

# **Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour on the Couples' Relationships**

## **APPENDICES: PART TWO**

**A joint programme between Middlesex University and Metanoia  
Institute**

***A project submitted to Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the  
Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies***

***by***

***Robert Hudson***

***Student Identification Number: M00478397***

***August 2021.***

<b>Appendix A:</b> DProf. amended plan for re – submission	3
<b>Appendix B:</b> Practice Evaluation Project (PEP)	16
<b>Appendix C:</b> Study recruitment flyer	51
<b>Appendix D:</b> Participant information sheet	52
<b>Appendix E:</b> Informed consent	54
<b>Appendix F:</b> Ethical approval	55
<b>Appendix G:</b> Interview schedule	56
<b>Appendix H:</b> Couples transcript (1-5)	60
<b>Appendix I:</b> Exploratory comments / emerging themes (1-5)	131
<b>Appendix J:</b> Cluster / Higher order themes (1-5)	168

**Appendix A**

**Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies**

Metanoia Institute  
Middlesex University

**Summary Plan – Re-submission**

Candidate Name:	Robert Hudson
Student Number:	Metanoia – 22824 Middlesex – M00478397
Module Code:	DPY 4444
Date of Submission:	October 2020

## **Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies**

### **DPY 4444 Programme Planning**

#### **Summary Plan**

1. Full name: Robert Hudson
2. Post Currently held: Clinical director at the Hudson Centre for Psychotherapy and Recovery (HCPR)
3. Title of Final Programme: Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies
4. Title of Final Project:  
  
Exploring the impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour on Couples' Relationships.

In this document I will respond to a letter written by Dr Stephen Goss on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

- 1) You should remove all data relating to any participants who have or have previously had contact with The Hudson Centre or with whom you have had any prior relationship in any other capacity.

In response to point 1, I have agreed with my AA to remove and replace all 5 interviews. I am writing to confirm that all five couple's interview data will be removed. Once this has been agreed, I have {see appendix 1} to be used as an advert to recruit new participants. I will also forward the letter and leaflet to a number of organisations that I am a member of, College of Sex & Relationship Therapy (COSRT), Association for the Treatment of Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity (ATSAC). I will also use various online social network platform, such as; Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and twitter to recruit research participants.

- 2) New data from appropriately recruited research participants will thus need to be collected, essentially repeating that phase of the research along with the subsequent analysis, interpretation of findings and writing up etc.

I can confirm that new appropriate research participants will be recruited as outlined above and the process of chapter 5 findings, chapter 6 discussion, and chapter 7, 8 will be repeated.

- 3) This should be done in close consultation with my Advisor, including providing a detailed written account of my plans for completing the work.

While writing this I have asked Metanoia to work with a new advisor as I am making a fresh start and would appreciate a new pair of eyes to support me with my work. I have contact my old advisor and inform her of this. On Mon. 29<sup>th</sup> Sept. 20, I was informed that Dr Simon du Plock will be my new AA, which I agreed to. We have had our first meeting and I will be working closely with him.

- 4) The new plan must be approved prior to proceeding. The need for scrupulous care in screening potential participants is one example of a topic that will need to be addressed thoroughly.

Under the ethics section and call for research participants invitation included in this report, I will demonstrate how I will show care and attention in the screening process of new research participants.

- 5) You will be provided with copies of the examiners' preliminary reports. All matters identified by the examiners or otherwise applicable to appropriate standards for doctoral work should be rigorously attended to.

Please see below my intentions of how I will address and integrate the feedback from the two assessors preliminary reports in my final document.

## **Title and Research aims**

*Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour on Couples' Relationships.*

The research aims are as follows: -

- To explore the impact of sexual addiction and compulsion sexual behaviour (SA&CSB) on couples' relationships.
- To understand the effects of these experiences on couples.
- To explore what the couples have done to deal with the situation.
- To use the outcomes of the research to develop a treatment programme for couples impacted by SA&CSB.
- To use the research to develop a specialised training programme for therapists who would like to work with this client population.

The following four research questions have been developed and these will be further expanded with supplementary questions.

1. How did you discover or learn about your partner's SA&CSB?
2. How did your partner's SA&CSB affect you? (Your emotions, health, sex, family, work, finance, etc.)
3. Specifically, how did your partner's SA&C behaviour affect your relationship?
4. What have you both done to try and cope with the effects of SA&CSB on yourselves and relationship?

**Project timeline**

<p><b>Oct. 2020 – Nov. 2020</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First proposed meeting with new AA</li> <li>▪ Submit plan to the Programme Research Ethics Committee PREC for approval</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nov. 2020 – Feb. 2020</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Start the recruitment process to find and replace suitable participants for the project</li> <li>▪ Make contact with participants who express an interest and agree dates for interview, either online or in person</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feb. 2020 – April. 2021</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First bracketing interview</li> <li>▪ Arrange and carry out participants' interviews</li> <li>▪ Transcribe interviews as I go along</li> <li>▪ second bracketing interview</li> </ul>
<p><b>April. 2021 – May. 2021</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check transcripts with participants for accuracy</li> </ul>
<p><b>May. 2021– Jun. 2021</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commence data analysis</li> <li>▪ Formulate themes</li> <li>▪ Third bracketing interviews</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jun. 2021 – Jul. 2021</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Peer audit for analysis</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jul. 2021 – Sept. 2021</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete report</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sept. 2021</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Submit report</li> </ul>

## Call for research participants

### **An exploration of the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity on the Couple's Relationship**

I am undertaking a doctoral research programme that explores the impact of sexual addiction and compulsivity on the couple's relationship.

The purpose of the study is to understand more about the impacts that sexual addiction and compulsivity have on couples' relationships.

I'd like to hear from you if:

- You identify that you have been impacted by sexual addiction and compulsivity in your relationship.

This research programme is being conducted as part of a doctoral research undertaken through Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University and has been approved by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee. The research will be conducted in accordance with UKCP and BACP Ethical Guidelines.

In order to maintain safety, wellbeing, integrity for all participants if you have had any involvement with me the researcher or the Hudson Centre, or have had any prior relationship with the Hudson Centre, you will not be suitable to be interviewed.

Your participation would involve taking part in a confidential, audio-recorded interview lasting 60 and 90 minutes. The interview will take place either via Zoom or at a convenient location to you, depending on which you would prefer.

If you are interested in taking part in this research project and would like to find out more please contact me:

Robert Hudson – [robert.hudson@metanoia.ac.uk](mailto:robert.hudson@metanoia.ac.uk) / +44 (0) 7939 624 790



## **Participants' Information Sheet**

Invitation to participate in a doctoral research study undertaken through Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University.

**Study Title:** A study of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour: Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour on Couples' Relationships.

Sexual addiction and compulsive (SA&C) sexual behaviour has received a great deal of attention for several decades. SA&C sexual behaviour is a progressive intimacy disorder in which an individual cannot control his or her sexual impulses and/or actions (Carnes, 1983). The individual becomes so obsessed with sexual desires and behaviours that it negatively affects other areas of his or her lives, such as their relationship or career (Carnes, 1983). The widespread use of the Internet, and the growing amount of sexual content that can be found there, has allowed for an expansion in research into sexual behaviours (Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000). As internet usage becomes more widespread, sexual addiction and out-of-control sexual behaviours have increased, resulting in a growth in the number of partners of sexual addicts feeling betrayed and seeking therapeutic support (Young et al., 2000).

The focus of the research is on the couple's experiences impacted by sexual addiction and compulsive sexual behaviour.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you both decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information together carefully and discuss it as you will both be interviewed together. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide together whether or not you wish to take part.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of the research is to explore and understand more about the impacts that sexual addiction and compulsive Sexual Behaviour have on couples' relationships. In particular, the research aims to explore the way in which couples respond and construct meaning of such experiences.

### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited as a couple to participate in this study because you have identified that you have been impacted by sexual addiction and compulsive sexual behaviour in your relationship. It is your choice whether you take part in this study or not. If you do decide to take part, you will both be emailed an information sheet to keep an asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

**What will I be asked to do if I take part?**

You will both be asked to meet with the researcher; you will have the opportunity to ask questions about the research and to address any concerns you may have. If you both decide after this to take part in the research, following which you will both be interviewed together for an hour at a convenient time and place to you both, either in person or online. The interview will be unstructured and exploratory in nature allowing you both to talk about your experiences of the impact on the relationship. All interviews will be recorded, and your responses will be reported verbatim.

The research is intended to be carried over 12 month period.

**What will be done with the information collected from me?**

All information collected will be stored anonymously; any information about you which is used will be anonymised. Your name, will not be included so that you cannot be recognised from it. The data will be stored, analysed and reported in accordance with the Data Protection Act. All data will be stored for no longer than 12 months after the end of the study. The information will be analysed by the researcher for the purpose of the research. No identifying details of the participant will be included in the completed research findings. The findings will be made available to participants who indicate that they would like a copy.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

By participating in this research, you will have an opportunity to share your experiences, and to help other couples who are going through what you have been through. Some of the information will also be used for research and training purpose.

**What are the possible disadvantages of participating?**

Participating in this study may trigger some of the painful memories of the past. You may experience some of the negative emotions that were felt during the period of the betrayal and healing. I will be able to provide you with details of additional support should you wish to access this.

**What happens if I do experience negative effects during or after participating in the research?**

Your participation in the research is entire voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with. You may also choose to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, simply by notifying the researcher of your decision. If required, I will provide you with other relevant information and/or contact details for other relevant services and support groups, will be made available to you.

**Emotional support available to anyone affected by their participation in the research.**

If you experience any negative effects because of your participation in this research, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me and I will put you in touch with an independent practitioner who can offer you some support.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of this study will be used to inform the research of the final report. The results will be used for profession and academic discussions and publications in professional journals or equivalent and for the development of training.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been reviewed by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee and was supervised by Dr Marie Adams and will now be supervised by Prof. Simon Du Plock.

**Contact for Further Information**

For further information contact

Robert Hudson

robert.hudson@metanoia.ac.uk

07939 624790

Prof Simon Du Plock

Senior Research Fellow

Metanoia Institute

13 North Common Road

Ealing, London

W5 2QB

Email: Simon.duPlock@metanoia.ac.uk

0208 579 2505

1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

**Informed consent Form / Strictly Private and Confidential**

Title of study: Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour on Couples Relationships.

Name of Researcher: Robert Hudson

I,....., (Please initial in the box) hereby give my consent to participate in the doctoral research study. I confirm that I have read and understood the attached information sheet and that I have been given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about this research study.

1. I understand that all data collection by me for the purpose of this study will be stored securely and anonymously in accordance with the Data Protection Act, so that no personal details will be linked with any of the data collected. I understand that if I have agreed to be interviewed this project, the interview will be audio-recorder and transcribed. All recording are for research purpose only.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. If I choose to withdraw, I can decide what happens to any data I have provided.

3. I understand that if I am invited to participate in this research project related to this research, it is my own discretion whether or not I choose to participate.

4. I understand that, in the reporting of the research study results, my name, contact details, and any identifying characteristics will be withheld so as to preserve my anonymity.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

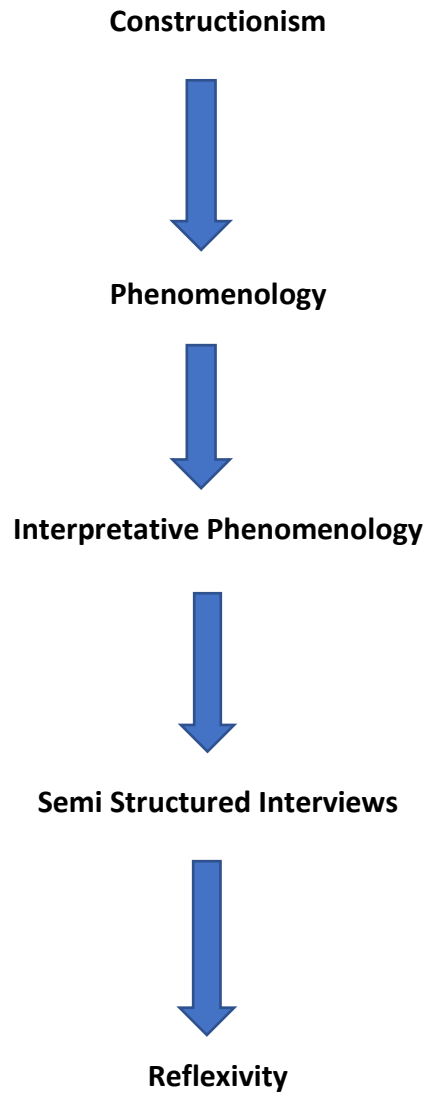
Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like a copy of the final report to be sent to you by email?    Yes / No

(Please circle one)

**The research process**



## Ethical challenges

In considering the ethical implications of my study, I have used the BACP's research guidelines; the focus was about actively seeking to do no harm to participants, with transparency being at the heart of this process (Bond, 2004). To minimise risk to any participants who may have an interest in my research, I have identified whom those parties might be, considered the potential harm that may arise, and have put mitigating action in place. The study was approved by the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee at Metanoia Institute.

In order to maintain safety, wellbeing, integrity for all participants if you have had any involvement with me the researcher or the Hudson Centre, or have had any prior relationship with the Hudson Centre, you will not be suitable to be interviewed.

Research in the field of sexuality and SA&C is very sensitive and personal; thus, the survey and follow up interview could be potentially harmful for participants as it will ask them to remember painful parts of their lives they would rather forget, which could trigger painful emotions. To ensure the wellbeing of the participants and make them fully aware of the research goals and requirements, they will be asked to read and initial an informed consent before starting the survey (Appendix C). Then they will have to read the research information leaflet, which includes the research goals, and they will be reminded that they can withdraw at any time. The participants will also be offered two counselling sessions by another therapist if they feel affected by their research participation in any way.

My own wellbeing is of a particular concern due to my own history of addiction and recovery. To help me manage these challenges, I will be supported by a research academic colleague who will conduct 'bracketing interviews' before, during and after the research (Appendix I). Rollins & Relf (2006) believe that these interviews enable the researcher to hold the tension of the dialectic process of investigating and testing the nature of the participant's experience, at the same time as holding and recognising their own experience in a way that relates to the research data – almost a parallel process. This process will help me access unconscious assumptions and values about the area being researched and

provide me with emotional support. Themes that may cause stress or bias will be developed and discussed in the interviews. Notes will be taken and the outcome will be embedded in the research and used to enhance the robustness of the research. I will access personal therapy if the need arises.

While I recognise that researching in this area may cause distress to the participants and myself, I believe it will also be therapeutic as the participants' voices are heard and it will help to support others going through similar experiences.

### **Ethical considerations**

As argued by McLeod (1994), the ethical implications of research must be considered at all stages of the process. To this end, the current study was evaluated in accordance with the ethical framework outlined by Bond (2004), in which the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, fidelity and veracity are all emphasised. At the heart of these principles is an active seeking to do no harm to the participants and an attempt to guarantee transparency. I also aimed to adhere to the research ethical guidelines recommended by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework (2015), thereby protecting the participants and enhancing the validity of the findings.

Ethical approval was granted for the current study by the chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee at Metanoia Institute via Middlesex University. This approval covered the recruitment of participants who had experienced sexual addiction and compulsive sexual behaviour and who had felt its impact of this on their relationship (Appendix ). As any study could compromise ethical guidelines at any point, the monitoring of the study by the researcher's supervisor throughout was a core requirement.....

**Appendix B**

**Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies**

Metanoia Institute

Middlesex University

**Practice Evaluation Project**

**Exploring the impact of Sexual Addiction and  
Compulsive Sexual Behaviour on the Couples'  
Relationships**

Candidate Name:	Robert Hudson
Student Number:	Metanoia – 22824 Middlesex – M00478397
Module Code:	DPY 4443
Date of re- submission:	May 2016
Supervisor:	Marie Adams



## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Abstract	3
Introduction	3
Literature Review	5
Research Methodology	9
Recruitment of Participants	12
Quality Control	12
Limitations	13
Ethics	13
Data Collection	14
Data Analysis	19
Organising Data and Creating Themes	21
Emerging Themes	24
Findings	25
Discussion	26
Conclusion	28
References	
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix A - Letter to therapist for recruiting participants	
Appendix B - Letter to participants	
Appendix C - The survey questions	
Appendix D - Consent Form	
Appendix E - Participant Information Sheet	
Appendix F - Ethics committee	
Appendix G – Responses to question 18	

## **Title**

Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour on the Couples' Relationships.

## **Abstract**

Sexual addiction and compulsivity (SA&C) is a progressive intimacy disorder in which an individual cannot control his or her sexual impulses and/or actions. The individual becomes so obsessed with sexual desires and behaviours that it negatively affects other areas of their lives, such as relationships and careers. Although the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V, 2013) does not yet recognise sexual compulsivity as a disorder, it is a serious problem. The National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity (NCSAC, 2007) claim that nearly six percent of the general population may have a problem in this area. The goal of this research is to explore and describe the impact of SA&C on couples' relationships.

Given the lack of research focussing on the impact of SA&C on couples, this study explores the effect of SA&C on these relationships. Couples experiencing SA&C are commonly treated individually; however, emerging research suggests that it also impacts couples' relationships, and both individuals and couples with sexual problems, whom may not have come to clinical attention before, are coming forward for treatment. This partially informed my rationale for this study.

This study used an online survey, which generated qualitative and quantitative data as an operation. A letter and online survey link was sent to therapists who subsequently invited their clients to partake in this study. A total of 140 respondents completed the survey, and the data was analysed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistical analysis. This study gained responses from couples whose relationships have been impacted upon by sexual addiction and who are receiving specialised sexual addiction therapies to support their needs. Results revealed the complexity and demands of working with couples who have been impacted by SA&C. The implication of these findings for training, research and practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** sexual addiction and compulsivity, internet pornography, internet infidelity, internet sexuality, cybersex, couples' relationships, experience and impact.

## Introduction

Prior to the 1990s, someone wishing to view pornography would have to go to a newsagent or sex shop to purchase magazines or VHS cassettes; someone wishing to have a sexual experience, whether in or outside of a committed relationship, had to negotiate and meet potential partners or affair-partners before starting the relationship. The introduction of the internet brought with it unlimited computer-based use of webcam and video streaming, computer-based interactive sex, chat rooms, online hook-up sites, such as Tinder and Grindr, porn and online prostitution websites, and porn file transfer sites (Carnes, 2001; Cooper, Delmonico, 2000; Griffin-Shelley, 2004; Delmonico & Carnes, 2006; Schneider, 2005).

With the internet and portable electronic communication, we are faced with both changes in social connections and intimate and sexual interactions. This media revolution is being driven by the evolution of social networks (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), increasingly interactive websites, virtual world sex, smart phone sexting and live video streaming, plus smart phone applications that can easily geo-locate an available prostitute or hook-up. People are now spending more time on chat sites, having multiple affairs, gaining easier access to prostitutes or compulsively viewing pornography. An additional challenge of these newer technologies is that acts of secret online activity or infidelity are easier to hide and deny – for example, smart phone applications can be deleted, leaving no visible trace of their existence, and do not offer a browsing history as computers do. With an increasing amount of applications and online sexual interactions, vulnerable users are becoming sexually addicted, and research suggests that it is having an impact on couples' relationships.

The NCSAC (2007) statement describes sexual addiction as engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behaviour, acted out despite increasing negative consequences to self and others. The term SA&C has entered into therapeutic work in the past decade (Grant, Levine, Kim, and Potenza; 2005). However, there is still no clinical definition for such a term, although it can generally be defined as a problem for people who feel their behaviours have a negative effect on their lives (Weiss, 2013).

According to the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT, 2015), 50 percent of couples initiate couples' therapy because of SA&C. The term 'couple' refers to two people who have a romantic or sexual relationship; for example, a wife and husband, boyfriend and girlfriend or a same sex couple.

Sexual addiction creates many challenges in relationships, and clients have reported that coping with discovery of their addiction and the experience of betrayal in a relationship is traumatic. SA&C is a progressive behaviour that affects both the individual suffering from the problem and those closest to them. According to Schneider (1999), the impact of sexual addiction on relationships causes serious negative consequences for the individual, including the breakup of marriages and relationships, and intense shame and pain. Individuals who have engaged in compulsive sexual activities often come to treatment because of a crisis, such as discovery of affairs, pornographic addiction or financial problems related to the behaviour. When such individuals are in a committed relationship, both members of the couple typically feel ashamed and tend to maintain secrecy (AAMFT, 2015). As a result, most couples are isolated and are not in contact with people who have dealt with similar problems.

According to Schneider (1989), SA&C is a disorder that has been misunderstood, and the impact on couples is a serious problem that presents a new dimension in couples' relationships. There appears to be limited research exploring the impact of sexual addiction on couples' relationships and a lack of specialised training for UK therapists.

### *Personal Interest*

My motivation for doing this research is based on my own addiction history and my current role within the practice. I am a recovering love and sex addict. My addiction had a profound impact on my life at the time and I lived in shame. About 15 years ago, I was in a long term relationship for six years. The first two years were very happy and comfortable for us; he was a flight attendant and was often away for long periods. Our issues were invariably reduced to him wanting more intimacy, time and commitment from me, and I was too fearful to give him what he wanted, as, looking back, I was unsure how to do so. The more stressed I got with my work, and the more anxious I felt in the relationship, my consumption of pornography increased. While he was away travelling, I would meet other men online and have numerous affairs. Later on, my use of pornography became excessive; at times, I felt unable to stop even though I knew it was harmful. I was caught up in the intense emotional 'high' of this behaviour. I struggled with this problem for many years until I sought help because it was hurting my relationship and me. At this point, I had treatment and went into 12 Steps recovery. He discovered the affairs and felt deeply hurt, betrayed and devastated by my behaviour. We recovered from that experience and stayed together until I ended the relationship after my fortieth birthday.

Additionally, the idea for this study developed out of my clinical practise as the founder and clinical director of The Hudson Centre for Psychotherapy and Recovery (HCPR). The Centre specialises in treating and supporting individuals, couples and families impacted by SA&C. HCPR is a recognised pioneer in the treatment of sexual addiction and infidelity, renowned for its outstanding programmes, specialist therapists and integrative approach (IITAP, 2013). This study is a natural progression from my position as a clinician and recovering addict, and it is important that this study mitigates research bias by exploring the impact from a couple's perspective, and not my experience or position.

### **Literature Review**

This section explores previous knowledge, key concepts and theories, and how these impact upon the research.

As reported, with the advent of the internet, a new dimension has been created for romantic and sexual relationships. Researchers suggest that the easier access and availability of pornographic material is leading to marital discord, separation and possible divorce. The AAA model (Anonymity, Accessibility, and Availability) (Cooper, 1998), which has hypothesised as a driving force behind cybersexual addiction, provides a framework to explain some of the underlying dynamics that contribute and impact on couples' relationships in diverse ways

(Magnes, 2013). This literature review covers approximately the past 35 years because there is little, if any, literature prior to this timeframe.

The search criteria for the literature review focussed on adult couples, sexual addiction and compulsivity, sexual and intimate betrayal, internet pornography and the impact on couples' relationships, sexual recovery.

## Approach

Sources searched included the internet, books, academic sites and a wide range of research papers published in the following journals: Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, CyberPsychology & Behaviour, Sexual Research, Cybersexual addiction, Marital & Family Therapy, Sexual and Relationship Therapy, Social Psychology and the quarterly Counselling & Psychotherapy research journal of the BACP.

The literature review's purpose is to provide evidence, or lack of, and theories about how to explain the findings in the study. The initial search from 1990 to 2000 produced a small number of research articles and one book by Carnes (1983). He points to a significant increase in the recognition of sexual addiction, as well as in the empirical literature surrounding the concept. His research and notions are influential and framed within a semantic analysis. He suggests that a distinctive form of sexual addiction has emerged in the wake of the growth of internet-accessible technology and the immediate explicit sexual materials that it provides. However, Carnes' research focusses exclusively on the experience of heterosexual male sex addicts.

## Findings

Since 2000, research has emerged that is primarily focussed on the experiences of male sex addicts; and, since 2004, research has begun to look at the impact on their partners. Schneider (2000) suggests the field of therapy now needs to consider the impact on couples' relationships. At this point, in the UK, research is limited to consideration of this issue in the context of sexual addiction, partners and couples' relationships (Hall, 2013). This is surprising, given the number of clients presenting at our centre for treatment.

The internet has provided a new arena for potential sexual addicts, offering easier access and anonymity (Cooper, 1998). Young et al. (2000) suggest that these factors opened the door to sexual addiction for individuals who previously did not express vulnerability to such addiction, or exposed the vulnerable user to a serious compulsive problem. With this in mind, it has far reaching consequences for partners of addicts and their relationships. According to Luo et al. (2010), couples' relationships, and emotional and sexual honesty, symbolise safety and provide the security of attachment. When sexual addiction is present, it leaves the partner feeling betrayed, angry and hurt. At the very early stage of treatment and recovery, couples exhibit intense emotional reactions. Hall (2013) suggests that, as a result, many clinicians prefer to offer treatment to the addict and spouse/partner separately. However, Glass (2002) suggests that both parties should be treated: the addict with one therapist and the spouse

with another. Alternatively, Carnes (1991) suggests that couples' therapy might be more helpful than group or individual therapy to facilitate healing.

Research studies, carried out by Young (1999a), Griffin-Shelley (1997), Cooper (1999), O'Mara and Buchanan (1999) explored the impact of online infidelity on couples' relationships with implications from evaluation and treatment, and prior research on computer addiction. Young (1999a) found that serious relationship problems were reported by 53% of the 396 case studies of internet addicts interviewed, with marriages and long term relationships most disrupted due to online sexual compulsivity. One conclusion that can be drawn from the research in this area is that there are many individual differences in which behaviours are defined as infidelity; for couple addiction treatment, this suggest a wide field for potential conflict.

Cooper, Delmonico and Burg (2001), carried out a small scale qualitative study with 14 couples on addicts' compulsive use of online pornography, and reported that the majority of cybersex addicts were married, heterosexual men. The initial disclosure of compulsive and addictive sexual behaviour negatively affects wives of sex addicts, and compulsive use of online pornography and behaviour can be perceived as infidelity and betrayal (Schneider, 2000, 2003; Steffens & Rennie, 2006). The wives reported emotional and psychological disruptions, a change in perception of their husbands, and reduced expectations that husbands will fulfil marital obligations (Schneider, 2008; Zitzman & Butler, 2009), with loss of trust as the primary issue in the relationship. Although it was a small-scale study and therefore limited in terms of the ability to transfer the findings to couples more generally, it does offer some insights as to the impact and is closely related to the present study.

In summation the overview of online infidelity in this field highlights the lack of research that looks at the impact of sexual addiction on the couple relationships; however, there are three studies in the United States that look at the impact on partners (Schneider & Schneider, Corley, & Irons, 2004). There are five qualitative and mixed-method studies that look at online infidelity (Henline, Lamke, & Howard, 2007; Hertlein & Piercy, 2008; Mileham, 2007; Whitty, 2005); however, only two studies were located on infidelity in the context of couple counselling (Hertlein & Piercy, 2008), and no research was located that looked at the impact of SA&C on couples' relationships. Research carried out by Schneider (2000) demonstrates that SA&C is reported to have affected millions of couples and families around the world.

### **Summary of Findings**

From the literature reviewed, some common themes emerged: the growth in the use of technology which affects couples' relationships, and the subsequent emotional impact on self, sex and relationships, traumatic responses and the effect on children. A common feature of the literature is that the studies focussed on the addict or the spouses/partner, with very limited studies on their actual relationships.

The literature review shows that without a diagnosis of sexual addiction, plus a lack of research based on the impact upon couples, a challenge is presented for both researchers and couples' therapists working therapeutically with sexual addiction.

