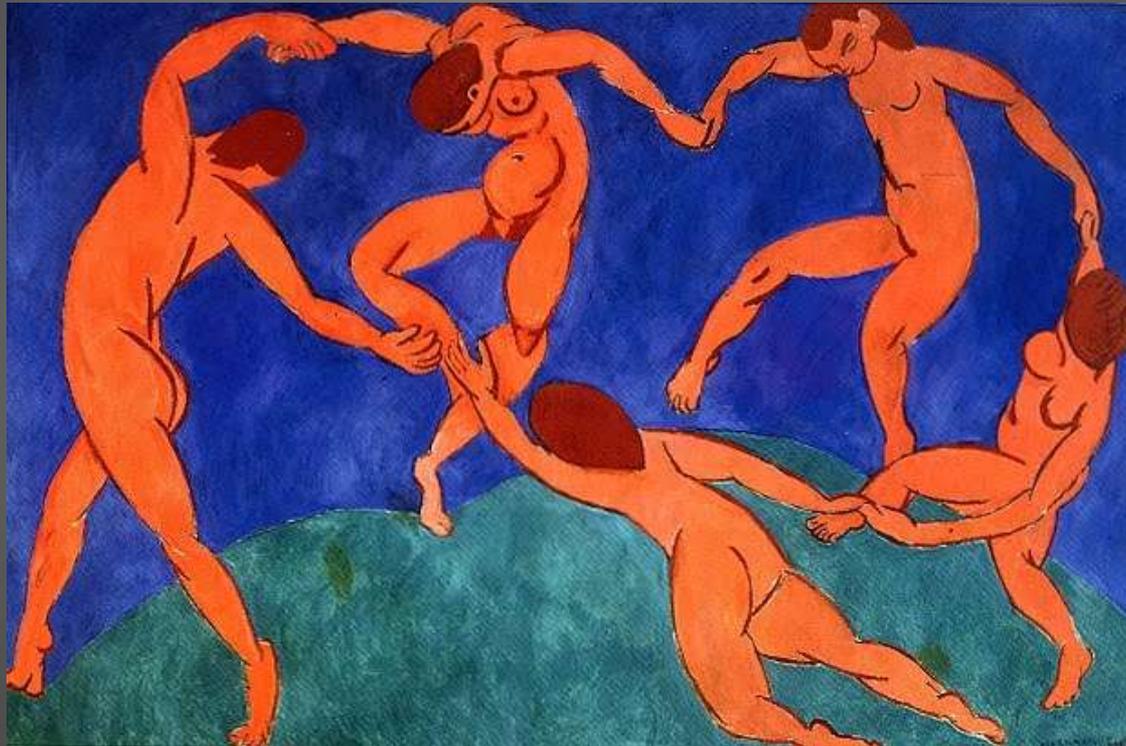


The Illusion of Intimacy

Clinical & Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Risk Taking & Sexual
Addiction



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We were made for relationship



Intimacy & Vulnerability

- David Schnarch (1991, 2009) argues that what we think is intimacy is actually often wanting “someone else to make us feel acceptable and worthwhile. We’ve assigned the label ‘intimacy’ to what we want (validation and reciprocal disclosure)”
- Instead he says “Intimacy is an ‘I-Thou’ experience. It involves the inherent awareness that you’re separate from your partner. With parts yet to be shared... Ironically, intimacy seems to develop through conflict, self-validation, and unilateral disclosure”.



Being intimate and vulnerable with someone doesn't mean you'll get the response you want.

- Sex can be a powerful substitute for true intimacy as it allows for some feeling of connection with others often without the problems of an intimate and vulnerable relationship
- Sex is transformed into a “drive” with the need to relieve sexual tension rather than about wanting a partner
- “Not wanting to want and wanting to be wanted”
(Schnarch, 1991)



Sex addiction defined



Sex addiction defined

- Controversial term in the area of sex (Giugliano, 2009)
 - Sexual compulsivity (Quadland, 1985) or impulsivity (Barth & Kinder, 1987)
 - Some consider the label of sex addiction as a label by “sex-negative” clinicians concerned with morality but this can disregard the real pain, trauma, and consequences experienced by some clients.
 - The American Society of Addiction Medicine’s definition of addiction has purposely been broadened to essentially a brain/reward system disease or the “pathological pursuit of rewards” which includes sex, food, and gambling (Smith, 2012).

- For the purpose of our discussion addiction is descriptively defined as:
 - Loss of control with a behavior
 - Continued use despite significant consequences
 - Preoccupation with the behavior or preparation of it
 - Distress, anxiety, irritability if unable to engage in the behavior

(Schneider, 2004; Goodman, 1993, 1998)

Intimacy disorder

- A relational/intimacy disorder – “the addict substitutes a relationship to an event or process [or substance] for a healthy relationship with others” (Carnes, 2001)
- The addictive relationship allows for a false control of relational risk and vulnerability

What is risk?

