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# **Understanding and Recognising Sex & Porn Addiction**



# Defining sex addiction

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*Any* sexual activity that is used to modulate emotion AND ‘feels’ out of control.

An unhealthy relationship with a mood-altering experience

An inability to stop, or reliably stay stopped, in spite of significant harmful consequences

*NB – it is not the activity that defines it as an addiction, but the dependency on it*

# A controversial 'diagnosis'



- Impulse Control Disorder?
- Hypersexuality?
- High sex drive?
- Sexual dependency?
- Sexual compulsivity?
- Immature decision making?
- Intimacy disorder?
- Emotional regulation disorder?

# Defining addiction



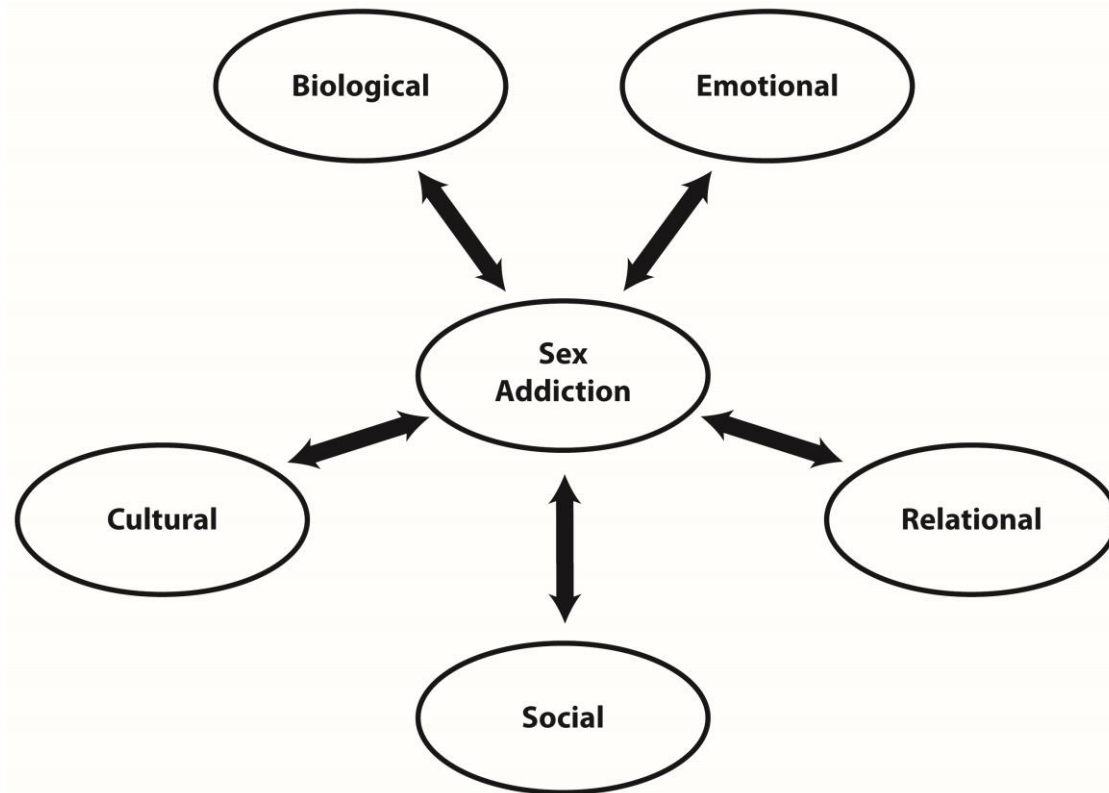
Is it.....

- A disease?
- A behavioural disorder?
- A psychological disorder
- A social construct?
- A learned condition?
- A relational problem?

