

Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by skeptical - 22 Nov 2015 15:01

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**If you voted yes:**

**Did you accept that you were an addict as soon as you joined GYE, or did it take time for you to figure it out? If it took time, how did you come to that conclusion? Please post below.**

**Thanks for your time.**

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by cordnoy - 22 Nov 2015 15:07

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Took some time.

Exactly how the book describes it.

Tolerance - I needed more and worse stuff.

And the attempts to stop - the real attempts were not workin'.

Thanks

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by skeptical - 22 Nov 2015 15:41

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My wife told me for years that I was an addict, and begged me to get help.

I argued that I wasn't, and I refused - for years.

When I started with GYE, I started to acknowledge that I may be an addict, but still argued that I just had a strong Yetzer Hara in this area (I still do believe that to some extent). Interestingly, I acknowledged it to the people I was doing inappropriate things with (they just laughed it off, assuming that I was joking).

I then went 6 months clean. And then I fell, got back up immediately, and was clean for about a month. Getting back up after that was much more difficult, and I was able to see how I was in quicksand, sinking deeper and deeper, while my life whirlwinded down the drain.

I then had no choice but to accept that I am, in fact, an addict.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?  
Posted by Lizhensk - 22 Nov 2015 17:48

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It took me a while, mainly because of denial. I didn't want to be an addict. At the same time, the label addict was a bit alluring, as an excuse believe it or not. "I'm POWERLESS so what do you want from me!?!?!?"

That didn't get me anywhere either.

How did I realize? Trying everything, white knuckling etc, and like Cords, tolerance. The disease is progressive and it sure was progressing on me.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?  
Posted by Bigmoish - 22 Nov 2015 23:40

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When I joined in July 2014, I thought I was not an addict.

As is well documented, I initially thought that I was a normal male who also had an obsession with a certain woman. I joined GYE when I realized that my lust habit and my obsession issue

were related, but I was still unconvinced of my addict status for several months. After about three months of ups and downs, more obsession, etc, I decided that I wasn't sure, but I would do the recovery actions of an addict regardless. It was only after about 9 months here that I realized I am certainly an addict. The obsession coupled with the complete irrationality of my lusting is was made me decide for sure.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?  
Posted by mggsbms - 23 Nov 2015 01:17

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It took some time for me to realize i'm an addict.

I joined GYE pretty much at the beginning of my struggle therefore i was quite naive as of the nature of this addiction, and was fooled by early successes. but as time ware'd on and my falls kept on getting closer and deeper i realize i was an addict right from the onset.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?  
Posted by peloni almoni - 23 Nov 2015 01:24

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[mggsbms wrote:](#)

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just a thought - if you would have chosen an avatar, it would have helped you identify better with yourself, and you would have come to the conclusion about yourself being an addict sooner.

Edit - this is a joke

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by serenity - 23 Nov 2015 03:53

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You know the kid in class who knows the answer and excitedly raises his hand and says oooh oooh oooh me me me me !!!!

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by Moshe271 - 23 Nov 2015 14:00

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When my therapist said, why don't you try SA? I said, "Naw, really?" That afternoon, I looked up SA's website. They have a questionnaire. I answered all the questions in the affirmative, except for the last one. I never sat in jail for a sexual act. At that point, I was convinced. I knew I was a sexaholic. From my 2nd SA meeting I began introducing myself as, "I'm Moshe, and I'm addicted to lust."

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As soon as I found out there was a such thing as a sex addict I was like that kid.

Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?  
Posted by cordnoy - 23 Nov 2015 14:19

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From the White Book

General Aspects of the Addiction

Our experiences have revealed three aspects of our condition that commonly identify addictions: tolerance, abstinence, and withdrawal. If someone has experienced these three phenomena in some area of his or her life, that person is generally regarded as being addicted. When we apply this test to ourselves, we identify as being addicted to lust, sex, relationships, or various combinations of these-for starters.

## Tolerance

The term tolerance refers to the tendency to tolerate more of the drug or activity and get less from its use, hence the need for increasing dosage to maintain or recapture the desired effect. With addictions other than drugs, tolerance refers to a need for increasing amounts of obsessive thinking, interaction, or activity, with less and less effect. In short, we resort to the drug more, with diminishing satisfaction. We see how this applies in our case when we remember how our lust or sexual activity escalated over the years, crossing one line after another, first in our thought life, then in our behavior. For example, those early masturbatory fantasies were seldom enough; we graduated to seeking increasingly potent varieties. And if we got hooked on pictures, we found ourselves seeking ever-more-explicit images to use. If we began by dating for romance, it often escalated into seeking more promiscuous liaisons. Exposing ourselves in fantasy progressed to doing it in public. We needed more and more of our "drug."

