we were driven ever inward, away from reality, away from love, lost inside ourselves” (SA 203). Many who have these aspects regard themselves as being addicted.

1. The Physical Allergy

The physical allergy manifests as a phenomenon of craving. When the sexaholic starts lusting/acting out in any form, the phenomenon of craving is triggered, producing an insatiable desire for more.

... the phenomenon of craving ... never occurs in the average temperate [person who lusts/acts out romantically or sexually]. These allergic types can never safely [indulge lust] in any form at all: and once having formed the habit ... they cannot break it ... (AA xxviii, 4th Ed. The Doctor's Opinion).

Once the sexaholic starts, she cannot stop. Some will continue to lust/act out until they get help. Others, who can stop periodically, might believe they can solve the problem by never starting

again, but for the sexaholic, this is rarely successful for long. Some may motivate themselves by recalling past suffering and the harm they caused, using this as a means to stay stopped. However, this does not work for the sexaholic because the mental obsession continues to fuel the addictive thinking and behaviors.

When considering our acting-out behaviors, it is essential to recognize that there are various forms of acting out. Page one of *Sexaholics Anonymous* states:

Those of us who are recovering in Sexaholics Anonymous were driven here by many different forms of the same problem. Some of us fit society's stereotypes of what a sexaholic might be and some of us did not. Some of us were driven to buy or sell sex on the streets, others to have it anonymously in bars or public places. Some of us found ourselves in painful and destructive affairs or consumed by an unhealthy obsession with a particular person or succession of persons. Many of us kept our obsessions to ourselves, resorting to compulsive masturbation, pictures, fetishes, voyeurism, or exhibitionism. Some of us victimized others. And with many of us, our compulsions took a toll on family, coworkers, and friends. Very often we felt that we were the only ones who could not stop, that we were doing this—whatever it was—against our will.

Since the emergence of online adult content, such as dating sites and porn, many sexaholics use online content as a form of acting out.

For many women with our addiction, obsession with a particular person or succession of persons has been called romance and/or relationship addiction.

And by “falling in love” I was shutting love out. Looking back, I see I was using “relationships” to try to control the addiction (Recovery Continues 47).

... we overdosed on “romance and passion” till we couldn’t cope with it any more (Recovery Continues 34)!

Here are some questions to help with a self-assessment for the physical allergy:

- 1. Once I start lusting/acting out in any form, can I stop if I want to?**
- 2. If I *can* stop, do I *stay* stopped?**
- 3. Do I tell myself I will set limits on lusting/acting out, only to break those limits?**
- 4. Do I need more ways or levels of lusting/acting out to achieve the same high or relief?**
- 5. Do I lust/act out in ways I thought I never would?**

The physical allergy may be identified by answering YES to one or more of the above questions.

2. The Mental Obsession.

As the AA Big Book describes, the reasons the sexaholic cannot *stay* stopped are because the mental obsession can at any time do one of three things: 1. come up with an excuse, 2. have a thought to act out deliberately regardless of the consequences, or 3. Experience the strange

mental blank spot with no preceding thought of caution. It is this mental obsession that prevents her from accurately remembering or anticipating the tragic results of lusting/acting out.

I knew from that moment that I had [a sexaholic] mind. I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots (Alcoholics Anonymous 42).

The fact is that most [sexaholics], for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in [lusting/acting out]. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first [lust] drink (AA, 24).

A unique aspect of sexaholism is that we can get high from our thoughts/fantasies alone. We may have a romantic/sexual memory or thought, but that is not lusting. At the moment when we indulge in this thought, we are lusting. Entertaining these lustful thoughts drives us to act out. Acting out starts in our thinking.

DO I HAVE THE MENTAL OBSESSION?

- 1. When I fantasize, do I have difficulty stopping?**
- 2. Despite being convinced that I should stop, do I still lust/fantasize over and over again?**
- 3. Do I entertain an “innocent” fantasy that then leads to an objectionable fantasy?**
- 4. Even though I was not thinking about it at all, do I find myself suddenly lost in lustful thoughts, sexual images/memories, or romantic fantasy?**
- 5. Do I have a hard time concentrating on tasks or holding a conversation because I am distracted by lustful thoughts, sexual images/memories, or romantic fantasies?**

The mental obsession may be identified by answering YES to one or more of these questions.

3. Withdrawal

The term withdrawal is applied to the symptoms the addict may experience when deprived of the drug or activity. Such symptoms can be physical, emotional, or both...This is no different from the drug addict feeling he'll die without his fix. It is simply not true; not feeding the hunger doesn't kill us (SA 31).

The Big Book describes withdrawal as follows:

To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks ... (AA, The Doctor's Opinion, xxviii-xxix).

We have listed three aspects commonly used to identify addictions: the physical allergy, the mental obsession, and withdrawal. Additionally, the addiction and its symptoms get worse over time.

Our sexaholism doesn't stand still; it progressively worsens (SA 32).

We are convinced to a man that [sexaholics] of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period we get worse, never better (AA 30).

Here are some questions to help with a self-assessment for withdrawal.

1. Have I ever experienced being on edge, irritable, restless, or unhappy between relationships, episodes of acting out, or fantasizing?
2. When not acting out, have I ever:
 - a. thought I would die
 - b. experienced shock
 - c. felt lost
 - d. thought that life didn't seem normal?

We hope we have made clear the distinction between the [sexaholic] and the [non-sexaholic]. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when [lusting/acting out], you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably [sexaholic]. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer (AA 44).

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE!!!
THERE IS HOPE AND A WAY TO FREEDOM!!!**

Sexaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover. (SA 201)

Find a Meeting: www.sa.org/meetings

Phone: +1 615-370-6062

Toll-free (USA & Canada): +1 886-424-8777

Mon-Fri, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (US Central Time)

Email: saico@sa.org