***Narcissistic Personalities and Pornography***

Narcissism in personality trait generally conceived of as excessive self love. In Greek mythology Narcissus was a man who fell in love with his reflection in a pool of water.

A narcissistic personality is one of the hardest personalities to treat in the mental health field. Narcissistic Personality Disorder is a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy that begins in early childhood. People with this disorder have a grandiose sense of self-importance, routinely overestimates their abilities, inflate their accomplishments, and may be surprised when the praise they expect and feel they deserve is not forthcoming. They may be preoccupied in power, brilliance, beauty, and ideal love. They usually feel superior to others and expect self gratification, expecting constant attention and admiration.

Most of us of think of a narcissistic person being self-centered, and they often are, but there is much more than this. Basically, a narcissistic person will think they are normal and others are wrong. They usually have difficulties to recognizing the desires and feelings of others due to their own focus on themselves. They are often contemptuous and impatient towards others who may talk about their own problems. However, these individuals can have deep psychological issues that can cause issues in their relationships. Spouses of narcissistic people usually cannot voice issues within that relationship and often reprimanded through cold and rude comments. Narcissistic personalities are emotionally cold towards those in relationships unless they want something from those individuals, such as sex. Again basically, this type of person will not admit that they have a problem. If you don’t believe me, just ask them and see what type of reaction you get.

A narcissistic person may say the right things, such as, “I love you” or “you are important to me”, but will often use excuses to cover over his/her actions. One characteristic is that a narcissistic person usually does not take responsibility for their own actions. “You made me mad so that is why I hit you”. A husband will often blame his wife for issues in the home or marital issues, placing blame on her. Many of these may admit they are partially the blame but very quickly magnify and point out the issues of the other person and usually will refuse to talk about changing themselves. This would show a sign of weakness.

As mentioned earlier, one of the characteristics to this disorder is a drive to satisfy their needs, many times at the expense of others. They may not fully understand or comprehend they have this drive to satisfy themselves, they are just preoccupied on themselves. It may be as small as a father neglecting the time with his children for the sake of going to a ballgame. He may try to justify his actions only to give empty promises. It could be magnified to spousal abuse, whether emotional, physical, or verbal. When a spouse confronts him about this and other issues, all fury usually breaks out.

Chronically low self-esteem and various forms of profound narcissistic wounding are nearly universal among [sex addicts](http://blogs.psychcentral.com/sex/2013/02/basic-sobriety-tools-for-sex-addicts/) (and other addicts, as well). Most have experienced inadequate parenting, childhood emotional neglect and abuse, sexual abuse, and perhaps substance abuse. Some may have been traumatized and have an overwhelming desire for self-preservation.

These complex trauma issues cause people to hide this feeling of shame about who they are, which in turn influences the ways in which they connect (and don’t connect) with others. That is why many narcissistic people have marital issues, not being able to really connect and fearful of letting go. To many narcissistic people, pornography and sexual fantasies or behaviors provide not only sexual intensity that satisfies them, they also provide emotional connections. Since they have an issue in being connected and showing empathy towards others, pornography is a safe outlet that that does not require feedback from others and they feel in control. This is especially true with Internet porn, where the user controls his/her entire experience and therefore remains emotionally safe and insulated from [the highly interpersonal experience of shame](http://blogs.psychcentral.com/sex/2013/12/developing-a-new-understanding-of-shame/). (We can’t feel shame in a vacuum; it requires other people.) So is it any wonder that narcissism and sex addiction typically travel in tandem?

Almost every health care professional who treats sex and porn addicts on a regular basis can tell you that their clients, both male and female, tend to be highly narcissistic – a quality that often makes for a tempestuous therapist-client relationship. Simply put, evidence from the field strongly suggests that [sex and porn addicts](http://www.recoveryranch.com/specialized-programs/mens-sex-addiction-treatment/) are nearly always self-centered and self-absorbed, often to an extreme degree, not only sexually but elsewhere in their lives. Of course, it’s nice to have scientific research that backs up what we typically see in our practices, and a recent study, [Narcissism & Internet Pornography Use](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0092623X.2014.931313#preview), accepted for publication in the Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, does exactly that.

The authors of this research, Thomas Edward Kasper, Mary Beth Short, and Alex Clinton Milam, all from the University of Houston, Clear Lake, asked 257 people to answer questions about Internet pornography use while also completing three commonly used narcissistic measurements – the [Narcissistic Personality Inventory](http://personality-testing.info/tests/NPI.php) (NPI), the [Pathological Narcissism Inventory](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19719348) (PNI), and the [Index of Sexual Narcissism](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8169963) (ISN). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 61 with a mean age of 29; 63% were female; 89% were heterosexual. The sample was racially diverse.

After more than two decades spent working with [sexually addicted women](http://www.recoveryranch.com/specialized-programs/womens-love-addiction-treatment/) and men, the results of this study are not surprising. 79% of participants reported “ever” viewing Internet pornography, with 44% stating that they “currently” viewed Internet pornography. Women in the survey spent an average of 30 minutes per week using porn, while men spent an average of **3 hours**. Most importantly, those who had ever viewed Internet pornography scored higher on all three narcissism inventories than those who had not, and individuals who said they currently viewed Internet pornography scored even higher on two of the three measures (the NPI and the ISN), with the third measure (the PNI) approaching, but not reaching statistical significance. These results held for both males and females.

**Extension to Sex Addicts**

This may not be of any value the topic of Narcissistic Personality and Pornography but found it very important. It was discussing the sexual addict.

The study discussed above did not specifically address sex or porn addiction, so the findings cannot be applied directly to a sexually addicted population. However, it is reasonable to assume that sexually addicted users of Internet porn – especially porn addicts, who typically spend **at least *11 or 12 hours per week*** using pornography (and often double or triple that amount) – might score even higher on the narcissism scales.

If so, this would correlate nicely with what we already know [about sexual addiction](http://www.sexaddictiontreatment.org/) (and addiction in general). Essentially, sex addicts engage in sexual fantasy and behavior not for pleasure, but for the sense of emotional control and escape that sexual intensity provides. Like other addicts, sex addicts use sexual fantasies and experiences to avoid emotional stressors, life challenges, and the pain of underlying psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, attachment deficits, unresolved early-life trauma, etc. Rather than seeking to feel better, sex addicts want to be distracted from their feelings. In other words, they seek emotional control over the unpredictable experiences that life brings them. When times get tough, sex addicts (and addicts in general) seek to disconnect. Instead of reaching out to others for support, they go for the quick fix that involves only them and their need/desire for control over what they feel.

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