## Abstinence

The term abstinence refers to the phenomenon where the typical addict tries to quit using the addictive agent or activity. Perhaps we should call it attempted abstinence. We swear off-again and again. Something inside tells us we

should stop. How many times did we say we had to stop? How many times did we actually try stopping? Some of us "stopped" every time we acted out!

## Withdrawal

The term withdrawal is applied to the symptoms the addict may experience when deprived of the drug or activity. Such symptoms can be physical, emotional, or both. This gives rise to the deception and demand that we've got to have sex. But this is no different from the drug addict feeling he'll die without his fix. It is simply not true; not feeding the hunger doesn't kill us.

Some of us look back on our transition to sobriety as a time when we were in a state of shock, in which our whole system had to slowly recover from the trauma of a lifetime of self-inflicted injury. Sobriety involves a new and unfamiliar way of life, like driving in a foreign country without knowing the language or customs. Only this is a whole new inner terrain. Without the drug, we begin to feel what's really going on inside. It takes time to adjust to all this, and the support of others in the fellowship is vital. Journeying this new road together helps take the fear out of withdrawal. We see that others who have gone before us have discovered that sex is truly optional, once they surrendered lust and the expectation of sex. And their comfort and joy are genuine; they are neither abnormal nor deprived. Married members discover they can go into periods of voluntary abstinence to recover from lust and find them surprisingly effective and rewarding experiences. Yes, there is life after lust! And life after sex!

We see that the practice of our addiction includes the whole range from sporadic or periodic to continuous acting out, sometimes all within the same individual. But regardless of our particular pattern, it involves the addictive elements of tolerance, abstinence, and withdrawal, though we probably are not aware of them at the time. And if we switch addictions-not uncommon for those trying to quit one the addictive process is the same.

Three additional aspects of our addiction we should look at are toxicity, adverse physical and emotional effects, and trigger mechanisms.

### Toxicity

Toxic reactions to alcohol and drug abuse are common knowledge. What we might call the toxicity of lust becomes especially apparent to us in recovery. We become increasingly aware of the poisonous effects of lust on our thinking and behavior. We have heard members say, "I'm allergic to lust," and we know the person is trying to describe the toxic reaction that occurs whenever he or she takes a visual or fantasy "drink" without even acting out. In sobriety, once we have withdrawn from lust and then let it back in, the toxic effect is felt immediately and strongly. We can tolerate less of it than ever, and it produces a greater disturbance. Our sexaholism doesn't stand still; it progressively worsens.

"I could see a girl in a bikini on a billboard five years ago and it wouldn't bother me; now, I go to pieces and lose my mind over it."

"Lust throws my whole system out of whack. I lose my equilibrium, my control, and have to recover as if from a poison."

[Note: These and other italicized quotes are from Sexaholics Anonymous members, past and present.]

## Adverse Physical and Emotional Effects

Who can say what is the full range of side effects that lust, sex, or relationship addiction can precipitate? We're still learning. Obvious effects are any of the proliferating horde of venereal diseases. Many of us found that impotence or frigidity also resulted from our sexaholism. But a vast range of other effects that we are just beginning to recognize accompanied many of us on our disastrous path toward sexual and emotional ruin: self-obsession; self-hatred; self-punishment; anger; loss of emotional control; isolation; and diminished ability to relate to others, concentrate, and function. Our sexaholism opened the door to a host of mental, emotional, and spiritual disorders that followed the advancing addiction.

It's as though at certain stages, our entire system cries out: Stop! You're killing me! Sexual sobriety opens the door to recovery, where the healing begins. We feel better physically, emotionally, and spiritually when sober and when the principles of the Steps are effective in our everyday lives.

## Trigger Mechanisms

In our addiction we develop a growing number of trigger mechanisms that help set us off. These include stimuli, conflicts, or pressures that provoke a fantasy, feeling, or thought that leads to our acting out. We seem to have no trouble identifying some of our more tangible lust and sex triggers. By the time we've become addicted, we've created a whole universe of them, which expands as the addiction progresses. Here are some categories suggested from our experience; the list will never be complete.

