

Addictions

Table of Contents

1. Addictions	1
1.1. Definition	2
1.2. Physical Addiction	3
1.3. Psychological Addiction	3
2. What Are The Signs And Symptoms Of Addiction?	4
3. What Are The Risk Factors For Addiction?	6
4. Getting Help	8
4.1. Guidelines for Recovery	9
5. Sexual Addiction	10
5.1. Introduction.....	10
5.2. Behaviors associated with sexual addiction	10
6. How to get free.....	11
7. Bibliography	13

1. Addictions

1.1. Definition¹

An addiction is any thinking or behavior that is habitual, repetitious, and difficult or impossible to control. Usually the addiction brings short-term pleasure, but there may be long-term consequences in terms of one's health and welfare. Addictions tend to be progressive conditions that slowly exert more and more power and control over the individual. With many addictions, the control is both psychological and physical. The addicted person may agree that the condition is harmful but stopping seems to be impossible. There are three categories of addiction: substance abuse, eating disorders and addictive behaviors.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine has this definition for Addiction²:

“Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in the individual pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors. The addiction is characterized by impairment in behavioral control, craving, inability to consistently abstain, and diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships. Like other chronic diseases, addiction can involve cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.”

A habit may eventually develop into an addiction³. Many of us can use substances or become engaged in activities without any significant problems. Some people, however, may experience damaging psychological and/or physical effects when their *habit* becomes an *addiction*.

What is the difference between a habit and an addiction?

Addiction - there is a psychological/physical component; the person is unable to control the aspects of the addiction without help because of the mental or physical conditions involved.

Habit - it is done by choice. The person with the habit can choose to stop, and will subsequently stop successfully if they want to. The psychological/physical component is not an issue as it is with an addiction.

With a habit you are in control of your choices, with an addiction you are not in control of your choices.

What is the difference between substance abuse and addiction?

¹ Collins, 1988, pp. 408,438,488-489,507

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addiction>

³ <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/addiction/>

ADDICTIONS

The difference between substance abuse and addiction is very slight. Substance abuse means using an illegal substance or using a legal substance in the wrong way. Addiction begins as abuse, or using a substance like marijuana or cocaine.

You can abuse a drug (or alcohol) without having an addiction. For example, just because someone smoked dagga a few times doesn't mean that he/she has an addiction, but it does mean that the drug is being abused — and that could lead to an addiction.

1.2. Physical Addiction

Being physically addicted means a person's body actually becomes dependent on a particular substance (even smoking is physically addictive). It also means building tolerance to that substance, so that a person needs a larger dose than ever before to get the same effects.

Someone who is physically addicted and stops using a substance like drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes may experience withdrawal symptoms. Common symptoms of withdrawal are diarrhea, shaking, and generally feeling awful.

1.3. Psychological Addiction

Psychological addiction happens when the cravings for a drug are psychological or emotional. People who are psychologically addicted feel overcome by the desire to have a drug. They may lie or steal to get it. The person's life centers around the need for the drug. An addicted person — whether it's a physical or psychological addiction or both — no longer feels like there is a choice in taking a substance.

2. What Are The Signs And Symptoms Of Addiction?⁴

A symptom is something the patient senses and describes, while a sign is something other people, such as the doctor notice. For example, sleepiness may be a symptom while dilated pupils may be a sign.

Substance dependence is when a person is addicted to a substance, such as a drug, alcohol or nicotine, they are not able to control the use of that substance. They continue taking it, even though it may cause harm (the individual may or may not be aware of the potential harm).

