Sexual Disorder

- Sexual disorders cause a great deal of psychological distress to the individuals troubled by them and to their partners.

- Sexual disorder: a problem with sexual response that causes a person mental distress.

- Interchangeable with the term, “sexual dysfunction”.

- Example(s): a man’s inability to get an erection and a woman’s inability to orgasm.
Sexual Disorder

- At some point in our life, we may have experienced a “sex problem” that went away in a day or a few months without treatment...these cases represent the “grey area” between absolutely great sexual functioning and long-term difficulties that require sex therapy.

- Lifelong sexual disorder: a sexual disorder that has been present ever since the person began sexual functioning.

- Acquired sexual disorder: a sexual disorder that develops after a period of normal functioning.
Sexual disorders fall into four categories:

- Desire disorders
- Arousal disorders
- Orgasmic disorders
- Sexual pain disorders

The first three categories correspond to components of the sexual response cycle.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

Desire Disorders

Hypoactive Sexual Desire

Sexual desire (libido) refers to an interest in sexual activity, leading the individual to seek out sexual activity or to be pleasurably receptive to it.

When sexual desire is very low and the individual is not interested in sexual activity, this is a disorder termed “hypoactive sexual desire” (HSD).

Found in both men and women.

According to Basson (2007), the defining characteristics are lack of interest in sex or sharply reduced interest, or a lack of responsive desire.

An absence of desire, even after sexual activity has begun.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

**Desire Disorders**

**Hypoactive Sexual Desire**

- According to surveys (of the general population), a lack of interest in sex is common.
- Too little sexual desire is the most common sexual issue reported by women.
- An estimated 10% of women younger than 49 years old and 50% of women above the age of 65 years old report problems with a lack of desire.
- Less common in men but men certainly due suffer from a lack of desire in sex...5% of men younger than 49 years old and 25% of men above the age of 65 years old.
- HSD should not be confused with “normal” experiences that inhibit an individual’s desire for sex.

  - Example: one cannot be expected to be “turned on” at all points of a relationship or with every potential partner.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

- **Hypoactive Sexual Desire**
  - A lack of desire for sex can result from a discrepancy between the partner’s levels of sexual desire.
  - In other words, if one partner wants sex considerably less frequently than the other does, there may be conflict.
  - This is known as the discrepancy of sexual desire.
  - Recently, the concept of hypoactive sexual desire has been modified to reflect female sexual interest/arousal disorder...
    - A diagnosis that encompasses lack of interest in sexual activity and absent or reduced arousal during sexual interactions...this diagnosis is limited to women.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

**Arousal Disorders:**

**Female Sexual Arousal Disorder**

- Refers to a lack of response to sexual stimulation, including a lack of lubrication.

- Difficulties with arousal and lubrication are common and according to research, an estimated 10% of women suffer from this disorder.

- Common during and after menopause.

- As estrogen levels decline, vaginal lubrication decreases.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

- **Arousal Disorders:**
  - **Erectile Disorder (erectile dysfunction and impotence)**
    - The inability to have an erection or maintain one.
    - Difficult (sometimes impossible) to engage in sexual intercourse.
    - Lifelong erectile disorder: the man has never had an erection sufficient to have intercourse.
    - Acquired erectile disorder: the man at one time was able to have satisfactory erections but can no longer do so.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

- **Erectile Disorder:**
  - According to surveys in North America and Europe, erectile disorder occurs in fewer than 10% of men under 40 years old but then increases to about 30% for men in their 60’s.
  - Erectile disorder is the most common of the disorders among men who seek sex therapy.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

**Orgasmic Disorders:**

**Premature Ejaculation:**

- Occurs when a man has an orgasm and ejaculates too soon.
- In extreme cases, ejaculation may take place so soon after erection that it occurs before intercourse can even begin.
- In other cases, the man is able to delay the orgasm to some extent, but not as long as he would like or not long enough to meet his partner’s preferences.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

Orgasmic Disorders:

- Questions arise from the concept of “too soon”... what qualifies as “too soon”... what precise criterion should one adopt to determine what qualifies as “too soon”?

- There is not a general consensus on what qualifies as “too soon”...

- Premature ejaculation may be defined as achieving an orgasm within one minute after the penis has been inserted into the vagina.

- Premature ejaculation may be defined as ejaculation prior to 10 pelvic thrusts.

- Premature ejaculation may be defined as the absence of voluntary control of orgasm.

- Premature ejaculation may be self-defined... if a man become greatly concerned about his lack of ejaculatory control and it is interfering with his ability to form intimate relationships.
The International Society of Sexual Medicine defines premature ejaculation as:

- ejaculation that always or almost always occurs prior to or within one minute of vaginal penetration.
- the inability to delay ejaculation.
- distress about the problem.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

- Premature ejaculation is a common problem in the general male population.
- Surveys indicate that about 15% of men have difficulties with early ejaculation.
Delayed Ejaculation (Male Orgasmic Disorder):

- The man is unable to have an orgasm, or it is greatly delayed, even though he has a solid erection and has had more than adequate stimulation.