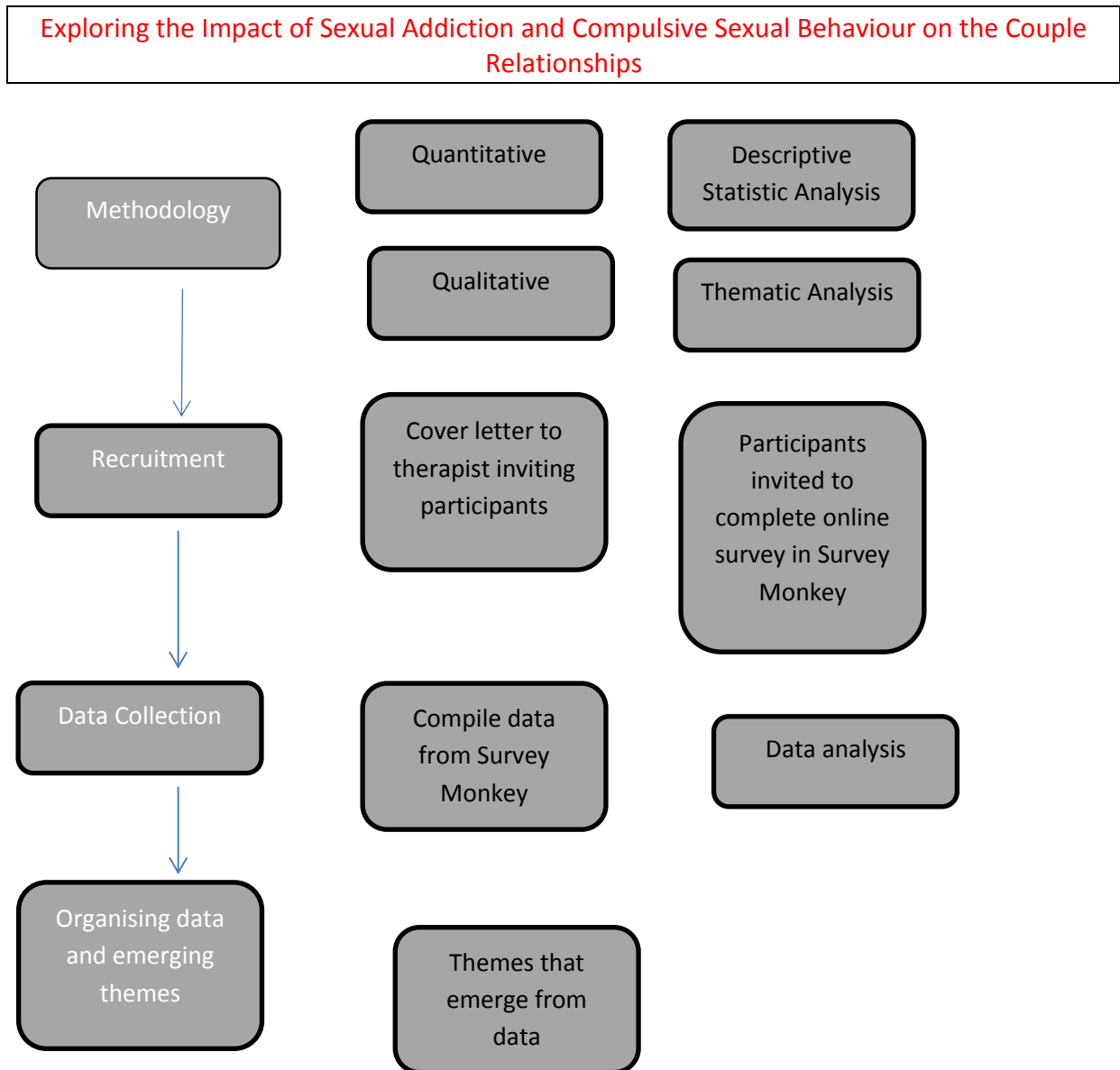
One of the key gaps in the research is that, within the UK, there is little research that seeks to explore beyond male sex addiction. Researchers, such as Hall (2013), have started to look at partners/spouses and discuss the role of couples' therapy in helping couples heal from sexual addiction. Furthermore, much of the limited research focusses on the client who is the addict or the spouse/partner.

### **Rationale for the study**

One of the key gaps in the literature review is the lack of research from the field of therapy, and specialised training to support couples' therapists. The intention is that this research will inform the work I do at the HCPR with couples and the wider therapeutic community, in the form of briefing seminars for practitioners. Findings will also be integrated into a training programme to support therapists. It is also hoped that this study will provide a foundation for more in-depth research and contribution in this field.

## Research Methodology

The flow diagram below outlines the steps taken in this study.





### *Why Mixed-Methods*

The research consists of mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology and a thematic analysis with descriptive statistics analysis, which was chosen as they complement each other. Quantitative data helped me identify patterns of behaviour that are associated with the impact of SA&C on couples' relationship, and also helped me gain a more comprehensive picture while measuring SA&C (Gergen, 1985). Qualitative research helped to describe specific aspects of people's lives, such as clients' experiences of the impact of addiction, and qualitative data explored the in-depth insights into clients' experiences. It also offered necessary data to explore the impact of SA&C (Chase, 2005).

Both thematic analysis and descriptive statistics were chosen as they are methods that seek to uncover patterns of meaning in respondents' accounts of experiences, and helped to describe the data (Charmaz 2006; Rennie 2006). Thematic analysis is a way of organising themes of qualitative data and seeks to unearth the themes salient in a study at different levels, and facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes to explore the understanding of an issue or significance of an idea, rather than to reconcile conflicting definitions of a problem (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Descriptive statistics is a discipline of quantitatively describing the main features of a collection of information (Miles and Banyard, 2007).

The appeal of using both thematic analysis and descriptive statistics analysis is considered an inductive and deductive cycle, where material is allowed to emerge directly from the data and is ultimately tested and grounded in the real world (McLeod, 2011). It is a constant comparative method which is particularly suited to the research question and which allows for flexibility and questioning of gaps, inconsistencies and uncertain understanding. These two methodologies look broadly at a similar type of question, but the qualitative aspect takes a more narrative/constructive approach while quantitative research takes a more paradigmatic/causal model-approach (Silverman, 1993). I believe that using both methodologies offers more exploration and in-depth insight on how SA&C impact couples' relationship (Toulmin, 1958). Grounded theory was considered but I felt that it was not fully suitable for the PEP at this stage as I was not interviewing participants (Chase, 2005).

### *The Methodological Position*

There are a number of theoretical and conceptual considerations on the epistemology and methodology that underpin the research. One of the broad ontological approaches for this research is social constructionism (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). This is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research, and demonstrates that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Mertens, 2015). The study relied as much as possible on participants' views of the situation being studied and sought to understand the meaning of multi-participants' experiences without establishing a single, ultimate truth because experience and impact can vary widely between individuals, cultural, social values and beliefs (Braun and Clark, 2014).

### *Aim of the Study*

The aim of this study was to explore and understand the impact of SA&C sexual behaviour on the couples' relationships. In order to gain more data on this impact, an 18-question online survey was designed to target couples who self-identify with having issues around SA&C – this formed the basis of the PEP study. I chose an online survey as I did not want to use the same quantitative data and method in both the PEP and the larger project. I also hoped that the data from the quantitative aspect of this study would inform the qualitative part. An online survey was also chosen as it would allow me to create graphs for reporting, and export data for further analysis.

### *Steps Carried Out to Complete this Study*

As the founder of the Hudson Centre, I am well placed and motivated to access therapists and participants in the field of SA&C. In order to carry out this study, I contacted therapists working with this client group. They then sent my invitation letter onto clients, which asked them to participate in an online survey. Participants then completed the online survey. Once the data was collected, I coded it to look for themes. These were then grouped together to inform me of overarching responses from participants.

The data was analysed using descriptive statistics analysis and thematic analysis, a method that has been described as both rich and flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Using thematic analysis was time consuming, and I was initially overwhelmed by the data and struggled to define categories and coding.

To learn more about the impact of SA&C on couples' relationships, this study adopted a mixed-method survey (Cresswell, 2003). This purpose was to enable a discovery-oriented approach whereby fuller understandings of the themes might emerge. The quantitative aspect of the study used descriptive statistics that described quantitatively the main features of a collection of information (Miles, & Banyard, 2007). These statistics were sought in order to stay as close as possible to the data presented by the participants. Braun & Clarke (2014) suggested that using descriptive analysis is a semantic approach to analysis which aims to document and describe the data provided by the participants in the study.

The qualitative aspect used thematic analysis that best described the meaning, and was used to interpret multi-stages of data collection, the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thematic analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to analyse the data provided by the participants. This involved multiple stages of analysis, starting from open coding, which described the data, progressing to properties from participants' wording. This resulted in the emergence of categories and was chosen as it has the capacity to generate conceptualisations about the experience of the participants.

### **Recruitment of Participants**

Couples in this study were recruited from both within the UK and outside in the USA in order to gain an adequate sample size for this project. The following steps in recruitment were carried out as follows:

- Finding participants 18 years and older to complete this survey.
- Emailing two sex addiction membership organisations (ATSAC in the UK and IITAP in the USA) requesting that they contact their clients in order to pass my survey to them.
- Sending a cover letter (*Appendix A*) to therapists, in both countries, who treat couples impacted by SA&C.
- They were then asked to forward the letter, which included a link to the survey, to any clients, current or previous, who are or have been in a relationship that was impacted by SA&C.
- The clients were given the option of participating in the survey, and assured that participation or non-participation would not adversely affect their treatment in any way. The accompanying letter (*Appendix B*) explained the nature of the research and invited the client to follow the link if they chose to participate in the survey. Informed consent was provided online, specifying study details, participant rights, risks and benefits, and the right to decline.
- They were also informed that the results would be used anonymously as part of a research study. At the end of the survey, the participants were asked if they would like to be interviewed for the bigger project later on and, if they agreed, to send me a confirmation email.

## Quality Control

Quality control refers to the efforts and procedures that researchers put in place to ensure the quality, validity and accuracy of data being collected using the methodologies chosen for a particular study (Braun & Clark, 2014). Some strategies were adopted to enhance the methodological rigour of this study and the 'transparency' 'trustworthiness' and 'accuracy' of the findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was achieved in various ways: the survey questions formed a key focus of my supervision at the start of the research with my research and academic advisor as well as colleagues. The survey was piloted with 10 colleagues for clarity, accuracy and consistency before going live on SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform.

Once participants had completed the survey, they had the opportunity to request a copy of the study's findings. The analysis of the data, in terms of the categories and themes covered, was consistently checked and reviewed by a critical friend to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. The critical friend's role was to support me and help establish the foundations of this project. His impact was very valuable as we initially struggled to determine which methodology was best suited to analyse the data.

Throughout the enquiry, my clinical and personal experience as a researcher was critically examined through discussion with colleagues, a critical friend and through reflection. Researcher expectations and biases were kept in check as much as possible by attempting to maintain an attitude of openness and to "bracket off" assumptions. As the researcher, it was possible that my clinical and personal pre-existing beliefs about addiction and recovery might influence how the data was collected and analysed. To reduce this possibility, ongoing dialogue with colleagues and a critical friend who had no previous experience of addiction

and recovery took place. This process of informal validity checking took place to ensure that the analysis remained grounded in the data and without preconceived theories (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993).

### Limitations of the study

There were several limitations to this study:

- The participants were self-selected, so will not fully represent the population.
- The data collection relies on participants' self-reports and self-assessments.
- Participants being solely English speaking and located across different continents precluded the possibility that cultural differences could be explored in a future study, although this was not investigated.
- The sample size, which is not large enough to allow reliable generalisation of the results and should be extended in future research.
- This study could have also benefitted from explaining to participants what the term 'committed relationship' means.
- Sexual orientation was not ascertained; therefore, this made the analysis of homosexual and lesbian relationships difficult.
- Participants were not adequately informed in the invitation letter (Appendix B) that their participation would not impact upon their treatment.

### Ethical

Research in the field of sexuality and SA&C is very sensitive and personal; thus, the survey could have been potentially harmful for participants as it asked them to remember painful parts of their lives they would rather forget, which could trigger painful emotions.

To ensure that participants were fully aware of the research goals and requirements, they were asked to read and initial an informed consent before starting the survey (*Appendix D & E*). Then they had to read the research information leaflet, which included the research goals, and were reminded that they knew they could withdraw at any time. The participants were also offered a counselling session by another therapist if they felt affected by their research participation in any way.

The ethical principles that informed the study were beneficence and non-maleficence, actively seeking to do no harm to participants, with transparency being at the heart of this process (Bond, 2004). The ethical principles were also consistent with BACP's ethical framework, 2015. Also, the study was approved by the Chair of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee at Metanoia Institute (Appendix F).

## Data Collection

Data was collected through online software, SurveyMonkey, and took 15 to 20 minutes to complete (*Appendix C*). The survey consisted of 18 questions and included demographic, multiple choice and open-ended questions. There were 140 responses to this online survey and 15 of them have agreed to be interviewed for the larger project.

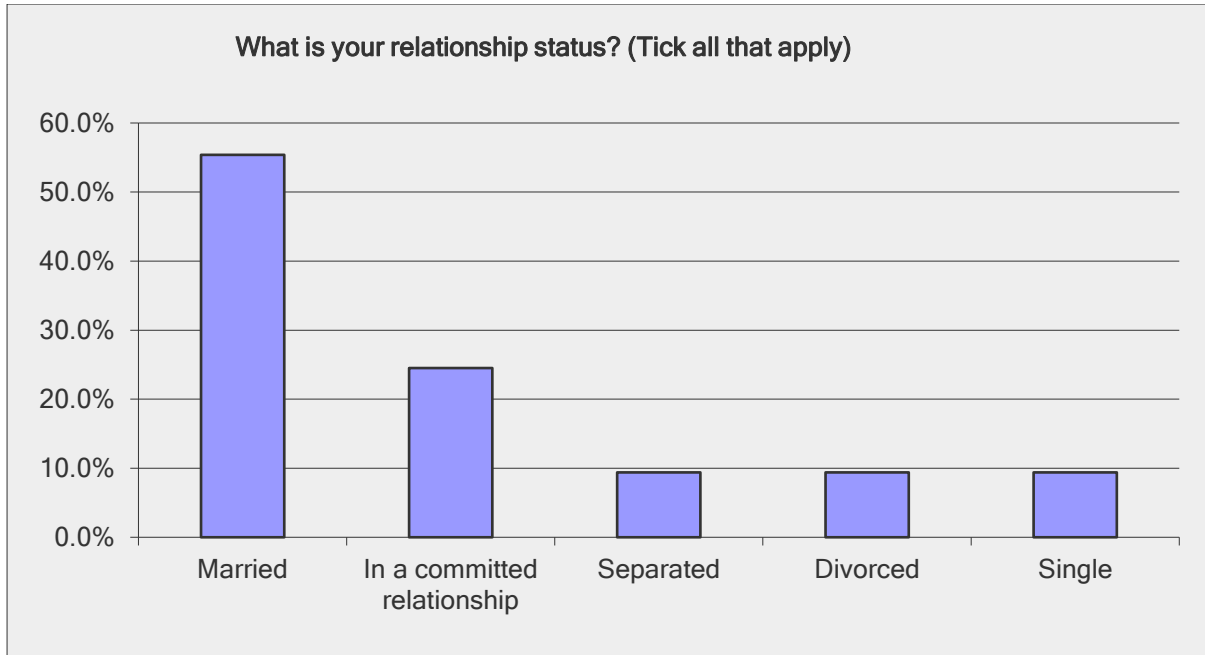
All responses were obtained within a 4-month period, between April and August 2015. The 140 respondents comprised of 79 men and 60 women aged between 24 and 65. **Being that only seven men and four women reported being in a homosexual and lesbian relationship, this significantly small number highlights a problem with this survey** – specifically, as mentioned earlier, the question of sexual orientation was not asked.

### *What is your relationship status?*

The research looked at the impact on couples so it was essential to find out how many of the respondents were in a relationship. In response to the question, “What is your relationship status” 55% were married, 24% were in a committed relationship, and 28% were separated, divorced or now single. Relationship status data is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 and Chart**

What is your relationship status? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Married	55.4%	77
In a committed relationship	24.5%	34
Separated	9.4%	13
Divorced	9.4%	13
Single	9.4%	13
Other (please specify)		4
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>139</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>1</b>

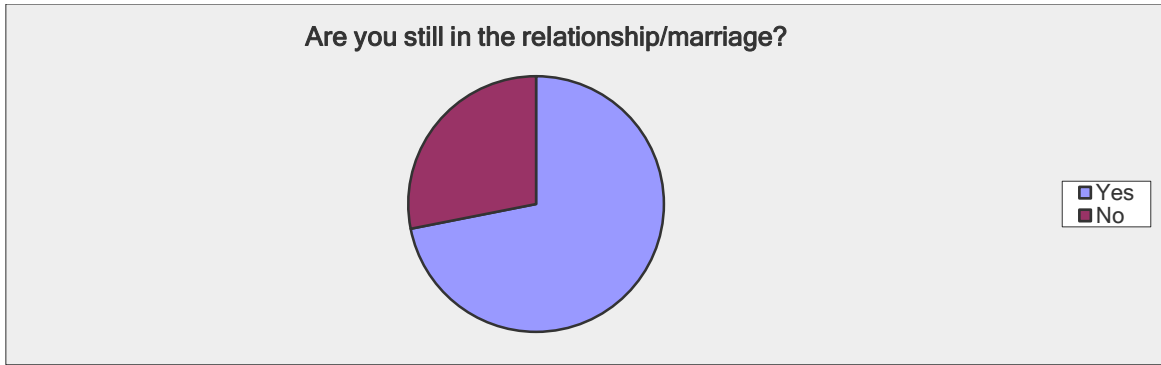


*Are you still in the relationship/marriage?*

While exploring the impact of SA&C within this group, it was essential to look at how many of the respondents stayed in their relationships after the discovery/disclosure. In response to the above question, 71% of the respondents reported that they stayed in the relationship/marriage after the discovery/disclosure, while 28% said that they were no longer in the relationship and 8 respondents were unclear about the status of their relationship at the time of this survey.

**Table 2 and Chart**

<b>Are you still in the relationship/marriage?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	71.9%	97
No	28.1%	38
Other (please specify)		8
<i>answered question</i>		<b>135</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>5</b>

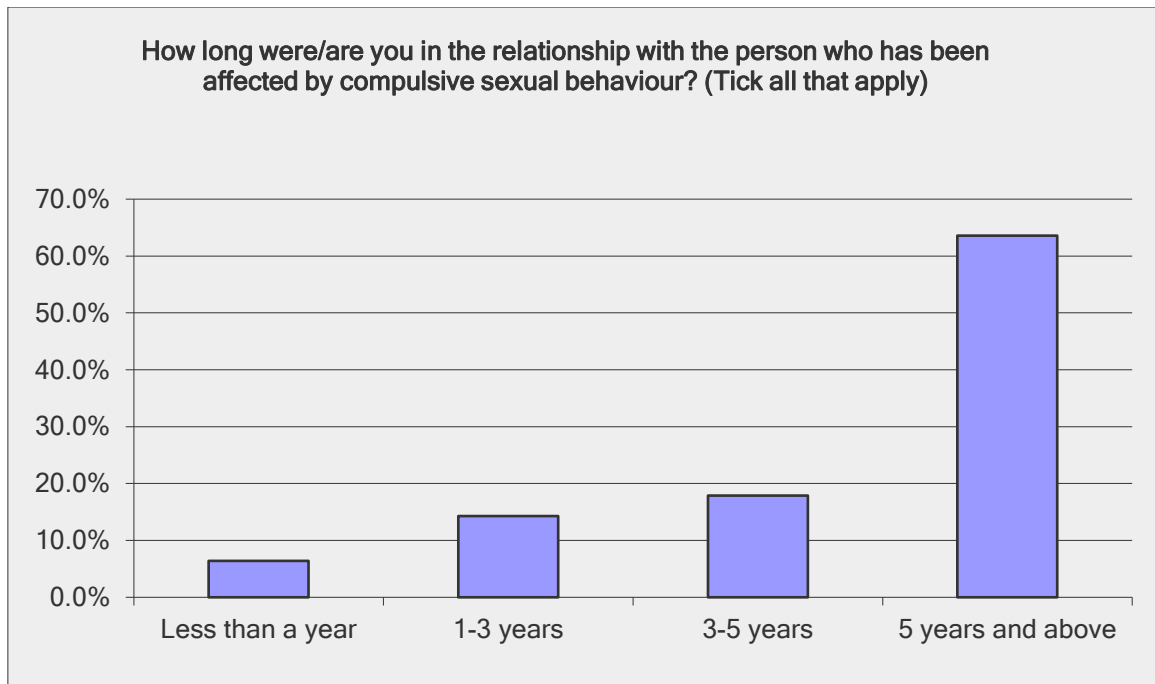


*How long were/are you in the relationship with the person who has been affected by compulsive sexual behaviour?*

As SA&C can disrupt the longevity of the couples' relationships, **it was of interest to learn how long respondents** had been affected by this behaviour. In response to the above question, 63% of respondents reported that they had been in the relationship with the person affected by sexual compulsivity for five years and above. 17% of respondents reported three to five years, 14% reported one to three years, and 6% less than a year.

**Table 3 and Chart**

<b>How long were/are you in the relationship with the person who has been affected by compulsive sexual behaviour? (Tick all that apply)</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Less than a year	6.4%	9
1-3 years	14.3%	20
3-5 years	17.9%	25
5 years and above	63.6%	89
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>140</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>0</b>



*Before the discovery or disclosure of compulsive sexual behaviour, was either of you experiencing any other problems in the relationship, individually or as a couple?*

Following on from the above question, it was key to discover if the compulsive sexual behaviour was in isolation or if there were other problems involved before disclosure. An overwhelming majority, 87%, reported that they experienced problems before the SA&C was discovered. Only 12% responded that no problems existed before the discovery or disclosure.

**Table 4**

Before the discovery or disclosure of compulsive sexual behaviour, was either of you experiencing any other problems in the relationship, individually or as a couple?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	87.8%	122
No	12.2%	17
<i>answered question</i>		139
<i>skipped question</i>		1

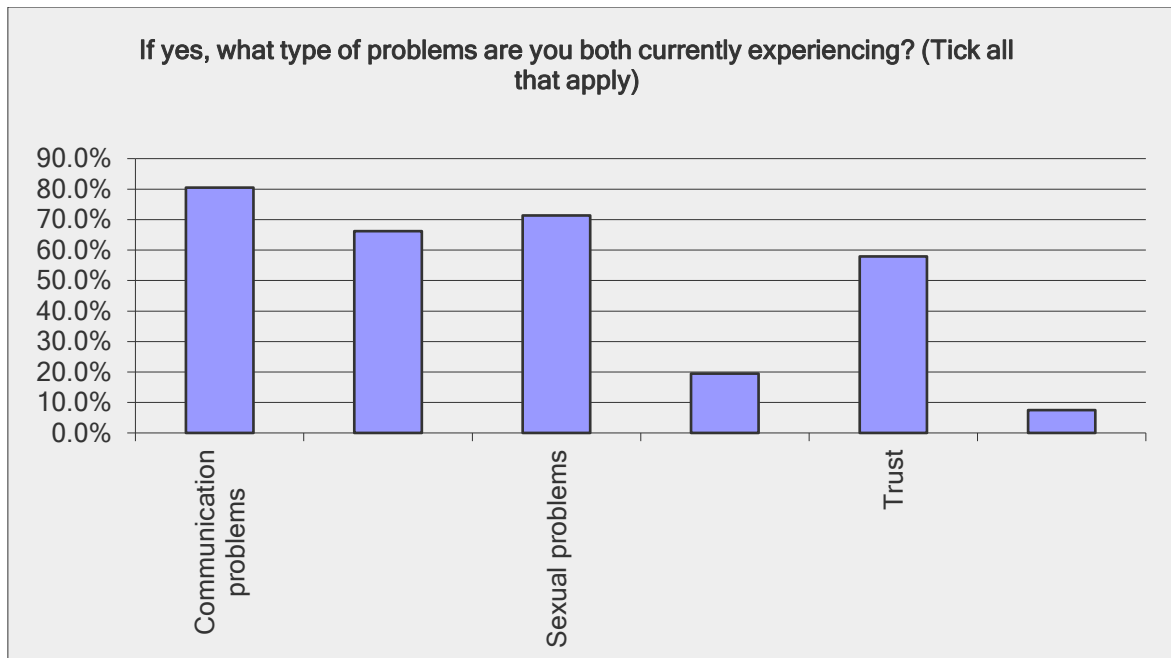


*What type of problems are you both currently experiencing?*

As table 4 suggests, 87% of couples experienced problems in the relationship before the discovery, I wanted to know more about the types of problems. Table 5 below reported that 80% of respondents had communication problems, 66% had relationship conflict, and 71% had sexual problems. Some partners, 19%, reported that they had financial problems and 57% reported issues of trust. Partners believed that SA&C had been causing problems between them for some time now. Several commented that, although they had learned about the behaviour very recently, they now recognised that it “had been going on for a long time and was probably responsible for the problems in the relationship”.

**Table 5 and Chart**

<b>If yes, what type of problems are you both currently experiencing? (Tick all that apply)</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Communication problems	80.5%	107
Relationship conflict	66.2%	88
Sexual problems	71.4%	95
Financial problems	19.5%	26
Trust	57.9%	77
Not applicable as I answered "No" to the previous question	7.5%	10
Other (please specify)		12
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>133</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>7</b>

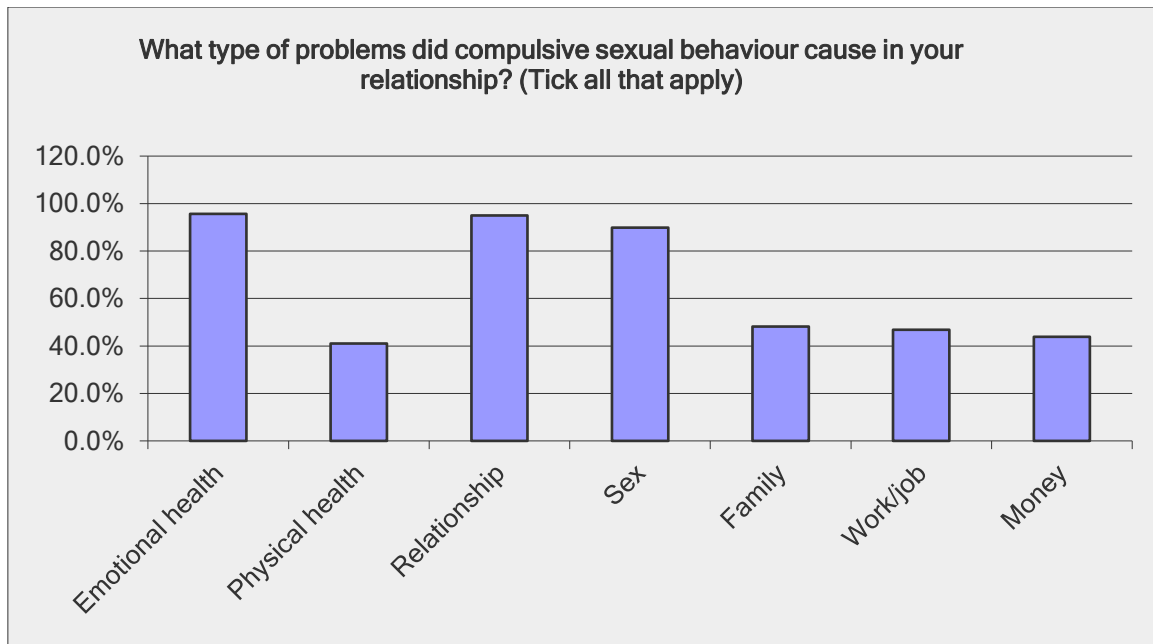


*What type of problems did compulsive sexual behaviour cause in your relationship?*

The above question sets out to explore the problems that the behaviour caused in couples' relationships. Table 6 below suggests that 95% of the respondents reported that the behaviour has significantly affected their emotional health, 95% reported that it had worsened their relationship, 89% reported that it affected their sex life as they felt "numb and hurt". 41% reported that it had affected them physically, and nearly half, 48%, said that it had negative effects on the family. 43% reported that it had affected them financially.

