

Paul Loosemore Twitter Chat Script

“Sexual Addiction”

January 22, 2016

AH: Welcome to today's #AHchat! Our topic is on “Sexual Addiction” We would like to start by welcoming our special guest, Paul Loosemore, who will be tweeting as @stopSaddiction. Paul is joining us to share his expertise on this topic.

Let's get started with some of our questions.

AH: Please tell us a little about yourself and your current role?

Paul: I am a therapist working in St Louis MO. I grew up in England and moved here with my wife to pursue the best training in counseling I could. We have lived here for a number of years and I have been working with people recovering from sexual addiction for over 3 years formally. My work is mostly with those wanting to change sexual habits, couples and traumatized females.

I recently founded a website called StopSexualAddiction.com to reach as many people as possible with a complete recovery guide to sexual addiction.

Why? Because often self-help books miss a great deal, or therapists aren't trained to deal with the specific issues that come up in this area. I wanted to bridge the gap in a practical and accessible way.

AH: Thank you for sharing Paul! Your role seems very exciting and valuable.

AH: What motivates you to stay in this career day after day?

Paul: People are gloriously made, and yet we often experience such a profound devastation of who we are—due to our histories and choices. I have always felt compelled to fight for change and speak about the “unspeakable” or the “shameful”. There is no better place to do this than in our broken sexual lives and relationships. I have also seen the effects of sexual brokenness in my extended family and couples falling apart. It is something I don’t want to just stand by and see.

Yes, it is really hard work and emotionally draining, but incredibly rewarding to see people change and move towards what they were made to be and then not need my help anymore!

AH: What is sexual addiction?

Paul: There are levels of [sexual misuse, abuse and addiction](#). The struggles we face though can be reduced to this: *sex used in a destructive way*—[be it on your own with images \(porn\)](#) or with someone else in a sexual act.

It normally starts when you find yourself exposed to exciting sexual stimulus that gives your brain a huge rush of dopamine. We alter our moods by viewing or engaging sexual materials. This impact is stored in our memories and we want to experience it again. This is when you start to misuse or abuse sexual stimulus or people. The brain then starts to adapt to the new bursts of dopamine that can be over 250% of the normal dopamine production.

Your brain doesn’t do well when it is flooded by neurochemicals like dopamine and so it starts to adjust by shutting down its reception of dopamine. You then need more dopamine to make you feel as good as you did before—this looks like more sex, different experiences or more deviance for it to be as exciting.

The reward pathway of your brain gets changed and ultimately the pathways to the parts of your brain that inhibit seeking or harmful sexual behavior get bypassed. At that point you can’t control your sexual behavior like you could before.

Morals and values can start to change as you can’t avoid sexual behaviors because your brain thinks they are vital to survival—when

really they are not. This usually causes great anxiety, shame, numbness and denial.

AH: What are some of the signs and symptoms for sexual addiction?

Paul: Great question: You must remember it can look different for everyone but I'll list the key things to look for.

- Often being preoccupied with sexual thoughts and objectifying people.
- Hiding sexual behaviors from others or not fully exposing their extent.
- Feeling controlled by, or not able to stop or change your sexual behaviors.
- Hurting others emotionally with your sexual behaviors. Finding romantic relationships hard or disrupted.
- Feeling depressed after sex, or unable to have sex with a relationship partner.
- Wanting to isolate, becoming anxious and thinking people would shun you if they really knew you.
- Staying up very late, or spending excessive time looking at images, movies or attaining sex partners.
- Losing jobs, missing meetings, interrupting education to be sexual.
- Taking sexual risks, you wouldn't have imagined before.

AH: What should someone do if they believe they are addicted to sex?

Paul: First: Seriously consider that their suspicion is probably right. Second: Know that they are not alone, disgusting, weird or unable to get help! It is usual for denial to kick in with any addiction. Don't give into it and figure out the truth. You can take a sexual addiction survey online to help you figure it out too. <https://www.recoveryzone.com/tests/sex-addiction/SAST/index.php>

Remember, not addressing the issue now means it is likely to only increase and you are more at risk for feeling worse and losing more of your life to it.