**Sex Objects.** Persons of the same or opposite sex, including our own bodies. Almost anything about them can serve as triggers: various body parts, items or styles of clothing, body language, and endless varieties of speech, behavior, or attitude. Some of us include in this category animals and inanimate objects.

**Media.** Pictures, printed matter, ads, television and movies, music, and dance. Various places, from bars and dance halls to the streets, marketplaces, and showplaces of the city may also be considered media in the sense of what they communicate to us.

**The Inner Landscape.** Most of us can see how memories and fantasies can act as triggers. Intangibles we are likely to identify on our own are such things as failure, rejection, or criticism. More remotely identifiable triggers are such things as feelings of loneliness, alienation, world weariness, boredom, isolation, "the lonely crowd," and other manifestations of unfulfilled God-hunger. Also, nudging us

to reach for our drug are such things as a heightened state due to anything from compulsive work, anger, resentment, anxiety, fear, excitement, or haste, to such things as stimulating foods

or beverages or even intellectual or aesthetic excitement. What we seem to be discovering is that just about anything can become a trigger, indicating that there's an underlying pathology driving our thinking and behavior. This can help us see how the whole person must be involved in recovery. Recognizing and accepting our limitations thus become crucial to recovery.

Susceptibility to such triggers is one factor behind our use of the program slogan HALT-Don't get too

Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired.

Hungry. With many of us, an agitated state of mind-haste, hurry, or "hyper," for example--seems at least as perilous as hunger. And hunger itself can lead to binge eating, as many of us so well know. Binging on food can trigger the sexual addiction.

Angry. Anger, resentment, and negative thoughts toward ourselves or others create the inner disturbance that isolates us and sets us up for our drugs.

Lonely. The "unconnected" sexaholic is a misconnection waiting to happen.

Tired. Fatigue often seems to make us more liable to temptation, lowering our defenses somehow, as though becoming weak physically affects our emotional stamina.

As we learn to recognize and surrender our triggers in sobriety and accept our limitations, fear of falling lessens. We learn the difference between indulging ourselves and taking care of ourselves. The new way of life works

if, that is, we begin finding what our lust was really looking for. Finding this is the result of a patient working of the Twelve Steps, which we shall get into in Part II. Before we do so, however, it may help to review the addictive process and consider both the concept of lust and the spiritual basis of addiction.

### The Addictive Process

Here again, our experiences in recovery reveal aspects of the process common to other addictions. In the early formative stages we have an overpowering desire-Is it really a demand?-for an action, interaction, or fantasy that produces a high-something to get us out of ourselves. It brings relief and pleasure, so we seek it repeatedly and compulsively. At first, it's a pleasurable way to cope with our inner conflict or stress or pain that seems intolerable. It works. Typically, sex with ourselves or others starts us off, and just as in other addictions, it dissolves tension, relieves depression, resolves conflicts or provides the means to cope with a difficult life situation or take an action that seemed impossible before. Whatever form our sexaholism takes, it has the apparent effect of reducing isolation; easing lack of emotion, loneliness, and tension;

and of gaining power or providing escape.

This new-found "friend" not only seems to reduce our inner conflict, boredom, and negative emotions, but also offers us fusion, validation, and a false sense of aliveness. As a matter of fact, all of these effects are false or at best only temporary. What seems to promise life is really taking away our lives.

It is almost impossible to pinpoint exactly when, how, or why our practice becomes addictive. Eventually, the process takes on a life of its own, often unrelated to the initial causes. And unlike normal coping practices, our addictive thinking and behavior become excessive and repetitive and are forced to serve a whole lot of other functions they weren't meant to serve.

Over time, the sense of pleasure begins to diminish; we feel less relief. The habit starts producing pain, and hangover symptoms begin appearing when the pleasure is outweighed by the pain: tension, depression, rage, guilt, and even physical distress. To relieve this pain, we resort to our habit again. As we constantly call on our addictive act for instant relief, our emotional control declines. We can go into impulsive behavior and mood swings, of which we are often unaware. Intimate and social relationships deteriorate.

Some persons coming into Sexaholics Anonymous seem to be in this transition zone between pleasure and pain. Thus, they go in and out of sobriety or the Program, feeling confused about their false start.