- The severity of the problem may range from only occasional problems with orgasming to a history of never having experienced an orgasm.

- In the most common version, the man is incapable of orgasm during intercourse but may be able to orgasm as a result of hand or mouth stimulation.

- About 10% of men experience delayed ejaculation.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

- **Female Orgasmic Disorder:**
  - The inability to have an orgasm.
  - *Situational orgasmic disorder: a case of orgasmic disorder in which the woman is able to have an orgasm in some situations (while masturbating) but not in others (while having sexual intercourse).*
  - *Roughly about 20% of women struggle with the inability to achieve orgasm.*
  - *The ability to achieve an orgasm is relative to one's experiences...adequate stimulation vs. inadequate stimulation.*
Pain Disorders:

- **Painful Intercourse (dyspareunia):** refers to genital pain experienced during intercourse.

- Approximately 8% of women and 2% of men report pain during sex.

- In women, the pain may be felt in the vagina, around the vaginal entrance and clitoris, or deep in the pelvis.

- In men, the pain is felt in the penis or testes.

- Decreases one’s enjoyment of the sexual experience and may even lead one to abstain from sexual activity.
Kinds of Sexual Disorders

**Pain Disorders:**

- Vaginismus: is a spastic contraction of the outer third of the vagina.

- In some cases, it is so severe that the entrance to the vagina is closed and the woman cannot have intercourse.

- Important to note, dyspareunia and vaginismus are often associated because if intercourse is painful, one result may be spasms that close off the entrance to the vagina.
Normal expansion of vagina during plateau phase

Vaginismus causing constriction of the outer vaginal muscles

- Uterus
- Urinary bladder
- Coccyx
- Cervix
- Symphysis
- Urethra
- Vagina
- Rectum
- Vaginismus
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

**Physical Causes:**

- **Erectile Disorder:** diseases associated with the heart and circulatory system are particularly likely to be associated with erectile disorder, since erection itself depends on the circulatory system.

- Any kind of vascular pathology (problems in the blood vessels supplying the penis) can produce erection problems.

  Erection depends on having a great deal of blood flowing into the penis via the arteries, with simultaneous constricting of the veins so that blood cannot flow out as rapidly as it is coming in...any damage to the arteries or veins may produce erectile disorder.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

- Erectile disorder is associated with diabetes mellitus... circulation problems and peripheral nerve damage.

- Erectile disorder may be one of the earliest symptoms of developing a case of diabetes.

- An estimated 28% of men with diabetes suffer from an erectile disorder.

- Diabetes is also associated with sexual disorders in women.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

- **Hypogonadism**: an under-functioning of the testes so that testosterone levels are very low.

- Any disease or injury that damages the lower part of the spinal cord may cause erectile disorder, that is the location of the erection reflex center.

- Erectile disorder may also result from severe stress or fatigue.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

- **Premature Ejaculation:** early ejaculation is more often caused by psychological than physical factors.

- **A local infection such as prostatitis may be the cause,** as may degeneration in the related parts of the nervous system, which may occur in neural disorders such as multiple sclerosis.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

- **Delayed Ejaculation**: may be associated with a variety of medical or surgical conditions, such as multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, and prostate surgery.
  - Most commonly, it is associated with psychological factors.

- **Female Orgasmic Disorder**: may be caused by severe illness, general ill health, or extreme fatigue.
  - Injury to the spinal cord can cause orgasm problems.
  - Most cases are caused by psychological factors.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

- Painful Intercourse and Vaginismus
  - Dyspareunia in women is often caused by organic factors, including the following:
    - Disorders of the vaginal entrance: irritated remnants of the hymen; painful scars, perhaps from a episiotomy or sexual assault; or infection of the Bartholin glands.
    - Disorders of the vagina: vaginal infections; allergic reactions to spermicidal creams or the latex in condoms or diaphragms; a thinning of the vaginal walls, which occurs naturally with age; or scarring of the roof of the vagina, which can occur after a hysterectomy.
    - Pelvic disorders: pelvic infection such as pelvic inflammatory disease, endometriosis, tumors, cysts, or a tearing of the ligaments supporting the uterus.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

Painful Intercourse and Vaginismus

Painful intercourse in men may result from a variety of factors such as...

- an uncircumcised man who has poor hygiene may not clean the penis thoroughly with the foreskin retracted...material may collect under the foreskin, causing infection.

- an allergic reaction to spermicidal creams or to the latex in condoms.

- prostate problems may cause pain on ejaculation.
### What Causes Sexual Disorders?

