

## Cybersex Consequences

Many times a cybersex problem develops during an increased period of stress or life change in which someone decides to cross a prior boundary and explore the world of online sex. The siren call of the internet is soon rationalized as a “manageable option” with common self-talk such as:

- 1) “no one cares”
- 2) “it will help me relax”
- 3) “my actions won’t harm others”
- 4) “it’s only online so it doesn’t count”

The consequences of cybersex choices now play some part in most divorces. But instead of working their own “stop-being-bad” program *cybersexers* need to suspend their dissociative coping and their misguided intimacy quest and embrace healthy courtship and sobriety via supportive relationships and treatment.

## Take the PATHOS Test to See Where You Stand

1. Do you often find yourself preoccupied with sexual thoughts? [**P**reoccupied]
2. Do you hide some of your sexual behavior from others? [**A**shamed]
3. Have you considered seeking help for your sexual behavior? [**T**reatment]
4. Has anyone been hurt emotionally due to your sexual choices? [**H**urt others]
5. Do you feel controlled by your sexual desire? [**O**ut of control]
6. When you have sex, do you feel depressed afterwards? [**S**ad]

A positive response to just one symptom would indicate a need for additional assessment. However, having two or more indicates the strong possibility of sexual addiction.

\* The “Cyberhex” model and survey quotes are from *In the Shadows of the Net* by Carnes, Delmonico, & Griffin.

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## What is Cybersex Addiction?

*Sexual addiction is real and can be distinguished from random moral lapses or narcissistic, recreational hedonism. Sex addicts lead a double life, often concealing their behaviors from others.*

\* Ten percent of adult internet users self-designate themselves as being cybersex addicts. Extending beyond traditional pornography, cybersex encompasses the entire gamut of ways people choose to be sexual with each other, including erotic chat & online prostitution. With the average age of 1<sup>st</sup> cybersex exposure now at age 11, and 30% of porn site visitors now female, the internet has lured entire subgroups that had once been assumed to be immune. However, ... hope looms large when someone seeks help.

## Virtual sex is rapidly spreading, advancing

\* A recent survey determined that 6% of all internet users (20 million individuals) now suffer from compulsive cybersex use. No longer a one-way medium, the internet (combined with webcams, Skype, and a variety of cutting-edge devices and software) now facilitates a number of online, interactive sexual activities. Teen phone “sexting”, virtual “video booths”, avatar-type virtual gaming sex, podnography, and “CUseeMe” activities abound. As robotic sex manikins (“sexbots”) move ever closer to full production we now find ourselves in an era where people will use any and every technology to try to simulate human sexual experience.

Perhaps the **biggest myth about internet pornography** is that it doesn't hurt or effect anyone. Some think it might even help “spice up” their relationship. But with 68% of cybersex couples surveyed one or both had lost interest in normal sexual relations. \*

“ ‘Everything is permissible for me’ - but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible for me’ – but I will not be mastered by anything.” I Cor 6:12



### What are the tell-tale signs?

Common syndromes include:

- 1) **Preoccupied** with internet sex
- 2) **Increasing** duration, frequency of use
- 3) **Inability to stop** / decrease cybersex
- 4) **Agitated** without cybersex outlet
- 5) Using cybersex to **escape** problems
- 6) Seeking new or **riskier** experiences
- 7) Lying; **concealing** internet use
- 8) **Illegal** soliciting of people / materials
- 9) Behavior **jeopardizes** job/relationship
- 10) **Losses** of time and finances

## Why is the internet such a powerful Svengali?

\* Popular authors on cybersex addiction have identified 6 “inroads” they’ve termed the “Cyberhex” that trap users in a 6-sided, hexagonal mind prison:

- 1) INTEGRAL - the “net” is part of daily life
- 2) IMPOSING – we have unlimited choices
- 3) ISOLATING – quick, private, disease - free sex
- 4) INTERACTIVE - the illusion of community via real time “pseudo-intimacy”
- 5) INEXPENSIVE – 24 hour anonymous, no/low cost chat, photos, and videos
- 6) INTOXICATING– fuels fantasy w/o rejection, gratifies w/o responsibility

