Hope and Healing for Women

Information About Women and Sex Addiction



Conference Approved
January 2023
PI/CPC Series

© 2021 International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. (SAA)

This pamphlet is for the woman who wonders if her sexual behaviors have crossed a line and are no longer healthy for her.

If so, Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) can help.

Members of SAA share our experience, strength, and hope with each other so that we may find freedom from addictive sexual behavior and help others recover from sexual addiction.

Is it possible for a woman to be a sex addict?

Yes, it is possible! People of any gender identity, race, or sexual orientation may struggle with sex addiction. Sex Addiction may not have any obvious outward signs, but, like alcoholism, sex addiction can include behaviors that become problematic. Sexual addiction encompasses a wide variety of behaviors, from sexual avoidance all the way to frequent, compulsive sexual experiences or the use of pornography.

While there are differences in the details, what we in SAA have in common is that we cannot control our sexual fantasies or behaviors. We felt more and more lonely and isolated as our addiction progressed. Sex addiction also affected our thinking. For instance, many of us thought that our sexual behavior was simply an expression of our sexuality or a way of meeting our own sexual needs as independent women. In reality, we had crossed the line, and our behavior was harming us. If you are like us, you may relate to some of the following stories. If so, SAA may be for you.

Joanna: I led a double life—working by day as a responsible teacher, but on weekends, I had many sexual partners, often

meeting strangers through dating apps. My friends and counselors assured me that my sex life was OK, but every time I hooked up with more than one person in a weekend, I hated myself. My shame kept me in isolation, avoiding sexual activity of any kind—sometimes for months. I blamed my behavior on mental health issues, but even when I worked them out, I still couldn't stop. My wake-up call came when I caught a sexually transmitted infection from one of my hook-ups. I knew something had to give, but before long, I found myself back on the apps.

Alyssa: I jumped from relationship to relationship. Whenever I got close to someone, I felt incredibly uncomfortable and had an irresistible urge to run away. Over and over, I "fell out of love" with them and "fell into love" with someone else. When I had an affair and lost a partner I truly cared about, it all came crashing down.

Nikki: I was sexually molested when I was young. This left me feeling confused, ashamed, and afraid. My sexual behaviors started with porn and masturbation, then progressed to sex outside of my relationships. I used sex to escape my feelings, not realizing the consequences. Everyone I turned to for help either shamed me or assured me that my sex life was normal. I kept making promises that I would change, but my behaviors continued to get worse.

Donna: I thought I couldn't be a sex addict because I had never had sex, but I couldn't give up my compulsive masturbation. I figured that my behaviors weren't hurting anyone except myself. I found myself drawn to more extreme pornography and began engaging in online sexual activity. I feared it was only a matter of time before I took it to the next level. Although I felt consumed by shame, I continued going down my dangerous path.

Diamond: Although I considered myself a very religious person with strict values around sex and dating, I couldn't stop entering into inappropriate relationships. I really didn't want to, but I felt like I had to have sex or risk losing the relationship.

Jissa: I was so afraid of sexual contact that I hardly dated. Later, after getting married, I avoided sex as much as possible. Instead, I read romance novels and watched reality TV, obsessively fantasizing about the characters. I realize now I started fights with my partner and was overly critical to avoid sex. Eventually, the pain, loneliness, and realization that my life was slipping away became too much. I had to do something.

Mary: I started engaging in sexual behavior for money on the weekends to get through grad school. After graduation, I didn't really need the money anymore, but I thought I did. I hated the work, the clients, and the consequences, but I felt trapped. I found myself addicted to the power and the money – and now I know I was addicted to the sex as well.

Danielle: My sexual activity started in early childhood. I often coerced other children to be sexual with me. Even though the behaviors with children stopped when I reached adulthood, I carried the title of "predator" in my heart, thinking I was a bad person doomed from birth. I used sex, drugs, and alcohol to numb my shame and engaged in increasingly risky behaviors.

What's stopping me from seeking help?

Even when we have all the information, it can be difficult to take the first step. Shame is very powerful, and shame over our sexual behaviors kept many of us from seeking help and actually fueled

the addiction. In spite of changes in social attitudes towards sexuality, a double-standard still exists: men are often applauded for hypersexuality, and women are frequently judged harshly. As women, we may think of ourselves as "bad" rather than as people struggling with a disease. We are often haunted with guilt and shame and may think that we will be criticized or condemned if we tell anyone.

For some of us, it took time and many negative consequences to see that our current sexual behavior was causing problems. Many people said our behavior was "normal." Some of us had childcare needs or work conflicts which we allowed to prevent us from getting help. But we had to let go of these excuses and get help or risk losing everything.

Each woman must determine the effect of her own sexual behaviors on her life. You may find yourself in the same unwanted place again and again. But there is good news – you don't have to live that way anymore! Just as our addictions were varied, so were our experiences coming into recovery. Here's how it was for some of us.

Julia: When I first looked for meetings in SAA, I was terrified to even think about being around men. I found a local meeting and reached out to the meeting contact, who put me in touch with a woman in the group. When we met, she told me about women-only virtual meetings. I used these meetings for the first few months and made great strides in my recovery. After more time, I felt comfortable being around men in my local meetings—even attending retreats! I am very grateful I had so many safe options for meetings.

Jessica: Walking into my first meeting, I noticed I was the only woman in the room. I walked with my head down and found my

seat. I wanted to run out, but I stayed. At the end of the meeting, several of the men greeted me as one of their own. I kept coming back with an open mind. I found that even though the details of our stories were sometimes different, our struggles were the same. From this unlikely beginning, I found lasting recovery and a community that cares about me.

Tracy: I heard about SAA for a while before I came to my first meeting, but I was afraid to try it. I was attracted to both men and women, so I didn't trust myself. I was sure that if I met with these people, I would end up having sex with someone. But my addiction was getting worse, and my life was getting more out of control, so I finally decided to give it a try. I called the International Service Organization (ISO) office of SAA and told them I needed help. They told me there was a meeting in my area in three days. But I needed help right then! They told me about the virtual meetings which happened every single day. I went to my first meeting that night. At that meeting, I found men and women who knew what I was going through and were ready to help me find my way out of addiction and into recovery. I have been coming back ever since, and I no longer have to be afraid of being sexual.

What does SAA offer me?

When we joined SAA, we found acceptance and support from people who understood as no one else could. We learned how to use recovery tools, and we worked the Twelve Steps with experienced members. We discovered a new way of life, free from compulsive sexual behavior, and we are discovering that healthy sexuality is possible for us. Now we have hope, and you can, too!

How do I find a meeting?

International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. (SAA):

P. O. Box 70949

Houston, TX 77270, United States

info@saa-recovery.org

www.saa-recovery.org

+1 713-869-4902

On the website meeting list, you can often find a meeting contact's name and contact information. Many of us found that connecting with another person before the meeting made our experience more comfortable. If you have trouble finding a contact, call the ISO office.

Literature and resources:

The SAA website, at saa-recovery.org, has several resources for women.

- See the section for women, or visit saa-women.org
- See information for women under the section for literature
- On the Find a Meeting page at saa-meetings.org, it is possible to filter meetings under gender for "Women" and "Women + LGBTQ."

Are you a sex addict? Take a quick self-assessment:
https://saa-recovery.org/am-i-a-sex-addict/self-assessment/