Eventually, what we're doing disrupts our ability for daily living. The addictive patterns lower our level of consciousness and remove us from life's mainstream. We are driven to spend more time thinking about and carrying out our addiction. At the same time, we deny the addiction to avoid the pain of recognizing how much of our life it has invaded and controls. The adverse side effects produced within us become more and more damaging.

Denial becomes woven into the fabric of our being. By refusing to listen to that still small voice within, we begin by denying we are hurting ourselves. For this lie to persist, denial must pervert the reality of ourselves and others and turns into blindness. We become unwilling and finally unable to see the truth about ourselves.

Finally, our addiction takes priority over everything else, and our ability to work, live in the real world, and relate comfortably with others suffers accordingly. In advanced stages, sexaholic practice becomes our main coping mechanism and only source of pleasure. Then it no longer helps us cope and begins causing new problems that must be coped with. In this vicious cycle, what was used as the cure becomes the sickness; what was used as the medicine becomes the poison; the Answer becomes the

Problem.

Summary of the Addictive Process:

It begins with an overpowering desire for a high, relief, pleasure, or escape.

It provides satisfaction.

It is sought repeatedly and compulsively.

It then takes on a life of its own.

It becomes excessive.

Satisfaction diminishes.

Distress is produced.

Emotional control decreases.

Ability to relate deteriorates.

Ability for daily living is disrupted.

Denial becomes necessary.

It takes priority over everything else.

It becomes the main coping mechanism.

The coping mechanism stops working.

The party is over.

For the sexaholic, the progression is relentless and inevitable. Within any given moment of our lives, however, we were unaware of the extent it had driven us and refused to see where it was leading. Like revelers riding a raft down the river of pleasure, we were unaware of the awesome power of the rapids or the whirlpool ahead.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by gibbor120 - 23 Nov 2015 14:29

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The question of "am I an addict" or "what is an addict" is one of the most polarizing questions discussed on this forum. There are many definitions, from the simple "if you want to stop, but cannot - you are an addict", to the extreme "if you have no hope other than G-d saving you himself - only then you are an addict", and everything in between. Then some deny that sexual addiction exists at all.

Some try their hardest not to be labeled an addict, while others want to be labeled an addict.

At some point I decided that it didn't matter. I am acting compulsively and out of control (although I had months of clean streaks here and there). It's getting worse, not better. I need outside help because everything I've tried on my own has not worked.

I don't think there is one definition of addict. I think it is a continuum and there are simanim (the level of obsession, the level of risk one takes to fill that obsession, and especially if it is getting progressively worse in the amount of time or the nature of the acting out). A person may be a low level addict, but not seek help until their life is sufficiently affected.

I suspected I was an addict, waffled here on the forum for a while trying to figure it out, decided it didn't matter, I need help. If you press me for a yes/no answer, I would say yes, I consider myself an addict.

How's that for a long-winded answer.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by cordnoy - 23 Nov 2015 14:32

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[gibbor120 wrote:](#)

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Read the post above yours.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?  
Posted by skeptical - 23 Nov 2015 17:03

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This isn't really about the definition of an addict.

If you don't think you're an addict, whatever you're definition, click no.

If you don't know whether or not you're an addict, click I don't know.

If you've accepted that you are an addict, whatever your definition, click yes, and write a post about how you came to that conclusion.

I do have a reason for this poll.

Thanks!

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by MBJ - 24 Nov 2015 13:25

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I can't say that I ever considered my disease progressive, and most of the time I still don't. For me it was about not being able to stop. Withdrawl when trying to stop as well I guess. But mostly for me it is the unending obsession. It is all I think about sometimes. Even now. Something I always turn back to. I know I will never be cured.

Also what really hit home for me was when I was stressed about a high credit card bill and my first reaction was I need to go to the bathroom and masturbate. It was so twisted and disturbing that I had no choice to admit that lust had become my panacea for all my problems and I can't just walk away from it.

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Re: Poll: Do You Think You're an Addict?

Posted by cordnoy - 24 Nov 2015 13:56

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panacea

[pan-uh-see-uh]

noun

1. a remedy for all disease or ills; cure-all.
2. an answer or solution for all problems or difficulties:

kinda figures: an ancient Greek goddess of healin'

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