**Table 6 and Chart**

<b>What type of problems did compulsive sexual behaviour cause in your relationship? (Tick all that apply)</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Emotional health	95.7%	133
Physical health	41.0%	57
Relationship	95.0%	132
Sex	89.9%	125
Family	48.2%	67
Work/job	46.8%	65
Money	43.9%	61
Other (please specify)		11
<i>answered question</i>		<b>139</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>



### Data Analysis

Data analysis was the most complex part of the process. The theoretical influence on the analysis of the data was the approach of quantitative and qualitative research (McLeod, 2006) and descriptive statistical analysis and thematic analysis, a method that complements the design of the research (Braun & Clark, 2006).

#### *Quantitative*

Descriptive statistics analysis was used as a way to summarise the participants' responses from the data collected in the online survey (Bryman and Burgess, 1994). It helped to interpret the data in a meaningful way when patterns emerge. Together with graphical data provided by SurveyMonkey, which formed the basis of quantitative analysis of the data. These methods can be used to determine whether or not your data conforms to the research question (Coladarci, 1980).

#### *Qualitative*

Thematic analysis was used to describe and report patterns in the data, organise the data, create themes, identify and analyse the data. It minimally organised and described the data set in detail as defined by Braun and Clark (2006). It was also used to understand participants' experiences in detail in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon in question (McLeod, 2012).

#### *Reflective statement*

The process of undertaking the research was far more challenging than I anticipated. During the 10 years I have worked with addicts and partners, I have been aware of the impact of this

work on myself. When analysing the data, some were quite traumatising to read, at times I was deeply impacted by the research and the line between the study and my own history became blurred. Sometimes I struggled to read the impact reported, found it very painful and depressing, as I immerse myself in their experiences of helplessness and powerlessness, at times I had to stop, journal my thought processes and take a break and go for walk. As the researcher, I was surprised of the role that emotions played in my research. I was deeply impacted by the participants' reports of the impact and struggled with analysing the data in isolation, and at times felt overwhelmed and uncertain. I found reading the trauma reported were distressing and at no point did I feel triggered into my past behaviour. Another way I coped was to be more 'detached' from the material, work on my countertransference issues and record my feelings whilst reading the content.

Building in the reflexive approach, supported by researchers such as Finlay and Gough (2003), allowed me, the researcher, to deconstruct my position in relation to the data and thereby mitigate any bias. It was important for me throughout this research to reflect on my own experiences and preconceptions of SA&C and how my own personal history and professional experience might affect my perception of the data. Thus, the rigor and quality of the analysis was considered in an ongoing manner in keeping with the guidelines of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

One of the challenges of this study was to get participants to take the survey. Dr Marie Adams, my academic advisor, had informed me that my timescale was unrealistic and thematic analysis is time consuming. My original timescale for this PEP was three months to collect, collate and analyse the data. My actual completed timescale was six months, double my estimate. I underestimated how difficult this process would be. The process took longer than I anticipated as I had to rely on addiction therapists to pass the survey on to their clients to encourage them to participate, as I thought this was an effective way to reach this client group.

This study posed a sensitive and ethical issues around my dual roles - as the researcher focussing on SA&C, and my clinical work and personal history with addiction. The dual role also formed a part of my personal therapy throughout the research. Organising data and creating themes was the most challenging part of this research because of the traumatic impact reported by the participants and the fact that I had to review this difficult data multiple times.

Throughout the study, I aimed to focus reflexively on my process as the researcher and on the participants. My reflective focus formed a part of the study; the dynamics between me the researcher, participants and supervisor were taken seriously and used as a way of enriching understandings (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Firstly, I concentrated on my dual role and deconstructing my position for transparency within the research. The loss, pain, distress and sadness reported were hard to read at times. Supervision and therapy were used to make sense of my own perceptions and feelings, which allowed me to be sensitised to organising the data and to start looking for emerging themes. At this stage, I began to diarise my process, which was a slow process, but one that was deeply beneficial in reflectively teasing out exactly what feelings belonged to the researcher and what belonged to the participants. However, I

was gratified and engaged by the detail and richness of the data and responses of the respondents.

### Organising Data and Creating Themes

The survey consisted of 18 questions, and question 18 offered participants an opportunity to further express how SA&C had affected their relationships by asking *“Please feel free to add any other comments which you think might be helpful to me in understanding how sexual compulsivity affected you both as a couple, and as a family”* (See Appendix G). **Creswell (2007) writes about developing appropriate qualitative questions, and this type of question demonstrates this.**

Using thematic analysis to analyse responses from participants of question 18, I also needed to utilise the three types of coding, open coding, axial coding and selective coding, as required in grounded theory (Braun and Clarke, 2014). After reading through the data several times, I proceeded with open coding. **I accomplished this by creating labels of specific words and phrases that summarised what I saw in parts of the data.** For example, as seen in one open coding table above, parts of the data focussed on trust being “severely damaged” and the “most overriding issues” in participants’ relationships. As the coding progressed, I needed to make more sense of what the data was telling me (as seen in the properties column of the Open Coding Table). For this analysis, **I came up with the code, “lack of trust”.**

After repeating this procedure several times and coming up with six open codes, I then created axial codes, which attempted to identify relationships between the open codes. As seen in the Complete Coding Table, I grouped the lack of trust, denial and gas lighting open codes and identified them as being related to one another by demonstrating how participants were not being honest with their partners, not taking responsibility and not being accountable with them. I repeated this consolidation step for other open codes.

The last step was to take all of my axial codes and figure out what commonality linked all of my data, or the selective code. As mentioned in the Complete Coding Table, I found that **couples who encountered** sexual compulsivity led them to experience unhealthy behaviours, **but eventually their relationships moved towards “learning as a process of recovery and healing”** (see ‘Completed Coding Table with Open, Axial and Selective Codes’).

**It was challenging to review this data multiple times and I found it quite time consuming and laborious, and I was initially concerned that I would become overwhelmed by the data, and struggled to define categories and coding. Also, I was anxious not to become confused with the data, and I realised that I needed to change my approach. This coding process was incredibly rewarding as it provided unique insights into how the 140 respondent describe the impact of SA&C on themselves and their relationships and not just how their experiences differ, but how they relate.**

**Organising Data and Creating Themes**

Open Coding Table:

Open codes	Axial codes	Selective code
Lack of trust, denial and gas lighting	Not being honest, taking responsibility and being accountable	Unhealthy to healthier path that sexual compulsivity on the relationship guides a couple towards
Couples' worries around other addictions such as food, substances, work and exercise	Using other substances to calm despair with a need to act out	
Learning as a process of recovery and healing	Opportunity to rediscover new parts of the relationship and the other	

Complete Coding Table with Open, Axial and Selective Codes

Open code	Properties	Examples of participants' words
Lack of trust	Trying to restore trust between partners, trust was impacted between them	Trust is severely damaged, we are working on restoring trust, we are working on repairing the trust that was shattered, trust has been the main casualty, and the biggest and most overriding issues in our relationship is trust
Denial	Partner not acknowledging what the participant saw regarding sexual acts	Claimed that I hadn't seen what I had seen, and totally denied what I had directly witnessed
Gas lighting	Masking the reality of compulsive behaviour, inability to be emotionally present	I was acting sexually for most of my ten year marriage and while I was never caught, I was not emotionally present, greater deception, pathological lying and insidious behaviour
Worries around other addictions such as food, substances, work and exercise	Participant displaying worry over remaining sober	As long as I remain sober everything will go well, triggered alcoholism as a coping mechanism

Learning as a process of recovery	Participant identify learning as a part of the recovery process	We are relearning about each other, we are now trying to work on our relationship, recovery healing and learning a healthy way of living, we have learned to be more open and honest
Healing	Participants capacity to move on from the trauma and see the relationship with new hope	This betrayal has given us an opportunity to look at our relationship in a new light, while it was devastating, the healing occurring in our marriage has given us a far better marriage than before

### Emerging Themes

In reviewing the comments offered by respondents **in response to question 18**, I have found some interesting and consistent themes in the data regarding complexity of relationship dynamics. An emerging theme throughout was that a vast majority, 80%, of the respondents, were married or in a committed relationship and stayed in the relationship despite the negative impact SA&C had on their lives. Nearly the same proportion, 70%, of respondents reported that the discovery, seeking therapeutic support and 12 Step programmes have supported them in continuing their relationship. A consistent theme from participant data was, “now we are able to be more open, honest and authentic with each other”. The sub-themes are broken down further below.

#### *Underlying problems*

The study highlighted that 87% of the respondents reported that they experienced problems in the relationship before the discovery/disclosure. Problems included communication, trust, sexual issues and relationship conflicts. These would have contributed to stress in the relationship; in such case, the addicted partner would use SA&C to escape from the difficulties of dealing with the ongoing issues.

#### *Loss of trust*

The most traumatised are those who were completely unaware that there was anything going on, or the ones who suspected and were made to feel that as though they were making things up or being paranoid. The majority of the respondents reported, “*the trust was severely*



*damaged, his behaviour made me feel as though I was going crazy, it took a long time before I started to feel safe and could trust again*" (see appendix G). When the trust is damaged and it's one of the core issues in the relationship, it can take a long time to be restored; it also needs to be repaired internally by each partner.

#### *Emotional impact on self and relationship*

Partners/spouses reported, *"my husband's sex addiction has caused me severe depression, suicidal ideation, and PTSD, the tension and fights have negatively impacted every aspect of our marriage and family"* (see appendix G). Some of the symptoms the respondent described include depression, anxiety, and sleeping problems. Jason (2009) suggests that these symptoms are related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

#### *Impact of sex within the relationship*

The theme of the impact of lack of sex on sense of self was consistent. The partners reported that their addicted partners/spouses were not interested in sex, and the partner would wonder *"why he was not interested in me sexually?"* (see appendix G). One respondent said, *"my husband is addicted to prostitutes, this has made our relationship unsafe – we have both had sexual transmitted diseases. As a result I am not able to trust him; the intimacy has been severely damaged"*. The partners who were addicted to sex workers and were also having sex with their partners would put their partners at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, which accounts for heightened fear and anxieties among couples.

#### *Effect of children and family members*

A respondent reported that, *"we are a blended family with teenage children, and his sex addiction caused tremendous damaged to all our children and they all turned against each other. My husband's sexual addiction nearly destroyed our family"* (see appendix G). **Some respondents reported that SA&C had adverse effects on their children and family members who are aware of the situation.**

## **Findings**

The findings of this study show that SA&C presents a challenge for couples and has a damaging effect on relationships. The study's findings also point to the need for specialised addiction treatment and support, and the analysis showed how beneficial this was to a couple in crisis.

The findings of this study show that SA&C causes emotional distress to partners, that the behaviour can impact their relationships, and the couple often feels the most negative effects (Magnes, 2013). After the devastating discovery of SA&C, intense emotions and recurrent crises are the norm. The positive news, however, is that the majority of relationships not only survive SA&C, but the research findings confirmed that 72% of participants remained in their relationship. Addiction and couple therapists have observed that many relationships can become stronger and more intimate after addiction treatment, couples therapy and recovery

(Schneider, 1991). SA&C appears to be the catalyst for approximately 50 percent of the couples who initiate treatment (AAMFT, 2015).

The conclusions of this study evidenced that nearly 94% of respondents reported that negative consequences continued after problematic sexual behaviour affected their relationships. This study confirmed and exemplified that, within couples' relationships, SA&C can negatively impact in the following ways: first, partners feel that the relationship trust decreases due to the dishonesty and deception of their behaviour. Second, the addicted partner has difficulty being sexual and their partner may feel sexually inadequate. Third, their children can be exposed to the behaviour, i.e.: discovering phone messages, text, pornography, and the impact this could have on them. And fourth, children may observe arguments and stress in the home. The behaviour and betrayal can also lead to separation, divorce or arrest.

**This study showed the majority of the participants, 70%, believe that people who come in with SA&C think it is imperative that they are treated as a couple, instead of receiving individual treatment.** A recent study emphasises that an assessment of the couple as well as a relationship assessment examining the relational dynamics and patterns would inform the process (Hall, 2013). Herman (1997) argues that the lack of an accurate and comprehensive diagnostic concept has serious consequences for treatment, because the connection between the patient's present symptoms and the traumatic experience is frequently lost.

The survey data supported the idea that couples felt isolated as they are too ashamed to talk to family/friends about this is trust. Some addicts expressed remorse and promised to get help, and did. However, the addict getting help doesn't help the couple, and some problems continue. Available resources are aimed at addicts, and while partner/spouses were helpful, there is no support for couple in crisis. Couples reported that SA&C is not something they can talk to others about without shame and judgment. In terms of seeking professional help, many participants, 70%, reported they had sought specialised professional help to support them in dealing with the crisis from SA&C.

## **Discussion**

Research has begun to emerge to better understand the complex issues of SA&C on the couples' relationships, and the findings of this study support current research that there is an impact. This feeds into the fact that people are spending more time on the internet to fulfil an ever increasing amount of their sexual needs, and the issues associated with online sexuality will become increasingly important and salient. It was also reported that specialised trained therapists are needed to work with this population.

More generally, the bulk of empirical investigation of SA&C is quantitative and rooted within an essentialist or positivist epistemological framework. While the proposed idea of SA&C as something that is socially constructed might be challenging for a quantitative researcher (how to interpret study results if participants are all sharing different types of impacts of SA&C),

using this approach offers the possibility to develop a better understanding of the different ways in which participants share the impact of SA&C on their relationships.

The strength was that the project achieved some objectives, and question 18 received more responses and details than expected. The key element was to understand the qualitative elements of the data, as the quantitative aspect alone would be hard to derive strong meanings from. One of the weaknesses was that question 18 was the only qualitative part of the survey and relying on quantitative data alone would not be sufficient. On reflection, I can now see that a few questions (for example, numbers 11 and 12) were possibly confusing. This needs to be clarified for interviews going forward. I decided not to interview participants at this stage as I am planning to do this in the bigger project. The quantitative aspect of this study did not make it possible to completely describe the data collected; nevertheless, the qualitative part of this study was needed to explain it fully.

Initially, grounded theory and thematic analysis was chosen for this study, but grounded theory was found to be unsuitable as I was not interviewing participants. After consulting my supervisor, it was agreed that a combination of thematic analysis and descriptive statistics analysis was better suited to describe the data. It's important to acknowledge my limitation with using descriptive statistics analysis, and that going forward, it would be best to seek help from a statistician as a way to improve the use of the data. It will be helpful for my future research to consider a number of issues relating to the process of interviewing, the type of questions, supporting the participants, and carrying out a mixed method research that also includes interviewing participants, which will enrich the qualitative element in order to scope the extent of the issue. The advantage of the sample used in the study was that each participant had experienced or was impacted by SA&C. When planning the survey, I was concerned with issues of anonymity and confidentiality, especially because I asked respondents to email me at the end of the survey if they wished to participate further. I was surprised that eight participants wrote to me saying that they would like to be interviewed, and another 20 emailed asking for the outcome of the study. This would have removed their anonymity when participating in the survey, although there was no way of connecting their survey response to their email. I hypothesise that, because the email link was sent from a therapist they are working with or have worked with, plus the comfort of the internet, this reflected the sense of anonymity the internet provides.

### **Future Direction**

The aim was to explore the impact of SA&C on couples' relationships. The study achieved this; however, there were a number of challenges with the design and analysis that need to be considered for future research. Doing just a quantitative study and relying on question 18 to collate qualitative data may be open to criticism as it does not reflect the rigour or depth of the survey. There were further challenges and, at times, it was restrictive. For example, it was difficult to report on some of the significance of the data. The process of coding created a disconnect at time – such as, coding and marking out data in relation to repetition was straightforward; however, when looking at the impact on couples' relationship, these were more complex to translate to themes.

It will be helpful for future research to consider a number of issues relating to the recruitment process of couples and interviewing. All the respondents that agreed to be interviewed for the bigger project have been in recovery/therapy. Given that, in the UK, there is little research in this field, it may be helpful to include couples who have been impacted but haven't been in therapy. I believe using this data and interviewing couples for the bigger project would be a better way forward.

This is a pilot study for my main doctoral research project, whose findings will inform the direction of the further research undertaken for the main project, as well as the design of the prospective intervention. These findings are to help clinician and researchers better understand the impact on couples, and how to determine if and what intervention may be required. Further research is required to increase professional and public awareness of the complex issues associated with SA&C.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the limitations of this study, it explored some important issue looking at the impact of SA&C on the couples' relationships. Research and clinical development have mainly focused on SA&C, how to classify and describe it diagnostically and how to treat the addict and partner. In the context of moving forward, there has been minimal discussion and research looking at the impact on couples' relationships. There is little doubt that use of the internet linked to SA&C will continue to expand. This practice evaluation project has sought to contribute to the rationale that, traditionally, couples therapists have been trained to work with couples in conflict, psycho sexual issues and infidelity. Further research could usefully qualitatively explore first-hand experiences of couples. Much remains to be done around SA&C to more clearly understand its impacts and effects on couples and their relationships.

**Word count:** 8500 words excluding, abstracts, references and appendices

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the respondents for their participation in the research study. Also my gratitude to all the therapists who may have distributed the survey online to their clients.

## References

- Adams, C.A. (2009) *Love, Infidelity, & Sexual Addiction*. Charleston, SC. Book Surge.
- American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy. (2015). *A Guide to Working through the Repercussions of Sexual Addiction*.
- American Psychiatric Association (APA). (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders 1V-TR., Fourth ed., Text revision*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric.
- Bancroft, J., (2008). Sexual Behaviour that is "out of control". A Theoretical conceptual approach. *Psychiatric Clinic of North America*, 31, 593-601.
- Bancroft, J., & Vukadinovic, Z. (2004). Sexual Addiction, sexual compulsivity and impulsivity, or what? Toward a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research*, 41, 225-234.
- Bager-Charleson, S. (2014). *A Reflexive Approach. Doing Practice-Based Research in Therapy*. London, Sage Publication.
- Bird, M. (2006). Sexual Addiction and marriage and family therapy: facilitating individual and relationship healing through couple therapy. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 32(3),

297-311.

Billy, J. O. G., Tanfer, K., Grady, W. R., & Klepinger, D. H. (1993). The sexual behaviour of men in the United States. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 25, 52-60.

Bond, T. (2004). *Ethical guidelines for researching counselling and psychotherapy*. Rugby: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Blow, A. J., & Hartnett, K. (2005a) Infidelity in committed relationships 1: A substantive review. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 31, 217-234.

Brown, E. M., (1991). *Patterns of Infidelity and their Treatment*. New York: Brunner-Mazel.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2014). *Successful Qualitative Research: A practical guide for beginners*, Sage Publication.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), pp. 77 – 101.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, (3rd ED.).

Carnes, P. (1991). *Don't Call it love: Recovery from sexual addiction*. New York: Bantam.

Carnes, P. (1983). *Out of the shadows: Understanding sexual addiction*. Minneapolis.

Carnes, P. (1986). *Progress in sexual addiction: An addiction perspective*. SIECUS Report.

Coladarci, A. P. & Coladarci, T. (1980) *Elementary descriptive statistics: For those who think they can't*. Wandsworth Publishing.

Cooper, A. (1998a). Sexuality and the internet: Surfing Into the new millennium. *CyberPsychology & Behaviour*, 1 (2), 181 – 187.

Cooper, A. (1998b), Sexually compulsive behaviour. *Contemporary Sexuality*, 32(4), 1-3.

Cooper, M., & Schneider, J. (2002). Disclosing secrets: Guidelines for therapist working with sex addicts and co-addicts. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 9 (1), 43-67.

Cooper, A. (2000) *Cybersex: The dark side of the force*. Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge.

Cooper, A. Delmonico, D., & Burg, R. (2005) Cyber users, abusers, and compulsives: New findings and implications. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 7.

Cooper, A. (1997). The internet and sexuality: Into the new millennium. *Journal of Sex Education Therapy*, 22, 5-6.

- Cooper, A., & Sportolari, L. (1997). Romance in cyberspace: Understanding online attraction. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy*, 22(1), 7-14.
- Coleman, E. (1992). Is your patient suffering from compulsive sexual behaviour? *Psychiatric Annals*, 22, 320-325.
- Collins, P. C., & Collins, C.N., (2012). *A Couple's Guide to Sexual Addiction*. Adams Media.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (2nd ed.) Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2007). Qualitative approaches to inquiry. In *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2nd ed.) Sage Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*: London: Sage Publication Ltd.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2011), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.
- Duncan, B. L. (2010). *On becoming a better therapist*. American Psychological Association.
- Ethrington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher*. Jessica Kingsley, London
- Finlay, L. & Evans, E. (2009). *Relational-centred Research for Psychotherapists*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Finlay, L. & Gough, B. (2003). *Reflexivity*, Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Fisher, J. (2007). *Addictions and Trauma Recovery*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Flores, P.J., (2004). *Addiction as an attachment disorder*. New York, NY: Aronson.
- Glass, S. P. (2002). Couple therapy after the trauma of infidelity. In A. S. Gurman & N. S. Jacobson (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (pp. 488-507). NY, Guildford Press.
- Glass, S. (1998). *Shattered vows*. Psychology Today.
- Grant, J.E., Levine, L., Kim, D., & Potenz, M.N. (2005). Impulsive control disorders in adult psychiatric inpatients. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 162.
- Green, D. & Latchford, G. (2012). *Maximising the benefits of psychotherapy*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Griffin-Shelley, E. (1991). *Sex and Love: Addiction treatment and recovery*. New York: Praeger.

Hall, P. (2013). *Understanding and Treating Sex Addiction: A comprehensive guide for people*

who struggle with sex addiction and those who want to help them. Routledge.

Henline, B. H., Lamke, L. K., & Howard, M. D. (2007). Exploring perception of online infidelity.

*Personal Relationships*, 14, 113-128.

Henwood, K., & Pidgeon, N. (1993). Qualitative research and psychological theorising. In M. Hammersersley (Ed.), *Social research: Philosophy, politics and practice*. OUP.

Hertlein, K.M., & Piercy, F. P. (2008). Therapists' assessment and treatment of internet infidelity cases. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 34, 481-497.

The Huffington Post. [http://huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/03internet-porn-stats\\_n\\_3187682.html#slide=more275323](http://huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/03internet-porn-stats_n_3187682.html#slide=more275323)

Kafka, M. P. (2010). Hypersexual Disorder: A proposed diagnosis for DSM-V. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 39, 377-400.

Kalichman, S. C., & Cain, D. (2004) The relationship between indicators of sexual compulsivity and high-risk sexual practices among men and women receiving services from a sexual transmitted infection clinic. *Journal of Sex Research*, 41, 235-241.

Luo, S., Cartum, M. A., & Snider, A.G. (2010). Assessing dyadic behaviour: A review, a new measure and two new models. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49, 155-163.

Manley, G. (1999). Treating chronic sexual dysfunction in couples recovering from sexual addiction and sexual coaddiction. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 6(2), 111-124.

McLeod, J. (2012). *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Sage, London.

Magnes, M. (2013). *Stop sex addiction*. CRP Press, Las Vegas.

Milrad, R. (1999). Coaddictive recovery: Early recovery issues for spouses of sex addicts. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 6(2), 125-136.

Miles, J & Banyard, P. (2007). *Understanding & Using Statistics in Psychology: A Practical Guide*. Sage, London.

Minwalla, O. (2011). A New Generation of Sex Addiction Treatment: The Sex Addiction-Induced Trauma Model for the Treatment of Sex Addicts, Partner and Couple. Presented



- at the Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health National Conference, San Diego US.
- Moultrup, D. J., (1990). *Husband, Wives & Lovers*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Moller, N. P., & Vossler, A. (2014) *Defining Infidelity in Research and Couple Counselling: A Qualitative Study*: *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*.
- Norwood, R. (1995). *Women who love too much*. Los Angeles, CA: Taarcher
- National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity, (2007). *Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health*.
- Reid, R.C., Harper, J.M. & Anderson, E. H. (2009). Coping strategies used by hypersexual patients to defend against the painful effects of shame. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 16, 125-138.
- Punch, K. (2006). *Developing Effective Research Proposals*, Los Angeles: Sage.
- Quittner, J. (1997, April 14). *Divorce Internet Style*, *New York Times*, p. 72.
- Raymond, N. C., Coleman, E., & Miner, M. H. (2003) *Psychiatric comorbidity and compulsive traits in compulsive sexual behaviour*. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 44, 370-380.
- Schneider, J., & Schneider, B. (1999). *Sex, Lies and forgiveness: Couples speak on healing from sexual addiction*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Materials.
- Schneider, J., (1998) *Back from Betrayal: Recovering from his affairs*. New York: Ballantine.
- Schneider, J. P., Corley, M. D., & Irons, R. R. (1998). *Surviving disclosure of infidelity: Results of an international survey of 164 recovering sex addicts and partners*. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 5, 189-217.
- Schneider, J. (1991). *Women sex Addicts and their spouses: Recovery issues*. *American Journal of Preventive Psychiatry & Neurology*, 3, 1-5.
- Schneider, J., & Schneider, B. (1990a). *Marital satisfaction during recovery from self-identified sexual addiction among bisexual men and their wives*. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 16, 230-250.
- Schneider, J. P, & Schneider, B. (1998). *Rebuilding the marriage during recovery from compulsive sexual behaviour*, *Family Relations*, 38: 288-294.
- Schneider, J. P, & Schneider, B. (2004). *Couple recovery from sexual addiction/coaddiction:*

- Results of a survey of 88 marriage. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 3, 111-126.
- Snyder, D. K., Baucom, D. H., Gordon, K.C., (2004). Can this marriage be saved? How to make the right decisions following an affair. New York: Guildford.
- Snyder, D. K., Gordon, K.C., & Baucom, D. H., (2004). Treating affair couples: Extending the written disclosure paradigm to relationship trauma. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11, 155-159.
- Steffens, B., & Means, M. (2009). *Your sexually addicted spouse: How partners can cope & heal*. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press.
- Steffens, B. A., & Rennie, R. L. (2006). The traumatic nature of disclosure for wives of sex addicts. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 13, 247-276.
- Thompson, D. (2012). *The fix – How addiction is invading our lives and taking over your world*. London.
- Tripodi, C. (2006). Long term treatment of partners of sex addict: A multi-phase approach. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 13, 269-288.
- Weiss, R. (2013). *Cruise Control: Understanding Sex Addiction in Gay Men (2nd Edition)*.
- Whitty, M.T. (2005). The 'realness of cyber-cheating: Men's and women's representations of unfaithful Internet relationships. *Social Science Computer Review*, 23, 57-67.
- Young, K., Griffin-Shelley, E., Cooper, A., O'Mara, J., & Buchanan, J., (2000). Online infidelity: A New Dimension in Couple Relationships with Implications for Evaluation and Treatment. *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity*, 7, 59-74.

## Appendix C



**CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

**"AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL ADDICTION AND COMPULSIVITY ON THE COUPLE'S RELATIONSHIP"**

- The purpose of the study is to understand more about the impact of sexual addiction and compulsivity might have on couples' relationships.

**I'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU IF:**

- You identify that you have been impacted by sexual addiction and compulsivity in your relationship.

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO:**

Your participation would involve taking part in a confidential, audio-recorded interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes. The interview will take place either online or at a convenient location for you, depending on which you would prefer.

 **IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE PLEASE CONTACT ME:**  
**ROBERT HUDSON - ROBERT.HUDSON@METANOIA.AC.UK**  
**+44 (0) 7939 624 790.**

**ABOUT ME:**

I am the Clinical Director and a Clinician at the Hudson Centre for Psychotherapy and Recovery. Currently undertaking a doctoral research programme that explores the impact of sexual addiction and compulsivity on the couple's relationship.

**IMPORTANT:**

In order to maintain safety, wellbeing, integrity for all participants if you have had any involvement with the researcher or the Hudson Centre, or have had any prior relationship with the Hudson Centre, you will not be suitable to be interviewed.