- Substance dependence can cause powerful cravings. The addict may want to give up (quit), but finds it extremely difficult to do so without help.
- The signs and symptoms of substance dependence vary according to the individual, the substance they are addicted to, their family history (genetics), and personal circumstances.
- The person takes the substance and cannot stop - in many cases, such as nicotine, alcohol or drug dependence, at least one serious attempt was made to give up, but unsuccessfully.
- Withdrawal symptoms are when body levels of that substance go below a certain level the patient has physical and mood-related symptoms. There are cravings, bouts of moodiness, bad temper, poor focus, a feeling of being depressed and empty, frustration, anger, bitterness and resentment.
- There may suddenly be increased appetite. Insomnia is a common symptom of withdrawal. In some cases the individual may have constipation or diarrhea. With some substances, withdrawal can trigger violence, trembling, seizures, hallucinations, and sweats.
- Addiction continues despite health problem awareness; the individual continues taking the substance regularly, even though they have developed illnesses linked to it. For example, a smoker may continue smoking even after a lung or heart condition develops.
- Social and/or recreational sacrifices - some activities are given up because of an addiction to something. For example, an alcoholic may turn down an invitation to go

⁴ <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/addiction/signs-of-addiction.php>

ADDICTIONS

camping or spend a day out on a boat if no alcohol is available, a smoker may decide not to meet up with friends in a smoke-free pub or restaurant.

- People who are addicted to a substance will always make sure they have a good supply of it, even if they do not have much money. Sacrifices may be made in the house budget to make sure the substance is as plentiful as possible.
- In some cases the addicted individual may take risks to make sure he/she can obtain his/her substance, such as stealing or trading sex for money/drugs; while under the influence of some substances the addict may engage in risky activities, such as driving fast.
- An addicted person commonly feels they need their drug to deal with their problems.
- An addicted person may spend more and more time and energy focusing on ways of getting hold of their substance, and in some cases how to use it.
- In many cases the addict may take their substance alone, and even in secret.
- A significant number of people who are addicted to a substance are in denial. They are not aware (or refuse to acknowledge) that they have a problem.
- In some addictions, such as alcohol, some drugs and even nicotine, the individual consumes it to excess. The consequence can be blackouts (cannot remember chunks of time) or physical symptoms, such as a sore throat and bad persistent cough (heavy smokers).
- As the addiction progresses the individual may stop doing things he/she used to enjoy a lot. This may even be the case with smokers who find they cannot physically cope with taking part in their favorite sport.
- The addicted individual may have small stocks of their substance hidden away in different parts of the house or car; often in unlikely places.
- Taking an initial large dose - this is common with alcoholism. The individual may gulp drinks down in order to get drunk and then feel good.
- Having problems with the law - this is more a characteristic of some drug and alcohol addictions (not nicotine, for example). This may be either because the substance impairs judgment and the individual takes risks they would not take if they were sober, or in order to get hold of the substance they break the law.
- Financial difficulties - if the substance is expensive the addicted individual may sacrifice a lot to make sure its supply is secured.
- Relationship problems - these are more common in drug/alcohol addiction.

ADDICTIONS

Some substance/alcohol abusers who are not technically addicted may also suffer from or cause some of the descriptions mentioned above, but they do not usually have the withdrawal symptoms of an addict or the same compulsion to consume the substance.

Signs that you or someone you know may have a drug or alcohol addiction include:

Psychological signals:

- use of drugs or alcohol as a way to forget problems or to relax
- withdrawal or keeping secrets from family and friends
- loss of interest in activities that used to be important
- problems with schoolwork, such as slipping grades or absences
- changes in friendships, such as hanging out only with friends who use drugs
- spending a lot of time figuring out how to get drugs
- stealing or selling belongings to be able to afford drugs
- failed attempts to stop taking drugs or drinking
- anxiety, anger, or depression
- mood swings

Physical signals:

- changes in sleeping habits
- feeling shaky or sick when trying to stop
- needing to take more of the substance to get the same effect
- changes in eating habits, including weight loss or gain

3. What Are The Risk Factors For Addiction?⁵

A risk factor is something which increases the likelihood of developing a condition or disease. For example, obesity significantly raises the risk of developing diabetes type 2. Therefore, obesity is a risk factor for diabetes type 2.

