

Childhood Trauma and Masturbation

For some addicts, masturbation was their first way of self-medicating.

Alexandra Katehakis MFT Alexandra Katehakis MFT
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Masturbation is a funny word. It might make you giggle thinking about the first time you got caught by your parents or caught your little brother in the act. It can be a great way to release tension, or a way to stay satisfied when you can't be with a partner. For most of us, it's simply a part of life and a component of healthy sexuality.

For others, however, this harmless behavior crosses the line into a compulsive activity that is anything but benign. Some become so dependent on the behavior that they lose hours and hours of their day, unable to leave the house. Others masturbate to the point of injuring themselves.

Choosing masturbation over intimate relationships, the person can become isolated, or end up spending all their time and money on porn to further fuel their compulsive behavior. Still others become addicted to the point where they find themselves unable to control the urge to masturbate in public or otherwise inappropriate places. This is addiction, and it can have just as grave, debilitating consequences as drugs or alcohol.

Often when a child undergoes abuse or trauma (no matter where it may fall on the spectrum of intensity) there are not sufficient outlets for all the rage, despair and grief that results from the betrayal. It is simply too overwhelming. Sometimes there are also explicit or implied rules about keeping silent, leaving the child with no one to turn to for comfort. The child may place the needs of the abuser(s) or dysfunctional family members above his or her own needs, opting not to rock the boat.

These emotions do not go away. Rather, they create an inner turmoil that demands self-medication, and without access to therapy or support, the wounded child may turn to addictive behaviors or substances to control the feelings.

Of course, when you are a child, there is a limit to the ways in which you can self-medicate. Masturbation is one of the most accessible and available forms of numbing out, because you rely only on your own body to produce the intoxicating chemicals that soothe the pain. In that sense, it is a unique kind of high that money can't buy. For many sex and love addicts, masturbation was their first drug.

In order to recover from compulsive masturbation, working with a trained sex addiction therapist can be indispensable. Learning to identify exactly how and when emotional states get sexualized is an important first step.

Anxiety, fear, jealousy and other primal emotions can immediately trigger the need to pleasure oneself, often so quickly that the addict doesn't have time to make the connection between the stressor and his or her reaction to it. Eventually, however, the person can learn to self-soothe in many different

ways, instead of relying on the one overused comfort mechanism. This restores masturbation to its proper place among healthy human behaviors.