#### Table 1: Drugs That May Impair—or Improve—Sexual Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>How It Affects Sexual Functioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Psychoactive Drugs</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Antianxiety drugs/tranquilizers</td>
<td>Enhanced desire, orgasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buspirone</td>
<td>Decreases hypoactive desire, improves premature ejaculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benzodiazepines (Librium, Valium, Ativan)</td>
<td>Desire disorders, erection problems, orgasm problems, ejaculation problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antidepressants I: Tricyclics</td>
<td>May treat hypersexuality, premature ejaculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antidepressants II: Serotonin reuptake inhibitors (Paxil, Prozac, Zoloft)</td>
<td>Desire disorders, erection problems, orgasm problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithium</td>
<td>Desire disorders, erection problems, orgasm problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antipsychotics</td>
<td>Desire disorders, erection problems, orgasm problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorazine, Haldol</td>
<td>Desire disorders, erection problems, orgasm problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Antihypertensives</strong></td>
<td>Desire disorders, erection difficulties, orgasm delayed or blocked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserpine, Methyldopa</td>
<td>Erection difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ace inhibitors (Vasotec)</td>
<td>At low doses, increases desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Substance Use and Abuse</strong></td>
<td>At high doses, decreases erection, arousal, orgasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Alcoholism creates many disorders and atrophied testicles, infertility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicotine</td>
<td>Decreases blood flow to penis, creates erectile disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opioids</td>
<td>Sense of well-being and relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endogenous: Endorphins</td>
<td>Decrease in desire, orgasm, ejaculation, replaces sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>Enhances sexual pleasure but not actual performance; chronic use decreases desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

Psychological Causes:

Immediate Psychological Causes:

- Prior learning: refers to the things the people learned earlier...for example: childhood...that now affect their sexual response.

- Immediate causes: various factors that occur in the act of lovemaking that inhibit sexual response.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

Psychological Causes:

- The following four factors have been identified as immediate psychological causes of sexual disorders:
  - Anxieties such as fear of failure
  - Cognitive interference
  - Failure of the partners to communicate
  - Failure to engage in effective, sexually stimulating behavior
Psychological Causes: Anxiety

- Anxiety during a sexual interaction can be a source of sexual disorders.
- Anxiety may be caused by fear of failure—that is, fear of being unable to perform, and performance anxiety has especially strong effects for men.
- Anxiety can create a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy in which fear of failure produces a failure.
- For example: a man may have one episode of erectile dysfunction (perhaps after drinking too much at a party) and the next time he attempts to have sex, he may anxiously wonder if he will “fail” again. The anxiety may impact his ability to achieve an erection.
- He may attribute this failure to achieve an erection as a permanent condition that affects his ability to perform in future sexual situations.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

Psychological Causes: Cognitive Interference

- Refers to the thoughts that distract the person from focusing on the erotic experience....the problem is one of “attention”.
- “will my technique be good enough”? or “will my body be beautiful enough to arouse him”?
- Spectatoring: Master’s and Johnson’s term for acting as an observer or judge of one’s own sexual performance.
- The process of evaluating how we are doing during sex and mentally commenting “good job” or “lousy job”.
- Men experience more performance-related distractions and women experience more appearance-related distractions.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

Psychological Causes: Failure to Communicate

- One of the most important immediate causes of sexual disorders.
- Many people assume that their partner knows their sexual needs...WRONG!
- You are the leading expert in the field of what feels good to you, and your partner will never know what turns you on unless you make this known.
- Many people do not communicate their sexual desires.
- For example, a woman who needs a great deal of clitoral stimulation to have an orgasm ay never tell her partner this; as a result, she does not get the stimulation she needs and consequently, does not orgasm.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

- **Psychological Causes: Failure to Engage in Effective Sexually Stimulating Behavior**
  - The result of simple ignorance.
  - A couple may not be aware of the location of the clitoris or the sexual positions to enhance stimulation.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

Psychological Causes: Prior Learning

- In some cases of sexual disorders, the person's first sexual act was traumatic.
- Example: a young man who could not get an erection the first time he attempted intercourse and was laughed at by his partner.
- The victims of child sexual abuse experience a lot of trauma in their early experiences and this may lead to later sexual disorders.
- A history of sexual abuse is frequently reported by women seeking therapy for problems with sexual desire, arousal, or aversion.
- A person who grew up in a very strict, religious family and was taught that sex is dirty and sinful may impact an individual’s ability to enjoy a full sexual response.
- A disorder may also develop when parents or adults overreact and severely punish a child for exploring their sexuality, masturbation...the person may not be able to achieve an orgasm from masturbation later in life.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

Psychological Causes: Emotional Factors

- Depression is associated with erectile disorder.
- Anger and sadness can interfere with sexual responding.
- Disgust is a strong emotion that is the enemy of arousal...disgust whether it is associated with a particular person, a body part, or an object—makes person want to avoid sex.
What Causes Sexual Disorders?

**Behavioral or Lifestyle Factors**

*Smoking, alcohol consumption, and obesity are all associated with higher rates of sexual disorders and all involve behavior.*

*A study of obese men between the ages of 35 to 55 showed that regular physical exercise reduced their body mass index and the incidence of erectile disorder.*