Although anybody, regardless of age, sex or social status can potentially become addicted to some substances, there are certain factors which may increase the risk from a medical point of view:

- Genetics (family history) - anybody who has a close relative with an addiction problem has a higher risk of eventually having one themselves. It may be argued that environmental and circumstantial factors that close family members share are the prominent causes.

⁵ <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/addiction/risks-of-addiction.php>

ADDICTIONS

- Alcoholics are six times more likely than non-alcoholics to have blood relatives who are alcohol dependent. Researchers from the Universidad de Granada, Spain, in a study revealed that *"the lack of endorphin is hereditary, and thus that there is a genetic predisposition to become addicted to alcohol"*.
- Geneticists believe that the reason some people try cigarettes and do not become smokers, while others do so very quickly is probably linked to the type of genes we inherit from our parents. Some people can smoke once in a while, throughout their lives, and never seem to become addicted, while others are unable to stop smoking without experiencing the unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. It is most likely that the way the receptors on the surface of our brain nerve cells respond to nicotine is influenced by our genes.
- Gender - a significantly higher percentage of people addicted to a substance are male. According to the Mayo Clinic, USA, males are twice as likely as females to have problems with drugs.
- Having a mental illness/condition - people with depression, ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) and several other mental conditions/illnesses have a higher risk of eventually becoming addicted to drugs, alcohol or nicotine.
- Peer pressure - trying to conform with other members of a group and gain acceptance can encourage people to take up the use of potentially addictive substances, and eventually become addicted to them. Peer pressure is an especially strong factor for young people.
- Family behavior - young people who do not have a strong attachment to their parents and siblings have a higher risk of becoming addicted to something one day, compared to people with deep family attachments.
- Loneliness - being alone and feeling lonely can lead to the consumption of substances as a way of coping; resulting in a higher risk of addiction.
- The nature of the substance - some substances, such as crack, heroin or cocaine can bring about addiction more rapidly than others. For example, if a group of people were to take crack every day for six months, and another identical group of people were to drink alcohol every day for the same period, the number of crack addicts at the end of the six months would be a lot higher than the number of alcoholics. For some people trying a substance even once can be enough to spark an addiction. Crack, also known as crack cocaine or rock, is a freebase form of cocaine that can be smoked.
- Age when substance was first consumed - studies of alcoholism have shown that people who start consuming a drug earlier in life have a higher risk of eventually becoming addicted, than those who started later. Many experts say this also applies to nicotine and drugs.

ADDICTIONS

- Stress - if a person's stress levels are high there is a greater chance a substance, such as alcohol may be used in an attempt to blank out the upheaval. Some stress hormones are linked to alcoholism.
- How the body metabolizes (processes) the substance - in cases of alcohol, for example, individuals who need a higher dose to achieve an effect have a higher risk of eventually becoming addicted.
- Children raised by alcoholic or drug addicted parents are more likely to view substance abuse or certain behaviors as acceptable, making them more likely to engage in the addiction themselves. Individuals from countries where use of a certain substance or engagement in an addictive behavior are frowned upon or hard to obtain show a much lower incidence of addiction, pointing to possible environmental factors.
- Individuals who experienced sexual, psychological, emotional or physical abuse are more likely to become addicts. The addiction becomes a coping mechanism, helping the addict to deal with strong negative emotions surrounding the abuse, feelings of severe low self-esteem, and possible flashbacks.
- Emotional disorders such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder often increase the risk of substance abuse and addictive behaviors, especially amongst those who are misdiagnosed or undiagnosed. Individuals often use drugs, alcohol, food, exercise, or work as a way to self-medicate and escape the symptoms of their primary disorder.

4. Getting Help⁶

If you think that you or someone you care about is addicted to drugs or alcohol, recognizing the problem is the first step in getting help.

Many people think they can kick the problem on their own, but that rarely works. Find someone you trust to talk to. It may help to talk to a friend or someone your own age at first, but a supportive and understanding adult is your best option for getting help. If you can't talk to your parents, you might want to approach a school counselor, relative, doctor, favorite teacher, or religious leader.