**ETHICS:**

This research programme is being conducted as part of doctoral research undertaken through Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University and has been approved by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee. The research will be conducted in accordance with the UKCP and BACP Ethical Guidelines.

## **Appendix D**

### **Participants' Information sheet**

Invitation to participate in a doctoral research study undertaken through Metanoia Institute and Middlesex University (13 North Common Road, Ealing, London W5 2QB).

#### **Study Title:**

Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity on Couples' Relationships.

Researcher: Robert Hudson, Tel: 07939 624 790, email: robert.hudson@metanoia.ac.uk

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of the study is to understand more about the impacts that sexual addiction and compulsivity have on couples' relationships.

#### **Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have identified that you have been impacted by sexual addiction and compulsivity in your relationship.

#### **What will I be asked to do if I take part?**

You are asked to complete and return by email the attached Participant Information Form and Informed Consent Form. You are now being asked to be interviewed, for this study.

#### **What will be done with the information collected from me?**

All information collected will be stored anonymously; any information about you which is used will be anonymised. Your name will not be included so that you cannot be recognised. The data will be stored, analysed and reported in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The information will be analysed by the researcher for the purpose of the research. No identifying details of the participant will be included in the completed research findings. The findings will be made available to participants who indicate that they would like a copy.

#### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

By participating in this research, you will have an opportunity to share your experiences, and to help other couples who are going through what you have been through.

**What are the possible disadvantages of participating?**

Participating in this study may trigger some of the painful memories of the past. You may experience some of the negative emotions that were felt during the period of the betrayal.

**What happens if I do experience negative effects during or after participating in the research?**

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with. You may also choose to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, simply by notifying the researcher of your decision. If required, other relevant information and/or contact details for other relevant services and support groups will be made available to you.

**Emotional support is available to anyone affected by their participation in the research.**

If you experience any negative effects because of your participation in this research, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me and I will put you in touch with an independent practitioner who can offer you some support. I will pay for one session.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of this study will be used to inform the research of the final report. The results will be used for professional and academic discussions and publications in professional journals or equivalent.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

This research has been reviewed by the Metanoia Research Ethics Committee.

For further information contact:

Robert Hudson  
Metanoia Institute  
13 North Common Road, Ealing, London, W5 2QB.  
07939 624 790  
robert.hudson@metanoia.ac.uk

## Appendix E

### Informed consent Form

Strictly Private and Confidential

Title of study: Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity on Couples Relationships.

Name of Researcher: Robert Hudson

I,....., (Please initial in the box) hereby give my consent to participate in the doctoral research study. I confirm that I have read and understood the attached information sheet and that I have been given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about this research study.

1. I understand that all data collection by me for the purpose of this study will be stored securely and anonymously in accordance with the Data Protection Act, so that no personal details will be linked with any of the data collected. I agreed to be interviewed, the interview will be audio-recorder and transcribed. All recording are for research purpose only.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. If I choose to withdraw, I can decide what happens to any data I have provided.

3. I understand that if I am invited to participate further in the larger project related to this research, it is my own discretion whether or not I choose to participate further.

4. I understand that, in the reporting of the research study results, my name, contact details, and any identifying characteristics will be withheld so as to preserve my anonymity.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like a copy of the final report to be sent to you by email? Yes / No

(Please circle one)

## Appendix F

13<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Robert Hudson  
13 John Princes Street  
London  
W1G 0JR

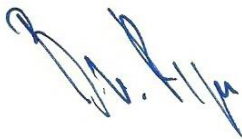
cc. Prof Simon du Plock

Dear Robert,

### **Re: DPsych Programme Research Ethics Committee (PREC)**

I am pleased to be able to write and inform you that the Committee met on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and considered the revisions to your Final Project proposal – that you have agreed to expunge existing data and to start the recruitment process again but with unknown participants.. The Ethics Committee agreed that your revisions satisfy the requirements for research ethics approval and that you may now proceed with your research.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Biljana van Rijn**  
**Faculty Head of Research and Doctoral Programmes**



13 Gunnersbury Avenue  
Ealing, London W5 3XD  
Telephone: 020 8579 2505  
Facsimile: 020 8832 3070  
[www.metanoia.ac.uk](http://www.metanoia.ac.uk)

## Appendix G

### Interview schedule

#### Title and research aims

*Exploring the Impact of Sexual Addiction and Compulsive Sexual Behaviour (SA&CSB) on Couples' Relationships.*

The research aims are as follows: -

- To explore the impact of sexual addiction and compulsion sexual behaviour (SA&CSB) on couples' relationships.
- To understand the effects of these experiences on couples.
- To explore what the couples have done to deal with the situation.
- To use the outcomes of the research to develop a treatment programme for couples impacted by SA&CSB.
- To use the research to develop a specialised training programme for therapists who would like to work with this client population.

The following four research questions have been developed and these will be further expanded with supplementary questions.

5. How did you discover or learn about your partner's SA&CSB?
6. How did your partner's SA&CSB affect you? (Your emotions, health, sex, family, work, finance, etc.)
7. Specifically, how did your partner's SA&CSB affect your relationship?
8. What have you both done to try and cope with the effects of SA&CSB on yourselves and relationship?



## Background information

### A. Demographics:

**Name:** (Initial)

- F:
- M:

**Your age?**

- F:
- M:

**Sex?**

- F:
- M:

Location:

Marital status:

Children:

1. How long were/are you in the relationship with/married to the sex addict?
2. Are you still in the relationship?
3. How long (years, months, etc.) were/are sexual addiction or online sexual activities by the addict a problem for you both?
4. As far as you know, what did your partner's sexual addiction or online sexual activities consist of?
5. To your knowledge, has your partner's sexual addiction or online sexual activities led to actual sexual encounters with other people?

## **B. Discovery or learn about sexual addiction or online sexual activities**

1. How did you discover or learn about your partner's sexual addiction or online sexual activities?

(Follow up questions: How did you react? How did your partner react? What happened next?)

2. What was the outcome and what emotions were connected to this experience?

## **C. Effects on the relationship**

1. Describe your (acting out/addicted partner and spouse) circumstances at the time you discovered your partner sexual addiction or online sexual activities?

(Prompt: Home life, work life.....)

2. How has this impacted you and your spouse/partner?
3. How has his/her sexual addiction or online sexual activities impacted the relationship?
4. How did your partner's sexual addiction or online sexual activities affect the relationship? (emotions, relationship, money, sex, family, co-dependents behaviours, etc. etc.)?
5. Specifically, how has your partner's sexual addiction or online sexual activities affected the sexual relationship between you both?
6. If you have children, how have they been affected by sexual addiction or online sexual activities? (Prompt: emotional stability, job).

7. Today, what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it has shaped your life?

**D. Efforts to deal with the situation**

1. What have you both done to try to cope with the effects of your sexual addiction or online sexual activities on you and your relationship?
2. What are you both doing now to cope?
3. What did you find useful or beneficial?
4. What are you and your partner together doing to resolve any problems with your "sexual" relationship?

Please feel free to add any other comments which you think might be helpful to us in understanding how sexual addiction or online sexual activities affects yourself the couple and the family.

## Appendix H

### Couples transcript

#### Interview-Couple-1-Rec

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

- Robert: OK, right. So good morning. Thanks to you both for agreeing to be interviewed. Can I ask you both just to give me the initials of your first name please?
- Martha: Mine is M.
- Oliver: And mine is O.
- Robert: Thank you, and how old are you?
- Martha: I'm 43.
- Oliver: And I'm 47.
- Robert: OK, and I take the view that M is female and O is male.
- Martha: Correct.
- Robert: And are you both – what's your marital status?
- Martha: We've been married now for over – oh gosh, 20 years.
- Oliver: Yes.
- Robert: OK, thank you, and do you have any children?
- Martha: Yeah.
- Robert: Yeah, how many?
- Oliver: Three boys and one girl.
- Robert: OK, well thank you for that, that's helpful. So let's start with – I'm going to be asking a bit about the relationship. How long have you both been in the – so just to go back to M, how long were you in the relationship with O before you discovered that there was a problem?
- Martha: Well it was actually – I mean, we've been married 20 years, it was very late on. I mean, a few years ago is when I first discovered that something wasn't right because I had seen something on his iPad when we was away on holiday, and that was the first time, so that would have been – gosh, four years ago.

- Robert: OK, thank you, and are you still in the relationship with him?
- Martha: Yes, yes I am.
- Robert: OK, and how long did you sort of notice the online activity?
- Martha: So, like I said, we was away on holiday, and I just saw a message on Oliver's iPad, and it was from another lady regarding a dinner, some sort of dinner that they'd obviously planned, and then obviously my brain started going into overdrive and I found out that he had been using pornography, he'd been talking to other women, he'd been emailing other women. At first he sort of tried to deny it, but obviously then he opened up about it.
- Robert: OK, thank you, and I think you've sort of answered Question 4 but I'm just going to repeat the question, if that's OK. So the question is, as far as you know, what did your partner's behaviour consist of? I think you sort of answered that, I'll just move on to the next question, if that's alright. So to your knowledge has your partner's sexual addiction or online activities led to actual sexual encounter with other people?
- Martha: Yes. So after stumbling across the message when we was away on holiday with our children, I noticed that he obviously was planning a dinner date with somebody, and then I saw email conversations and I realised very quickly that he had been and was seeing and meeting up with other women, and Oliver later admitted that he was.
- Robert: OK, thank you. How did you sort of react when you discovered the email messages and his disclosure?
- Martha: I was in an absolute state of shock, I was in disbelief, I just couldn't believe that I hadn't picked up on something sooner. I mean, the lies, I was just full of questions, just absolute disbelief, shock, I guess I was in a state of shock.
- Robert: OK, thank you. Can I ask Oliver, what did your behaviour consist of?
- Oliver: Well a variety of different things, it mainly started around the use of pornography, and then that graduated onto webcams and conversations with girls and ladies. Eventually it led to, yeah, I used to work away an awful lot, I still do, but I was obviously in certain places where I was able to go out and, you know, go to red light districts and speak to and eventually frequent prostitutes as well, so it kind of graduated on.
- Robert: OK, thank you. When Martha sort of discovered your behaviour and spoke to you about it, what happened next?
- Oliver: Well it sounds crazy really I suppose, but I had a tremendous sense of relief

at first when she found out about it, I'd not had the courage to deal with it, to talk to her about it for years, and I desperately wanted to. So I then had this tremendous feeling initially of just relief, suddenly she knew and I wasn't hiding that any more from her. Then just panic I suppose because, you know, the last thing I want and the last thing I wanted was to lose Martha and, you know, for it to affect the family. So it was a mixture of relief leading into panic, and then just gradually, gradually over time, I was able to tell her more. It's not easy to – it's not the kind of thing that you can just say in one go I suppose, just took a bit of time.

Robert: OK, I appreciate that, thank you. Can I ask, Martha, what was the sort of outcome and what emotions were sort of connected to the experience for you?

Martha: So after Robert, sorry, after Oliver, after he told me the extent of what had been happening and for how long, I said that he has to go and get some help if we are going to try and build on something. Obviously we've got four children together as well, so I was deeply concerned about them and the impact that this would have. So Robert took therapy, we both had therapy individually, and we embarked upon couples therapy, which helped. I guess it sort of helped us to kind of communicate with one another and enabled me to kind of stop, stop fixating on detail and just my whole reality, the man I'd known for so long and the world I'd known for so long, had come crashing down, and it just enabled us to be able to communicate and to see that we did want our marriage to work but we needed to make some huge changes, well Oliver needed to make some big changes.

In terms of the emotions I felt, I know that – I do believe that Oliver loves me, loved me, loves me, but I guess for me it was more about – I struggled an awful lot to come to terms with what had happened, you know. I felt like this huge – I felt like it was a huge trauma in my life, and, you know, I wasn't sure if staying together was right, right for me, right for my children, how did I know that he wouldn't do it again? So in terms of emotions, you know, we're still processing, we're still together and we have worked through the problems through couples and individual therapy, and that has helped, and I have a clearer sense now than what I had when I first found out.

Robert: OK, thank you, that's very helpful. Oliver, can I ask, what was the outcome and what emotions were connected to this experience for you?

Oliver: Well, as Martha's said, you know, the end outcome, or certainly where we are now, I feel like we're closer and stronger than we've ever been in our marriage. I suppose it's because the whole discovery of my addiction and what I'd done forced me to be honest. I desperately wanted to be honest, I never, ever wanted to hide anything from Martha, but I'd just formed

habits, I'd just formed the ways of coping, I had coping mechanisms that just weren't healthy for me and I just – just one thing had led to another, and it just got a little bit too much.

I'll be honest with you, Robert, I still do struggle to talk about it, I hate what I did, I hate the fact that it went on for so long and that I nearly destroyed our marriage, I nearly – and I don't know, I've thought long and hard about why, why I have this need to just satisfy whatever urges I have. I know that I didn't – growing up I struggled very much, I struggled with feeling wanted, certainly I had a very kind of – I suppose you'd call it Victorian upbringing, and I'm quite a distant father and I found that quite difficult, I never truly had even much love for my mother, it was very distant. Yeah, so even hearing myself say that, I'm not trying to make excuses for what happened, at the end of the day, you know, I'm responsible for what happened.

Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that.

Oliver: A tremendous sense of relief, a tremendous sense of relief that not – and tremendous sense of gratitude that Martha has forgiven me for it. I know that it's still not easy on a day-to-day basis, but she stood by me and I'm really grateful for that.

Robert: Thank you, I can hear the difficulty. No, thanks for that. Just moving on just a bit here, could I ask you, Martha, to describe what you became aware of and what Oliver told you in terms of the circumstances at the time of the discovery, and how this is sort of – has it had any effect on home life and work life? You sort of alluded to some of that earlier, if you could just expand on that for me, if you can?

Martha: So at the time, obviously when he told me, my initial reaction to everything was 'This cannot be happening, because surely I would have picked up on this'. I mean, yeah, life is busy, we've got four children, it isn't easy, we both work –

Robert: Can I just interrupt for a second, did you ever have any suspicion?

Martha: Well maybe a little bit with the pornography, but I thought 'You know what, it's something –', and I hate putting a gender to it, but it is something that men particularly often do.

Robert: Yeah, I hear that.

Martha: But gosh, I never, never realised it was to the level that it was, and obviously it then spilled onto things like webcams, and it made me feel really silly, and how, how did I not pick up that the man who I've known for so long, for half of my life, how on earth could he have kept this from me? You know, we've got four children together, we've built a life, we had a

wonderful life, and was I not enough for him? You know, all of that I questioned for a very, very long time.

Robert: I hear that.

Martha: You know, a part of me, on a very selfish level, not selfish, but you start to think 'Is it me? Am I not attractive any more?', you know, and is it because the four children, they have drained life out of our marriage at times, but, you know, I've tried not to take on that blame.

Could I have done more? It just was like my whole world had come crashing down on me and everything I truly believed and I thought, that we'd built up, had been destroyed in just one discovery of that message on the phone. I often used to think back, if I hadn't picked up his iPad when we was away, and I only picked it up to look at something really – I just wanted to see if there anywhere different we could go for dinner in the area that night, and then to see that message. If I'd not done that would he have ever opened up to me? That's not healthy and I realise that and we've worked through that, but, you know, we take each day as it comes and there is still a lot of hurt, I'm not going to lie, I can't just switch it off, but we're in a much better place than we were three years ago.

Robert: OK, thank you, thank you. What I think I'm going to do actually, if that's OK with you, Martha, I'm going to go through questions with you first, and then I will go through the same questions with Oliver after, is that OK with both of you?

Martha: Yes.

Oliver: Yes.

Robert: Thank you, because it makes more sense to me, now I'm thinking about it, rather than going backwards, forwards, backwards, forwards. Can I ask, Martha, how has this sort of impacted you and Oliver now, how has it impacted you both now?

Martha: We're in a much better place now, much better, and, you know, in Oliver's defence he has worked incredibly hard, he is very – he tries to be as open and as honest as he can.

Robert: OK.

Martha: I'm not going to lie, sometimes, when he says he's got to work late or he's got to go to a meeting, my little brain switches immediately to 'Is he telling me the truth?' So that I'm still working through, but we are in a much better place and we are continuing to live as a family and, you know, look after our children and care for them as husband and wife, as mom and dad,



as best as we can.

Robert: Thank you. No, that's helpful. Has it had any impact on the relationship?

Martha: Yes.

Robert: And if so, how?

Martha: Yes, for a long time I struggled with getting intimate with Oliver. I just couldn't shift the thought that I maybe wasn't enough for him, and I've worked through that with individual therapy and it is getting better now, but that has taken a long time for me to, you know, get intimate, be loving. I've lost a lot of my confidence in that area as a result of everything that's gone on.

Robert: Thank you. Just sort of expanding on that question, you've talked about how you felt, you've talked about the fact that it's affected your intimacy, it affected your self esteem. Has there been any financial impact and impact on the children or extended family?

Martha: In terms of the children, our youngest, they don't know the extent. Our older son is aware but not the full details. We've tried our hardest to protect them from – you know, because I don't want them to feel – I don't want Oliver to feel ashamed of what he's done and I don't want the children to look at him differently, I've tried to protect them. They are aware that we've had – well the older three are aware that we've had counselling, just because we've had a few problems and we wanted to work through it. In terms of family, I did speak to my sister about it because at the time it was very hard dealing with it on my own, and my mother also knows the full extent, but again there was an element of – you know, and this is not to put Oliver down in any way because I am grateful for the effort he's put in and what he's done, but I felt a little ashamed to tell people.

Robert: I hear that. Yes, and it can be very – it's a very personal issue.

Martha: Yeah.

Robert: And it's one that it can be difficult to explain to people what's going on really, so I really hear that. So just to go slightly backwards and forwards, because I think you're actually answering a lot of the questions before I got to them, which is hopeful, but I think the next question was sort of specifically, which I think you've covered some of it, and if you don't have more to add that's OK, but the question is specifically, how has your partner's addictive behaviour and activities affected your sexual relationship between the two of you? You've talked about the fact that you have struggled to be intimate, to reignite the intimacy and passion, but is there anything else you can add to that?

Martha: Yeah, I just – before find out what had happened I was very – you know, I was a very loving, warm, passionate I thought, person, and since this I've gone completely – I went, should I say, completely the other way, and it's taken – it's taken a good couple of years to get intimate again with Oliver on a sexual level. Even just, you know, watching television sometimes when the children have gone to bed or they're out at friends houses, sometimes I find I can't – I can't bring myself to snuggle up to him like we used to and watch a film together. That will come, I am working on it, and Oliver is aware that I find it very difficult, but it's more sex and I am getting better at it.

Robert: Right, OK. No, that's really helpful, thank you, Martha. Just moving on for a moment, so today what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it has shaped your life and your future of the relationship going forward?

Martha: So Oliver was always very much 'Let's look to the future and let's not keep looking back', and after many sessions of therapy I realised that it wasn't healthy, me to keep looking back in that past at what he'd done, trying to get, you know, the details, it wasn't healthy. So together with the help of therapy and with Oliver we drew a line and we now work towards our future, and every discussion, every time, you know, it kind of comes up, you know, because we bicker sometimes and you throw things back in one another's faces a little, I'm trying not to do that because it isn't healthy, and we are in a very, very good place. I feel Oliver is now much more open with me, he's honest, and I feel I know him on a much deeper level, which I thought I knew before but actually I didn't. Yeah, don't get me wrong, there's good days and bad days and we are still working through the problems, but we're getting there.

Robert: OK, well thank you, that's helpful. Just moving on to the last bit of the interview, Martha, so we're looking at the efforts to deal with the situation or what you both have done to deal with the situation. What have you both done to try to cope with the effect of the addiction on you and your relationship?

Martha: So we underwent, as I said, therapy individually, which was very, very useful and incredibly helpful. We also then embarked upon couples therapy together, and again that was great because we was able to – to have somebody there to facilitate and to stop it getting into shouty-shouty, blamey-blamey, we actually just sat sometimes in silence. Then Oliver would openly tell me things, I would open up to him, and it built a very strong foundation for us to move forward.

Robert: Yeah, yeah, thank you.

Martha: Yeah.

Robert: OK, thanks. What are you both doing now, because I think you mentioned that you've come to the end of therapy, what are you both doing now to sort of cope with the situation?

Martha: So we try and check in with one another, we try and do it, you know, every day. I try and understand the obsessions and the addiction, because I understand it is an addiction and addictions are very hard to break and I don't want Oliver to relapse, of course I don't. So we do, we check in on one another's emotions and we talk, we talk a lot, and that helps, and if he is feeling, you know, like he's – not he's going to relapse, but if he is feeling a little unsteady or he's getting thoughts again, you know, we try and work through them, and it has been hard and it is draining, but we have things that we've been told by the therapists that we put in place that have helped. I think Oliver, for a long time, was keeping a little journal, a journal as such, and I was as well, that helped. Writing things down helps an awful lot, for me particularly.

Robert: OK, thank you. What did you find useful or beneficial during the discovery and doing the therapy and doing the couples therapy?

Martha: What I found really useful was the techniques that we used to tap into things that both of us didn't really realise were going on. I didn't actually realise, I wasn't aware, of Oliver's upbringing. Obviously I knew his dad wasn't around much, but I didn't know the extent, and Oliver worked a lot on that in therapy, not as an excuse as to why he did what he did but just to put into place his past, to look at why maybe he's gone the way he's gone. I found that incredibly useful because it just enabled me to see that it wasn't quite as black and white, as he just had urges to go and sleep with a prostitute, that was particularly useful. I mean, indeed myself, working on myself, looking at things in my life that have maybe framed the ways I am now and what not.

Robert: No, that's helpful. So it sounds as though it's allowed you both to get closer together –

Martha: Yeah.

Robert: – and to learn more about each other.

Martha: Yeah.

Robert: OK, thank you. What are you and your partner doing now to sort of resolve any problems that has arisen around the sexual aspects of the relationship? You've talked more about the communication and that you both check in, so in terms of the sexual bit, what are you both doing now to resolve that?

Martha: So about a year ago we started having – sounds very cliché, I know, but we started having date nights, so going back to like we were when we first met, when we were, you know, without kids, and we have – once a fortnight we will go for a meal, we will go out somewhere, something we both enjoy doing, and that has really helped, because it's just us, we haven't got the distraction of work or kids or home life, and that has helped me an awful lot on an intimate level because it's kind of re-lit the flame I guess in some ways. Why I first was attracted to Oliver, and it feels like we've both been kind of stripped back of all of our secrets, our inhibitions, our worries, everything, and we're starting over. There's something quite exciting about that in many ways, and that itself has enabled me to physically get closer to Robert again, to Oliver, sorry Robert, to Oliver again.

Robert: OK, thank you. No, that's helpful. If that's OK with you, Martha, I'm going to move on to Oliver –

Martha: Yes.

Robert: – and just ask the same questions, and then I'll come back to the both of you at the end. So thank you for that. Oliver, so can I ask if you could just describe for me what your behaviours consisted of?

Oliver: Yeah. So I suppose you'd call it compulsive or regular masturbation, I used a lot of pornography, and then webcams, and then that went on to massages and, you know, certain type of massages of course, which then led on to eventually visiting prostitutes and, you know, having a sense of regular relations with certain prostitutes.

Robert: Thank you for your honesty, that was helpful. Could you sort of describe for me when the discovery took place, how this sort of impacted you and your wife?

Oliver: So the impact on me was, I think as I mentioned before, initially it was a mixture of that relief, horrible, horrible guilt, and shame, because of what I had been doing, what I'd hidden and the lies that I'd told. A huge fear that Martha wasn't going to be able to forgive me, and a bitterness. I mean, it broke my heart to see her so broken by this, and that was really hard, that was really hard to deal with because I knew I was the – there's no one else to blame for that, I was the cause of what she was going through. Then there's the shame that I hadn't been stronger, that I hadn't been able to own it, to control it, to stop it, you know, when in my work, if I want to do something I do it. I'm very successful at what I do and I've always been – always been one of the best at whatever I've turned my hand to, so you could say that's come easy to me, but this, this I just – I felt like I just couldn't control it, I felt like I couldn't beat it.

Robert: I hear that, thank you. Just expanding on that for a little bit here for me, has the behaviour sort of impacted your home and your work life in any way?

Oliver: Impacted the home because obviously it caused a lot of anguish in the home, which, you know, as Martha's alluded to it, was picked up on by certainly the older children. You know, I try to be the opposite, I try to be the opposite of how my father was for me, I want to be involved, I want to be there and to be a good father and to let my children know they're loved, and yet this, the tension in the home, you know, as Martha said, the younger ones, the younger ones just really probably understand it at some deeper level but don't – well they recognise it but they don't know what it is, but certainly the older ones, you know, there was a few difficult questions, and again that felt really difficult because I just knew again that I was solely responsible for this and I felt again I was letting them down as well as letting Martha down, and that just made me feel as big a failure as a father as my dad was with me.

So yeah, work-wise, not really. I mean, I've always thrown myself into my work, I suppose I used that again, when it was really difficult I just again threw myself at my work and made sure that I was at least winning there. Yeah, does that answer your question, I don't know?

Robert: Yes, yeah. No, that's helpful, thank you. How has it impacted Martha?

Oliver: Well, understandably it initially made her very distrusting of me, and it put a huge barrier up between us because it's always there, it doesn't go away. You know, it gets easier some days, and then some days it's just – and of course it's the first thing that can be wielded if anything else happens, it's the first thing, even if it's not intentionally mentioned like that, but as soon as something else goes wrong it's the first thing that can be used against, you know, if that's fair. And I don't mean this, Martha, forgive me, I don't mean it like that, but it feels like there is a part of me that I suppose wanted to move on.

Robert: And I think – sorry, I think what you're saying makes sense, because what I think you're saying here is that whenever Martha gets triggered by something you've done that's kind of one of the first places her brain goes back to, so that sort of makes sense I think.

Oliver: Yeah.

Robert: Thank you. Just moving on for a bit, how has the addiction impacted your relationship? You've sort of covered a bit of that earlier.

Oliver: Well it pretty much crippled the relationship. I mean, you know, the children have a very good – they're a very good form of – you know,

contraception is not the right word, but they tend to stop you having a more active intimacy anyway, particularly when they're younger, even when they're older. So our intimacy between us had been infrequent and probably not where it should be for a long time, and it's very – in the early days of kind of being reborn I suppose, now, and it feels a lot more honest now I suppose because I feel that we – you know, before, for me it was almost out of a sense of guilt and obligation, whereas now there's a real, genuine desire and want for me to be close to Martha and show her that she's the only one.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. Has there been any financial impact of your behaviour on yourself and your family, and has there been any impact on your extended family? I'm aware I've asked two questions there.

Oliver: I'll answer the second one first, not my extended family, both my parents are no longer here.

Robert: I'm sorry to hear that.

Oliver: Thank you, and I'm an only child, so I don't have that immediate family around me. I know obviously Martha's sister was aware of it and that was difficult, and I was aware that she was [unintelligible 00:40:22]. So that's still difficult because the shame I feel is kind of magnified whenever she's around, and it's not that she's particularly vitriolic or unkind, she isn't, but it's more my own issue there. Financially, no. I mean, you know, apart from paying for all the therapy and all the different programmes we've been through, but to be honest, I'd pay that, I'd pay twice what I paid to get to where we are now, you know. So no, it's not had any long-lasting financial impact on us.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. Just moving on a bit, specifically how has your addiction affected your sexual relationship between the two of you, and you sort of talked a little bit about that earlier, is there anything else you can add to that?

Oliver: I think – I suppose the only thing I could add to that or re-emphasise is the honesty. I know this sounds strange, but there's a difference between having sex, you know, and forgive the language, but, you know, in the sense of fucking somebody and making love to somebody, and I was never really able to distinguish between the two. For me it was only ever that, it was only ever the sex, it was very much the sex, whereas now I really feel that we're starting to be able to reclaim the act as something which is more intimate and more honest and more reflective of the way I feel about Martha, and that's really – that's something which I'm really thankful for, and I want that to be – I want that to be the norm.

