



Winds of Change

become the person you were meant to be

Cherrie Herrin-Michehl, MA, LMHC, Counseling Services

17220—127th Pl. NE, Suite 101, Woodinville, WA 98072 (206) 353-1307

hope4today1@verizon.net

Volume I, Issue 3

January 2006

NOTE: All names and identifying information of clients have been changed to protect their identities.
Cherrie Herrin- Michehl, MA, LMHC, is a licensed mental health counselor, speaker, and writer .

CUTTING AND CHAOS OF THE SOUL

Sue, a 35-year-old mother of three, had been secretly beating herself for years. On the outside she looked perfect, with outfits that screamed "I have it all together." She reminded me of a beautiful mansion that looks solid and commanding of respect. But once you unlock the door, it is full of dry rot and cobwebs.

Sue asked to be a part of my Wounded Heart sexual abuse group therapy, although she wasn't sure if her abuse had been severe enough to qualify. Many women assume that their abuse was mild and that it

hasn't deeply affected them if there was no penetration. Nevertheless, they have the signs of a damaged heart, and try to suppress the pain through eating, shopping, sex, drugs, alcohol, bulimia, or self-abuse. Deep down, chaos abounds.

During the eighth week of therapy Sue told the group she was in such intense pain that she could barely sit for more than five minutes. The night before, she explained, she had severely beaten herself with a hair brush. After sharing her story, another woman shared that she couldn't bear to look at her hands because she picked at her cuticles to the point of bleeding and scabbing.

One evening, nobody except Sue showed for the group. Normally people didn't miss, and I decided to use the time for individual therapy if Sue wanted. She agreed and, as always, I prayed silently before beginning.

During the first few minutes, I asked her what her life would be like if she wasn't consumed with pleasing people. She had hinted during previous sessions


that she struggled with pleasing people.

Startled by my question, she bolted upright and leaned back into her chair, smiling softly. "I wouldn't hurt my body anymore." I wasn't expecting this, and silently thanked God for the stream of light He poured into the moment. We discussed this at length, and realized that she had been expending enormous quantities of energy into stuffing her feelings and trying to please others.

"Who are you trying to please?" I asked. She named several people, and then sighed. As a little girl, she was required to please her mother in order to keep herself from getting beaten or yelled at.

Before leaving that night, I wrote a contract stating what she could do instead of beating her body when she felt angst in her heart. She agreed to sign it, and followed through with its requirements. The next week, the group members were thrilled that Sue had turned the corner of her journey into healing. Something she had struggled with for years

**Cutting
and
self-injury
are
symptoms
of a
shattered
soul.**



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E-mail Cherrie Herrin-Michehl at hope4today1@verizon.net	

was beginning to subside.

The last time we met, Sue reported that she had returned a back scratcher she had purchased several months earlier to do self-harm. She grinned, and reported that she had exchanged it for bubble bath.

Self-injury is an outward symbol of a shattered soul. Until the person works on the underlying causes of her pain, she will be stuck in a dark tunnel of self-harm. When she begins the process of facing the chaos in her soul she will begin to become the person she was meant to be.

PORNOGRAPHY AND ADDICTION: Why Men Fall Prey to the Lure of the Net

Michael, a CEO with a charming personality, lived a double life for three years. People admired and respected him for his honesty, intelligence, and uncanny ability to get along with people. Little did they know that he was spending more time online at pornography sites.

Michael began his entanglement with internet porn because of a pop-up ad which displayed a beautiful woman in a bikini. His day had been especially difficult, and he was exhausted and stressed. To his amazement, he felt much better after spending time at the site. A bit of guilt crept in while he thought about what his wife would think if she knew. But how would she find out? He shrugged it off and continued to click on more sites and images.

Before Michael realized what was happening, he developed an addiction to pornography. He spent more and more time on such sites and his work productivity decreased. The liberty he enjoyed as a CEO gave him flexibility in his schedule so that he could spend more time online.

His wife noticed that he was more emotionally distant and didn't connect with her as well as he used to. He would get agitated when they went out, and seemed to want to get back home. She began to think something was going on with him, but didn't know what it was.

One night she woke up in the middle of the night to use the restroom. She noticed a stream of light coming from Michael's den, and she lightly walked down the hall to see what he was doing.

