

Interrupting the Momentum of Sexual Addiction Could Involve Withdrawal Symptoms

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Sexual addiction involves an irresistible compulsion to engage in sexual behavior. Like other addictions, it entails engaging in compulsive behavior even when it no longer brings satisfaction. Initiating recovery involves interrupting the momentum of addiction by abstaining from the problematic behavior. Many people report that they experience withdrawal symptoms when ceasing the behavior. The symptoms individuals may experience include cravings, agitation, irritability, anxiety, mood swings, difficulty focusing or concentrating, depression, lack of energy, and changes in sleep and appetite.

Like individuals struggling with drug addiction, those dealing with sex addiction often make commitments to themselves or others to quit, cut back, or change their preferred behaviors to something less harmful. However, despite the negative consequences, the resolve is often short-lived, and the compulsive sexual behavior persists.

Sexual addiction can lead to various significant losses, including the loss of close relationships, freedom due to legal consequences (such as incarceration), financial stability, self-esteem, and a sense of competence in other areas of life and health. Eventually, many individuals with sex addiction realize the severity of their situation, often prompted by a crisis or series of crises that break through denial and other defense mechanisms, leading them to seek help for their addiction. To make the transition from active addiction to recovery, most people with sex addiction need to abstain from sexual activity for some time, typically ranging from thirty to ninety days. Although long-term abstinence is not the ultimate goal of sex addiction recovery, the aim is to restore sexual health.

At the outset of recovery, each individual must define "abstinence" for themselves based on their sexual history. Someone struggling with sex addiction would likely consider any sexual behavior not conducive to intimacy in a relationship as acting out. Abstinence often involves refraining from masturbation, especially since many individuals with sex addiction consider it one of their "sexual drugs of choice."

To break the cycle of addiction and establish abstinence, individuals with sex addiction must resist overwhelming urges to act on their sexual compulsions. The withdrawal symptoms experienced in the transition into recovery can disrupt normal functioning in various areas of life, such as emotional, physical, and relationships, interfering with social interactions, work, and academic performance. The symptoms experienced during the transition into recovery can be overwhelming and discouraging enough to propel the person trying to eliminate a sexual addiction right back into compulsive sexual behavior for relief.

Managing withdrawal symptoms and withstanding the strong urges to act out often requires support from therapists, support groups, and loved ones. Therapy can help individuals develop coping strategies to deal with cravings and emotional distress, as well as addressing any underlying issues or trauma that may contribute to the addiction is crucial for long-term recovery. Support groups provide a sense of community and understanding.

People seeking recovery must acquire early abstinence skills and make lifestyle changes that promote and support abstinence. Support groups, therapy, accountability partners, and support from family and friends help. Healthy habits such as regular exercise, adequate sleep, and nutritious eating can contribute to overall well-being during recovery and distract from the obsession about acting out. Self-care is essential.

Recovery is a journey that requires patience, commitment, and ongoing effort. Understanding that quitting a compulsive behavior is just the beginning of recovery is crucial. After you have interrupted the momentum of addiction, the hard part is not returning to it. New recovery and living skills are necessary to maintain that newfound abstinence and ultimate recovery.

With dedication and the right tools, individuals can overcome the grip of sexual addiction and reclaim control over their lives. Breaking free from sexual addiction is a challenging but achievable goal. With determination, support, and professional guidance, individuals can interrupt the momentum of addiction, establish healthy behaviors, and experience a fulfilling life free from the constraints of compulsive sexual behavior.



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