Robert: Yeah, thank you. No, that's helpful. You've talked about your children,

how have they been affected by your compulsive behaviour, or has it had any effect on them?

Oliver: I suppose only time will tell, Robert, with that. From what I can see, obviously things are much happier around the home generally now, and so, you know, they react and respond very quickly, children, you know, they're very good, they're very good at kind of reacting quickly. At the time I know that they were – I could see it was worrying them and they didn't understand why mom and dad were having these arguments and having this tension, and I know that in the future it's going to come up in more detail, but Martha's been really good and I'm really grateful to her that she hasn't allowed her pain to affect how she deals with the children. She hasn't used them as a weapon, and I know that – you know, I had a friend of mine, a similar thing happened, and there the children became a weapon, and Martha's not done that and I love her for that, I really am thankful for that. So, you know, at the moment everything seems fine because we're on a good path, but at the time they were having wobbles themselves.

Robert: Yeah, I hear that. That's wonderful to hear, and thank you. Just moving on for a moment, I'm just mindful of time. So today what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it shaped your life?

Oliver: It's made me feel a lot more honest and it's enabled me to be honest with myself and with Martha, and that for me is the biggest and the most important of the impacts. I'm still processing the side of it, where I'm dealing with that, the guilt that I feel about it, and that again is easier some days than others, but I know that, in a sense, I feel now more than ever that I married the only woman that would ever and could ever love me and that I'm just really grateful for that, I'm really grateful for her, and it's made me love her more and be so grateful for what we have.

Robert: OK, thank you. I hear the sense of gratitude. If it's OK to move on to look at the efforts, what have you both done to try to cope with the effect of the compulsive behaviour on you and your relationship?

Oliver: So it's about – a lot of eased to a certain extent once I was able to share that it was even there, that it was an issue, and that, I suppose the initial exposure of what I was going through, enabled me to feel stronger about it, because now I feel like I'm more accountable, now I feel like it's out there, that it's not a secret that I can hide away and just indulge in. So we talk and I do share if I've had a particularly difficult day in the office, you know, because I still have those thoughts sometimes, which I think are natural to a certain extent to have thoughts, but it's obviously what I do with those, and now, because I can talk about it, I'm able to control it.

- Robert: OK, thank you. What are you both doing now to cope with the situation?
- Oliver: I think Martha alluded to making more time for each other. I mean, she mentioned about the date nights, which again have been really, really helpful, but also just – we just try and have – make an opportunity in the day to connect with each other, even if it's just for five minutes, just a sense of sitting down and having a cup of coffee or, you know, sitting down. We're both into Kombucha at the moment and it's trying a new brand and sitting down and trying one together, and just having 10 minutes at the end of the day, you know, just to connect, that's really helped.
- Robert: Thank you, and that's helpful. Just coming to the end, what did you find most useful or beneficial during the periods of the therapy and the couples therapy and this sort of intensive work that you both did?
- Oliver: Just the unburdening, Robert, you know, it forced me to be honest with myself and with my wife, and that, the fact that there was a space for me to really think and talk about what I was feeling and what I'd done, and to start to really try and rebuild that trust, all of that really, really helped. You know, I very rarely get any time to sit and do anything that's introspective, or I certainly didn't beforehand, it was very much I was very reactive to life and everything be prioritised according to the need, of how I felt it would impact us, but very often that was driven by my desire to be the breadwinner. Now I suppose, what it did was it gave me an opportunity to see, to redefine what was important, and to see that actually the emotional connection between us was more important than, you know, making sure that I got a certain number of hours in in order to prove that I was being worthwhile to the business. I suppose it's enabled me to rejig my priorities and it gave me a space to do that, a safe space.
- Robert: Thank you, Oliver, and I appreciate that. My sort of final question, what are you and Martha now doing together to resolve any sort of sexual problems? I know you've alluded to the fact earlier about thoughts, so if there's sort of any triggers or anything that you're finding difficult, and I know you talk about sharing more, but what are you both doing now to sort of deal with any difficult sexual issues that will come up or that have come up as a result of what has happened?
- Oliver: For me, I just try to be honest about it, because I fear the biggest thing, the biggest problem moving forward, will be me beginning to hide things again, because it's that slippery slope. So it's about sharing with Martha about it, but talking about that, but also at times just managing that myself, just understanding that I don't – I suppose it can be a daily issue at times, particularly when I'm really stressed at work and stuff's going south, shall we say. So yeah, it's talking about it. We're not still in therapy at the moment, although, you know, we have talked about how that could be useful again moving forward, just to kind of keep things ticking over I



suppose and allow us another space, but at the moment it's just those regular connections, those points where we can just talk about things and just be honest with each other.

Robert: OK, well thank you, thank you very much. Just before we end and say goodbye, can I just ask you both, is there anything that you think would be useful for me to know that I haven't asked, or do you sort of have any comments that you'd like to add that you think might be helpful? If you feel you've sort of answered everything then that's also OK, but I just wondered if there was anything else you think that might be helpful? Martha, if you want to go first, or Oliver, it's up to either of you really.

Martha: I think, you know, what you've asked has kind of touched upon our whole journey and everything that's kind of gone on and what continues to go on. I guess, in terms of the future, you know, it's not as easy as just being able to turn a switch and us go back to normal, as obviously you know, Robert, it does require a lot of work every day.

Robert: Yes, yes.

Martha: And so it's just about getting the balance right, not turning a blind eye on what's gone on but not bringing it up, which I had a big habit, as Oliver said, if we'd have little arguments over something very small, it might be a disagreement on something to do with the children or, you know, him not doing something that I'd asked, like put the bins out, I could – early on I very easily went into blame again, bringing up, constantly bringing up the past and what he's done, and it just wasn't helpful. I mean, we are still living each day, learning, and like Oliver said, therapy is an option because we are still going through this process three years down the line.

Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that. Thank you very much, Martha. Oliver, is there anything you would like to add before we end?

Oliver: No, just I suppose I know I've heard myself say the word 'gratitude', but I know, for me, although when Martha found those messages it was in a way the worst and also the best day of my life, I just – you know, where we are now, it's just – it isn't easy, but it's just so much better than where we were. And I know even – and I know that maybe – but I don't know if Martha always feel the same, because I suppose she had this picture of me that wasn't real, and now I feel that our love is stronger and I feel that it's far more honest and we're far more transparent with each other, and I feel I just –. So yeah, I have a sense of gratitude that this has enabled us to get closer and to get through this, and that I have a wife who still loves me, regardless.

Robert: Thank you very much. I'd like to take this opportunity to say thanks to you both for agreeing to be interviewed, and I really appreciate your

contribution. Yes, I will end the interview, if that's OK, and say thank you very much.

Martha: Thank you.

Oliver: Thank you.

Robert: So I'll end there.

[End of recorded material at 00:56:15]

**Couple-Interview-2-Rec**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

Robert: Hello.

Liam: Hello.

Cindy: Hello.

Robert: Hi, Liam and Cindy. My name is Robert. Thanks to you both for agreeing to be interviewed. Well, I have said your names anyway, but if I could just ask you to just give your first name for me, that would be helpful?

Cindy: I'm Cindy.

Liam: And I'm Liam.

Robert: Thank you, and how old are you both?

Cindy: I'm 41.

Liam: And I'm 39.

Robert: Thank you, and what's your marital status?

Cindy: We've been married for over 10 years.

Robert: Thank you, and are you still in the relationship?

Liam: Well, of a sorts, yes. I mean, we're still legally married, we're not – we're not currently living together per se at the moment, but we are still legally married, yeah.

Robert: OK, thank you, Liam. And Cindy, how long were you in the relationship before you discovered that there is a problem with Liam's sexual behaviour?

Cindy: I knew that he was – I knew he had a bit of a thing for masturbation and looking at pornography on the internet before we were married, a little bit before, but I just thought that 'Hey, this is what most guys do', you know, not putting a gender to it but most guys do it, it's not a problem. And then it got excessively worse going into our marriage, and I brought it up several times, but he assured me that there was nothing wrong.

Robert: OK, thank you. And I'll just continue with you, Cindy, for the moment, if that's OK?

Cindy: Yeah.

Robert: And as far as you know, what did his behaviour consist of? You touched on the pornography bit, did you know about anything else?

Cindy: Yeah. So it was compulsive masturbation, emotional affairs, using web cameras, paying for, you know, these websites, and it's since come out that he was, you know, going to have a massage and getting a happy ending or the benefit at the end of it.

Robert: Thank you, and I think you've sort of answered or started answering the other question I was going to ask; to your knowledge has his behaviour led to sexual encounters with other people?

Cindy: Yes, I believe so in terms of obviously prostitutes. I know he's had a lot of emotional affairs online, so yeah.

Robert: OK, thank you. And how did you discover or learn about his sexual problems?

Cindy: Well it was actually my son. So we've got two children, a boy and a girl, and my son, who at the time was nine, discovered some material on his dad's computer when he was using it. He immediately alerted me and said 'Mom, I've found this on dad's computer', and upon looking into it, because all of his passwords were automatic, so all the logins were automatic, I was able to basically access everything he'd been looking at over the last god knows how long, and I'd seen that he'd got hidden web cameras, he'd set up other social media accounts, these websites where he's had to pay, talking to other women on Twitter, on Instagram, all the social medias.

Robert: OK, thank you. And how did you react to this, Cindy?

Cindy: I was mad, I was really angry, I felt absolutely betrayed by him. I didn't want him around the children, I thought he would – what he'd done was disgusting. He would – it would, gosh, just be so shameful for the children to know that. I mean, the fact my nine year old son came across it was horrifying for me. The extent to what he'd been looking at as well, I would never want my child to have seen any of that, and the worst of it was, when I confronted him, he denied it.

Robert: Right, that was going to be my next question; how did he react?

Cindy: He completely denied it, he said he didn't have a problem. In the past I've confronted him about it, because I knew he would masturbate a lot and I knew he would use these different porn sites, and I'd confronted him in

the past and he said 'I haven't got a problem', but the fact that he kept doing it was like he didn't care for my feelings and the fact I kept bringing it up. He didn't respect that it was bothering me and I grew very distant, and when I confronted him he used my distance as a way of why he does what he does.

Liam: To be fair, sorry, I don't use – I don't use your distance. You know, that's a fact, it's a fact that you withdrew and that that made things a lot worse. I'm not trying to look for excuses, that's just – you know, yeah, absolutely I've made mistakes, absolutely, but, you know, it's not just me [laughs], this isn't just my issue.

Robert: Can I interrupt for a moment? Liam, can you just hold that for a bit and I'll come to you in just a moment?

Liam: Yeah, yeah, OK.

Robert: Thank you. So you were saying, Cindy, that you grew distant, and my next question was going to be; what happened next?

Cindy: So we went round in circles, I mean, it was just – it was awful, and I still am still angry with everything, and the fact – my distance, I just have to say this, I'm sorry, Robert, but my distance came from many years of me trying to get my husband to open up to me about why he felt the need to keep going online, masturbating over other women, and can't he see that that would have an effect on me? Most women, most wives, would have distanced themselves, it's the natural thing to do. I didn't feel good enough for him.

Robert: It sounds as though the distance was a way of protecting yourself from not being hurt.

Cindy: Well yeah, you know, he's doing this online, what he was doing, you know, sneaking off to do it, it just felt so – it just felt so wrong and sordid and just disgusting. I was really disgusted and it did draw a distance. So after a lot of anger, yeah, on my part, but rightly so, I got him to move out because I didn't think he was setting a great example to the kids.

Robert: OK, I hear that, thank you. My next question; what was the outcome and what emotions were connected to that? You've talked about your anger and asking him to move out, was there anything else?

Cindy: So we decided that we was going to try and work things out, so we both agreed to having therapy, individually, but, you know, Liam needed to have that therapy if we was ever going to build any kind of bridge again. We also had couples therapy, and after time he did – he stopped denying and he started to take responsibility for what he had done.

- Robert: And did he ever disclose to you what happened?
- Cindy: Not really, he just said he had a high sex drive, that he couldn't help it, that he's got a very – you know, and he has got a very demanding job, he works long hours, it was a relief for him. He's spoken a little bit, you know, when we first got together about his childhood, I know he was an only child and there were some issues there, but, to be honest, you know, he can't use those as excuses.
- Robert: Right. No, I hear that, thank you. And can you sort of describe for me the circumstances at the time, because I think you talked about your son discovering this and then your son sort of showed it to you, what impact or effect did it sort of have on your home life and the family?
- Cindy: Well it was terrible, because there was just so much anger, and I just couldn't seem to move on from it. For a long time he was in denial, he just kept saying 'I don't have a problem, it isn't a problem, loads of men do it. I bet if you ask your friends, all of their husbands look at sites', and part of me then felt a bit of blame, because I felt maybe I didn't give him enough love. I'm not an overly loving person like that, you know, it takes a lot for me to get close to somebody, and obviously we've been married for over 10 year and we've built that closeness, and as soon as I saw his laptop I just hated him, I hated everything about him in that moment. And I've come to realise that I do love him still, and some days, you know, I love what we're trying to save, but other days I can't stand him.
- Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that, thank you. And what impact has it had on you personally, and I know you've talked about the fact that you've doubted yourself, you've second-guessed yourself, you started thinking 'Was I enough, did I give him enough?', what sort of other impact did it have on you?
- Cindy: I became quite obsessed with wanting to know why. I felt so traumatised by his sexual behaviour, why, was it something in me, was I to blame? I just felt like it was such a huge breach of my trust, that having these sexual interactions, whatever you want to call them, online, on web cams, with prostitutes, is a breach of trust, but the lying about it, the lying was an even bigger, bigger breach for me, because don't stand there now I've seen the evidence and lie, categorically lie to my face, and I just felt – I just needed answers, I needed to think about –
- Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that, thank you. And how has it sort of impacted the relationship, because I know you said he's moved, that you've asked him to move out, how has it impacted the relationship between the two of you?
- Cindy: We are working through things. We're in a much better place now, a year

and a half down the line of having therapy, both individually and together. He still rents a flat, I don't want him back in the house yet, I'm not ready for it; however, I understand that the kids – he's a very good father to our children and he sees – so he comes and he sees them once a week, it was once a fortnight to start with, but it's once a week and he'll take them out. You know, sometimes they'll stay over at his flat, other times he'll come to the house and I'll go out and he's got some time with them. It's just very hard, because I haven't been able to be very honest with other people as to why he's not living at home, even the kids, you know.

Robert: And that sounds difficult.

Cindy: Hmm, it is quite difficult.

Robert: And I think you're ahead of me actually, so the next question I was going to ask was about sort of the emotional impact, and has there been any financial impact? You've talked about the family, that the children love him and he spends time with them, has there been any financial impact on you and the relationship of the family?

Cindy: Massively. I mean, when I first discovered the amount of websites he was paying for, using our money, and I work myself, I put into the family home. Yes, he has a very lucrative job, he works long hours, he earns good money, but it was our joint money that was paying for these sites, paying for prostitutes. Obviously now he's renting, so that has incurred a cost, all the therapy we've had to have, you know, yeah. The thing with Liam, because I think he feels a lot of guilt, he ends up spoiling the children when he does see them, spending excessive amounts on things for them. I don't know if that's his way because he feels guilty, I don't know, but he's spending a lot of money on our children. Yeah, ridiculous amounts.

Robert: Thank you, I appreciate that and I can hear your frustration. Just moving on a bit, specifically how has his behaviour affected the relationship between you two, the sexual relationship, especially now that he's no longer living in the house?

Cindy: Yeah, I mean, we haven't been sexually intimate for a long time.

Robert: Right.

Cindy: Probably, if you ask, when you ask Liam, and we'll probably agree, Liam, Liam will say that I withdrew from intimacy, he felt that I was distant for a long time, which maybe I was, yeah, but I just – at the moment I can't, I just can't, I'm still working through a lot of things.

Robert: No, I hear that, I hear that.

- Cindy: Yeah.
- Robert: Thank you. You've touched on the children, how have they been affected, particularly your son who discovered Liam's online sexual behaviour, how has it impacted them and affected them?
- Cindy: So our little girl is younger and obviously, you know, she doesn't know, she doesn't know what's gone on.
- Robert: Right.
- Cindy: My nine year old at the time, when he found the images, obviously it was clear to see what kind of images they were because they were quite graphic, which was awful, and he asked me, 'Mommy, why has daddy got pictures of that on his computer?', and I had to lie and say that it was – I can't even remember what I said at the time, but I said it wasn't daddy's or something or other.
- Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that.
- Cindy: And now the effect is that my son particularly gets cross that daddy's not at home, he's a real daddy's boy, he blames me for making daddy live on his own.
- Robert: And that must be very difficult.
- Cindy: It really is, because, like I said, I feel I can't speak to many people, I haven't even told my own parents, they think that we're just going through some difficulties.
- Robert: No, I hear that, thank you. Just moving on for a bit, today what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it shaped your life? You know, I can hear overall that it's been a very difficult situation really.
- Cindy: Yeah. I mean, I'm not going to lie, I do still love him and I do want our marriage to work, and I'm willing to put time and I'm willing to put the effort in, but I need time.
- Robert: Yes, I hear that.
- Cindy: I still feel angry and I can't help that, I'm working through that in my own individual therapy, and as a result of it I've started suffering with terrible panic attacks and anxiety, something I never had experienced, and I'm not blaming you, Liam, but I find it's either that fight or flight. I ruminate an awful lot on what's gone on in the past, so I'm actively trying to help myself and help and listen to Liam at the same time, so we're just in a bit of a –



we're just in a transition period, but I don't feel ready for him to come home yet.

Robert: OK, thank you. I'm just going to move on to the final bit of the interview. What have you both done so far to try and cope with the effect of the addiction on your relationship? You've talked about individual therapy for you, therapy for Liam, what else have you done?

Cindy: We've done couples therapy, and we do – when he comes and sees the children at the weekend often he will stay and I'll make him a coffee, and we'll chat about the week and his work, and we are talking about it, so I'm learning to listen more.

Robert: OK, well thank you for that. What do you find useful, what have you found useful in terms of what you've both done so far over the last 18 months?

Cindy: Well personally, for me, it has been useful having him out of the house.

Robert: Right.

Cindy: Because, for the first few weeks of finding out, he was living with us, and obviously these feelings were still incredibly raw, but I was out of control, my anger was – I mean, it was not nice for the children. Since he's gone I feel a sense of calm in myself. You know, I do love him and I do want this to work so badly, not just for me, for our children, for Liam, but just – yeah, it just still needs time.

Robert: No, I hear that, thank you. And my final question, and I really appreciate this and I can hear how difficult this has been for you, Cindy, what are you and Liam now doing together to resolve any problems with your sexual behaviour?

Cindy: So we are having couples sex therapy, which it's early days, it really is early days, and yeah, we're working through. That has helped, it has helped me kind of break down this wall that I built up and I'm slowly chipping away at it. Yeah, it has. We're not fully intimate yet, we've had a kiss, we've cuddled, you know, but we're not fully there yet.

Robert: OK, thank you, thank you, and I really appreciate this. Just moving on, I'm going to come back, move on to Liam, if that's OK? So, Liam, can I just ask, how did Cindy discover or learn about your behaviour?

Liam: Well, as she's already said, it was via my – well our son, and he was on my laptop, and yeah, clicked the wrong thing and hey presto, there we were.

Robert: But how did you react to this, when you discovered this, how did you react to it?

- Cindy: He denied it.
- Liam: Well hang on, the question was to me.
- Robert: Yes.
- Liam: Yeah. Yes, of course the natural reaction for me was to, you know, deny it, because I was thinking about my son and I didn't –
- Cindy: Yourself, you was thinking of yourself.
- Liam: This is what it's like all the time, Robert, this is what it's like all the time. I've listened and let you talk, even when I didn't agree with everything you were saying, Cindy, and you're not doing the same for me now. If you're going to continually chip away at everything I say and answer my questions this is going to be really difficult.
- Robert: No, thank you, I can hear that it is difficult. What would you describe as the outcome and what emotions are connected to this situation for you, Liam?
- Liam: I'm just – at this stage now I am really, really frustrated and I'm just – I know I've done wrong, I know I made mistakes, I know I – you know, what I did was abhorrent in many ways and that it's really upset Cindy, and I'm really sorry that she's upset and I've said that, god knows how many times I've said that to her, I've done – and yet still it's like it was yesterday and still it's like, you know, nothing's changed for her. Everything's changed for me in the sense that I'm doing everything I can to put this right, everything I can to put this right, but it's just never enough.
- Robert: Never enough.
- Liam: Never. So I'm frustrated, if I'm being completely honest with you, Robert, that's the overwhelming – that's the overwhelming feeling right now.
- Robert: Frustration.
- Liam: Frustration, yes, and guilt of course because, you know, but still it's just what else do I need to do?
- Robert: It's a good question and we'll come to that in a bit. So can you describe for me, Liam, the circumstances at the time of the discovery and what the behaviour had consisted of? And I appreciate it's probably difficult to go back to it, but would you be able to do that for me?
- Liam: Yeah. I mean, you know, look, porn and only porn for years until I had –

you know, literally the marriage had become that dead and dry that I had nothing else, that I just – then it progressed and it became – it became more, and then it became the web cams and then it was the massages, and then eventually, you know, on a couple of occasions it went further into something more physical with prostitutes.

Robert: So I'm just wondering here, it sounds to me that you're blaming Cindy's distance for what you were doing, is that right? Or you're saying that, because she was distant with you, that's why you did it?

Cindy: Hmm, that's exactly what he does, he's said the whole time, it's my fault.

Liam: No, I haven't said –

Robert: Sorry to interrupt, Cindy, can we just allow Liam to answer the question, if that's alright?

Cindy: Hmm.

Liam: Look, I'm not saying it's just Cindy's fault, it's not, of course I am responsible as well, but I'm just saying that there are other factors involved in this, it's not black and white. You know, life is shades of grey, and the thing is that I think, to my wife, and I love her, I love her dearly, yeah, but to her everything is very black or white, everything has a box, everything has a place, everything has a name on it, and once it's been named and it's been boxed off she can be really, really happy and she can be – and feel confident about that, but unfortunately life isn't that simple and straightforward, there's a lot more grey to it.

What I'm trying to say is that it doesn't help when I had a wife who just completely withdrew from me and who was shaming me, you know, sometimes really aggressively about something which, yes, all my friends, all my friends, you know, any of my male colleagues that I'm aware of, they all watch porn and they all –so yes, that's just one of those things, but, you know, their wives don't have quite the same militant approach to dealing with it. Look, it's wrong, I'm not saying it isn't wrong, I get that, I get that, you know, that I've hurt her and I'm sorry that I've hurt her, but –

Robert: No, thank you for that. I think that sort of just leads nicely into the next question, which was about the impact. How has it impacted Cindy and how has it impacted you? Yeah, you've touched on a bit of it.

Liam: Well it's impacted in the fact that, you know, I've been out, I've been living away in a flat three miles away for the past 18 months or whatever, and I only get to see my children now at the weekends, you know. Yeah, I do spoil them because I don't get to see them all the time and because I don't know what else to do, because when I've got them now I want to show

them that I love them, you know.

Robert: Yeah.

Liam: But again I can't win, because I'm either spending too much money on them or, of course, I was spending too much money on these horrible practices that I did, you know, bearing in mind that the majority of it is money I earn and bring into the family in the first place. So if I want to spend then I should be doing that, and I'm the one paying the rent for all of this. So yeah, it's –

Cindy: But Robert, sorry, can I just intercept there, I equally work full-time, and at the time of him using all these sites it was coming out of both of our monies.

Robert: Right, OK. No, I hear that, thank you. Just moving on, I think the next question, Liam, is how has your addictive behaviour impacted your relationship, and you've touched on some of it? So when I ask a question you feel you've answered, just let me know you've covered it already, unless there's anything you'd like to add. How has it sort of impacted the relationship? You've talked about being out of the house, you talked about your frustration, you talked about Cindy being very black and white, are there any other impacts?

Liam: Well, you know, we don't have a marriage at the moment, it's just a piece of paper at the moment, so it's impacted that because, you know, it is literally, as Cindy said, a cup of coffee occasionally at the weekends while we're passing. You know, it's just an arrangement of childcare at the moment, that's how it feels like, and I don't want that to be the case because I think it's really important and I want this to work. So it's affected us, yes, because I want this to go back to normal, I want us to be living together, I want us to try and give those children a proper, normal, whatever is normal, upbringing, and I don't feel that Cindy's allowing us to do that at the moment, because she's still stuck in a rut on this. So that's how it's affected us, the relationship is – you know, it's stuck in a rut, stuck in a rut.

Robert: Yeah, thank you, which kind of leads on to the next question, which is about how did your addiction effect the relationship in terms of the emotions, in terms of the relationship itself, in terms of money, in terms of sex and in terms of the family? You've covered the emotional bit about your frustration and anger, you've talked about the relationship, that it doesn't exist at present, you've talked about money, that you spoil the children because you love them and you don't see them very much. How about sex on the family and anything else that I may have missed?

Liam: Well obviously, you know, I have no sex life, you know, I haven't done for

18 months, and that's – so that, in that sense, has it affected that, then yes, because I want this to be right and I only want that to be with Cindy. So, you know, it's affected that, but the children and the family, you know, they ask questions, the lad does, he asks questions at times and asks why I'm not – why I'm still living in a flat, when am I going to be coming home, when am I – and he worries about it. He doesn't blame you about it, Cindy, he doesn't blame you at all, I think that's more in your mind, but he's confused and upset about it, and I don't know what to say to him. I just have to say that mommy and daddy are, you know, just having to work through a few things and that sometimes, you know, adults have to take time to think about things apart, I try and explain it as simple as I can, you know. So yeah, it's affected lots, it's affected our whole life, everything's different, you know. The only thing that's stayed the same really is work, you know, and that's a godsend, to be honest.

Robert: That's one stability you have. No, thank you. Just moving on to the next one here, today what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship, and how it's shaped your life at present?

Liam: Well it's destroyed my life at present and, you know, I'd like to say to you that this is the start of the new – of something new, but I'm not convinced it is any more, I just feel like it's just gradually withering in front of me and I don't know what else to do. So yeah, it's completely affected everything and I – yeah, I don't know what else to say to you on that one, sorry.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. No, thank you, I appreciate it. Just moving on to the final bit, what have you both done to try to cope with the effects of the addiction on the relationship and on you, what have you both done?

Liam: I've done everything, I've done everything I can, everything I can think of, everything I've been asked to do, absolutely everything. I've been doing the 12 step programme, you know, I've joined the men's group, which is really helpful and, you know, I still attend that support group, and we've had couples therapy, you know, you name it, if there is something that Cindy wanted us to do in order to make this better I've done it. I've jumped through every hoop, I've done everything I can.

Cindy: The trouble is, Robert, the one thing that Liam doesn't seem to get is I need time. You know, he thinks that I'm just going to click my fingers and, yeah, it's been 18 months, but for me, some days it feels like it was only yesterday.

Robert: Right.

Cindy: And the fact that, for so long, I was so ashamed I couldn't tell anybody, and it took me a while to have therapy individually, but, Robert, it's all about – he says I'm black and white, he's all about timeframes, the timing, 'When

can I come back in the house? When can we get intimate again? When?', you know. I know his mind immediately, he's probably thinking about sex, for me that's the last thing on my mind right now.

Robert: OK. No, I hear that. Can I just sort of offer something for a moment there? So it sounds to me, Cindy, that you're still at the crisis phase where things are very delicate, and it sounds as though you're requiring something which is very safe and calm to gain some clarity, is that right?

Cindy: Yeah, yeah.

Robert: And I think, Liam, what Cindy probably needs from you or needs more of, and it sounds also, Cindy, that Liam needs some reassurance and hope, and it sounds as though that's what both of you are looking for from each other really. Does that sort of make any sense?

Cindy: Yeah, it does, and I do want us to get back on track, of course I do, I want this marriage to work, you know, and I do love Liam, but –

Robert: Liam, can you hear that?

Liam: Yes. [Shush. Yes, I'm sorry, the dogs barked].