"What in the world are you doing?"

she screamed. Michael sat on the computer while he masturbated to the image on his computer screen. He quickly deleted the image and pulled himself together. He couldn't look her in the eye while he muttered, "Oh, nothing."

Couples like Michael and his wife are beginning to become commonplace. Statistically, 40% of all time spent online is at pornography sites. Many of the users, believe it or not, are the nicest guys you've ever met. Their addictions, like all other addictions, only get worse if untreated. I have been working with such couples for several years, and have helped many work through their issues very successfully.

In order to treat this or other issues of sexual addiction, I have the best success rates when working with the wives and husbands separately. Later in therapy I often bring them back together, but in many ways the wife holds the cards.

As with other addictions, he is not going to change unless the costs are high. The wife learns to understand what sex addiction is about, and particularly that it is **NOT ABOUT HER**. It is in no way related to her own perceived deficits of physique or performance. It is actually about underlying issues, such as one or more of the following:

- **People Pleasing** as a personality trait
- **Rejection** in a relationship that occurred years ago
- **Getting attention from women** that he did not receive from his father

- **Stuffing feelings** and acting out to reduce stress instead of venting his feelings to safe people
- **Perfectionism** which is often related to people pleasing
- **Control issues** which often come from a childhood that was chaotic to some degree. Sometimes it was a parent that exerted an exceptional amount of control over the child. Other times it was a situation in the home which felt out-of-control to the child, such as a parent that was a heavy drinker or alcoholic.

Until these underlying issues are addressed and successfully dealt with, the man's desire to act out will only get worse. To pretend that it's not a problem is ignorance that will only lead to a greater degree of pain in the future. Men are wired visually, and therefore are set up for an addiction to pornography. The hope comes from treating the roots instead of the symptoms only.

Pornography Stats:

- The FBI finds pornography at 80% of all violent sex crime scenes
- 60% of all website visits are sexual in nature
- 1 of 3 visitors to all adult web sites are women

THE DARK SIDE OF PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism. The word melts deliciously off your lips like fine chocolate. "Perfect," you say when someone gives you the answer you want. Perfectionism is applauded and worshiped in our driven society. Thanks to your perfectionism, you excelled in school, and later earned scholarships and opportunities that aren't available to everyone.

Unfortunately, one of the problems with perfectionism is that it lives next door to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). If the boundaries aren't contained, the perfectionism can easily spill into OCD. It starts gradually, and looks like a positive attribute, until somewhere down the road you are chained to thoughts and/or actions that eat up more and more of your time.



Ken's business is doing unbelievably well. His financial backers are astounded at the speed of his success, as they thought it would take him a few years to make the profit he has made since opening seven months ago. During the twelve years the backers have floated new businesses, they have never seen one take off like Ken's cell phone franchise.

What his backers don't know is that Ken is obsessed with perfectionism, which has begun to include spending an inordinate amount of time rearranging his merchandise. It started as an extension of who he is and his commitment to excellence. But soon he developed a compelling need to make the merchandise more attractive each day. He

moved around the phones repeatedly, organizing them in different ways. Sometimes he arranged the phones by color, other times by the age group or gender he felt would select them. Then he arranged them by size, brand, and serial number. He started to get frustrated with himself, and wondered why he was able to check off fewer tasks of his "to do" list each day.

Last month, Ken's sales were down for the first time since opening. This is due to his failing to provide the superb customer service like he did in the past. The reason is that he is too busy reorganizing his merchandise. Ken is starting to experience some of the symptoms of OCD. These include:

- **Checking** doors, locks, stoves, etc. more than once or twice
- **Hoarding** objects most people would throw away, such as old papers, plastic bags, or clothing
- **Thoughts** that won't go away, often with themes of violence or aggression
- **Cleaning** repeatedly, to the point that it is a gross waste of time
- **Counting** objects such as tiles, ceiling squares, etc.

People like Ken usually don't get help because they seem to have their lives in control. In fact, the roots of the disorder include a profound need to control. They are often very successful in the eyes of the world, and this makes it more difficult for them to seek help.

