

The Female Sex Addict

Information based on Facing the Shadow by Patrick Carnes, The Betrayal Bond by Patrick Carnes and Back from Betrayal by Jennifer P. Schneider M.D.

The male addict's goal is commonly, sexual gratification. However, as you will see, for the female sex addict it is more about the thrill of the chase and the catch.

The Female Sex Addict:

“Women addicts seem to be more focused on the attention, the feedback, not so much the sex. In fact, the orgasm seemed to be optional for most of the women, unless they were into masturbation. It seemed to be the power of getting the man, getting the attention, the chase and the capture.”

For female sex addicts, the common goal is power over men.

Many women sex addicts were sexually abused in childhood. They learn that sex is the way to get power and love from men.

Sex addiction is often assumed to be a man's problem. Sex addiction in women is judged more harshly than it is in men. Men are typically praised for being a “ladies man,” a “Don Juan,” or “womanizer.” Women on the other hand are likely to be considered a “slut” or “whore.” Women sex addicts have been found to experience more shame than men do, and women sex addicts are considered more shameful. Sex addiction is almost as common in women as in men, but that data is hard to come by because the forms it takes differs.

Sex addiction in women is more likely to take the form of fantasizing, romance, and serial relationships.

Like male addicts, female addicts watch pornography online, however, they more commonly use chat rooms and other ways to actually interact with men. The internet is a powerful medium for fueling fantasy-based interactions, and for feeding the romance addiction that women are particularly susceptible. This is why research has shown that female cybersex addicts are significantly more likely than men to seek real-life meetings with their online sex partners.

Sex Addiction in Women

1. Compulsion, or unsuccessful attempts to control a sexual behavior:
 - Changing relationships to control sexual fantasy and activities
 - Swearing off relationships, only to give into the next “right lover”

- Breaking promises to self or others to stop abusive fantasy or sexual behaviors
 - Switching to caretaking others, workaholism, overeating, or romance novels to take the place of a sexual relationships
2. Continued behavior despite negative consequences:
- Unplanned pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, or violence
 - Terror or shame resulting from sexual activities
 - Decreased productivity at work due to sexual behavior with self or others
 - Relationships problems resulting from extramarital affairs or excessive time spent on sex-related activities
 - Depression related to inability to change sexual patterns or their consequences
 - Substance abuse or eating disorders to numb shame and other negative feelings related to sexual activities
3. Obsessive thoughts in planning or obtaining sex:
- Neglecting family, relationships, or career because of time spent preoccupied with sex or sexual partners

Addictive sexual behavior patterns in women may include:

- Excessive flirting, dancing or personal rooming to be seductive
- Wearing seductive clothing whenever possible
- Changing one's appearance via excessive dieting, excessive exercise, and/or reconstructive surgery to be seductive
- Exposing oneself in a window or car
- Making sexual advances to younger siblings, clients, or others in subordinate power position
- Seeking sexual partners in high-risk locations
- Multiple extramarital affairs
- Disregard of appropriate sexual boundaries, for example, considering a married man, one's boss, or one's personal physician as appropriate objects of romantic involvement
- Trading sex for drugs, help, affection, money, social access, or power
- Having sex with someone they just met at a party, bar, or on the Internet
- Compulsive masturbation
- Exchanging sex for pain or pain for sex

Relationship symptoms typically reported by female sex addicts:

- A history of short, failed relationships where sex is the primary bond
- A pattern of returning to or remaining with partners who are abusive or emotionally unavailable

- Masturbating compulsively to romantic fantasies of past or potential partners, romantic books, fictional characters, television shows, and movies
- A pattern of inappropriate sexual relationships-with married men, bosses, or subordinates
- Consistently having sex as a way to feel wanted, loved and validated
- Taking money, or encouraging gift-giving in exchange for sex but not viewing this as prostitution
- Giving money to unethical massage therapists and physical trainers in exchange for sex, but not viewing this as hiring prostitutes
- Excessively and consistently abusing food, exercise, and spending to “feel better” when lonely or not in a relationship
- Secretly acting out fetish behaviors with casual or anonymous partners while in a primary relationship
- A pattern of seeking emotional validation through online or in-person encounters (new relationships) while already in a primary relationship

When Both Partners are Sex Addicts:

When both partners are sex addicts, there are several pitfalls that they need to overcome during recovery.

- *Triggering each other's addiction:* Sex addicts who are in a committed relationship or marriage need to establish guidelines for healthy sexuality within the relationship. Sexual activities that can lead to acting out are best avoided. For example, a female sex addict who had engaged in masochistic activities with many partners was married to a man whose acting out had involved sadistic sex. To minimize their likelihood of S&M acting out, this couple agreed to avoid S&M activities within their relationship
- *Attending the same recovery meeting:* It may seem convenient for a couple to attend the same Twelve-Step meeting, but those who have done so report that it is risky. When the partner needs to share with the group to avoid relapse, they may feel inhibited if the spouse or partner is present. If only one group is available, the couple should take turns attending separately
- *Sponsoring each other:* An important part of healing is learning to rely on and trust others. When you are both going through healing it is incredibly important to have a sponsor who has been through the program, has been sober for a while, and can help to support you through the process. There is too much conflict of interest in sponsoring each other.