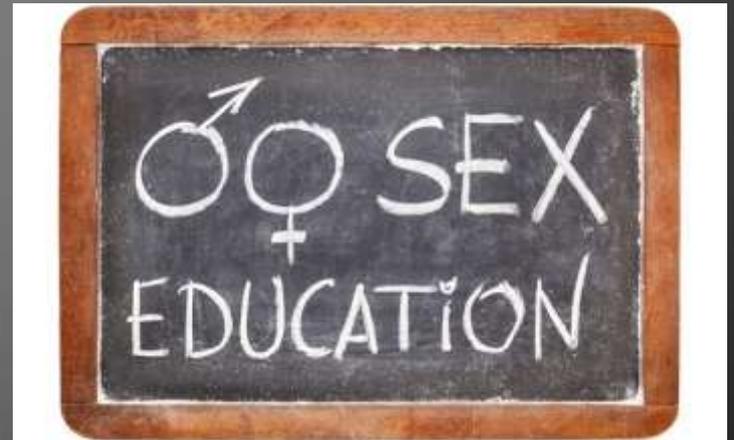
- Risk as an action or decision with an uncertain outcome but has the possibility of gain/pleasure (Tulloch, 2003)
- Risk is subjective – risk knowledges are the products of ways of seeing, rather than being fixed in their meaning



“We’ve considered all the potential risks except the risks of avoiding all risks”

Information

- Purely informational campaigns are often ineffective (Martin, 2006)
- Information doesn't often change an addict's behaviour
- Sexual information often has also come with a message of shame or negativity which doesn't match experience for many people thus they become cynical of all information



Experience

- The brain as an “anticipation machine” that enables us to represent the future (Siegel, 2001).
- People see familiar or voluntary risks as less serious – there is more concern over rare and memorable outcomes (Tulloch, 2003)
- Risk being tied to prior experience (Millstein & Halpern-Felsher, 2002)
- Attachment - Individuals struggling with sex addiction have been linked to an insecure attachment – specifically highly anxious and highly avoidant (Carnes, 2011; Leedes, 2001; Zapf, Greiner, & Carroll, 2008)

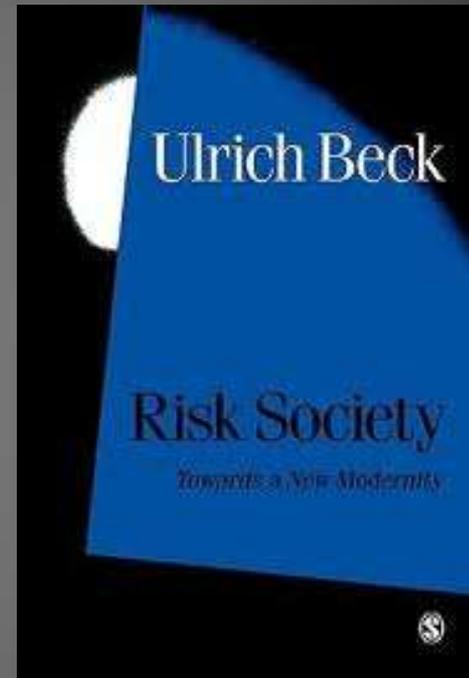


Trauma, Dopamine, and Mood

- Research supports that trauma plays both a part in sexual risk-taking and addiction and that the soothing effect of dopamine through addiction can effectively become a nervous system regulator (Hall, 2011)
- Dopamine released with drugs of addiction and other behaviours including sexual activity leads to Delta-FosB accumulation in the brain's reward circuit which leads to more cravings and eventual structural brain changes such as 1)numbed pleasure response 2)hyper-reactivity to drug/activity 3)erosion of willpower (Nestler, 2001; Goldstein and Volkow, 2002)
- Bancroft shows a substantial minority of men using sex to cope with negative mood states especially in younger men in both heterosexual and homosexual contexts (2003; 2004a) and this was “strongly characteristic of the sex addict group” (2004b).

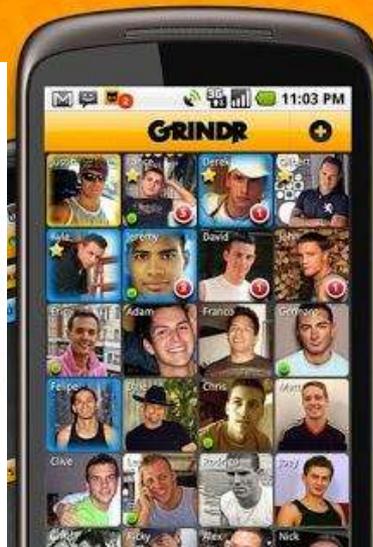
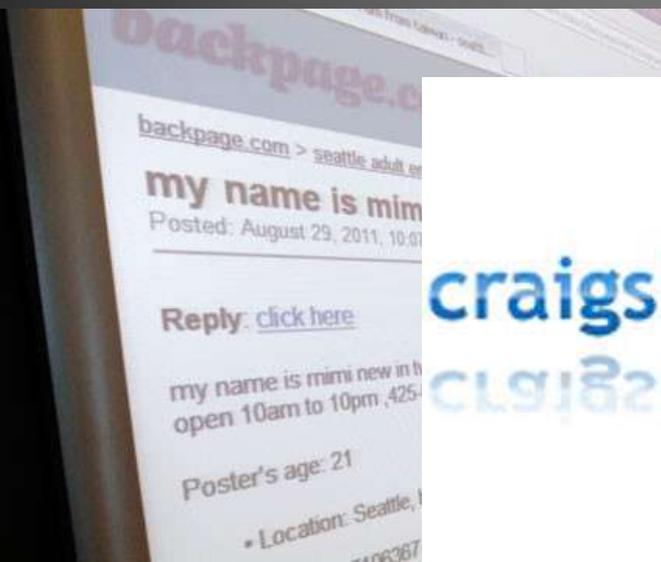
Beck's theories of risk