Robert: That's fine, not to worry.

Liam: Yes, I did hear that and, you know, it's fine, but how long have I got to wait? This is – at the end of the day –

Cindy: Oh, this is what – this is what I mean, every time it's 'How long have I got?'

Liam: It was more of a rhetorical question actually, Cindy, it was just – Robert had asked me rather than you need to chip in. It was a rhetorical question, how long have I got to wait, because that's how I'm feeling at the moment.

Robert: OK. Is this something that you're both able to discuss in your couples therapy?

Cindy: Yes it is.

Robert: Good, so I'd probably advise you both to take it there. Just moving on for a moment, we're just coming to the end. Liam, what did you find or what have you found useful or beneficial during this process in the last 18 months since the discovery and both of you trying to repair the relationship?

Liam: You know, it's been good to be able to talk about it, it's been good to be able to, you know, express how I'm feeling as well and try and look at both

sides of the story rather than just, you know, feeling that it's very much of a one-sided argument. You know, for me, one of the lasting benefits has been joining the men's support group, I've really found benefit from chatting to other people who are in similar situations, who have had similar issues with their relationships, and that's really helped, you know, that's really, really helped.

Robert: OK. No, thank you. Just moving on to the final question; what are you and your partner doing to resolve any problems with your sexual relationship?

Liam: Go ahead.

Cindy: No, you go.

Liam: Well, I mean, as I mentioned before, I mean, I'm an open book in that sense, Robert, because I've said – I've been very honest and said I'm willing to do anything to get us back to where we need to be, so attending the groups, you know, trying to have conversations. I've moved out the house, you know, I take the children only when Cindy says I can take the children. You know, I'm basically at her beck and call, that's what I'm doing to try and get things back.

Robert: OK, I hear that, thank you. And Cindy, I think you wanted to say something there?

Cindy: I was just – sorry, what was the question again, Robert?

Robert: The question was asking about what are you and your partner doing together to resolve any sexual problems within the relationship?

Cindy: Yeah. So, as Liam said, we are having sex therapy, which is helping, it is. I mean, with regards to the kids, he says it's all on me, he can have the children whenever, you know, I have never made that a problem for him, ever, but in terms of – you know, a few times he's hinted at staying over and having – you know, 'Let's have a takeaway, let's have a few drinks', I'm just not ready for that, because I know what he's thinking.

Liam: You don't know what I'm thinking, you presume to know what I'm thinking. Or if you think what I'm thinking is I want to try and get the relationship back on course then you're right, but if you think I'm thinking I just want to take you to bed then no, then no, that's not exactly what I'm thinking. I want us to have a family and I want us to look after the children together in the same house, I want the marriage to work, that's what I want. You can't keep on presuming to just think that you know everything that's in my mind.

Robert: I appreciate that. Can I just interject for a moment? Can I suggest that this

is something you may want to discuss more in-depth in your couples therapy?

Cindy: Yeah.

Robert: Thank you. My final question, not a question really; is there anything that you both feel that I may not have asked or missed that you'd like to add?

Cindy: The only thing, and I'm not being defensive and I'm not trying to – because I hear everything that Liam has said, but Liam talks a lot about how he's jumped through every hoop I've asked, he's done everything I've asked, he's done this, he's bent over backwards, he's put himself on the line, and yes, he has, but it wasn't necessarily for me, it's for his problem. I, Robert, haven't had really anybody, I haven't told my mom and dad for fear that they would look at Liam differently, I haven't told any of my friends for fear of that. I've protected, I have protected, I have protected the situation and what we went through for him, because I do want this to work and I do want us to move forward, and I do not want other people's opinions of him ruining that.

Robert: I hear that.

Cindy: I just want him to understand that it's not a quick fix and 18 months is not a long time.

Robert: Right. No, I really hear that, thank you. I would like to suggest we stop here and I'd like to say thank you both very, very much, and I appreciate your contribution.

Cindy: Thank you.

Robert: This is a good place to end?

Cindy: Yeah.

Robert: Thank you very much. So I'll stop here.

Cindy: OK.

[End of recorded material at 00:41:41]



**Interview-Couple-3-Rec**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

Robert: OK, hello?

Joan: Hello.

Robert: OK. Today is Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2021, and it's now 3:45, and I'm starting the interview. My name is Robert, can I just ask you both to introduce your first names please?

Joan: I'm Joan.

Ben: And I'm Ben.

Robert: Thank you, and how old are you guys?

Joan: I'm 44.

Ben: And I'm 49.

Robert: Thank you, and do you guys have any children?

Joan: We've got – yes, three daughters.

Robert: Thank you, and how old are they?

Joan: We've got a daughter who's 18, nearly 19, we've got a daughter of 16, and a daughter of 9.

Robert: Thank you, and I may have asked this before, apologies if I haven't, are you guys married or – ?

Ben: Yes we are, yeah.

Robert: You're married, and how long have you guys been married?

Ben: Just over 20 years.

Robert: Thank you, thank you for that. So what I'm going to do, if that's OK, I'm going to ask one of you the questions first and then I'm going to ask the other person after. Who would like to go first?

Joan: I don't mind, whatever Ben wants.

Ben: I really have no opinion on that.

- Robert: [Laughs] I need a volunteer please.
- Ben: OK, I'll go, I'll go first.
- Robert: Thank you. So let me just ask, Ben, how long were you in the relationship before you became aware that there is a problem with your sexual behaviour?
- Ben: I've always, in a sense, you know, had issues with what I know is termed now, from a lot of the work I've been doing, as compulsive sexual behaviour, but I suppose it came to a head and began in a more earnest way about – oh, just about 18, nearly 19 years ago, so just after the birth of our first daughter.
- Robert: OK, thank you for that, and are you still in the relationship with Joan?
- Ben: Yes, very much so, very much so.
- Robert: OK, and you said that the behaviour sort of started a year – just shortly after your daughter, your first daughter was born?
- Ben: Yes.
- Robert: OK, and what did the behaviour consist of? Sort of maybe at the beginning stage, because if it started a long time ago I would take the view that it has changed, or maybe I'm wrong here, but I'll allow you to answer the question.
- Ben: No, you're right, it has, it did develop. Of course, it's a thing of the past now, but at the time it started as pornography, you know, via online mainly, and then that led later on to webcam use, and eventually it led to engaging in or allowing myself to get embroiled in a series or a number of affairs at work, yeah, with colleagues.
- Robert: OK, thank you. Just bear with me a second. Have you met anyone outside, apart from your wife, in a sexual way outside? Yeah, have you met anyone in a sexual way outside your marriage?
- Ben: Yes, yes. Yeah, I did, it progressed, as you rightly assumed, and in the last 8 to 9 years I had a series of affairs or one-night encounters.
- Robert: And were you having a series of affairs and the online encounter and the one-night stands all at the sort of similar time, rotating it, or they were kind of periods where one was happening and periods where one wasn't happening?

Ben: It was – yeah, it was more that it was, you know, one as a substitute for the other I suppose. You know, if I was involved at the time in an ongoing affair then I wouldn't necessarily have the need for the pornography or any of the online aspects of it.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. And how did Joan discovered about your compulsive sexual behaviour?

Ben: To my shame, my – well our eldest daughter was helping me with a work project on my phone, I'm a little backward when it comes to some of the modern tech and she was helping me with a couple of new apps. I wasn't around at the time and I hadn't in any way thought it through I suppose, but she saw a couple of messages that pinged up on my phone and was concerned and showed them to my wife.

Robert: And how did you react to this?

Ben: Initially I was – well initially, I think understandably, I tried to deny and deflect and claim that there was some kind of mistake and that it was all untrue, but it became – it didn't go away, understandably, and Joan quite rightly went after getting the truth out of me, and over time that happened, but at first I was – I tried to – very much tried to distance myself from the truth.

Robert: OK, and how did Joan react to this?

Ben: To say she was livid would be an understatement. She was very, very angry and, you know, we talked about whether I should leave the house and move out, but we decided that I would stay and stay in the study, and I suppose, although I was not in the bedroom, I was somewhere else, meant that we were having this breakdown of our marriage in front of our children. So it was very difficult and she was quite rightly angry, and it didn't help that I was quite resistant to being open with her, I see that now, I accept that. There were reasons, obviously, there always are, and I found I was finding lots of things difficult at the time and felt that I couldn't be honest with myself or her for fear of losing everything, like my family and her, but anyway, she was obviously very, very, and quite rightly, upset.

Robert: OK, thank you, and what happened next, after the process you just described?

Ben: Well Joan made it very clear that if I wanted to have a chance of us staying together I had to start seeing and chatting to someone and basically enter into therapy, that I had to show that I was willing to make a change. So, reluctantly at first, I accepted that, I started seeing a therapist, I joined a men's support group, 12 step programme, and more recently we've been doing some really useful couples therapy actually, which has been a real

big step forward for us. But yes, it wasn't something I wanted to do and it was something that – but it was something that I – you know, put it this way, Robert, you know, I'll do anything in order to try and make this right.

Robert: Right. No, I hear that, thank you. What was the sort of outcome and emotions connected to this experience, firstly you? Actually no, let's go back a bit, firstly your daughters, and then for yourself, and then Joan?

Ben: You mean the outcome for our daughters? Well the two oldest daughters have found it very difficult and I think are equally angry with me.

Robert: Right.

Ben: You know, I'll make that quite clear.

Robert: Surely they must be quite confused really, not understanding what's going on.

Ben: Yes, but I think they're old enough to know, and obviously with the way that it was discovered it's quite clear what's happened. You know, I'm ashamed of that and I'm ashamed that they saw those messages and that they know about this, and that this has all come out. Yeah, so they're still very angry and hurt about it as well, I mean, we have good days and we have bad days I suppose. Yeah, it's affected them certainly with our relationship and it's created a sort of – I suppose you would say a division in the household. Our youngest is much younger and doesn't really fully comprehend what's going on, and she, if anything, is – bless her, she feels sorry for me, ironic, you know. Yeah, so it's created a division almost within them as sisters as well, which is sad to see, and I wish that wasn't the case but, you know, our youngest is too young to have any kind of more detailed conversation about what's going on.

Robert: I hear that. No, thank you, thank you. Sorry, did you want to add anything else?

Ben: No, I think that sums it up really. I mean –

Robert: OK, that's helpful, thank you. Just moving on for a moment, can you sort of describe for me the circumstances at the time of the discovery, and what was happening for you in terms of your work life, home life? Yeah, what was the circumstances like for you at that time?

Ben: I was working, working away a lot. I mean, I do have a demanding job, it does require trips away when I'm speaking internationally as well, I do a fair bit of travel that way, and often work unsociable hours, albeit without – I admit, and again Joan and I have talked about this, that I did end up using that as an excuse and a cover story for some of my behaviour. So I

wasn't really around much at home, and when I was back I was dealing with the guilt of everything that was going on and trying to make up for not being there, but not really coping with it very well and I wasn't happy.

Robert: What was the relationship like with you and Joan at that time?

Ben: Well, you know, I've always loved Joan and that's never, ever been in doubt. After the children, as soon as our first child was born, how intimacy sexually became a bit more challenging, and that continued, and I suppose you would say it went downhill. You know, it's a story I'm sure you hear lots, but it's difficult for parents when there are children around –

Robert: Yes, I'm aware of this.

Ben: – and it's also difficult – yeah, it's difficult if the pregnancies have been difficult, you know, the birth has been difficult and there's been – . You know, I don't want to say too much I suppose, but let's just say that there were, quite understandably, issues for Joan that meant that she was finding things difficult, and I didn't deal with that greatly and I suppose I over-promised, I over-promised trying to solve that. You know, we weren't really having sex at all, to be honest, Robert.

Robert: Yeah, I hear that.

Ben: – for a few years, it was a distant memory rather than a – wasn't even a once-a-month on the calendar, it wasn't really happening.

Robert: I hear that, thank you, thank you for your honesty and I really appreciate you sharing such sensitive information with me now, I appreciate it, thank you. How has the discovery impacted you and Joan and the girls, your daughters, by the way?

Ben: It's fractured our family I think. I wouldn't use the word 'broke', I would use the word 'fractured'. I think that it's repairable and I've seen real signs of hope for the future, which brings me, you know, real pleasure that there's light at the end of the tunnel, but at the moment we're still in a place where it can be very difficult, where there can be arguments and tension and blame and guilt.

Robert: I hear that. Thank you, I hear that. Is it OK to move on?

Ben: Yes, yes. No, it's fine.

Robert: How has it sort of impacted the relationship, if you have anything else to add that you feel that you haven't shared already, how has the discovery and the behaviour impacted the relationship?

Ben: In the last few months it's started to actually strengthen our relationship, because we've been attending a couples therapy where we have – we've chatted to other couples that have been through this and then come out the other side, and some that are already still – you know. I mean, can anyone say they ever get over something like this? I don't know, but we've been chatting to other people and it's so difficult, isn't it, because although we've both shared with our families and our families both have, quite surprisingly in some cases, been very supportive, it's difficult because you want to know from people that have been there rather than people that maybe are just looking at you and listening to you with sympathy and pity, you know.

Robert: Yes. No, I hear that.

Ben: It's been really useful to hear how other people have – what they've done proactively to make a difference, and we've started to put some of those pieces of advice into practice and it's started to bear fruit, and we've started to build again, we've started to build, which is nice.

Robert: Sounds very promising, thank you. Were there any other impacts in terms of financial, in terms of emotions on yourself or on Joan?

Ben: I mean, I think for Joan, and I'm sure she'll tell you herself, the impact on her has been her ability to trust me, and I understand that, and again, hopefully, that is beginning to be rebuilt. Financially, I have taken some time off from work, I suppose you'd call it a sabbatical, which I felt I needed to do in order to really focus on this and to try and give it – and also to show to Joan that this, what we have, what she is to me, what my girls are to me, is more important than my job, anything. So I suppose, yes, there is a financial implication of that, of taking that time off, but [laughs] worth every penny, and obviously the therapy itself always has a cost, but again worth every penny. Yeah.

Robert: OK, well thank you for that. Just going back to your daughters, you've sort of told me quite a bit about how they've been affected, but I was just wondering, in terms of the specific behaviour, emotional and their moods, has it sort of affected their moods or affected them emotionally in any way?

Ben: Well, I mean, two of them are teenaged girls [laughs], so they're prone to be hormonal anyway and emotional [laughs], so with that considered, obviously, yes. I mean, I hope to god it hasn't and doesn't affect their ability to have trusting relationships moving forward, that's my greatest hope, also my greatest fear, Robert, I would hate to feel that that shattered their image of what a relationship can be or should be. You know, they're both equally at college, at school, full-time education, you know, they have their own concerns and their own issues just with growing up. Obviously

there's anger, as I mentioned before, towards me, and I understand that, and there is – yeah, I don't know, I don't know, I suppose I'm more concerned about their ability to forgive me than I am Joan's.

Robert: Right, yeah. No, thank you for that. Just moving on here, so just thinking about today, what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it has shaped your life?

Ben: I feel like it's – I feel like it's – I suppose I don't want to use cringeful metaphors, but I feel like I've been hauled out of a well or I've been given an opportunity to try again. I can reflect now that I was living a lie and I can reflect now that I'm responsible for that and I take – I do, I take full responsibility for that, so I can understand that this process has given me an opportunity to have a second chance and an opportunity to be honest and to be a man of my word, and to be there as a good father, I want to be a good father and I want to be a good husband, and I wasn't before. You know, life is difficult, there are things going on, I didn't deal with the stresses and the pressures of work and general life and being a parent very well, but, you know, they're excuses. At the end of the day I made those decisions and I made wrong ones, and this is giving me a second chance and I'm grateful for that.

Robert: I hear that. No, thank you for that. We're just moving on to the last bit of the questions for you, Ben, just bear with me. So what have you both done to try and cope with the effect of the addiction on your relationship and your sexual intimacy?

Ben: So, as mentioned, I've been through various types of therapy, the couples therapy, individual therapy, the 12 step programme and then, more recently, this intensive programme for couples, which has been really useful.

Robert: OK, well thank you. What are you both doing now? So you've talked about all the stuff you've done, what are you both doing now to cope with the situation, or how to manage it?

Ben: Well one of the things that we've learnt in the latest round of therapy is to try and work in once a week an open safe zone of at least 45 minutes, where we take ourselves away to somewhere other than the house, a neutral zone, a piece of neutral territory, and we simply sit and face each other and talk, share. That's one of the things we've done, and one of the things they encourage you to do as you do it is to try and hold hands, and that's – yeah [laughs], it's the last thing sometimes that I'm sure, you know, we want to do, and particularly Joan, but it's began to build back some intimacy.

Robert: No, I hear that, thank you. That's sort of pivoted to the next question quite

nicely actually; what did you find most useful or beneficial? So you've talked about the holding hands, you've talked about the checking in.

Ben: Hearing from people that have been where we are now, which helps us cope with the shame I suppose I'm feeling.

Robert: And I also guess it helps with the isolation, it makes you guys not feel so much alone.

Ben: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. I suppose a reflection I've had is I've never been a particularly empathetic person, you know, most of my colleagues, and I'm sure my wife, will tell you that, it's more process driven, I'm more – you know, but I feel like I'm learning to understand and try and engage with my emotions more and try to become more compassionate, more empathetic, and this process is helping me do that because it's helping me try to connect the heart and the mind, and that's always been an issue for me, the two are very rarely connected, if that makes sense, I don't know?

Robert: Thank you. No, that's really helpful, and the final question; what are you and your partner doing together now to sort of resolve any problems around the sexual – around your sexual relationship, if there are any problems now?

Ben: Well, you know, we've not really overcome that hurdle yet, the holding hands and conversations is about as far as we've gone. I don't know, I'm hoping that's going to change in the future, but that's in Joan's hands.

Robert: So it's a work in progress.

Ben: Yeah [laughs], I suppose you'd call it a work in progress, Robert, yes [laughs].

Robert: Thank you, and thank you very much, Ben, that was really helpful, and if it's OK I'm going to move on to Joan now and then I'll come back to the two of you at the end, if that's alright?

Ben: Of course, of course.

Robert: Thank you. Joan?

Joan: Yes?

Robert: So I'm just going to ask you the same questions, if that's OK? Is that OK with you?

Joan: Yes, of course.



- Robert: So how did you discover or learn about Ben's addictive behaviour?
- Joan: Well it came about because our daughter, our eldest daughter, who's 18, she was helping her dad with something on his phone I think, something for work, and she noticed some quite explicit messages coming through, to which obviously she came and told me and made me aware, and it went from there really.
- Robert: OK. Just bear with me a second, I've lost my train of thought here. Yes, how did you react to that?
- Joan: I was mad, I was – well, to be honest, I was in utter disbelief, I could not – I could not believe what she was telling me. I almost thought 'This is a bad dream, it's a sick joke', but of course it wouldn't be, my daughter's not like that. I confronted Ben and he said it was a mistake, as in something that she'd seen that wasn't meant for him, and he threw every excuse at us, telling us it was something to do with an app he'd downloaded, oh I don't know, and eventually he opened up, but it took a while.
- Robert: Right, OK, thank you. What was the outcome and what emotions were connected to this experience for you and then for Ben?
- Joan: So I just felt – I felt in utter shock, almost like – I guess, I've only experienced it with grandparents, but like a bereavement almost. It felt like I was looking at my life from the outside, but it wasn't really my life, it was somebody else's life and I was just looking in on it, because everything we had built together for over 20 years has just come crashing down, you know. I felt angry, I was finding it incredibly difficult to concentrate at work, on my girls, particularly my youngest, who still obviously needs mom, my elder two are obviously teenagers, my oldest is nearly 19. I felt angry, I was having terrible mood swings, one minute I'd be full of anger and rage, and then I'd be crying. I just struggled to understand how this could have gone on for as long as it did and to the extent at which it did.
- Robert: OK, thank you, thank you for that. You've talked about the impact and how it's impacted you, how has it impacted the relationship?
- Joan: Between myself and Ben?
- Robert: Yes.
- Joan: At first he went through a stage of denial. I mean, it was getting ridiculous, some of the excuses that he was coming up with, and he just kept on trying to convince me that it wasn't true, that what our daughter had seen was an actual misunderstanding. He didn't seem to understand my emotions, you know, as time went on, and particularly before starting therapy, I had so many different emotions, and one minute I would be fine, I would be

doing the washing up, and the next minute I would be screaming at the top of my voice at him.

Robert: I can imagine.

Joan: And I couldn't rationalise it, I couldn't control it, I felt out of my depth. I started feeling panicky, my chest would feel tight. I at times just wanted to scream and at times, if I'm honest, I wanted to just run away or not be here to deal with it. Ben, once therapy started and once we started working through techniques, he's been a lot better at understanding where my emotions are coming from, and that's obviously helped. You know, I also felt an element of guilt and blame, that it was maybe me, you know, this is why he's had to turn to having affairs and pornography and webcams and whatever else.

Robert: Thank you, and when you discovered about this compulsive behaviour, you've talked about some of the emotion effect, if you had to sort of reflect on the relationship do you feel that it had any impact in the past or present?

Joan: I know Ben's mentioned it, after our eldest was born, so she's now 19, I'll be honest, I struggled, as a new mom I struggled with adapting to life. I'd always been fairly career driven myself. I don't say I had post-natal depression or anything like that, but, you know, for a woman the change was massive.

Robert: Yes, I hear that.

Joan: Mentally, but physically as well, and I didn't feel attractive, I didn't feel Ben desired me, I felt – I felt the biggest I've ever been. I felt conscious of myself.

Robert: Yeah, I hear that.

Joan: I'll be honest, our sexual relationship, yeah, it was non-existent, and it went on for quite some time. I didn't have an easy birth either with my first, it was quite traumatic, and it left not only physical scars but mental as well, and I think Ben took that as me withdrawing from our relationship, but he kept assuring me at the time that it was fine and it would improve and he would help improve it, but those improvements never came, and of course, as time goes on, you know, the gap gets bigger.

Robert: Yes, I hear that.

Joan: We lost a lot of that spark that we once had.

Robert: Well thank you. You've talked about your three daughters, how have they

been affected by their father's behaviour?

Joan: My eldest two have a lot of anger towards him, my eldest I think more so because she obviously found the messages and obviously – you know, her dad denying or trying to make out that what she was reading wasn't true affected her a little bit. The middle child, who's 16, she feels angry, she feels – she went through a period of she couldn't even – she wouldn't even talk to him. Obviously he's been staying in the study. And then my youngest daughter, I mean, she's very young, she doesn't understand, obviously we haven't gone over it with her, the ins and outs, but she sees us all as ganging up on him and has taken to obviously defending him. She feels very sorry for him, she's with him a lot, comforting him, and she often will say to me before bed, 'Mommy, why can't daddy come back into your bedroom? Mommy, why don't you cuddle daddy any more?' She's got a lot of questions, and it's very hard –

Robert: She's really confused.

Joan: Yeah, very confused.

Robert: Well thank you for that. What was his relationship like with his daughters?

Joan: He's a good father, the children have never wanted, you know, they've never had to beg for anything, he's always provided, any clubs they've wanted to do, anything, you know, they have wanted he has given. Not in a spoiling way but just, you know, he's been a good father like that; however, I mean, he worked away a lot, and when he was home he often wasn't present. So he'd often say, you know, if he'd been on a two day conference, he was tired and he was going to have a shower and then go to bed, we didn't – it was often just me and the girls.

Robert: Right, I hear that. No, thank you. Just moving forward for a moment, so thinking about today, what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it has shaped your life?

Joan: I guess I went through an awful lot of emotions, from anger to hurt, to hate, to feeling betrayed, to guilt, to blame, but since doing all the therapy I have a greater understanding of Ben, the person Ben is, I feel we engage with one another a lot more. As Ben mentioned, the therapies provided a safe space for us both to, you know, communicate with one another without it turning very sour, and we've in turn become a lot more supportive with one another.

Robert: Right. Sorry, go ahead, sorry I interrupted you.

Joan: No, that's OK, and I was just going to say that it's been great doing the couples intensive programme because we've met other couples, and it's

eradicating the shame that you feel from talking to maybe other couples who have no experience of it, so actually befriending and listening and supporting and being with other people who have gone through a similar journey has helped immensely.

Robert: Yeah, well thank you. Just going back actually to a question you've just prompted me on, because I think the question was; how did your partner's sexual addiction affect your relationship in terms of your family and his family, or did it have an effect on him?

Joan: So in terms of like my parents?

Robert: Yes, and his parents.

Joan: And his parents. So we debated for a long time whether we should be honest about telling them, because both of us, particularly Ben, felt a great deal of guilt and shame, but we decided we would tell them, they've always been very supportive of us in the past. Ben spoke to his parents, I spoke to my parents. We told Ben's brother, I told my brother. At first my brother was very reluctant as to why I was still willing to give this a try, he was quite angry, he's always been very protective of me, my eldest brother, but he's come to realise that we want to make it work for our girls, for us, for our future, and our parents are the same. You know, we're working with them, they know what we're going through, therapy, we've been very honest, and that's helped a lot.

Robert: Ah, that sounds wonderful. No, thank you for that. Just moving to the final bit; what have you both done to try to cope with the effects of the compulsive or addictive behaviour on you and on the relationship?

Joan: So Ben was going to move out of the house. However, I didn't want that because, by him moving out, and this is not me controlling the situation, but him moving out, how was I not to know that he wasn't continuing to have these affairs?

Robert: It's a good question.

Joan: And I had a lot of reservations about it. My eldest said he should move out, she couldn't understand why I was letting him stay in the house, but for me, I needed to be able to see him, not that I was checking his phone or doing any of that, don't get me wrong, there were times when I wanted to, you know, but I needed him to be at home because I needed to know he wasn't lying to me again.

Robert: Yes. No, I hear that.

Joan: You know, it's caused an awful lot of – as Ben rightly put it, it's fractured

the relationship with all of us, with our girls, with us two. We're now working very hard to mend those fractures and to bring back some sort of stability for the girls, particularly my youngest.

Robert: Yes. No, I hear that, thank you. What are you both doing now to cope with the situation? I think you've told me quite a bit, if there's anything else you'd like to add that's fine, if not I can move on.

Joan: Well just continuing with the therapy, as we've said. As Ben said, we try and once a week engage with one another. I found it very hard at first to sit there and look Ben in the eye, but over the weeks and months I've managed it, and we hold hands occasionally if we're walking, and we've just shown little snippets of that to the girls so that they can see that things are changing.

Robert: No, that's helpful, thank you. What did you guys or what have you found most useful or beneficial?

Joan: For me it's been the therapy, and also with meeting other couples who have gone through a similar experience. I know that, when I first found out, I was Googling like mad, I was desperate to find something, to find somebody to say 'This is what's happened and this is how we are'. So when we did finally meet those couples it was such a relief to just be able to be open and honest and to hear their stories, and to know that we're not alone.

Robert: No, I hear that, thank you. Finally; what are you and Ben now doing together to resolve any problems around your sexual relationship?

Joan: So Ben, he is still in the study at the moment. When my eldest goes back to university he's going to have to take her room for a bit, and then we're going to just see how we go.

Robert: Right, OK, so take it step-by-step.

Joan: Yeah. We haven't embarked upon – I mean, that sounds very formulaic, but we haven't been sexual.

Robert: OK, I appreciate your honesty, and thank you very much. The final question, not question, I just wanted to ask you both; is there anything you would like to add that I haven't asked, or anything you feel that would be useful for me to know, or anything you've missed?

Joan: I don't think so, not from my part.

Robert: OK. Ben?

Ben: No, I feel like we've covered everything.

Robert: OK. Well I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you very, very much for both your support and agreeing to be interviewed, and I will end the interview at 16:28, OK?

Ben: Thank you.

Robert: Thank you.

[End of recorded material at 00:44:24]

**Couple-4-Interview**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

Jamie: Who are you interviewing first, Robert?

Robert: Shelley.

Jamie: Shelley.

Robert: So just bear with me. Good morning.

Shelley: Morning.

Robert: Are you both there?

Jamie: Yes.