If Ken doesn't get help soon, he will begin to get depressed. He may start to be late wherever he goes because of his rituals, compulsions, and obsessions. At home, he may start to arrange his pillows perfectly in the center of the bed, reorganize cupboards, clothes, line up the paper towels in a straight row, and so forth. As the problem grows, the amount of time allocated to arrang-

ing, reorganizing, counting, checking, washing, or obsessing consumes more of his day. If he doesn't get help, he will get more depressed. His career and relationships will dramatically decline. The desires to organize, check, and wash seem as real to you as your need for a glass of water on the hottest day of the year.

People with undiagnosed OCD usually wait until they feel about a quarter of an inch from insanity to get help. The obsessions-only form of OCD has another facet in that the sufferer is flooded with thoughts such as extreme violence and aggression, or committing horrendous crimes. These obsessions feel very real to him. He is terrified that even though he has always been considered a good person, he will commit these heinous acts. He knows that if he shares this with a professional, he will most certainly get locked up. So he keeps it a secret until he snaps. The truth is that people with OCD will not follow through with their horrible thoughts. They are convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that they will do so, but it is not the truth.

Research shows that it normally takes 13 years for someone to get a diagnosis for OCD. Fortunately, there is hope, and people with OCD can get back to normal. I have had the honor of helping many people get to the other side of OCD. It has been rewarding for me for many reasons, but probably the biggest reason I enjoy working with OCD is that several years ago I suffered with the disorder.

Most of the literature emphasizes treating the symptoms and not the causes, but I believe that my experience has tapped me into the causes and that I can usually treat them successfully. The bright side of OCD is that it happens to people with very high IQs, and once the perfectionism is tamed, a rewarding and joyful life is possible.

Extreme perfectionism is a mask worn to cover a negative self-image.





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If you would like to be added or removed from the mailing list, please email your request, including full name and address to: hope4today1@verizon.net

DEALING WITH THE ROOTS OF YOUR WEIGHT ISSUES:

How long will you treat your symptoms instead of the causes?

"Oh my gosh, Sandra, is that *you?*" I couldn't believe how much weight this former client had lost. I'd run into her at a local store, and we chatted about her weight loss and how she was doing. She had lost 70 pounds since I had seen her last, which was about a year and a half earlier. Of course I couldn't resist asking how she did it. I was expecting to hear that she used one of the latest diets. Instead, she grinned and said, **"You know, most of the weight loss is from what you and I worked on in counseling."** We chatted for a while about her life, and it was thrilling to see how well she was doing compared to when she had first come into therapy.

"I finally realized why I was punishing myself (by being heavy)," she said. She chatted a bit more about how we had discovered that she—like many overweight women—was punishing herself for certain things she had done, which I can't reveal due to confidentiality. We had worked on figuring out how she was sabotaging her life, and why she felt compelled to do so. She gradually decided that she was done with that part of her life, and decided she deserved to be average sized. She started working on it, and in a slow, healthy way, dropped over seventy pounds.

I ran into Sandra at the same place about a year later, but didn't get a chance to chat because there were more people around. She looked the same as the last time I'd seen her, so I know she has kept the weight off for over a year.

I wish more women and men would be willing to get into

therapy to work on the underlying issues that caused them to gain weight in the first place. Of course there are no guarantees, but I **find it interesting to note that many of my clients end up losing weight if they needed to do so.** It is often a by-product of dealing with the issues that are heavy on their hearts, because those issues are the ones that tend to end up on their hips.

Do you have the courage to work on the reasons that you gained weight when it first started to accumulate? If you do, you will probably have more success with keeping your weight off once you lose it. Most likely, the weight gain started at a difficult period in your life, and in some ways it worked for you. By this, I mean that if you were promiscuous years ago, you quickly discovered that to wear extra weight protects you from your own promiscuity. Some of my clients call it a "fat bubble." What do you call your layer of protection? What would it be like to deal with the causes of your weight gain?

Would you be willing to ask yourself the tough question of why the weight gain seemed like it was protecting you? Or why you turned to food as your drug of choice when your parents got divorced, or you were molested, or you lost your best friend? Until you are ready to face the truth, you probably will have only fleeting success with keeping off excess weight. The truth will set you free. But first you will have to be able to look at your issues straight in the eye. Are you ready to deal with the roots of your weight issues, instead of yo-yo dieting? You deserve it.