- It is crucial to cut off access to addictive material or places.
- Use internet filters, stop your internet connection, block numbers and websites, give someone else your car keys. Yes, this really is important.
- [The next step is to locate support](#) from people who understand sexual addiction and won't judge, but provide support for you.
- If a spouse, partner or children are involved then they need support too. Addictions like this usually impact the whole family.
- Then try and engage in things that bring legitimate pleasure, enjoyment and make life worth living. This helps with dopamine, keeps depression at bay and reminds you of more! This may take some careful brainstorming and planning.
- Next, learn how the addiction works and what is likely to have happened. These articles are a great place to learn some of the basic science and personal impacts:
<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/54daa1a0e4b03bd166945987/t/5552b012e4b0081d0d2c3fc1/1431482386036/Sex+Addiction+Fact+Sheets.pdf>
- Start to engage your emotions by observing, naming and experiencing them. It is important not to continue blocking these or allowing them to “drive the bus” unnoticed. A key step is owning your behavior, and building motivation to do something.
- List the problems that you experience because of your addiction and also the 10 things you want most out of life. You will be encouraged to act in response to these.
- Finally, make a plan! Get help doing that.

My article of Early Stage of Recovery can be found here:

<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/55356be9e4b0bb1e2885da4c/t/568c37c97086d7219d17e879/1452029897233/Early+Stages+of+Recovery%3BSteps+towards+integrity.pdf>

AH: What resources are available for someone struggling with sexual addiction?

Paul: There are a growing number. Everything from counseling, to support groups, practical exercises for change, websites, apps and accountability partners.

I would recommend moving into a holistic plan for change—just reading a self-help book doesn't usually work! Support groups are common and vary in quality. You can start here: <https://saa-recovery.org/>. Complete an internet search for "sexual recovery groups" in your area. Be careful what you type into searches! Filters and monitoring software is very helpful.

Check out: <http://www1.k9webprotection.com/>. I really like this free one!

Reading: Get a book both that talks through the psychological side, and one that gives you helpful tips and techniques to use. You need both sides.

I highly recommend "Surfing for God" by Cusick, it is a Christian perspective, but with great truth for everyone. Therapists: Look for someone with specific training in this area. Use a <https://www.psychologytoday.com/> search.

When you get into counseling or support groups accountability partners can be used. If you can't get formal help, please speak fully honestly with about your behaviors and current temptations—someone you can trust. (Not your spouse/partner though, as this is traumatizing for them.)

Lastly, I have developed a comprehensive, effective plan for recovery at www.stopsexualaddiction.com. The materials guide you through the behavioral, emotional and cognitive parts of recovery whilst giving you tools, techniques and expert advice for navigating relationships and learning about the addiction. You will [learn how to cope with emotions, reduce stress and build a truly satisfying life](#). Consultations are

available to assist you at any point in your journey. I did this to bridge the gaps I saw out there in the recovery world.

AH: What encouragement might you offer to the individual struggling with sexual addiction today?

Paul: You are lovable. You are not terrible. You are worth it. You can change. When you are feeling hopeless or destined to be stuck, get help. Many people have successfully walked away from sexual addiction and you can too. It probably won't be easy, but you will not believe how much better you will feel. I would encourage people to do the full work of changing behaviors and dealing with underlying concerns. This will stop alternative detrimental coping strategies creeping in.

I wish you all out there the best in your recovery and I would love to hear from you and help if I can. Remember: You are lovable; you aren't worse than I can take. Let's walk forward together.

AH: Thank you Paul for sharing this great information about sexual addiction. If you or a loved one has been suffering with a sexual addiction, we hope this information encourages you to get connected. [Seeking out treatment is critical for hope, healing, and recovery.](#) Thank you to everyone who participated in our Twitter Chat today! And thank you for the great insight @stopSaddiction!

Please stay tuned for future Twitter Chats from AH!

If you are in need of resources for substance abuse, visit our website at [Addiction Hope.](#)