

Sex Addicts Anonymous UK (SAA UK) is a fellowship of men and women who share our experience, strength and hope with each other for the purpose of finding freedom from addictive sexual behaviour and helping others recover from sex addiction.

### Is sex addiction real?

Sex is a natural, healthy and enjoyable part of life. It can be a beautiful, happy and bonding experience between two people. So how can it be an addiction? Aren't people who say they're sex addicts just making excuses for their lack of self-restraint and control? Don't they just enjoy it too much?

We face these questions all the time. They come from a whole world of misunderstanding about what addiction is. Sure, it's true that not every person who has an affair is an addict. And not everyone who's watched pornography is an addict. And not everyone who has lots of sex with lots of people is an addict. Some people just have high sex drives, or just happen to like certain things. That's fine, we're not trying to label everybody as an addict, or create excuses for irresponsible or unfaithful people.

But sex addiction does exist. And it's different from generally high libido, in two major ways:

#### 1. Once we've started, we can't stop

For alcoholics, there's no such thing as just one quick drink. For gambling addicts, there's no such thing as 10 minutes at the casino. For sex addicts, there's no such thing as "5 minutes of porn" or "just an hour in the strip club" or "just one partner this week".

There's a whole variety of sexual behaviours that can be addictive - but they all share a common thread: whatever we're addicted to, we find it impossible to stop once we've started. We'll stay up to the small hours on the internet - we'll fantasise obsessively about romantic and sexual liaisons - we'll empty bank accounts on prostitutes and lap dancers - we'll suffer STDs from our involvement in sex work - we'll have affair after affair - we'll masturbate until we're sore - and we'll get up the next day and do it again.

Once we've started, we lose control over how much or how long or with whom or when or where.

#### 2. Once we stop, we can't stay stopped - no matter what the consequences

The above would all be academic if we could just not start in the first place! If only the alcoholic could remember the disaster of the last time he drank! If only the gambler could recall with sufficient force the horror of the loan shark and the bailiff! If only the sex addict could remember the STD test and its shameful result - the painful discoveries and broken relationships - the jobs lost, the sleep lost - the pay-cheques

blown - the police calling at the door - and act on it by staying stopped!

Many of us have faced such consequences time and again. But they've not stopped us going back for more. It seems baffling to others - but all the terrible, humiliating things in the world don't seem to cure the obsession. In fact, the worse our lives become, the harder it seems to stop, and stay stopped!

Most people enjoy sex normally. They assume we enjoy it too - just too much. For us, that's not always the case. Often our addictive behaviours leave us hurt, injured, demoralised, broke, despairing, and even suicidal. Yet no matter how often we experience these negative consequences - no matter how much we hate ourselves and what we're doing - we always keep going back. Despite repeated and humiliating failures,

Most of us didn't know what was wrong with us - or that our condition had a name. We often thought we were just dirty, or bad, or unworthy people - we didn't realise we were suffering from a real and treatable disease.

there's always one more attempt to control ourselves and enjoy sex as others do, and one more failure. That's addiction.

#### How do I know if I'm an addict?

Like an alcoholic unable to stop drinking, sex addicts are unable to stop their self-destructive sexual behaviour. Our behaviours vary: compulsive masturbation, pornography, affairs, compulsive internet use, intrigue, paying for sex or being paid, voyeurism, exhibitionism, unsafe sex, abusive sex and much more besides. Family breakups, sexual diseases and other health consequences, financial disaster, loss of jobs, and risk to life are often the painful themes of our stories.

We come from all walks of life - we are ministers, doctors, homemakers, factory workers, salespeople, secretaries, clerks, accountants, therapists, dentists, politicians, to name a few. We are men and women - young and old - gay and straight - of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. None of these dividing lines mean anything to us - because they mean nothing to the disease - and we have come to believe that it is a disease.

Some of us also struggle with other addictions, like drugs, alcohol, eating disorders and compulsive gambling. Most of us didn't know what was wrong with us - or that our condition had a name. We often thought we were just dirty, or bad, or

unworthy people - we didn't realise we were suffering from a real and treatable disease.