Unfortunately, overcoming addiction is not easy. Quitting drugs or drinking is probably going to be one of the hardest things you or your friend have ever done. It's not a sign of weakness if you need professional help from a trained drug counselor or therapist. Most people who try to kick a drug or alcohol problem need professional assistance or a treatment program to do so.

⁶ http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/addictions.html

4.1. Guidelines for Recovery

Once you start a treatment program, try these guidelines to make the road to recovery less bumpy:

- Tell your friends about your decision to stop using drugs. Your true friends will respect your decision. This might mean that you need to find a new group of friends who will be 100% supportive. Unless everyone decides to kick their drug habit at once, you probably won't be able to hang out with the friends you did drugs with.
- Ask your friends or family to be available when you need them. You might need to call someone in the middle of the night just to talk. If you're going through a tough time, don't try to handle things on your own — accept the help your family and friends offer.
- Accept invitations only to events that you know won't involve drugs or alcohol. Going to the movies is probably safe, but you may want to skip a Friday night party until you're feeling more secure. Plan activities that don't involve drugs. Go to the movies, try bowling, or take an art class with a friend.
- Have a plan about what you'll do if you find yourself in a place with drugs or alcohol. The temptation will be there sometimes, but if you know how you're going to handle it, you'll be OK. Establish a plan with your parents, siblings, or other supportive friends and adults so that if you call home using a code, they'll know that your call is a signal you need a ride out of there.
- Remind yourself that having an addiction doesn't make a person bad or weak. If you fall back into old patterns (backslide) a bit, talk to an adult as soon as possible. There's nothing to be ashamed about, but it's important to get help soon so that all of the hard work you put into your recovery is not lost.

If you're worried about a friend who has an addiction, you can use these guidelines to help him or her. For example, let your friend know that you are available to talk or offer your support. If you notice a friend backsliding, talk about it openly and ask what you can do to help.

If your friend is going back to drugs or drinking and won't accept your help, don't be afraid to talk to a nonthreatening, understanding adult, like your parent or school counselor. It may seem like you're ratting your friend out, but it's the best support you can offer.

Above all, offer a friend who's battling addiction lots of encouragement and praise. It may seem corny, but hearing that you care is just the kind of motivation your friend needs.

5. 'Sexual Addiction

The term sex addiction describes the behavior of someone who has an unusually strong sex drive or sexual obsession. Sex and thoughts of sex dominate a sex addict's thinking, making it difficult to work or engage in healthy personal relationships. Sex addicts may engage in exhibitionism, voyeurism, prostitution, compulsive masturbation, or cybersex. Treatment for sex addiction includes individual counseling, marital and/or family therapy, support groups, 12-step recovery programs, and in some cases, medications.

5.1. Introduction

The term "sexual addiction" is used to describe the behavior of a person who has an unusually intense sex drive or an obsession with sex. Sex and the thought of sex tend to dominate the sex addict's thinking, making it difficult to work or engage in healthy personal relationships.

Sex addicts engage in distorted thinking, often rationalizing and justifying their behavior and blaming others for problems. They generally deny they have a problem and make excuses for their actions.

Sexual addiction also is associated with risk-taking. A person with a sex addiction engages in various forms of sexual activity, despite the potential for negative and/or dangerous consequences. In addition to damaging the addict's relationships and interfering with his or her work and social life, a sexual addiction also puts the person at risk for emotional and physical injury.

For some people, the sex addiction progresses to involve illegal activities, such as exhibitionism (exposing oneself in public), making obscene phone calls, or molestation. However, it should be noted that sex addicts do not necessarily become sex offenders.

