Sex and Relationship Addictions
Principles and Tools

The Deep Wisdom of Sex and Relationship Addiction

As in all forms of effective therapy, we let ourselves be led, and encourage the client to be led, by what their hearts truly and most deeply desire and know.

Deep in ourselves, sex addicts know that to heal, I must connect.
The ‘problem’ is that we try to do the connecting without full engagement.

Deep in ourselves, sex addicts know that my body can liberate me from pain.
The ‘problem’ is that we relate to the body as object, not subject.

In both cases, it works to follow the deep wisdom and not be pulled into the vortex of the problem, neither fighting nor collaborating with it.

This means: support relatedness, and support the body as subject.

Neuroscience of Sex and Relationship Addiction

- Active addicts function as a 1-Person Psychological System
- There is an oscillation from hyperarousal→ hypernumb affective states
- Sex and relationships are the means to manipulate these states
- Arousal templates and crosswiring of sex and other aspects occur over time
- Triggers restimulate the addiction neural networks leading to acting out
- Shame overlays and protects the system

Soul Curriculum of Sex and Relationship Addiction

- At this time, there is widespread consensus that suffering is needed to grow
- As a result, growth-oriented people will tend to pull in trauma and addiction
- Also at this time, there is widespread consensus that desire is ‘bad’
- As a result, guilt and anger are primary elements in sexual consciousness
- Trauma and addiction in a person can serve as the call to a heroic journey
- This particular heroic journey involves confronting harmful sexual beliefs
- Addicts who make the journey bring back the medicine of conscious sexuality
- As such, those who make the journey evolve the culture as wounded healers
Sex and Relationship Addictions
12-Step Programs

Please note that the generalizations in this chart apply to these fellowships broadly, across the nation, and especially in cities where multiple fellowships exist. In smaller towns like Santa Fe, where only one or two fellowships exist, the demographic information usually does not apply, and often the group will have developed its own norms to suit the members who actually regularly show up, vs. the official stance of the fellowship nationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fellowship</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Sobriety Defined</th>
<th>Other Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexaholics Anonymous (SA)</td>
<td>Mostly married men with “classic” acting out patterns</td>
<td>Anything other than sex with an opposite sex spouse is acting out</td>
<td>Heteronormative literature and heterosexist policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA)</td>
<td>Typically the most diverse in terms of straight/gay, male/female</td>
<td>Member determines</td>
<td>Founded by Patrick Carnes; strong on shame reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA)</td>
<td>Stronger female to male ratio</td>
<td>Member determines</td>
<td>Strong emphasis on relation addiction; brilliant text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Compulsives Anonymous (SCA)</td>
<td>Much stronger gay/bi and transgender percentages</td>
<td>Member determines</td>
<td>Best on understanding and describing interplay of sexual identity and addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Recovery Anonymous (SRA)</td>
<td>Couples (1 or both partners are addicts)</td>
<td>Members determine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>S-Anon</td>
<td>Spouses of Sex Addicts</td>
<td>Freedom from obsession with partner’s behavior</td>
<td>Closely connected to Sexaholics Anon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Codependents of Sex Addicts (COSA)</td>
<td>Partners/Spouses of Sex/Relationship Addicts</td>
<td>Freedom from obsession with partner’s behavior</td>
<td>Closely connected to SAA</td>
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</tbody>
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Santa Fe (As of April 2011):
SAA is well-established, with a solid network of members with significant sobriety and demonstrable commitment. Info Line: 505.466.3042
Current meetings:
- Mondays, 12-1, St. Bede’s Church.
- Wednesdays, 5:30-7:00, De Vargas Mall Community Room (Men-Only Meeting)
- Women-Only Meeting: location and time can be obtained at Monday meeting.
Sex and Relationship Addictions
Sample Art Directives

These are directives I have often used with clients at different points in the therapeutic process.

- Double Life
  - Two images of the two lives a person has been living
  - Persona and Shadow
  - Sometimes use two sides of same paper, each for side of life
  - Masks also useful

- Collage of Messages/Conditioning
  - What A “Man” or “Woman” is “supposed” to be
  - Messages about sexuality, sexual behavior

- Image of Healthy Sexuality
  - Often easier to depict than describe

- Image of Sexual Shame Being Carried
  - Good one to burn/destroy/bury

- Internal Parts Map
  - Emotions
  - Inner Child/Children
  - Addict
  - Evolves over time

- Social Atom
  - Existing and potential relationships
  - Current and Desired

- Relationship with Addict/Addiction
  - Evolves over time

- Body Tracing
  - Marking areas of shame/abuse
  - Marking areas of empowerment
  - Marking areas where there is presence/dissociation
  - Progressive transformation over time
Sex and Relationship Addictions
Resources

Professional Associations/Trainings

- IITAP – International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals – offers the 4-level CSAT training developed by Carnes and others, needed to access Sexual Dependency Inventory, other material; hold annual conference; referral directory.
  - iitap.com

- SASH – Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health – annual conference, online resources
  - sash.net

Treatment Centers (no particular order)
Many centers claim to treat sex and relationship addictions, however most in my experience do not really “get” these addictions or assume they are one-size-fits-all with other recovery. If looking at other options besides below, interview heavily and ask about CSAT therapists, what models they use, how they distinguish sex/relationship addiction from other addictions, ask tough questions!

- Gentle Path/Pine Grove – comprehensive, founded by Patrick Carnes, has stepdown options
  - www.pinegrovetreatment.com/gentle-path.html

- Keystone – men; good for offenders also
  - keystonecenterecu.net

- Life Healing Center – in Santa Fe; has exclusive female track
  - life-healing.com

- The Meadows – strong 35-day program
  - themeadows.org

- Sierra Tucson – strong integration with trauma recovery
  - www.sierratucson.com

- Sexual Recovery Institute – offers 1-week crash courses; very good on narcissism and responsibility orientation in relationships
  - www.sexualrecovery.com

- Sante – don’t know program intimately, but known to “get it” about sex addiction
  - www.santecenter.com/treatment/sexaddiction