**YES**



# Models of addiction

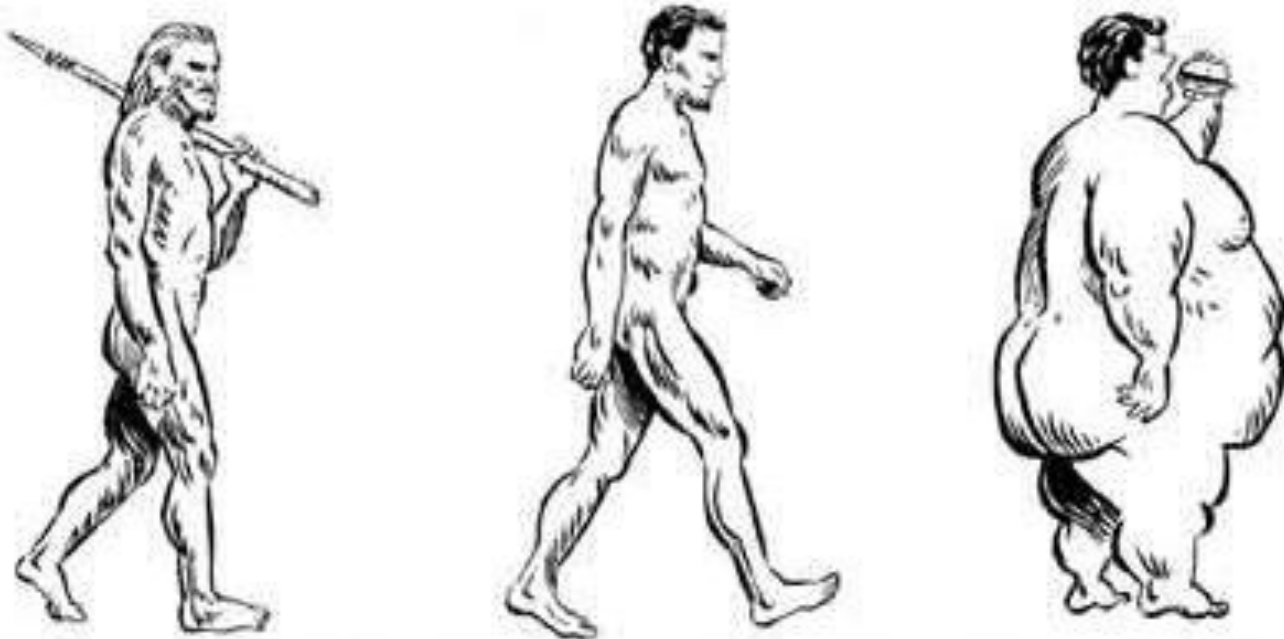


BERSC Model (Hall 2012)



# How our brains become addicted

Internet porn taps into our natural drive for sexual variety and novelty





# How our brains become addicted

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Endless novelty, continually spikes dopamine which creates constant appetite

Neural pathways develop that 'wire' the brain to porn as an optimum source of dopamine

Increased shame creates increased desire to escape painful feelings with the chosen 'drug'

**Dopamine = 'want' not like**



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BHAREf9zmU>



# Clinical reality



- ISAM Definition of Addiction
- DSM V – Addictive Disorders
- Foresta (Italy) 2011 (porn induced ED)
- Prause et al (USA) 2013 (high sex drive)
- Egan and Parmer (UK) 2013 (compulsivity)
- Voon et al (UK) 2014 (porn cue response)
- Hilton (USA) 2013 (supernormal stimuli)
- Kuhn (Germany) 2014 (porn addiction related brain changes)
- Farre et al (Spain) 2014 (similarities with Gambling addiction)
- Voon et al (UK) 2015 (novelty, conditioning and attention bias)
- Foresta (Italy) 2015 (adolescents and pornography)
- Stulhofer et al (USA) 2015 (hypersexuality and high sex drive)
- Klein et al (Croatia/Germany) 2015 (ED and hypersexuality)
- Chatzittofis et al (Sweden) 2015 (HPA Axis dysregulation)
- Brand et al (Germany) 2016 (Ventral Striatum activity)

# The clients reality



- Growing membership of 12 step groups
- 260,000+ members of online support groups
- Increasing presentation for therapy
- 20,353 users of online self help Kick Start Recovery Programme

# What triggered you to seek help....



*“It’s dominating my life and is completely against my core values”*

*“Low libido, can’t ejaculate or get erection with partner”*

*“Trying to save my relationship”*

*“I don’t want it to control my life anymore”*

*“Tired of my life”*

*“Fear of losing everything”*

*“I’m completely drained by my behaviours and it’s devastating my relationship”*

*“Waste of time and debt”*

*“I really don’t know, I’m just unhappy”*

*“I have reached a point where I am seriously contemplating suicide, I can’t go on like this”*

