



The Winds of Change
becoming the person you were meant to be

Cherrie Herrin-Michehl, MA, RMHC 14024 NE 181st St., Suite. 108,
 Woodinville, WA 98072 (206) 353-1307 www.counselorhm.com

Volume 1, Issue 1
 April 1, 2004

Inside this issue:

What is Sex Addiction?	2
Help for the Addict and the Spouse	2
The 3 C's of Sex Addiction	2
Resources for the Addict & Spouse	3
The Effects of Sexual Abuse on Personality ³	3
What is a Panic Attack?	4

THE WEIGHT—SEXUAL ABUSE CONNECTION

“When did you first start substituting love for food?” I asked my client. (Note: names and identifying information have been changed to protect confidentiality.)

“I don’t really know,” she answered as she reached for the Kleenex box. “I remember in high school when I’d lost a lot of weight, and this really popular guy gave me the eye, if you know what I mean.”

My nod encouraged her to continue. “What did you do right after he gave you the eye?” I asked, knowing what was probably coming.

“I went right home and raided the refrigerator.”

“You’re terrified of your own beauty?” I asked, although it was spoken softly and sounded more like a statement than a question.

“I guess so. His look made me realize at that second that if I didn’t put a layer of protection around myself—actually a layer of fat—then I would probably be abused again, or turning back into my old promiscuous self, which is even worse. So yeah, I guess you’re right. I’m terrified of my own beauty.”

I encouraged her to continue therapy to get to the roots of the issues, which often display themselves through many secondary symptoms, including

- Depression
- Eating disorders (including obesity, anorexia, and bulimia)
- Other addictions
- Promiscuity or lack of sexual intimacy
- Difficulties in friendships and other relationships

“When did you first start to gain a lot of weight?” is a crucial question. Something happened to the person at that time in her life. It may have been the divorce of her parents, sexual abuse, or another extremely painful situation. **Until the pain is dealt with, the food addiction will probably not improve.**

The great news is that help is available! Professional counseling and sexual abuse groups, where you work through the pain, is the road to change. Call if you would like to begin the road to deep change.

This client has now lost over 40 pounds, and is becoming increasingly com-

fortable with her beauty.

Does this mean that every woman who is significantly overweight was sexually abused? Of course not. However, many who have struggled with weight issues did experience major trauma in their lives. Usually they will continue to struggle with the weight until they work on the roots of their issues.

Being overweight is usually a symptom of underlying issues, and more than likely the weight loss won’t stick until these issues are dealt with. To work on the weight alone is somewhat like chopping off the top of a weed in your garden. The root will be hidden for a while, but sooner or later the weed will reappear.

BEFORE YOU DIVORCE

Do you know what research has discovered about the effects on your children? In the book The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, the authors explained their findings of a study that tracked children from the time their parents divorced until their adult years. Often the results don’t surface before their thirties, when they often have difficulties with employment/, careers, and relationships. What are the other research-based findings about children of divorce? And is there any hope for my marriage? Read the book, which is based on the author’s case studies on children from the time their parents divorced until their thirties.

WHAT IS SEX ADDICTION?

Richard clicked on his computer one night a few years ago, and a pop up ad led him to a sexually provocative web site. His heart began to beat rapidly, and his palms began to sweat. It seemed like only a half hour had passed, but he looked at the clock and realized it was 1:00 a.m. He breathed a sigh of relief that his wife was out of town, and he didn't get caught.

Within a few weeks, Richard couldn't wait to get home and click on his favorite sites. Throughout each day he looked forward to being alone with his computer where he could click his way into sites that relieved stress. He began to masturbate to the images online.

Months later, the net lost its luster. He

needed something new to get the same feelings of elation he used to get with online porn. This led him through the doors of adult stores and massage parlors. His work was slipping, and he began to miss larger parts of his work day due to his obsession with sex and masturbation. He was a top executive for a large company, and covered his tracks well at first. But six months into his addiction, he started to miss important meetings.

One night, his wife awoke to use the restroom and noticed the light from the computer screen in the next room. She expected her college aged daughter to be typing a report, but walked in on Richard masturbating to a woman online. She watched for a few moments, and then he felt her presence.