Shelley: Yes.

Robert: Yes. So today is Wednesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, and my name is Robert Hudson, and I'd like to start off by saying thanks to you both for agreeing to be interviewed. Can I just ask you to say your first names please?

Shelley: I'm Shelley.

Jamie: And I'm Jamie.

Robert: And how old are you?

Shelley: 32.

Jamie: And I'm 35.

Robert: Thank you, and if it's OK I'd like to start off with Shelley, if that's alright? Is that OK with you, Jamie?

Jamie: Of course.

Robert: Brilliant, thank you. And Shelley, is that OK with you?

Shelley: Yes.

Robert: OK, thanks. So I'll start off by asking, how long are you and have been in the relationship with Jamie?

Shelley: We've been together seven years, and we've been married for six years.

- Robert: Thank you, and are you currently still in the relationship?
- Shelley: Yes, but it's – yes, it's work in progress but we are still in the relationship.
- Robert: OK, thank you. And how long had you been in the relationship before you discovered – or I should say, when did you discover about Jamie's sexual behaviour?
- Shelley: I found out, it's about a year ago now.
- Robert: OK.
- Shelley: Yeah, a year ago.
- Robert: Thank you, and as far as you know did your partner's sexual behaviour or online – what did it consist of, as far as you know what does Jamie's online behaviour or sexual addiction consist of?
- Shelley: So I found out that he'd been having an affair with one of his colleagues at work, it was actually a male colleague, right. At first Jamie said that was it and there was nobody else, but since he's disclosed that he's been using internet porn, masturbation, compulsive masturbation, male and female porn. He's been having affairs with men and women, and transsexuals as well. He's been visiting lots of websites, he does these games I think, I didn't know much about them, to be honest, until now, you know, where it's very heightened sexual activity, very graphic material online, books, pretty much everything.
- Robert: OK. So it sounds as though there's a lot going on. Thank you. And to your knowledge has your partner's sexual addiction and online activity led to actual sexual encounters with other people?
- Shelley: Yes. So with his colleague, Mike, I found out that they'd been having an affair for quite a while. When he works away he has been meeting with men, as I said, yeah, meeting with men, women, transsexuals. Lots of online encounters as well, prostitutes, yeah.
- Robert: OK, thank you. And just moving on, how did you discover or learn about your partner's sexual addiction and online activities?
- Shelley: So, as I said, it came about about a year ago now. My phone had broken and I was just using Jamie's phone because I wanted to search for something really quick on the internet and I couldn't be bothered to get my laptop. His phone was just sat there, I picked it up, and I've never done this before and I don't know why, I saw a text message that he hadn't read, like a WhatsApp message. I clicked on that and it was just from one of our



mutual friends, and then something just drew me to looking at the other messages on his phone, and there was a message from Mike and there was lots of kisses, and there was a message, the first message that popped up just made me want to look at more, and it was from that point that I discovered that they had been embarking upon a relationship of a kind.

Robert: OK, thank you. And how did you react to this?

Shelley: My first initial thought was absolute shock, I was so confused, because, to my knowledge, my husband, the man I'd known for seven years, was heterosexual, and there I'm seeing messages from a co-worker, a male co-worker. I'm like 'Is he gay?', you know, 'What is this?' I felt my world had been turned upside-down, I felt completely bewildered, betrayed, confused, angry, hurt, distressed, just so, so confused. Questioning myself a lot as well.

Robert: Yeah. No, I can hear that. And how did he react to this?

Shelley: He denied everything, well the affair with Mike, so he denied, denied it all, said 'Oh no, that was something else'. I mean, it was plainly obvious that it was for him, and the messages back and forth were quite – quite graphic at times, if I'm honest. Yeah, he denied everything for a long time, and even now it's only – I mean, don't get me wrong, we've gone through recovery now, but at the start of it all I would really have to push and push, almost feed him in order for him to give me a response. He never offered anything, it was always me having to really – you know, just keep banging on at him, because he would quite happily have denied it all.

Robert: Right. No, thank you. This sort of follows on to my next question, the question actually is, what happened next? So you sort of said that you had to feed him information to get information out of him, what happened after that?

Shelley: So he wasn't very forthcoming at all about, you know, the extent of everything that had happened and gone on, and I didn't trust him. I just felt there was more, after finding out about the affair with Mike I thought there must be more. So I hired a private investigator and the private investigator basically, yeah, followed him, and I found out that he, when he's away, the meetings with, like I said, males, females, transsexuals, yeah. Then he eventually, eventually, after a while and after obviously me telling him about the private investigator, he came clean about everything.

Robert: Right, thank you for that. And what has been the outcome and what emotions were connected to these experiences?

Shelley: Just the extent of his lying, and the fact I didn't have a clue about it up until discovering that text message from Mike. I felt very betrayed and hurt. I

wanted him, if I'm totally honest, to leave.

Robert: Right.

Shelley: I wanted him to go, I couldn't see a way that we could come back from this, because he'd been having these encounters with men, so is he gay?, and then I was like 'But he's also having encounters with women, he may be bisexual'. He assured me, and he still does, that he's heterosexual and that it's more fantasy based. He didn't leave the house, because the one thing Jamie is is an incredible father to our two children, but he's in a separate room now, and we still spend weekends together and we make sure we all eat together. Our children are very young, so I'm hoping that, you know, they haven't – I mean, my little girl is two and I've got a four year old, so they're very young still. But I also learnt a little bit about, you know, through the therapy, his childhood and the relationship he had with his mom, which I wasn't aware of.

Robert: Right.

Shelley: So that's sort of where we're at at the moment, we're just trying to heal the relationship, which broke very badly.

Robert: Thank you. No, I hear that. Just moving on to talking about the effects on the relationship, can you sort of describe for me your addicted partner's circumstances at the time you discovered about his sexual addiction and his online sexual activities?

Shelley: Yes. So he was compulsively looking at or obsessively looking at sites, ones he'd have to pay for. He was looking at these online games, but he had a separate phone and a separate email, which I later discovered, and just through discovering all of this, and it wasn't just an affair with one person, it was an affair with so many different people, men, women, you know. It's just been really damaging, one minute I want him to go away, the next minute I want him to stay, and he's also spent an extortionate amount of money, and we've agreed and he's agreed that I want a full disclosure on everything before we can begin to get back what we had, if we ever can.

Robert: Thank you. No, I appreciate that. And how has this impacted you and how has it impacted him?

Shelley: So with me, I've almost questioned my own sexuality, in that my femininity. I feel I'm not enough for him, you know, because he's basically been with everyone, and it makes you question yourself, my own self-esteem, my own confidence as a woman, I feel that's sort of been taken away from me, he's made me question that.

Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that, thank you. And I think the next question, just to

follow up from that one, as in; how has his sexual addiction and these online activities impacted the relationship?

Shelley: Well, hugely. We are not, and will not be for a while, we're not sexually active at all. I mean, we're undergoing couples therapy together, Jamie's doing incredibly well with the therapy he's having, the 12 steps.

Robert: That's good to hear.

Shelley: Yeah. We've started a sex therapy programme, but it's very, very early, simple steps at the moment.

Robert: OK, well thank you.

Shelley: One thing I did request is that he has a full STI, and so do I, because, you know, my biggest fear was that he had caught something and he'd passed it on to me. I've got two young children and, you know, they are at the forefront of both of us, and Jamie, as I've said, he's a brilliant dad.

Robert: Yes, I hear that, thank you.

Shelley: But luckily the results did come back negative.

Robert: Good to hear, thanks. And how did your partner's sexual behaviour and online sexual activity affect the relationship? You've talked about how it's affected you, how has it affected you, how has it affected the relationship from his point of view?

Shelley: Well, he's – we're still in separate rooms, we're still – we're very much trying for the sake of the children to maintain a relationship, mom and dad, so we'll still eat together, we'll still sit and watch a film together, we'll still go and spend weekends together. You know, Jamie would like it to get back, and I'm not speaking for him here, but he would like to get back to a relationship, obviously a sexual relationship. At the moment that's not on the cards for me, or for him I think.

Robert: Thank you. No, I hear that. What emotional impact and financial, and you've talked about the sexual bit of it, but in terms of a family? Let's start with the emotional bit first, what emotional impact it's had on you and had on him?

Shelley: It's damaged me, if I'm honest, emotionally, physically, mentally. I just feel very broken, I feel just constantly questioning everything that our relationship stood for. For him, I think he's – I mean, he constantly kept saying it was fantasy and these fetishes are connected to the relationship he had growing up with his mom and his dad not being around, but it's drained both of us emotionally, we're running on empty, or we have been

running on empty for a long time. Therapy is now helping to kind of reconnect with emotions for one another, you know, and try and kind of look at our own emotions individually and move forward.

Robert: Yes. No, thank you. Just moving on, financially, what financial impact has it had on you both?

Shelley: I mean, huge. He has spent an extortionate amount of money. I can't even – we have to look at our finances because, as I've said, I want, you know, for this to work and move forward I want full disclosure. So financially I know he has sent a lot of money, and that comes from prostitutes, websites, taking people out, meeting up with –

Robert: Thank you.

Shelley: Yeah.

Robert: No, I hear that. And just the final part of this question; in terms of your family and his family, what impact has this had on your family and his family?

Shelley: So I haven't – I haven't spoken to anybody in my family about what's gone on, purely because I feel – I feel a bit ashamed, I feel guilty, embarrassed. I mean, I don't even know where to start or how, so my family are still totally oblivious. That has been incredibly hard.

Robert: I can imagine.

Shelley: I don't feel like I've got anybody that I can – that is close enough, even close friends I've not been able to disclose this to. Jamie, the same. I've asked Jamie, I would like Jamie to talk to his mom, because the relationship there is issues which, you know, he's spoken of and he's spoken about in therapy, and I would like him to open up to his mom, but he hasn't done, as yet.

Robert: OK. No, thank you for that. Just moving on for a bit, specifically how has Jamie's behaviour, his sexual behaviour, the online activities you've talked about, affected your sexual relationship? I know you said that he hasn't moved out and you're both not having any sexual relationship at the moment. Is there anything else you'd like to add to that?

Shelley: No. I mean, at first I wanted him to move out. He's in another room at the moment. I mean, the comforting thing is we've spoken a lot about this, and obviously doing the sex therapy programme is helping because we're both discussing that side of it in therapy. We've also been to – we've also been put in touch with, through workshops, couples that have gone through a similar thing that are at a much further stage and they have actually embarked upon, you know, sexual relationships again, but it's in

the early stages and it's just very simple steps. You know, we kind of touch, we might hold hands occasionally if we're out, but it's still, yeah, very early days.

Robert: OK. No, thank you for that. And you've talked about – you mentioned earlier that you have two children, you mentioned a boy and a girl, how have they been affected or have they been affected by Jamie's sexual behaviour and this online activity? You've talked also about the traumatic impact this has had on you, has there been any effect or has it effected the children in any way?

Shelley: I mean, the children are very young, which is a saving grace in all of this. Our two year old, you know, she's – I don't think, I hope there's been no effect. My four year old asks why daddy is in another room of the house and why he doesn't – why daddy doesn't sleep with mommy, why daddy doesn't cuddle, but that's the extent at the moment. I'm really hoping that they don't, because the children are both of our main priorities.

Robert: Yes, I hear that.

Shelley: And that's why I've made a really extra special commitment to make sure we eat together like we've always done and spend weekends together, going out for walks, you know, watching a film all together, playing with the kids together, I've made that – and Jamie has as well, he was very much, you know, on the same page, that the kids have to be our priority.

Robert: Thank you, and I assume that provides emotional stability for the children.

Shelley: Yeah, yeah.

Robert: Thank you. My next question today; what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it's shaped your life?

Shelley: Like I said, it's reared a lot of questions about myself, myself as a woman, was I enough for him, am I enough? What I would say is we are in a good place at the moment and Jamie is committed to having the therapy, I'm committed to having couples therapy, talking to other couples, and our relationship is in the healing stage. We've literally gone back to basics and we're rebuilding the trust, the respect for one another, we're just taking it block by block with it.

Robert: Yeah, thank you, Shelley. And just moving on to the final part of the interview, which you'll probably be happy about, what have you both done to try to cope with the effect of his sexual compulsive behaviour on your relationship?

Shelley: So I've asked for, as I said, I wanted a full disclosure on everything, he had

to be completely honest with me if this was ever going to stand a chance of working, and now, for about a year, he has – he's not been involved in any online sexual activities, any encounters, and I truly believe him. He's been incredibly honest with me and he's worked incredibly hard at the therapy, and for that I am, you know, very grateful. In terms of myself, I'm still in the healing process, some days I feel like I can do it, other days I feel like just throwing the towel in and leaving, but we have two children together and we made those marital vows six years ago, and as long as we have that full disclosure and that remains in place then we are working towards being in a much better place, and probably a much more honest relationship than what we ever had.

Robert: Yeah, thank you, and that's good to hear. Just moving on for a bit, what are you both doing now to cope with the situations you've talked about?

Shelley: I find great comfort in talking to others who have been through a similar journey. So we've got a support group, which is fantastic, because at the time of finding out you feel like you're the only one, 'Why has my – ?' You know, not that I'd understand it any better, but if it had been a woman from work I could have moved on quicker and I wouldn't be as obsessed as I've been about every little detail, but because it questions – it questioned for me Jamie's sexuality, you know, my own femininity, everything. So having somebody to talk to, the couples therapy is also helping, Jamie has a sponsor, as I said, he's doing the 12 steps and he's made amazing progress.

Robert: Thank you, that's good to hear. What have you both found useful or anything beneficial in terms of what you've done? You've talked about the couples therapy, you've talked about the individual therapy, you've talked about Jamie's 12 steps, what have you both done which you found useful or beneficial?

Shelley: Just having time together when the kids have gone to bed, we do make a point, most evenings I would say, of just sort of sitting and chatting and talking about how we're feeling. So if we're having a bad day or if, you know, Jamie feels like he's getting some sort of – oh, I don't want to say 'urge', but if he feels like he could easily fall off the wagon, so to speak, he can actually now sit with me and talk to me, and I've learnt techniques to be able to kind of deal with that and to talk about it, and also talk to him. So we try every evening and just have, you know, 5 or 10 minutes just sitting on our own and being honest with one another.

Robert: Oh, thank you. So it sounds as though communication has been extremely essential.

Shelley: Massively, and that's the whole point with me, I wanted him from the start to be, you know, communicating, be honest with me, being up front, and

yeah, it's been a long journey but we're getting there.

Robert: Thank you. No, I hear that. And my final question before I move on to Jamie; what are you and Jamie doing together to solve any problem with your sexual relationship? You've touched on that very briefly earlier.

Shelley: Yeah. So we've started doing a sex therapy programme, which is actually very – you know, it's been really helpful because it kind of takes you right the way back to the very basics of just sitting, looking at one another, eye contact. Then simple things, like touching, and these were all things I couldn't ever imagine doing, when I first found out and for a couple of months after I didn't know how I would ever be able to get back to that. So touching, we've just recently started like massaging one another, kind of connecting on that level again, that has been incredibly helpful. The children have been a great distraction and a focal point for both of us –

Robert: I hear that.

Shelley: – to make this work, and like I said, just having the opportunity to talk with other people who have been through it, because I haven't spoken to anybody who knows me.

Robert: I hear that, Shelly, thank you very, very much, and I really appreciate your contribution. If it's OK I'll move on to Jamie, is that OK, Shelley?

Shelley: Yes, that's fine.

Robert: Thank you. Jamie, are you still there?

Jamie: Yeah, yeah, I'm still here.

Robert: Brilliant. So I'm going to ask you just similar questions I just asked Shelley, if that's OK with you, and the first one I'll start off with; how long are you in the relationship with Shelley?

Jamie: We've been married just over six years now.

Robert: OK, thank you, and are you still in the relationship?

Jamie: Yeah, [laughs] yeah. Yeah, definitely still in the relationship.

Robert: Thank you, and how long or sort of when did Shelley discover about your sexual behaviour?

Jamie: Just over a year ago.

Robert: OK, thank you, and as far as you know what does the behaviour consist of?

- Jamie: My behaviour?
- Robert: Yes.
- Jamie: Well it's a mix of different things, but essentially it boils down to my – well, it boils down to looking at male and female and also other types of pornography, transgender pornography. It eventually led to me meeting up with people in various ways, of both sexes, and sometimes paying for sex, other times just meeting up just on adult websites, that kind of thing, and also an affair that I had, one main affair with a co-worker.
- Robert: OK, and can I just add here, Jamie, I should have sort of said this before, I appreciate your honesty and also that this is very private and very personal, and I'm just aware that I'm taking you into this very difficult place, so I just want to acknowledge that, but thank you. Just moving on; to your knowledge has your behaviour led to you meeting with other people?
- Jamie: Yeah, yeah, it has.
- Robert: OK, thanks, and how did Shelley discover about your sexual behaviour and online activity?
- Jamie: She read some texts that came through from Mike. Yeah, she was borrowing my phone at the time.
- Robert: OK, and how did you react to this?
- Jamie: Well, you know, I tried to deny it and I tried to – yeah, to deflect attention I suppose away from it, hoping that she would see it as, you know, a close friendship, but it didn't work, she was persistent in her – and rightly so, in her suspicions of what she'd read.
- Robert: Thank you, and what happened next?
- Jamie: Well I suppose all hell broke loose [laughs]. Yeah, I eventually confessed to the fact that I had been and was in the middle of an affair with Mike, who is someone that I work with, one of my DRs, one of my direct reports at work. Yeah, and that's all I kind of let slip at that time, I thought it was damage limitation to a certain extent [laughs], that I didn't want to – I thought that was bad enough for her to discover, but yeah, that's where we started.
- Robert: I hear that. So you felt that the lack of disclosure was about protecting her really, because you didn't want to hurt her any further?
- Jamie: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you know, I wasn't proud, I'm not proud of it, I



knew it was wrong, but at the same time, you know, I've got a family, I love her very much, and the last thing I wanted to do was to hurt her in any way, shape or form. I've never doubted the fact that I love her and I've never doubted the fact that she – you know, that I made the best decision in marrying her, that's never been in doubt, so I wanted to protect that at all costs.

Robert: I hear, and what was the outcome and what emotions that were connected to the experience of the discovery? You talked about the fact that you withheld and lied, how did this sort of impact you and how did it impact her?

Jamie: I mean, it impacted her because obviously I'd broke her heart and I've never regained her trust since, and I get that, obviously I get that. I felt ashamed of what I was doing, and I felt guilty, I felt guilty because, at that stage, I wanted – I kind of wanted to say more, I wanted to just get it all out, but again I just didn't. I mean, everyone keeps lies, we all lie to each other, don't we, we all lie to ourselves, there are always these things that we keep, and I just didn't want her to – I just didn't want her to hurt any more. So I felt ashamed and I felt guilty, they were my two biggest things, and I suppose I felt a little bit of relief, Robert, a little bit of relief, just the fact that I suppose she's found out, there was a little bit of that, because I'd kind of known it was going to happen at some point, you know.

Robert: Yes, yeah, I hear that, thank you. Just moving on, we're going to move on to the effects on the relationship. Can you sort of describe for me, Jamie, your circumstances at the time of the discovery? What was happening for you at work, in your personal life, in your family life, what was going on?

Jamie: I mean, nothing of note, Robert, there was nothing that was – I mean, I have a good job, I had a good marriage, you know, or I've always believed, and I've got two beautiful children, you know. My job is always high pressured and I've always got – you know, there's always stress and pressure related to that, but it was the same, there was nothing out of the ordinary that was going on, it was just in the sense of a pretty ordinary period of time I suppose, because this whole thing that I'm learning about through sessions like this and other stuff, it's been a part of me since as far back as I can remember. Yeah, I suppose this has always been a part of who I am.

Robert: OK, thank you. And how has this impacted yourself and your wife, Shelley?

Jamie: I mean, obviously when – the more Shelley found out, you know, after she'd hired the private investigator and it all came to light, the more she found out the more I saw the harm and the damage that it had done to our marriage. So I feel its permanently scarred our relationship, but I do feel that we've seen more kind of positivity and more hope recently,

particularly with everything that we've both been doing to try and salvage the mess that I've made. I suppose for me, once everything came out I was finally completely honest. I feel I suppose now, I feel closer to Shelley than ever before, I feel like she knows the real me now rather than just the person that she knew before who had lots of secrets.

Robert: Right, OK.

Jamie: So there's an honesty there, Robert, there's an honesty there, and for me there's a real sense of – there's a strange sense of happiness that she knows me and that she's still willing to fight for the marriage and to be with me, which I greatly, greatly appreciate and love her for.

Robert: Thank you. And how has the behaviour impacted the relationship now?

Jamie: Well, you know, it was a betrayal, and I suppose the impact on the relationship is the fact that I have been living – well I've been staying in a different room in the house, we've not been able to be intimate for – well ever since obviously Shelley found out about it, although hopefully, with this new course, that might change in the future, I hope, if Shelley's able to trust me. So it's impacted in the sense of how we live day-to-day, it's impacted in the sense of our physical intimacy, and obviously on trust, because, you know, part of what I did I suppose was also – you know, I mean, we have a joint account and there's a lot of money that I spent that was ours, which I've used to indulge myself in the past, in the past few years.

Robert: Thank you, Jamie. And I was just going to ask if you could expand for me what emotional impact this has had on you and has had on Shelley?

Jamie: For Shelley, as far as I'm aware, you know, it's just made her obviously question whether she wants to be with me, it's made her question whether her judgement – she can trust her own judgement, it's made her question whether I was ever the person that she thought I was, it's made her question whether – and this is me just repeating back things she's said, so Shelley, please correct me if I'm wrong, but in the sense, you know, made her question if she ever knew the real me. I suppose [laughs] that's all completely fair enough, you know. For me, there's still a long way to go, Robert, so I'm kind of speaking to you now from this position of saying that this has been, as hard as its been and as horrible as its been, as awkward and as horrific as it feels sometimes, and sometimes I wake up in the morning and I just think – I can't believe this is where I am, I can't believe that this has happened, I can't believe that we've got to this stage, I can't believe that this is where I find myself now, because it just was never the future I imagined for myself, but at the same time I feel like there's some kind of gradual journey towards me understanding more about why I am the way I am.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. I just wanted to ask, financially what impact has it had on you and on your marriage?

Jamie: Well, you know, obviously, I mentioned before, I spent a lot, I spent a lot of money, Robert, both in paying for those kind of sexual encounters and just in – you know, just in everything that went around that really.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. Sorry, was there anything else you were going to add there?

Jamie: No, just I suppose it's – you know, Shelley's aware of it now because part of that was part of the deal, was that there was a full accounting of everything that had been spent, so she knows about it. I mean, I hadn't realised how much money I'd spent, I suppose I just – you know, it was easy just to kind of –

Robert: Bury your head in the sand.

Jamie: Bury your head in the sand, yeah, and also it wasn't something I ever – you know, I didn't do my annual accounts of how much I'd spent on this thing.

Robert: Right. No, I hear that.

Jamie: Looking back, in retrospect, it makes me even more ashamed, the amount, because there's money there that could have gone towards so many other things that we want for our children and our future.

Robert: No, I hear that.

Jamie: It's gone now.

Robert: I appreciate that. And in terms of your family, your direct family, has it had any impact on them?

Jamie: You mean the children themselves, Robert, or my mother?

Robert: More your mother, we'll come to the children just after this.

Jamie: I hope not, I pray to god every night. No, I sense, with the older one, I think as Shelley mentioned, that sometimes there are questions and sometimes there are – there were just little moments, little tiny things that maybe they'd picked upon, but I don't think so and I pray to god that nothing negative comes as a part of this. We've tried really hard to protect them both and to keep them separate from this, and to try and present a united front and to really try not to argue or bicker or bring this or let this be anything in front of them. If something's happened, and Shelley's been so

good at that despite what she's had to deal with, it's been kept out of their sight I think.

Robert: Right. No, thank you for that. And just moving on; today, what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it has shaped your life?

Jamie: Well it's turned my life upside-down, it's made me refocus very much on my family. I mean, I probably was too work focused before, and I suppose most people, professional people, could probably say that, but I was – now I really put my focus on investing my time in Shelley and trying to get this back to where it needs to be, where I want it to be, and listening to the family. So it's made me redirect where I see the important things by far, it's made me question, you know, what I do with my time, and it's helped me to become a more open person and, particularly with Shelley, to be more honest with her.

Robert: Thank you, Jamie. Just moving on to the final part of the interview, looking at the efforts to deal with the situation, what have you both done to try to cope with the effects of the addiction and your online sexual activity on you and your relationship?

Jamie: So obviously, you know, as Shelley mentioned, and particularly, and this was part of the deal, I've been through several courses of intensive therapy, I'm now about to take the 12 step programme, I've found a sponsor. Yeah, I've done lots of things, like Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, and we're currently doing couples workshops and kind of intensive programmes towards that, towards more intimacy. So, you know, everything and anything really, anything and everything. You know, I really hope, and Shelley's seen this and I know because she said it to me and she's encouraged me with it, which I'm forever grateful, and that's that Shelley's seen a change in me and my behaviour. I've abstained now for nearly 10 months from any other kind of contact with anybody, and that's where I want to be and I want to be in this relationship.

Robert: Thank you. No, that's helpful. Just moving on to the penultimate question; what did you find useful, if anything, or beneficial in terms of all the stuff that – you've talked about a whole list of programmes that you've done and both of you have done, what have you found useful, if anything, or beneficial?

Jamie: For me I suppose, you know, it's a bit of a cliché to say this, but to be taken back and to understand how my upbringing had, in a sense, an effect on some of the confusion of where I found myself in the years since. You know, understanding about my relationship with my mother and trying to unpack that, because I felt uncomfortable about that for years, I've not been able to – I wouldn't be able to tell you why, Robert, I wouldn't have

been able to tell you, I wouldn't have even probably been honest or said anything to you about it, you know, if you'd asked, but now I can name it and I can understand it a bit more, and I can appreciate why I always felt slightly uncomfortable and wanted to distance myself from my mother; a woman who I love greatly, you know, I really do, but still. So I've really appreciated the opportunity to look at some of those things really, I've never had an opportunity to do that, and I've not really, apart from my relationship with Shelley and a couple of friendships more recently, I've not – these kind of things are just not things I've ever talked about.

Robert: No, I hear that. No, thank you. Finally, what are you and Shelley now doing together to resolve any problems with your sexual relationship?

Jamie: Well we're both committed to ongoing therapy. You know, we're both very open in how we feel and what we're coping with. We're doing the kind of sex therapy course, which is I suppose a – what they've said is a way of taking baby steps back towards hopefully encouraging a more physical intimacy, and that's something which I know, I greatly hope, is going to work, and we talk regularly. I mean, I think Shelley mentioned before to you that if I'm having a difficult day, or she is, we will make time every day to sit and talk, and we try, you know, we do try to sit and look at each other in the eyes. I mean, I found it difficult for a long time to look at Shelley in the eyes directly after all this came out, because I felt so ashamed.

Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that.

Jamie: So I'm trying to just even look at her, just as we talk about this, to accept that I can meet her in the eyes and deal with those feelings that I get of shame and embarrassment.

Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that, Jamie, and I want to say thank you. Just before we end and I say goodbye to you both, is there anything that you think might be helpful for me to know in terms of understanding how the addiction and your online activity has affected yourself or both of you as a couple or the family? Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Jamie: I can't speak for Shelley, I don't think there's anything, apart from to say that, you know, I think if it wasn't for this, if it wasn't for the fact that I've had the opportunity to get help with this and to talk to someone and to receive non-judgemental help and advice, just someone who would listen, that I think eventually I would have probably, you know – oh god knows, but I worry about where my future was going and how that would have affected Shelley and the family. So for me it's been – to say it's been a life-saver is probably underestimating how important it's been.

Robert: No, I hear that, I hear that, thank you, Jamie. Shelley, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Shelley: No, not really.

Robert: No?

Shelley: I think we've sort of covered everything. For me, I've just learnt to, now, just not keep bringing it up I guess and not keep fixating and obsessing about what's gone on in the past, and just try, as hard as it is some days, to look to the future.