14,563 respondents

[www.sexaddictionhelp.co.uk](http://www.sexaddictionhelp.co.uk)

# Why present to sexual health professionals?

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- ◆ STI's
- ◆ Unwanted pregnancy
- ◆ Gone off sex
- ◆ Delayed ejaculation
- ◆ Erectile dysfunction
- ◆ Genital pain/injury

# Assessment



- ◆ Salience
- ◆ Mood modification
- ◆ Tolerance
- ◆ Withdrawal
- ◆ Conflict
- ◆ Relapse

*(Griffiths, M. 2005)*

# Helpful questions



1. Does your sexual behaviour have a negative impact on other areas of your life such as relationships, work, finances, health, professional status?
2. Have you tried to limit your sexual behaviour or stop it all together, but failed?
3. Do you find yourself struggling to concentrate on other areas of your life because of thoughts and feelings about your sexual behaviour?
4. Have you noticed that you need more and more stimuli or risk in order to achieve the same level of arousal and excitement?
5. Does your sexual behaviour contradict your personal values?



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7. Are you more tempted to engage in sexual behaviour when you're stressed, anxious, angry, lonely, depressed or sad?
  8. Do you feel dependent on your sexual behaviour and struggle to feel fulfilled with any alternative?
  9. Do you currently, or have you in the past, struggled with any other addictions or compulsive behaviours?
  10. Has anyone in your family currently, or in the past, struggled with any addictions or compulsive behaviours?

# Getting into recovery



- ◆ Recognise 'Brighton'
- ◆ Stop going to Brighton
- ◆ Stop fantasising about Brighton
- ◆ Learn to read the road signs
- ◆ Explore new coastal towns
- ◆ Find travelling companions
- ◆ Get a satnav!





# Treatment options

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Individual Counselling/Psychotherapy –  
psychodynamic & CBT

Group Therapy – Psycho-educational

Group Support – 12 Step or similar

Couple Counselling / Psychosexual  
Therapy

# Resources



**FREE self help resource  
for sex & porn addiction**

## **The Kick Start Recovery Kit**

[www.pornaddictionhelp.co.uk](http://www.pornaddictionhelp.co.uk)



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## Therapy

- Individual Psychotherapy (also via Skype)
- Couple Counselling & Disclosure services
- Psychosexual Therapy
- Intensive & Weekly Addiction Recovery Groups
- Chemsex recovery group (London)
- Intensive & Weekly Partner Support Group
- Online recovery group for 18-25 yr olds

## Training - ISAT (Institute for Sex Addiction Training)

- Accredited Diploma in Sex Addiction Counselling

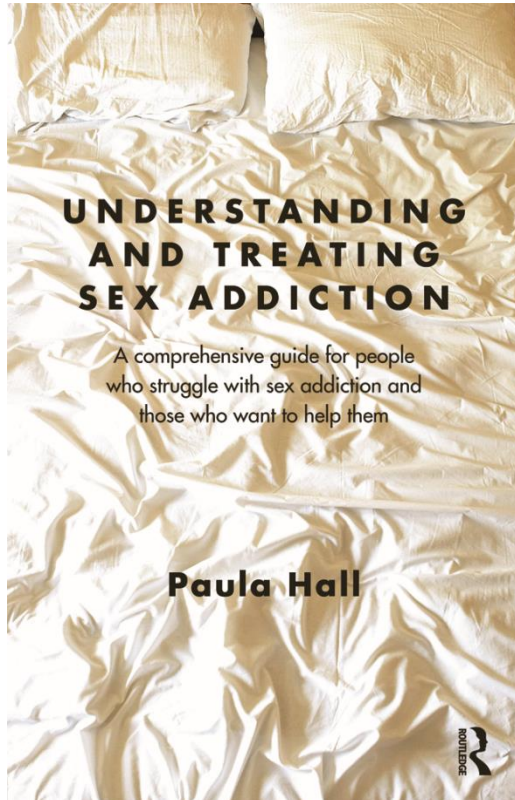
# Contact details



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