

Family and Friends

UNDERSTANDING PROBLEMATIC SEXUAL BEHAVIOR (PSB)

While it may be hard for you to understand, even the most prominent Christian man or woman has the capability of leading a secret life outside of public view. This happens when the person chooses to act outside of his/her professed values. For every married person who decides to engage in secret problematic sexual behavior, there is a spouse at home that has just experienced sexual betrayal.

Here is what you should know about someone who exhibits problematic sexual behavior.



Problematic sexual behavior (PSB) isn't about sex. It's about the high created from the sexual arousal and/or orgasm. Compulsive sexuality is very similar to a gambling addiction. It's not really about the gambling. It's about the euphoria the brain experiences to escape reality for a moment. The brain receives a "hit" of dopamine (the reward neurochemical) from arousal and/or orgasm. PSB is about abusing neurochemistry in much the same way alcoholics abuse alcohol and drug addicts abuse drugs.

*Weiss, R (2012, September). *Sexual Addiction, Hypersexual Disorder and the DSM-5: Myth or Legitimate Diagnosis?* Counselor: Magazine for Addiction Professionals. <https://blog.counselormagazine.com/2014/11/sexual-addiction-legit-diagnosis-or-pop-culture-phenomenon/>



Problematic sexual behavior isn't a marriage problem. It's a personal problem. PSB is a consequence of childhood trauma, underdeveloped identity, and misused neurochemistry. Therefore, PSB usually develops before marriage and comes with the spouse into the marriage. The betrayed spouse is *neither the cause, nor the cure* of a person's problematic behavior. More sex is not the answer.

"TINSA: The Neurological Approach to the Treatment of Sex Addiction," by Dr. Michael Barta



Childhood trauma, such as sexual, physical, emotional, and verbal abuse is, typically, the core wounding that influences the development of problematic sexual behavior (PSB). 81% of those exhibiting PSB have experienced childhood sexual abuse. 97% have experienced emotional abuse. Trauma in childhood is processed by a child's underdeveloped brain and creates shame. The shame is, unfortunately, carried into adulthood and needs to be processed for true *recovery*.

Slavin MN, Scoglio AAJ, Blycker GR, Potenza MN, Kraus SW. *Child Sexual Abuse and Compulsive Sexual Behavior: A Systematic Literature Review*. *Curr Addict Rep*. 2020 Mar;7(1):76-88. doi: 10.1007/s40429-020-00298-9. Epub 2020 Jan 28. PMID: 33425653; PMCID: PMC7787260.

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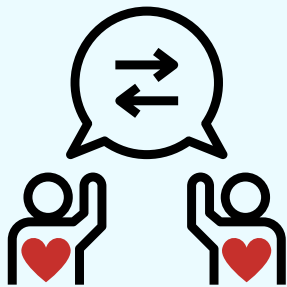
Here are additional reasons why Christian men and women act outside of their values and engage in problematic sexual behaviors. Most do not realize or intuitively understand these issues while active in their compulsion.



From a faith perspective, overcoming PSB is more than just “lust management.” Achieving freedom from PSB involves not only a deepening faith walk and prayer life, it includes competent therapy with a Certified Sex Addiction Therapist (CSAT) to address the childhood trauma and feelings of deep seated shame and unworthiness. PSB isn’t something you can “pray away,” as many men in recovery will tell you.



Believing the lies is a form of denial. It’s hard to be a Christian and engage in behaviors that go against your value of marital faithfulness. Therefore, the person with PSB believes their own lies, “What my spouse doesn’t know won’t hurt him/her.” “My spouse is not meeting my need for sex, therefore, I am justified in going outside of my marriage (through pornography, sexual venues, using sex workers, or having affairs, etc.) to meet this need.” To turn toward true recovery, the person with PSB must face reality, come out of denial, and acknowledge the damage their behaviors have caused or are causing.



The associated behaviors used to keep the secrets are just as damaging as the betrayal itself and often continue after sobriety. These behaviors include lying, blame-shifting, justification, minimization, verbal attacks, becoming the victim, and other forms of gaslighting. These behaviors must be straightforwardly addressed in order to restore trust in the relationships that have been ruptured by the problematic sexual behavior. The person with PSB learns healthy communication patterns to achieve true recovery.



Sobriety is not the same as recovery. Sobriety is not doing the behavior. Recovery is the process of healing the intimacy disorder associated with the PSB. Recovery helps the person with PSB work through the issues of their childhood so they can see themselves for who they truly are as a child of God. Recovery also allows them to discover how to behave in a way that aligns with their values, discover who they want to be and become their best selves for God, themselves, and the spouse/family. These tools are taught in groups and with personal therapy with a certified sex addiction therapist (CSAT).