

# ***CHARACTERISTICS OF SEXUAL BEHAVIORS*** ***WHICH CREATE VULNERABILITY TO SEXUAL ADDICTION or ABUSE***



## **1. Exploitation of Others**

Many of the behaviors take advantage of vulnerability or victimize through intrusion or the use of power. The sexual addict repeats his or her experiences of childhood victimization, now becoming the perpetrator.

## **2. Non-mutuality**

The behaviors involve inequality or isolation. They typically do not result in intimacy or increased emotional closeness.

## **3. Objectification**

Many of the behaviors dehumanize others, making them into objects. Sex objects are easier to exploit, allow for greater risks, and do not disrupt an addict's sexual trance by requiring a response.

## **4. Dissatisfaction**

The behaviors often leave people in despair, yet wanting more. This dissatisfaction stems partly from the lack of meaning inherent in impersonal sexual contact and partly from the fact that sexual pleasure only anesthetizes the pain, without ever healing it.

## **5. Intensification of Shame**

The behaviors create shame and secrecy, key ingredients in addiction. With a diminished sense of self, addicts are less able to set appropriate boundaries, except those that reduce the risk of being discovered.

## **6. Basis in Fear**

Dangerous, risky, and illicit behaviors generate fear. Excitement and arousal are directly related to how much fear exists.

Cross dressing, as an example:

In many cultures men wear clothing that is feminine by Western standards. There is nothing particularly erotic about such clothing. Even in our own culture, women may wear men's clothing and appear highly fashionable. So what is it about cross dressing that can be so addictive? Says Tom: "I wonder why women don't have the equivalent fetish of getting turned on by wearing men's clothes? Maybe it's because they're perfectly capable of wearing men's clothes in our society without it's being shameful."

The answer is that the behavior itself is not bad or wrong. Rather, an individual's belief system makes his or her behavior emotionally loaded. If people see their behavior as shameful or fearful, that can propel their eroticism into a compulsive spiral.