5.2. Behaviors associated with sexual addiction

Behaviors associated with sexual Addiction includes:

- Compulsive masturbation (self-stimulation)
- Multiple affairs (extra-marital affairs)
- Multiple or anonymous sexual partners and/or one-night stands
- Consistent use of pornography
- Phone or computer sex (cybersex)
- Prostitution or use of prostitutes

⁷ http://www.medicinenet.com/sexual_addiction/article.htm

ADDICTIONS

- Exhibitionism
- Obsessive dating through personal ads
- Voyeurism (watching others) and/or stalking
- Sexual harassment
- Molestation/rape

Generally, a person with a sex addiction gains little satisfaction from the sexual activity and forms no emotional bond with his or her sex partners. In addition, the problem of sex addiction often leads to feelings of guilt and shame. A sex addict also feels a lack of control over the behavior, despite negative consequences (financial, health, social, and emotional).

6. How to get free

John 8:32

³² And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Zechariah 4:6

⁶ Then he said to me, “It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

Ephesians 6:12

¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Begin by replacing wrong thoughts and error in your mind with truths from God's Word (Holy Scripture). This usually involves some counseling with a God called pastors or competent Christian worker or counselors.

The core spiritual root of all addiction is always rejection:

- The root of rejection
- The fear for rejection
- Self rejection

Also to be considered and dealt with are confusion, rebellion, lust, pride, anger, unforgiveness, hate, depression, anxiety, compulsion, fear, worry, guilt, shame, deep hurt.

The following is steps that can assist in the process of breaking free from bondage⁸:

⁸ Buys, 1990, p. 83

ADDICTIONS

- Confess. Acknowledge and confess the existence and right of an identified sin, iniquity or transgression. Confess with the mouth, out loud, that it is wrong in God's eyes and according to His Word.
- Repent. Ask the Lord for forgiveness for entering into the sin, iniquity or transgression. Announce that you choose to turn away from the sin. This can be done on behalf of someone who has passed away.
- Forgive any party involved or that is responsible for the committed sin, iniquity or transgression. Forgive yourself where necessary and forgive God if you should blame Him for any part in it.
- Receive forgiveness from the Lord as He is faithful and just to forgive any confessed sin.(1 John 1:9)
- Renounce any more involvement or putting up with the sin or transgression.
- Bind the strongman. (Matthew 12:29)
- Break the power of any curse, in the authority of the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and cast any evil spirit (demon) out, in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, that was working through the legal right of the confessed sin, iniquity or transgression.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill the space left behind by the curse or evil spirit. (Matthew 12:43-45)
- Affirm your healing, deliverance and restoration in the Name of Jesus.
- Forsake the sin or transgression in your life going forward and obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

The following should be done to assist in keeping one safe and far from harm⁹:

- Avoid the influences of the world and the wrong crowd of people;
- Pray specifically against the influences of the world and the wrong crowd of people;
- Thank the Lord for being proactive in showing the truth and the hidden things to His children. (Jeremiah 33:3)
- Never feel condemned for that which might surface. The Lord's intention is that it should be dealt with. Satan is always behind condemnation.
- Simply say: "Thank you God, for showing me what was in my heart. Now I will do something about it."

⁹ Buys, 1990, p. 84

The conviction of the Holy Spirit is specific and can be dealt with immediately. The conviction of the Holy Spirit leads to freedom if one repents and asks for forgiveness.

7. Bibliography

ANDERSON, N. T. 1998. *The Bondage Breaker*. Crowborough: Monarch.

BUYS, A. 1990. *Life Through Choice*. Kanaan Ministries. Unpublished.

COLLINS, G. R. 1988. *Christian Counselling*. Vancouver: Word Publishing.

PENN-LEWIS, J. 2004. *War on the Saints*. Pennsylvania: CLC Publication.

Website. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addiction>. 29 March 2011

Website. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/addiction/> 29 March 2011

Website. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/addiction/signs-of-addiction.php> 29 March 2011

Website. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/addiction/risks-of-addiction.php> 29 March 2011

Website. http://www.medicinenet.com/sexual_addiction/article.htm 29 March 2011