

## **Sexual Addiction - Are You Suffering From Someone Else's Sexual Addiction: Part 4**

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Are you angry, depressed, confused, and constantly trying to figure out what your spouse is up to? If you are spinning your wheels, trying to strategize and find solutions for your spouse and your relationship before you have actually identified the problem, keep reading. Family members can suffer from the sexual addiction of spouses, and spend countless hours trying to solve the problem before they really know what they are dealing with. If you are suffering negative consequences of someone else's sexual behavior, you might be in a relationship with a sex addict.

How can you tell if you are in a relationship with a sex addict? Sex can take on an inappropriate level of importance in a relationship where there is sexual addiction. There may be an absence of sexual intimacy. In a healthy relationship, couples enjoy a variety of intimate acts. You can have a sense that something is wrong with the level of intimacy in your relationship. You might feel lonely before, during or after sex. You might feel used sexually. You may feel that your spouse is not capable of emotional intimacy and can only express intimacy sexually. Perhaps you find that you are often in conflict over sex. Although it is common for couples to have different levels of need for sex, you have many arguments over sex. Perhaps your spouse pouts or acts up if s/he doesn't get sex when s/he wants it. Even after sex, they may continue to demand more, not feeling satisfied with the experience they just had. Perhaps they demand the kinds of sexual activity that you are not comfortable with. Perhaps you comply. You might be at a place in the relationship where you have sex with your partner because you are afraid they will seek sex somewhere else if you don't comply. Or perhaps your spouse does not seem interested in sex with you at all.

Addiction carries with it a certain amount of dishonesty and secretiveness. For family members that dishonesty and secretiveness also involves a compulsion to uncover the "truth" so that you can "fix" whatever the problem is. You may find yourself playing detective to find out what is going on. You are constantly on the lookout for evidence of about whether they are doing what they say they are, or going where they say they are going. You might feel compelled to interrogate them. Perhaps you find porno hidden in the house, which prompts a "search and destroy" mission on your part. When you accidentally find unexplainable charges on the credit cards and phone bills, your compulsion to look harder might kick in. You might even hire a private investigator. The compulsion to gather information is strong. Somehow if you can get enough information, maybe you can solve "the problem". You probably feel all alone, and believe that you can't talk to anyone about it.

By now your spouse's addiction is having major negative effects on you. Family members suffer the financial, social, emotional, and relationship consequences of their loved one's addiction. You may be engaged in a compulsive game of cat and mouse, trying to take control of the addict's behavior. Your mental health and/or physical health is probably suffering. You may have stress related physical complaints. You may be

depressed-even suicidal. You avoid family and friends. Your self confidence and self-esteem is slipping, even in other areas of your life. You might have been able to hang onto your sense of self-esteem at work, but eventually that too, begins to erode. You feel hurt or embarrassed by the addict's behavior but you may also feel responsible for their behavior. You make excuses for them or tell lies to hide their behavior from others. You blame yourself and think that if you were prettier/more handsome, sexier, smarter, taller/shorter, etc., that your spouse would not be acting this way. You find yourself behaving in ways you never thought possible. You scold, lecture, yell, threaten to leave, or otherwise coerce them into behaving appropriately. You might even engage in "getting even" behavior like spending money or having affairs of your own.

Regardless of the symptoms of family dynamics of sexual addiction that you are suffering, there is help available. A simple internet search will reveal a variety of internet resources. Although most resources revealed will be for the addict, there are some resources for the family as well. You can also find a list of local 12 step meetings available for sex addicts and for the family members. Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA), Sexaholics Anonymous (SA), meetings are for sex addicts. Co-SA, Codependents of Sex Addicts is for family and friends of sex addicts ([www.cosa-recovery.org](http://www.cosa-recovery.org)). Many community facilities that treat alcohol and other drug (AOD) addiction also treat sexual addiction.

You may think, "I'm not the addict, why should I get help?" If you are engaged in any of the family member's behavior described above, or if your self-esteem is suffering, or if you are depressed, get help for yourself. You may not be able to convince your spouse to seek help, but you do have some power and control over your own life decisions. You can recover, regardless of whether the addict does.

Copyright 2009, Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D. <http://www.peggyferguson.com>  
Hubbard House Publishing, Stillwater, Oklahoma