

How to Find Help For Sexual Addiction

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Trying to find help for sexual addiction can be a daunting task. The revelation of the secret is devastating and creates a major relationship crisis. Regardless of how the revelation comes about, the spouse will generally feel angry, betrayed, and hurt.

The sexual compulsiveness of one of the partners is a very real threat to the continuation of the relationship. The faithful spouse may grieve the loss of the perceived relationship and come face to face with the reality of a relationship where the partner has been living two different lives. Individual counseling is appropriate for both spouses. Couples counseling is also appropriate. Twelve step group involvement is also quite helpful.

Spouses of sex addicts usually have many questions about what it all means, what kinds of risk they are exposed to, and what they should be doing next. One of the most pressing questions for the non-addicted spouse is "Should I leave, or should I stay."

They often need some help in working through the deluge of feelings and making a decision. The spouse usually feels compelled to gather as much information as possible, ostensibly to make an informed decision. The compulsive need to gather information and the feelings the obsession exacerbates can eventually bog down the whole process if left unchecked. While the feeling of being overwhelmed by the thoughts, feelings, and seemingly never ending questions is typical, to get to healing, you have to keep moving.

Spouses often have some fundamental and down to earth questions about their partner's addiction. They often equate sexual addiction with sexual offending. They may worry about possible predatory behavior and whether their children or other family members are safe. They wonder if the illness can effectively be treated and what kinds of outcomes can be expected.

While the non-addicted spouses have a high need for answers and support, they often feel ashamed and resist asking for help. To do so would mean disclosing information. They often feel afraid of being judged. They often report that they have no one to talk to about their experiences, feelings, and questions.

Finding help for sexual addiction-regardless of whether the help is for the addict, the spouse, or the couple-can be confusing and difficult. Depending upon where you live, it may not be so easy to find a therapist who treats sexual addiction or family members of sex addicts. Since a simple search in the yellow pages usually does not yield the desired results, there are several ways that you can find a qualified therapist.

In your search for appropriate help, try these.

1. An internet key word search with sexual addiction counselor and location will usually bring up some possible candidates. You usually have to wade through numerous thinly disguised treatment programs located somewhere in the United States advertising as local help.
2. Contact the state licensure or certification board for alcohol/drug counselors. Ask for a recommendation for a counselor for sexual addiction. Sexual addiction is usually most effectively treated by addiction professionals.
3. Find the day, locations, and phone numbers for 12 step groups that focus on sexual addiction. Look for your local Sexaholics Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Co-Sex Addicts Anonymous or Recovering Couples Anonymous meetings. Go to some meetings. Ask people in the meetings who the best counselor in town is for your specific needs.
4. Call the alcoholism/drug treatment centers in your city or state and ask for a referral for someone that they know who treats sexual addiction.
5. You can also attend some open Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and ask people in the meeting who to contact for sexual addiction treatment. A large number of people who are in recovery for sexual addiction also have other addictions. You could meet some people in AA or NA who are also working a 12 step program for sexual addiction.
6. Find a meeting for Celebrate Recovery in your community. They are usually held at churches and tend to have a religious base (versus "spiritual focus"), but sexual addiction is one of many addictions or compulsions represented in the group.

Keep looking until you find the kind of help that you need. These tips presuppose that you have health insurance or financial means to pay for professional counseling when you find it. If this is not the case, other resources are available.

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