- Institutional risk
- Risk becoming 'invisible'
- Flexibility vs. stability
- Loss of connection and trust
- The burden of choice



The age of the internet

- Access to sex has changed thus content and behaviour has been impacted
- The internet is integral to life and always around
- The “crack cocaine” of sex addiction



Meet Guys Near You
On The World's Largest All-Male
Location Based Social Network

Power

- Power is an underlying component to how people perceive and respond to risk through culture, gender, age, sexual preference (Finucane et al., 2000; Higgins & Brown, 2008; Wellings et al. 2006)
- Most addicts have a paradoxical relationship to power – the addiction is unmanageable but often provides a sense of power when they are in the midst of their addictive behaviour
- “Not wanting to want and wanting to be wanted” (Schnarch, 1991)

Information

Experience

Power

Trauma,
Dopamine, Mood

Culture/society

TRUST

Working with trust

- Building a relationship with self, others, and existential meaning



Intervention examples

- Fisher, 1992 – a good overview of AIDS/risk interventions
- Mustanski et al., 2011 – YMSM risk overview
- Jackson et al. 2012 – most promising interventions addressed “multiple domains of risk”
- Martin, 2006 – develops the change from primarily information based interventions to “reasoned action” and “planned behaviour”
- <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/RRcomplete-list.htm>

Commonality between sexual risk taking and addiction interventions

- Recognition stage – includes teaching/information, identifying behaviours and their associated risk and the client's beliefs of these things and how they may have formed
- Commitment stage – exploring common hindrances such as self-efficacy, partner (social) attitudes, efficacy of intervention itself, interpersonal & personal consequences
- Enactment stage – rehearsal of interventions (interpersonal especially important), community support, management of triggers such as mood, substance use, environments, “personal growth”

The Mpowerment Project: an HIV intervention example

- Community and peer-based intervention through outreach to 1) diffuse the safer sex message in the community 2) to recruit (with the hope of these men then diffusing the message more personally)
- Developed by “Core Group” of 12-15 young gay men in the community with input from a community advisory board



<http://www.mpowerment.org/>

The Mpowerment Project: an HIV intervention example

- Intervention consisted of:
 - Outreach through distribution of informational materials and invitations to Mpowerment events at local gay hangouts
 - Creating new social settings at an Mpowerment centre and designing social events
 - Recruitment to attend a small group which was a peer led one-time meeting focusing on misperceptions about safe sex, poor sexual communication skills and interpersonal issues. Role plays, both for safe sex and recruitment, were practiced, and gift packages with condoms, lubricant and logo buttons were given

Addiction example: Carnes 30 task approach

- Comes from his longitudinal study with over 1000 sex addicts (Carnes, 1992)
- Identified aspects that recovering individuals were doing in their life and developed performables and competencies with each

Addiction example: Carnes 30 task approach

Recovery Task	Performables	Life Competency
1. Break through denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creates a problem list ■ Records a secret list ■ Completes list of excuses ■ Completes Consequences Inventory ■ Learns 14 ways to distort reality ■ Inventories 14 distortion strategies in personal life ■ Accountability—Victim Empathy exercise ■ Makes full disclosure to therapist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understands the characteristics of denial and self-delusion ■ Identifies presence of self-delusion in life ■ Knows personal preference patterns of thought distortion ■ Accepts confrontation
2A. Understand the nature of addictive illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Completes assigned readings on sex addiction ■ Learns different ways to define sex addiction ■ Understands addictive system ■ Understands deprivation system ■ Maps out personal addictive system ■ Understands criteria for addictive illness ■ Applies criteria to personal behavior ■ Learns key factors in the genesis of sex addiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knows information on addictive illness ■ Applies information to personal life
2B. Sexual addiction component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understands sexual modularity ■ Understands sexual hierarchy ■ Knows ten types of behavior ■ Reviews ten types for personal patterns ■ Completes and shares sexual history ■ Completes ideal fantasy list ■ Completes and shares fantasy contamination exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understands sexually compulsive patterns ■ Knows specific stories/scenarios of arousal template