

Compulsive Behaviors

- Compulsive behaviors are practiced for the same reasons that compulsive drug use occurs.
- Many of the symptoms of compulsive behavior are the same as the symptoms of compulsive drug use, such as doing the behavior or thinking about doing it most of the time and continuing the behavior despite adverse consequences.

Heredity, Environment, & Compulsive Behaviors

- Besides emotional needs created by chaotic childhoods, environmental influences that make users more susceptible to compulsive behaviors include bad diets, a glut of fast-food restaurants, state sponsored lotteries, and easy-to-get credit cards.
- Heredity plays a role in compulsive behaviors make some people more susceptible.
- A heredity susceptibility to compulsive behavior involves many of the same areas of the brain and neurotransmitters that are involved in drug abuse.
- A number of researchers postulate that a lack of arousal in the reward/pleasure centers causes people to engage in compulsive and repetitive behaviors to raise their level of arousal.

Conclusion

- Because the roots of any compulsion are so similar, one has to treat the basic emotional causes of addiction as well as the specific substance or behavior.

Other Addictions

*Employee Assistance Program
Educational Series*

Archbold Memorial
Employee Assistance Program
902 Cairo Road Thomasville, GA 31792
229.228.2210 • 1.877.EAP.ARCH



Compulsive Gambling

- Historically, gambling has been used by governments to raise funds, although at times, it was looked on as a vice.
- Compulsive gambling includes commodities, stock, and day trading.
- One to 3% of American adults are compulsive gamblers. Male compulsive gamblers outnumber female compulsive gamblers two to one but only a fraction of women, compared to men, seek help.
- More than 5% of college students are compulsive gamblers with another 10% experiencing some problems.
- Other behavioral and substance addictions, such as alcoholism, occur in 30% to 50% of compulsive gamblers.
- Some characteristics include preoccupation with gambling, betting progressive amounts of money, risky attempts to recoup losses, restlessness and irritability when trying to stop, and jeopardization of family, relationships, and job.
- Compulsive gambling is treatable through Gamblers Anonymous, individual therapy, and abstinence from all gambling

Compulsive Shopping

- The inability to handle money is a hallmark of almost any addict.
- Compulsive shopping (buying) is an impulse control disorder. This means that the behavior relieves tension and gives pleasure unlike obsessive compulsive disorders that only relieve tension and discomfort and are not pleasurable.
- The control a compulsive shopper feels adds to a feeling of self-worth.

Eating Disorders

- Society's promotion of underweight models has set up a false ideal of how we should look.
- The three main eating disorders are bulimia, anorexia, and compulsive overeating.
- Up to 95% of anorexics and bulimics are female.

Anorexia Nervosa

- Anorexia is similar to a weight phobia. It occurs mostly in women who are too concerned with pleasing others. They lack self-esteem and a sense of self.
- Anorexic individuals lose up to 60% of their body weight. The health risks are enormous.
- Treatment is difficult because anorexics think their weight is normal or even too high even though to others, they look emaciated.

Bulimia Nervosa

- Bulimics usually look normal but they stay that way by bingeing and then purging (throwing up) the large amounts of food they eat. They also use excessive exercise, laxatives, and fasting to control their weight.
- One to three percent of adolescent females have bulimia.
- Low self-esteem, pursuit of thinness, and biochemical changes induced by constant dieting trigger and perpetuate bulimia.
- Bulimia is best treated in its early stages through psychotherapy, emotional support by family and friends, and self-help groups.

Compulsive Overeating (including binge eating disorder)

- With compulsive overeating, the desire to eat is triggered more by emotional states than by true hunger, e.g., to calm, to satisfy, to control pain, and to combat depression.
- About 300,000 people die prematurely due to eating disorders: heart disease, diabetes, stroke, gout, cancer, and arthritis.
- Treatment includes psychotherapy, self-help groups such as OA, pharmacological treatment with anti-depressants or amphetamine congeners, and behavioral therapy to change eating habits and lifestyle.

Sexual Addiction

- Compulsive sexual behavior such as pornography, masturbation, phone sex, voyeurism, and flashing, is practiced as a way to control anxiety, stress, solitude, and low self-esteem.
- The sexual activity is usually followed by guilt, remorse, fear of being caught, and resolutions to stop the behavior.

Internet Addiction

- Internet addictions include cyber sexual addiction, cyber-relationship addiction, Net compulsions, information overload, and computer games addiction.
- Cyber addiction means "using the Internet or the computer to the exclusion of a socially interactive lifestyle."
- Cyber addiction can be stimulating or sedating while online.