He quickly shrunk the screen and pretended he was researching to buy new golf clubs. "That's it," she said. "Are you sick, or what?!" She threatened to leave him, but then rethought it quickly and gave him an ultimatum. He could either get help, or get out.

Richard showed all the signs of sexual addiction:

1. Inability to control his behavior.
2. The need to surpass what he has done previously in order to achieve the same results.
3. Problems in one or more areas of his life due to his behavior, including relationships, work, and/or the legal system.
4. Efforts to stop by will power have failed.

HELP FOR THE SEX ADDICT AND HIS OR HER SPOUSE

Perhaps you're surprised to discover that sex addicts can be female. It is estimated that from 30% to 50% of sex addicts are female. But often their addictions are more relational, such as meeting men on the internet. Sometimes they leave their spouses for men they meet on the net. In virtual reality, men she is instant

*Sex addiction will get worse
if it is untreated.*

messaging have time to plan what they say. This makes them one dimensional, and also buys time necessary to plan the perfect answer to questions, unlike real life. This, of course, makes him appear to be car-

ing, sensitive, and close to perfect. So it's this person that the woman actually falls for.

The good news is that there is hope for the addict and his or her spouse. A good treatment program includes in-depth therapy by a person knowledgeable about the subject to get to the roots of the problem. Also, a 12-step program with a sponsor who helps them work the steps vigorously and thoroughly is a must. But the crux of the program is the boundaries of the spouse. He or she has to make and keep clear boundaries.

THE THREE C'S FOR THE SPOUSE OF A SEX ADDICT

The spouse has to remember that she (or he) didn't cause the addiction, cannot cure it, but can contribute to it. The cause is complex, often including issues with his own father—namely, that he never gave his son the important gift that children need from their parents: the message: "I am so proud of you." Another cause has its roots in sexual abuse. Usually men say, "Oh no, I was never abused." But when I delve into

their stories, they reveal that somewhere along their lives, they experienced something that was inappropriate for a child their age. Perhaps they were exposed to porn, or they stumbled upon an older cousin as she was undressing because the door wasn't closed. Unfortunately, even these sorts of events can be a catalyst for the start of an addiction. Especially if the father is absent either physically or emotionally. Another interesting cause is the personality trait of people-pleasing.

Often the addict is charming and the nicest guy you've ever met. He lives a double life, and you would never guess in a million years that he is a sex addict. Until he can learn to express his true feelings in the moment (this is taught in therapy) and he sheds his people-pleasing habits, he will most likely not get a grip on his addiction. Call today for your free consultation, whether you are a sex addict or your spouse is. I have successfully treated both.

RESOURCES FOR THE ADDICT AND THE SPOUSE

Get yourself the help you need, and don't wait until the problem gets worse. Every day, men all over the country are arrested for the solicitation of prostitutes. Amazingly enough, most of these men hold down great jobs and are very nice people. Their wives are shocked when they find out.

Get educated about the problem. Read books such as:

Out of the Shadows by Patrick Carnes

Men's Secret Wars by Pat Means

Every Man's Battle by Steve Arterburn

Get help online, at web sites such as www.iprodigals.com

Get individual therapy to deal with your own issues, whether it is you or your spouse. Spouses need to develop new ways of relating to their spouses, get educated, and learn how to create and keep firm boundaries. Usually sex addicts will not change until they are at risk to lose something or someone they value highly, such as their spouses, children, or careers.

Attend 12-step meetings that you can locate from the www.iprodigals.com web site.

Call today for your free consultation to see if you would like to begin individual treatment to work on the roots of the problem, whether or not you are the

addict or your spouse is the addict.

Remember that by nature addictions will only get worse unless the addict receives help. It has to be intense and the top priority in his life in order to work.

Usually sex addicts will not change until they are at risk of losing something or someone they value highly, such as their spouses, children, or careers.

THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE ON PERSONALITY

You've been pretending for years that the inappropriate sexual advances you received as a child or adolescent don't affect you today. How long will you keep pretending?

