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**Addictions**

*Help, I need somebody, help not just anybody.*

*Help, you know I need someone, help.*

*When I was younger so much younger than today I never needed anybody's help in any way.*

*But now these days are gone and I'm not so self-assured, now I find I've changed my mind and opened up the doors (The Beatles, 1965).*

These words, written by John Lennon, echoed some of the torment he experienced in his early days with the Beatles. He was not alone. Addiction can occur in many forms. Often, it is assumed that physical dependence characterized by withdrawal symptoms is required in order for someone to be diagnosed with an addiction disorder, but the fact is that behavioral addiction can occur with all the negative consequences in a person’s life minus the physical issues faced by people who compulsively engage in drug and alcohol abuse (Carlisle et al., 2016).

According to the 2018 National Survey on Substance Abuse and Health (NSDUH), 14.5 million adults ages 18 and older had alcohol abuse diagnoses. This includes 9.2 million menand 5.3 million women. In addition, an estimated 88,000 people (approximately 62,000 men and 26,000 women) die from alcohol-related causes annually, making alcohol the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States (SAMHSA. 2018). In spite of these alarming numbers, there are addictions, other than substance abuse addictions, that cause tremendous issues with people but do not receive the notoriety as compared to substance addictions.

Addictions that are categorized as non-substance abuse addictions are called process addictions (PAs) and wreak just as much havoc on people’s personal lives. PAs are compulsive-like behaviors associated with cravings, urges, and disruptions in social, personal, and work relationships. Examples of PAs are: gambling, sex addiction, video gaming, internet, exercise, eating, shopping and others (Carlisle et al., 2016). Furthermore, PAs are seen as “*processes, whereby a behavior*, *that can function both to produce pleasure and to provide escape from internal discomfort*, *is employed in a pattern characterized by recurrent failure to control the behavior and continuation of the behavior despite significant negative consequences*” (Merkouris, 2016). In short, PAs can occur with all the negative consequences in a person’s life minus some of the physical issues faced by people who compulsively engage in drug and alcohol abuse

According to research, PAs are more common than one thinks. Up to [10 million](http://nafgah.org/statistics-gambling-addiction-2016/) Americans live with a gambling addiction. About [6 percent](https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/ajp.2006.163.10.1806) of people in the United States live with shopping addictions. It is estimated that [25 percent](https://www.webroot.com/us/en/resources/tips-articles/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers) of Internet search inquiries — or 68 million searches daily — are associated with pornography. As a result, sexual addiction has become a serious problem in the US, with around [30 million people in the nation having some form of the disorder](http://www.medicinenet.com/sexual_addiction/article.htm). In addition, exercise addiction impacts about [3 percent](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229423277_Psychometric_properties_and_concurrent_validity_of_two_exercise_addiction_measures_A_population_wide_study) of people who regularly go to the gym. About [5–10 percent](https://www.omicsonline.org/workaholism-a-review-2155-6105.S6-001.pdf) of people grapple with work addiction. Needless to say, PAs are just as destructive as substance addictions and cause significant impairment in one’s psychological well-being.

If you are struggling with process addictions, please seek help by calling CAMH at 817-658-9290. In a confidential setting, we will assist in finding the right place for “helping you get your feet back on the ground”. There are many success stories in battling addictions.

References

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Merkouris S., Thomas S. A,, Browning C.J., Dowling N. (2016). Predictors of outcomes of psychological treatments for disordered gambling: A systematic review. Clin Psychol Rev. 48:7–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.06.004

SAMHSA. 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Table 5.4A—Alcohol Use Disorder in Past Year among Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Age Group and Demographic Characteristics: Numbers in Thousands, 2017 and 2018.