We made up excuses. We minimised our problem and told ourselves that "everybody is this obsessed with sex." We denied the harm we were doing. We made solemn vows to ourselves and others. We were often depressed, some of us thought of suicide, some that we were losing our minds. All we knew for sure was that we wanted to stop, but couldn't.

Fortunately there's now a test available at the back of this leaflet and online ([www.saa-recovery.org](http://www.saa-recovery.org)) for people who are worried. If you're in doubt - check it out - there are no fees or adverts or anything to buy. No catches, we're just here to help.

#### If I am an addict, what can I do?

Sex Addicts Anonymous UK (SAA UK) is a fellowship of men and women who share our experience, strength and hope with each other for the purpose of finding freedom from addictive sexual behaviour and helping others recover from sex addiction. Our programme is based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, though we are not affiliated with AA or any other organisation.

Our local meetings offer an accepting, non-threatening environment where we can share our common struggles and learn how to apply the principles of the Twelve Steps to our everyday lives. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behaviour. There are no fees or dues. It's a simple programme, and it worked for us.

**We practise strict anonymity and confidentiality, so that our meetings are a safe place for all of us. Whom we meet or what is said in a meeting is confidential and is not normally disclosed or discussed with anyone else. We don't oppose other forms of therapy or treatment - we just offer our experience, you're free to take it or leave it.**

## Am I a sex addict?

You may find these helpful as a method of self-assessment. If you answer 1 or more questions "yes", then you may have an issue:

1. Do you keep secrets about your sexual or romantic activities from those important to you? Do you lead a double life?
2. Have your needs driven you to have sex in places or situations or with people you would not normally choose?
3. Do you find yourself looking for sexually arousing articles or scenes in newspapers, magazines or other media?
4. Do you find that romantic or sexual fantasies interfere with your relationships or are preventing you from facing problems?
5. Do you frequently want to get away from a sex partner after having sex? Do you frequently feel remorse, shame or guilt after a sexual encounter?
6. Do you feel shame about your body or your sexuality, such that you avoid touching your body or engaging in sexual relationships? Do you fear that you have no sexual feelings, that you are asexual?
7. Does each new relationship continue to have the same destructive patterns which prompted you to leave the last relationship?
8. Is it taking more variety and frequency of sexual and romantic activities than previously to be brought to the same levels of excitement and relief?
9. Have you been arrested or are you in danger of being arrested because of your practices of voyeurism, exhibitionism, prostitution, sex with minors, indecent phone calls etc.?
10. Does your pursuit of sex or romantic relationships interfere with your spiritual beliefs or development?
11. Do your sexual activities include the risk, threat, or reality of disease, unwanted pregnancy, coercion, or violence?
12. Has your sexual or romantic behaviour ever left you feeling hopeless, alienated from others, or suicidal?

## Our contact details

Sex Addicts Anonymous UK is free, non-judgemental, and based on an approach that has helped millions of addicts worldwide.

Many of us have found that by sharing honestly with others and working the twelve steps we have been able to stop destructive sexual behaviour which we were powerless to stop on our own. Our lives, which had become unmanageable, have been transformed.

If you think you or someone you know might be suffering from a pattern of addictive sexual behaviour, please don't hesitate to contact us by any of the methods described below:

### Call us on:

**0784 310 8302**

This is a confidential message line checked by members of the group. You should normally receive a call back, if requested, within 24-48 hours (women who call may ask to speak to another woman).

### Email us at:

**[info@saa-recovery.org.uk](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org.uk)**

**Newcomers may attend any normal meeting.**

**[www.saa-recovery.org.uk](http://www.saa-recovery.org.uk)**

The views expressed in this pamphlet are those of the UK Intergroup of Sex Addicts Anonymous and do not necessarily represent those of Sex Addicts Anonymous as a whole.

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**ARE YOU  
IN CONTROL  
OF YOUR SEX  
LIFE?**

**OR IS IT IN  
CONTROL OF  
YOU?**