Besides the secondary symptoms you read about on page 1, the following are frequent symptoms that people who have been abused experience:

Powerlessness: Since powerlessness played a leading role in the abuse, you now have probably tried to overcome that. Sometimes people are determined that nobody will ever have power over them again. Unfortunately, this backfires on them and creates a fear in other people. Or else you have never realized that now you do have power, and you have lived your life as though you have to put up with anything. You may even be considered a doormat and not respected because you are so nice, peo-

ple can't stand it.

Betrayal: Abusers often set their victims up by giving them special attention, privileges, or gifts. This gives them the appearance of being nice people that can be trusted.

Therefore, years after the abuse, the victim has difficulty trusting anybody, and the kinder they are, the less likely they will be trusted.

Ambivalence: The body was designed

to respond to touch. So on some level, even though the abuse was horribly violating, the body most likely felt a degree of pleasure entangled with the abuse. This is highly confusing and produces ambivalence—she hated it, but at the same time she enjoyed it to some degree. Often this confuses her and she begins to feel as though the abuse was her fault, as if she caused it or encouraged us. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. This ambivalence can lead to promiscuity, as

the victim realizes she can get attention with her body. She is more susceptible to this if she came from a family in which her needs for attention and love were not meant. Since people were created for relationship—with God and with people—they will do whatever they have to do in order to get attention. Sometimes this blurs the definitions of sex, love, and intimacy. The end result is that the woman feels lonely because she has not had the opportunity to learn the difference between sex, love, and intimacy. Her lack of trust and confusion about power fuels the fire and breeds depression.

The good news is that there is hope. If you choose, you can get help from an experienced therapist to break free and to become the person you were meant to be. I was trained by renowned Christian psychologist and author, Dr. Dan Allender. I use his book, *The Wounded Heart* and its accompanying workbook to help you onto the road of the life you have always dreamed about. How long will you continue to pretend there is nothing wrong? Call today.

Years after the abuse, the victim has difficulty trusting people, which takes a toll on friendships and romantic relationships.



The Winds of Change

becoming the person you were meant to be

Cherrie Ferrin-Michehl, MA
Counseling Services

**14024 N.E. 181st Street,
Suite 108
Woodinville, WA 98072
(206) 353-1307
www.counselorhm.com**

WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK?

You had never experienced anything like it before: Your heart was beating so hard, you thought you were going to die. Your palms were sweaty, you were shaking, and you felt as though you were completely out of control. You were afraid you would let out a primal scream, or that you would go crazy. Maybe you went to the ER, and were told you had an anxiety attack.

Anxiety disorders, including panic attacks and panic disorder, are the most common psychological problem Americans experience today. The good news is that help is available, and the bad news is that if you don't get help soon, the situation is likely to get worse.

Sue (not her real name) had a panic attack in the grocery store, but decided to ignore it. Later that month she had attacks in a theatre and in a restaurant. Before long, she decided to avoid theatres and restaurants. She felt like she needed control and that she would freak out if she went to a store, restaurant, or theatre. Unfortunately she didn't seek help. Within a few months, her world became smaller and smaller. She developed a case of agoraphobia, and could barely leave her home.

Finally Sue discovered she was unable to fly. Just the idea of being inside a plane where she had no control was almost enough to bring on a panic attack. At that point she sought help, and is now living a life free of panic attacks.

Due to many factors, more and more people are experiencing panic attacks, panic disorder, and agoraphobia. If you or anyone you know are experiencing such problems, know that you are not alone and that help is available. The sooner you receive treatment, the faster you can get to the roots of the problem. In fact, if you know anyone who has had a few attacks, encourage them to seek help immediately—before the problem gets worse.

In the meantime, you may change your lifestyle to reduce your chances of getting panic attacks. Caffeine, sugar, nicotine, and other drugs create more anxiety. Cognitive therapy also helps tremendously, as well as chasing down the roots of the problem and learning tools to de-stress and relax. Often the person grew up in a home with a great deal of dysfunction, such as alcoholism or frequent emotional, physical, or verbal abuse. Don't suffer any longer. Call today for your free consultation.