

## Behavioural addictions

The concept of addiction to a drug or to alcohol is widely understood. The concept of behavioural addiction is less immediately obvious. Behavioural or 'process' addictions operate in very similar ways to substance addictions, and can be just as life destroying for the addicted person and their family members.

Behavioural addictions may involve a dependency on certain behaviours in relation to other people – as in the case of codependency or sexual/relationship addictions – or compulsive behaviours engaged in for excitement, emotional release, achieving a sense of self or chasing the promise of control, such as gambling or self-harming.

Gambling, shopping, shoplifting and gaming are all activities which can be engaged in compulsively in order to achieve a 'high' in a manner similar to a mood-altering chemical. They are, in other words, mood-altering activities which can produce significant release of adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine in the body to radically affect the person's way of relating emotionally to themselves and to the world.

Behavioural addictions are underpinned by the same characteristic emotional dispositions that are present in all addicted persons: low self-worth, shame, anger and fear frequently present at an underlying level. Again, in common with substance addictions, there is a tendency for the behaviour to increase in frequency and severity, and for the consequences of that behaviour to become more serious, over time. The downward spiral of addictive disorders – even when alleviated by periods of improvement – is common to these addictive patterns.

Click on individual pages to discover more information on individual behavioural addictions.

**If you think you suffering with behavioural addictions then give us a call, we can help**

**Call 020 7323 4970**

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