Robert: No, I hear that. No, thank you very much, and I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you both very much for agreeing to be interviewed and for taking the time, and I appreciate your contribution. So I'll take this opportunity to end the interview and to say thank you very much, Jamie and Shelley, OK?

Shelley: Yeah.

Robert: Thank you.

[End of recorded material at 00:52:19]

**Couple-5-Interview**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

Robert: Hello.

Eva: Hello?

Robert: Hi. I'll start off by just introducing myself. My name is Robert Hudson and I'll be interviewing you both today, and today is Wednesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, and it's 1.30. So yeah, as I said, my name is Robert, and can I ask you both just to give me your first names please?

Eva: I'm Eva.

Noel: And I'm Noel.

Robert: Thank you, and how old are you?

Eva: 43.

Noel: And I'm a bit older actually.

Robert: OK, thank you very much, and I'll start with Eva, if that's alright? How long are you or have been in the relationship with Noel, Eva?

Eva: We have been together for 17 years, and we've been married now for 15 years.

Robert: Thank you, and are you still in the relationship?

Eva: Yes, yes we are.

Robert: OK, and how long were you in the relationship before discovering about Noel's sort of sexual behaviour or sexual problems?

Eva: So I found out about 18 months ago, so that would have been 13 and a half years into the relationship?

Robert: OK, thank you. And as far as you know, what did your partner's sexual addiction or online activity consist of?

Eva: Gosh. Pornography, using lots of different sites, affairs, prostitutes, compulsive masturbation, yeah.

Robert: OK, thank you. And to your knowledge has your partner's sexual addiction led to any actual sexual encounters with other people?

Eva: Yes, prostitutes and other women that he's met up with, conduct huge affairs with.

Robert: Thank you, and I'm just going to move on to talk a bit about the discovery. How did you discover or learn about Noel's sexual addiction activities?

Eva: Well, I noticed that two of our credit cards had been maxed out, which immediately – obviously joint accounts, so immediately caused some concern, because I was thinking 'Well hang on a minute, I haven't been overspending, I haven't bought anything lavish'. So I confronted Noel about it, who basically lied to me and said it was for work things, but it just didn't make sense. Many times in all of this have I contacted the credit card company and went on at them, basically, to tell me where the spends were coming from. I became a little bit obsessive about it really, just constantly calling them up, and it all came to light, and eventually, after a lot of pushing and prodding and poking around, Noel eventually confessed.

Robert: OK, thank you. And what was the outcome and what emotions were connected to this experience of the discovery?

Eva: Just I guess it was incredibly traumatic. I was very confused, just so, so confused, and hurt and angry, and the fact that he'd lied about it, you know, Noel is not very good at confronting things in life anyway and this was just so, so traumatic. I mean, it made me become very obsessive in my behaviour, you know, compulsively feeling the need to speak to the credit card company, to look online at internet banking. I would sort of ruminate an awful lot because I would want to know, and I know that's been an issue for Noel because he doesn't like me keep bringing back the past, and it's caused a lot of issues.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. Just moving on to talk about the effect on the relationship, could you describe for me the circumstances at the time of the discovery for your partner and of yourself really, what was going on at that point?

Eva: I mean, we've got four children together, it's both of our second marriages, we've got four children together. I mean, they're of a grown-up age, 16, 14, 11 and 9, but having four children is very hard, and we agreed very early on, as we were trying for children, we both agreed we wanted a big family, we agreed that I would be the stay-at-home parent and Noel would work. I know he's had a lot of stresses at work. In the last few years we've both become a bit withdrawn, distant, you know, Noel hasn't been very present with our children and I know that's work, a lot of that was work. I also suffer bouts of depression, which has had an effect on the whole family and hasn't helped, but we lost an intimacy, because having four children is hard, you're exhausted at the end of the day, and yes, they're getting older



now, but they still need running here and there, they've still got clubs. They come first, and unfortunately our marriage has come second.

Robert: Right, I hear that. No, thank you. And how has this impacted you and Noel? You just touched on some of the facts, that the marriage came second and the children came first, did it have any other impact?

Eva: Well I guess Noel started, and I did, we both started withdrawing from one another a little bit, and eventually, you know, the impact on our sexual relationship, well there wasn't really one, it would maybe be if we go on holiday or I felt relaxed, and I know my depression hasn't helped that because sometimes, you know, you don't – haven't been in the mind frame. In terms of emotionally connecting, I think we've both withdrawn there as well, I know that Noel has found my depression quite hard over the years, he doesn't always know how to deal with me, you know, and it affects the whole house and I take responsibility for that, but I just feel we lost ourselves really.

Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that, thank you. And how has the sexual addictive behaviour impacted the relationship?

Eva: Well it impacted it massively, because – well, for me, I just couldn't get passed it for a long time, and it resulted in me wanting Noel to move out, to stay away from the home, and I gave him an ultimatum, that he seeks help, for one, if he wants any chance of improving this, and he has to move out. Yeah, it's been hard, it's been very difficult, and it's just been so traumatic, the whole upheaval of everything, and the lies and the denials, and it's exhausting and it's the constant questioning, and I'm questioning myself constantly.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. How did Noel's sexual addiction affect the – sorry, has it had any emotional impact on yourself?

Eva: Yeah, I mean, massively. I feel like, for me, life has been tipped upside-down, I'm very angry. I've got so much – or I had, it's going slightly, but so much rage towards Noel, and his response was he became very cold and quite withdrawn. It's just this – it was a need for me to just know everything, I felt I had that right to know everything.

Robert: Yeah, I hear that, yeah. No, that's helpful. And in terms of the relationship, you've talked about some of the impact, is there anything else that's worth adding at this point?

Eva: I mean, the relationship is – I mean, yeah, it just went from being a complete mess of 'Are we going to get through this?', to now obviously putting things in place which are helping us through this, but it's by no means fixed and we're a very long way from that.

Robert: No, thank you. And have there been any financial impacts, in terms of how has it impacted you both financially, the behaviour?

Eva: Well, I mean, massively. He's spent an absolute fortune on these online sites, these pornography sites, prostitutes, having affairs with prostitutes, taking women out, and this all comes at a cost. And yes, he has a very good job and his work have been very kind in paying for – you know, he's got the insurance to pay for treatment, but in terms of what he spent, very selfishly, indulging himself, it has had massive repercussions on us as a family.

Robert: No, I can hear that, thank you. And just moving on for a bit, specifically how has Noel's sexual addiction affected the sexual relationship between the two of you?

Eva: Well there isn't one.

Robert: Right.

Eva: There isn't one at all at the moment.

Robert: OK.

Eva: Yeah.

Robert: Thank you for that, and you've talked about the children.

Eva: Yes.

Robert: How have they been affected by his sexual addictive behaviour?

Eva: So when I first found out I was very mindful, and so was Noel, of protecting the children. However, I've been having therapy myself, seeing a therapist for a long time for my own depression, which sort of relates back to my own childhood. So my children have always been at the forefront of everything I want to do right. So my therapist said, 'Well it's not up to you to tell your children, Noel will need to do that', and I felt – yeah, because by me telling them and him moving out, I was so fearful that they would put the blame onto myself, and at this point I felt very blameless, I felt the victim in all of this. So Noel, he had to tell the children, obviously didn't go into full detail as to why he was moving out, and actually the therapy that Noel got was in the US, he went out for residential therapy for six weeks, and in one of those weeks myself and the children went out with him to do some family work together.

Robert: Right, OK. No, thank you for that. Just moving on, today what impact has

the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it has shaped your life?

Eva: Well, I mean, Noel suggested that we have couples therapy and that has helped. In terms of it affecting life, I mean, he's still living away from the home, he's living with a friend, and in front of the children we are amicable, and providing I don't mention the past myself and Noel are OK, but the minute I draw reference to or I bring anything up hell breaks loose, he doesn't want to talk about it, he shuts down, it causes a lot of arguments. So it's still very fragile and, you know, we're working towards trying to get something back on track.

Robert: Right, OK. No, that's very helpful. Just moving on to the last part of the interview, what have you both done to cope with the effects of his addiction on you and the relationship?

Eva: So I've continued to see my therapist and that has been incredibly helpful. Over the last six months we've both been having a couples intensive therapy, which was Noel's idea. As I said, Noel doesn't like us speaking about the past, as a result of that, because he's not in the house during the week, at the weekends he comes and looks after the children and I tend to stay away for a night or two, just to have a little bit of time for myself, to think without being mom or, you know, cook, cleaner, housewife, and that's helped a lot. Communication with us is amicable, as I've said, but it's strained at times, strained, there's still very much a presence of the trauma and how broken I feel I am and our relationship is.

Robert: No, I hear that. No, thank you for that. What are you both doing now to cope with the addiction on the relationship?

Eva: So we're taking, you know, each step at a time, which I know sounds very clichéd, but we are. We're trying to be open and honest.

Robert: Under these circumstances sometimes that's all you can do really.

Eva: Yeah, exactly. We're trying to be the best parents we can for the children, and the ages they are, they understand a lot. The 16 year old has got a lot of questions, and the 14 year old, you know, they're not stupid, they're nearly adults themselves. So yeah, we're just taking each day, we're not making any plans too far ahead, and we're continuing to have therapy, which is really the saving grace, the light at the end of the tunnel of all this.

Robert: I hear that, thank you. What did you find useful or beneficial during this period of your individual therapy, Noel's treatment in the US, you both coming back and doing the couples intensive, what have you both found beneficial or useful?

Eva: I guess it's understanding why we've got to the point we've got to, why we are here and what went wrong, and we've investigated a lot about our own childhood, you know. I know Noel, with his father, he had a lot of issues there growing up, his father not being present, often away a lot of the time and I believe his father conducted many affairs from what his mom has said. Myself, I didn't have a perfect childhood by any means, so that's come to light and that's helped, you know, the fact that I was sent off to boarding school at a very young age. My mother had a very good job, very good job, she was a very career orientated woman, but it made her quite cold around her children, and me going to boarding school had big, big ramifications later on down the line because I think a lot of my depression has come from that, which I know has been hard on Noel.

Our early part of our relationship, pre-children, was great, and then we've had four children together, there's been the strain on the relationship, and I've probably – you know, I've been hard work at times. I'm not always up for – you know, when Noel's been in the mood, say, I've pushed him away because I'm tired, I don't feel great, I've got the kids ironing, a stack of ironing, and I think, yeah, we've both learnt, sorry, to bring it back to the question, we've both learnt a lot about ourselves individually.

Robert: I hear that, thank you. Finally, what are you and Noel together doing to resolve any problems with your sexual relationship?

Eva: So we both want the marriage to continue and to work, so we're just trying to be honest with one another. We do hit stumbling blocks because, I've said it quite a few times, I am still very much on my journey of why, and I do bring it up sometimes and I know that Noel hates it when I do. I'm trying not to do that because I know that's a personality flaw in myself, I do that a lot in life in general, so we're just trying to talk about the future, to look to the future, but at the same time just taking it very slowly and continuing our therapy.

Robert: OK, thank you, Eva. Is there anything else you'd like to add just before I move on to Noel?

Eva: No, no, I think I've covered everything.

Robert: Thank you very much, and I appreciate that. Noel, is it OK for me to ask you the sort of same questions?

Noel: Yeah, yeah, of course, go ahead.

Robert: OK, thank you. How long are you in the relationship with Eva?

Noel: We've been together just over 17 years.

- Robert: 17 years, and are you still in the relationship?
- Noel: Yes, we are.
- Robert: Yes, OK. And how long before the behaviour came to light, or when did the behaviour come to light?
- Noel: It was about 18 months ago, so we'd been married just over 13 and a half years, yeah.
- Robert: Thank you, and as far as you know what did the behaviour consist of? Sorry, yeah, not as far as you know because you're actually doing it, what does your behaviour consist of?
- Noel: So the behaviour itself, which started around about 10 years ago, originally started out with a simple usage of pornography and then eventually graduated into using prostitutes on a regular basis. You know, sometimes, if that wasn't viable, possible, time-wise, whatever, you know, the usual massage parlour, happy ending.
- Robert: OK, thank you. And you've talked about prostitutes, my next question was going to be, have you met with anyone else in a sexual way outside your primary relationship?
- Noel: Yes.
- Robert: OK, thank you. And moving on to the discovery, how did your partner discover or learn about your sexual addictive behaviours?
- Noel: She saw that – she looked at the statements of two of our credit cards, both maxed out due to activities.
- Robert: OK, thank you. And how did she react to this?
- Noel: Well she wanted to know obviously why, why there was significant debt on both cards, and then started questioning me as to what this money was for, what the spending had been for. I denied everything originally and said it was for work, hoped it would go away, she persisted. I eventually was honest, told her what had been going on.
- Robert: Right, OK. The next part of the question was going to be, how did you react, but you've sort of answered, that you denied and later on disclosed later. What happened next, after you admitted or told her the truth, what happened then?
- Noel: Well, I mean, she essentially threw me out the house. Obviously, you know, she'd had a history of depression, I think it's safe to say it threw her

into quite a dark place, understandably, and I decided I needed to get help, that's where my journey into therapy began and eventually our journey into therapy.

Robert: That's helpful, thank you. And when she threw you out the house, how did you feel about this?

Noel: Well, you know, there's no two ways about it, I deserved it. I panicked, because my family, my marriage, despite how distant it had become and I suppose how pedestrian it had become, certainly between us in many ways, it still was my world, it's all I really care about. I mean, none of the other things that happened meant anything, it was just more I suppose stress relievers, they were a way of – they're escapism, they were a guilty secret and, you know, almost just a way of tuning out. It made me panic that I had thrown all that away

Robert: OK, thank you for that. I think you've sort of started answering the next question, which was; what was the outcome and what emotions were connected to this experience? And you talk about the panic, was there anything else?

Noel: Shame.

Robert: Shame.

Noel: Deep shame that I was not able to control this, that it in a sense bettered me, in the sense it took over, and got me to the point where I knew in the back of my mind that I was out of control but I could not – I couldn't find a way to get back on top, I couldn't find a way to regain that control, I couldn't find a way out of it. I was spending and I was taking more and more risks, and becoming more and more dependent on the thrill that it provided me.

Robert: Thank you for that. And just moving on to the next section about the effects on the relationship, so can you describe for me your circumstances at the time when your behaviour was discovered?

Noel: I mean, you know, I'm very guilty of being too work centric and time poor generally because of the pressures that are placed upon me. I live in a very unstable and fluid workstream where there's constant change, there's constant challenge, there's constant pressure, and at the time, you know, we'd had another new CEO in, a lot of rejigging of positions, a lot of concern over whether I and my colleagues would be losing our jobs, so it was a difficult place work-wise. At home, I used the word 'pedestrian' before, you know, it's difficult, four kids who I love deeply, it's difficult to get time for you, let alone time for us as a couple, and we just – I don't know, you end up feeling like a servant to your children at times, don't you,

and I say that knowing full well that my wife would tell you I don't do enough, certainly didn't do enough around the house, but you still end up feeling like you're a slave to what you've produced.

Robert: I appreciate that.

Noel: So I felt – I suppose I was feeling – there was a fair part of me that felt trapped, to be completely honest with you, Robert, completely trapped, that I was in a situation where there was very little at times to look forward to in the sense of intimacy, in the sense of – you know, it felt like it was more downs than ups.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. And I think the next question is; how has this impacted you and how has it impacted Eva and the relationship?

Noel: Me, the whole process has eventually led to a huge transformation, a huge realisation of who I am, what I am, what I'm capable of and how to manage that. For Eva, I've broken her heart. I do think that the therapy has been good for her, because obviously she has ongoing mental health issues of her own which, you know, have taken their toll on the marriage, but it would be wrong of me to try and blame that in any way because that would be most unfair on her, that would be most unfair on her. It's created a barrier which, at the moment, I don't know if we can get over, I hope we can and I've seen change and I think that things are getting better, but at the moment, the way – with me not being in the home, with the current setup, just being weekends and then Eva not being there, it's very difficult outside of the therapy itself to build much.

Robert: OK.

Noel: But yeah.

Robert: Thank you for that. And how has your sexual addictive behaviour impacted the relationship? I think you've covered some of that, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Noel: Huge debt. Guilt. An easy whipping stick which can be used against me at time, but then I suppose I do deserve that.

Robert: I hear that.

Noel: As frustrating as I find that.

Robert: OK. And just moving on for a bit, in terms of – has it had any emotional impact on yourself or the children?

Noel: Well it's had a deep emotional impact on me, you know, in many ways, as

I've mentioned, about the shame and the guilt, and then eventually the hope that the therapy has given me. The residential course, which I know Eva mentioned, which was over in the US, was really helpful, just because being taken out of the immediate situation and given an opportunity to breathe and just focus on me and on us, my background and who I was and who I am, all of that, to be able to do that properly for the first time ever without the pressure of work, knowing that I was supported by them to do it was really transformative and really helpful. Then to have them there for the week, as difficult as that was, it was really – I think it's helped, I think it's helped everyone feel that there isn't some kind of guilty secret that we can't talk about, we've done that, we've done that, we've got that bit there and everyone knows what that is now, and we're trying to now cope with how we heal. So I feel that it kind of – you know, that particular six weeks was really useful, and just the ongoing, yeah, the ongoing help that I've got from the various –

Robert: No, I hear that, thank you. No, that's really helpful, and that sort of has fed quite nicely into my next question really, I was going to ask; how have the children been affected by your addictive behaviours? And you talked about how the residential treatment has benefited you guys as a family, do you feel that it has had any impact on them?

Noel: Well, I mean, I would be lying if I said that it didn't have an impact on them because I don't live in the house, they don't see me very much, and I think that – and I know from conversations with them that that's important, that they would like to have more opportunities and times for us to be a family properly in the eyes of whatever normality is I suppose. There doesn't seem to be any lingering animosity or blame at the moment, they all seem to be coping, and that surprised me, particularly from the older ones, I was expecting more of a hard time, and that again I think only speaks volumes for how helpful the residential treatment was and how helpful it's been since. You know, we've really tried, there's not much Eva and I do well together, but the one thing we do do well together is we try and protect our children and love our children, and I think that, on that side alone, at least in front of the kids, the united front that we give them I think does give them the reassurance they need to feel safe.

Robert: No, I hear that. Thank you for that, that's really helpful, and it's reassuring to hear that. Moving on to the next question; today what impact has the whole experience had on you and your relationship in terms of how it's shaped your life?

Noel: Well, you know, I'm living with a friend, I'm not living at home. I feel like that burden I suppose has been lifted, I feel like I'm living a more honest life. I feel better equipped to deal and cope with the pressures that I feel sometimes from work, I feel like I have been given better coping mechanisms and ways to deal with those things. And I feel that I am really



trying to do everything possible, I possibly can, to create a better future for us, to do everything I can to make tomorrow a better day than today. I want us to live in the future, not in the past, I want us to get back fully together, and I believe that we can do that. So, you know, it's had a massive effect in helping me hopefully restart and build things properly, from a real point of trust and honesty.

Robert: Yeah. No, I hear that, thank you. Moving on to the last part of the interview, in terms of effort what have you both done to try to cope with the effects of your addictive behaviour on you and the relationship?

Noel: Well, I mean, I've done most of what my wife has asked me to do at every stage. I mentioned before, I moved out. I've sought counselling, I'm part of the Men's Circle, I'm part of the 12 step programme, I have a sponsor, I'm currently working my way through that and finding a lot of benefits from that. I suggested to Eva that we go for couples therapy and she eventually agreed, and that's been really helpful and useful. The residential therapy that we've talked about, you know, I've tried and I am trying to do everything I possibly can, give her some space at the weekends. Our setup isn't strictly just to give Eva a space, it's because we are at the moment not great around each other all the time when the kids aren't there, but I'm trying and I will continue to try to do everything in my power to make this right.

Robert: Thank you, I can hear that. And what are you both doing now to cope, and you've talked about the fact that Eva goes away at the weekend to get some time and you go to the house and look after the children, and you're doing some couples therapy, is there anything else you've both done or would like to add that you're both doing to cope with the situation, and that you're also living away from home?

Noel: No. I mean, I suppose I try not to keep things, to bottle things up any more, I try to name what it is that I'm feeling at the time, what it is I'm experiencing, I try to name it and let it just be so that it doesn't eat away at me, so that's part of that whole honesty message I suppose I was talking about before. Apart from that, I mean, I don't – yeah, I'm just trying to manage my behaviour on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, and be a good husband, a good father, a good son to my parents, who have stood by us, by me more appropriately I suppose with what's gone on. I'm trying to be a better individual.

Robert: OK, thank you for that. And what have you both found useful or beneficial in terms of the work you've done?

Noel: For me it's been about how to manage my behaviour, how to understand more about me and why I am like this, why my coping mechanisms led me to making bad decisions, and just helping to teach me that there are other

options, that I don't have to necessarily just allow myself to be an addict to those things, that I can be stronger and I can have the strength to say no and to seek better alternatives. As I said, to be a better husband and to be monogamous, and to be loving and supportive, and to be honest.

Robert: Yeah, thank you. And finally, what are you and your partner together doing to resolve any problems with your sexual relationship?

Noel: Well we're in the middle of the couples therapy, which is slow going but it is going and that's better. I think for years it was only going one way and that was backwards, and now at least it's going in a more positive direction.

Robert: I hear that. One of the slogans actually I often use, that it's a process, not something that goes very quickly.

Noel: Yeah.

Robert: No, thank you for that. And just to bring it back to the two of you, is there anything else you feel or any comments which you think might be helpful for me to understand a bit more about the effects of the behaviour on yourself and you two as a couple and your family?

Noel: I suppose, you know, when you have a large family like we do and busy lives, which I suppose is the majority of people [laughs], therapy is so useful in just allowing you to focus on you and the relationship and giving you a safe space to look at that. I don't think we'd ever have allowed ourselves the time or made the reason to do that if it wasn't for this, so out of a bad thing has come a very good thing.

Robert: I hear that, thank you, and that's really helpful. Is there anything else, or you feel we've covered everything?

Noel: Not from me, no.

Robert: Thank you. Anything else?

Eva: No, not that hasn't been covered or touched upon.

Robert: Oh thank you. Well I would like to take this opportunity as we come to the end to say thank you both, a big thank you to you both, and I appreciate your valid contribution, and this draws to the end of the interview. So thank you very much, and I'll end here if that's OK. So thanks, goodbye.

Eva: Thank you, bye-bye.

Noel: Bye-bye. Thank you.

[End of recorded material at 00:43:55]

**Appendix I**

**Exploratory comments: Couple 1**

<b>Transcript (Couple 1 – Oliver and Martha (pseudonyms))</b>	<b>Exploratory Comments (addict &amp; non-addict)</b>	<b>Axial Codes/ Emerging Themes</b>
<p>For a long time I struggled with getting intimate with Oliver (C1 - Martha) (P: 3; L: 26)</p> <p>and I've worked through that with individual therapy and it is getting better now, but that has taken a long time for me to, you know, get intimate, be loving (C1 - Martha) (P: 5; L: 47 - 50)</p>	<p>Not being intimate for long after discovery</p>	<p><b>Damaged Intimacy</b></p>
<p>– it's taken a good couple of years to get intimate again with Oliver on a sexual level. (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 6-7)</p>	<p>Taking long to get intimate again</p>	
<p>and I realised very quickly that he had been and was seeing and meeting up with other women (C1- Martha) (P: 2; L: 21-22)</p>	<p>Meeting other people (acting out)</p>	<p><b>Exposing betrayal and feeling hurt</b></p>
<p>everything I truly believed and I thought, that we'd built up, had been destroyed in just one discovery of that message on the phone. (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 13 - 14)</p>	<p>Discovery leading to destruction</p>	<p><b>Broken/Damaged Relationship</b></p>
<p>it pretty much crippled the relationship (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10; L: 45)</p>	<p>Crippling relationship</p>	
<p>and it put a huge barrier up between us because it's always there, it doesn't go away (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10;L: 24-25)</p>	<p>Discovery of addiction leading to damage in relationship/putting a wall between the couple</p>	
<p>Impacted the home because obviously it caused a lot of anguish in the home, which, you know, as Martha's alluded to it, was picked up on by certainly the older children. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 33 - 35)</p>	<p>worrying about children and their emotions</p>	<p><b>Negative impact on children's wellbeing and behaviour</b></p>
<p>In terms of the children, our youngest, they don't know the extent. Our older son is aware but not the full details. (...), I've tried to protect them. (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 22 - 26)</p>	<p>Protecting children</p>	<p><b>Prioritising children</b></p>

and I don't want the children to look at him differently, I've tried to protect them (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 26 - 27)	Not wanting children to treat the addict parent differently	
In terms of the children, our youngest, they don't know the extent. Our older son is aware but not the full details. (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 22-23)	Children unaware	Protecting issues from children
and I don't want the children to look at him differently, I've tried to protect them (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 26 - 27)	Not wanting children to treat the addict parent differently	
I felt again I was letting them down as well as letting Martha down, and that just made me feel as big a failure as a father as my dad was with me. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10;L: 12-14)	Fear of being a bad parent	Worrying about children's opinion
At first he sort of tried to deny it, but obviously then he opened up about it. (C1- Martha) (P: 2; L: 9 -10)	Denial at first	Denial of the compulsive sexual behaviours
we've got four children together, we've built a life, we had a wonderful life, and was I not enough for him? You know, all of that I questioned for a very, very long time. (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 39 - 41)  you start to think 'Is it me? Am I not attractive any more (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 45 - 46)  you start to think 'Is it me? Am I not attractive any more (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 45 - 46)  for a long time I struggled with getting intimate with Oliver. I just couldn't shift the thought that I maybe wasn't enough for him (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 46 - 47)	Not Feeling good enough / Questioning self-worth	Victim's self blame and self-questioning; also sustained by perpetrator
I felt like it was a huge trauma in my life (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 26)	Feeling of trauma	Discovery of addicted partners' sexual behaviours leading to trauma
it mainly started around the use of pornography, and then that graduated onto webcams and conversations with girls and ladies. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 2; L: 34 - 36)	Porn as a starting point	Gradual progression from porn and development of sexual compulsions

<p>, and obviously it then spilled onto things like webcams, (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 35 - 36) +</p> <p>So I suppose you'd call it compulsive or regular masturbation, I used a lot of pornography, and then webcams, and then that went on to massages and, you know, certain type of massages of course, which then led on to eventually visiting prostitutes and, you know, having a sense of regular relations with certain prostitutes (C1 - Oliver) (P: 6; L: 45 - 48)</p>		
<p>and it put a huge barrier up between us because it's always there, it doesn't go away (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10;L: 24-25)</p>	<p>Discovery of addiction leading to damage in relationship/putting a wall between the couple</p>	<p><b>Dramatic change of life</b></p>
<p>it sounds crazy really I suppose, but I had a tremendous sense of relief at first when she found out about it, I'd not had the courage to deal with it, to talk to her about it for years, and I desperately wanted to. (C1 -Oliver) (P: 2; L: 44 - 46)</p> <p>a tremendous sense of relief that not – and tremendous sense of gratitude that Martha has forgiven me for it (C1 -Oliver) (P: 4; L: 10 - 11)</p> <p>initially it was a mixture of that relief, horrible, horrible guilt, and shame, because of what I had been doing, what I'd hidden and the lies that I'd told. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 16 - 18)</p>	<p>Sense of relief after discovery</p>	<p><b>Positive outcome of discovery</b></p>
<p>Then just panic I suppose because, you know, the last thing I want and the last thing I wanted was to lose Martha and, you know, for it to affect the family. So it was a mixture of relief leading into panic, and then just gradually, gradually over time, I was able to tell her more. (C1 -Oliver) (P: 2-3; L: 48-51)</p>	<p>Discovery leading to honesty</p>	
<p>, the man I'd known for so long and the world I'd known for so long, had come crashing down, and it just enabled us to be able to communicate (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 17 - 19)</p>	<p>Improvements to communication</p>	

<p>I feel like we're closer and stronger than we've ever been in our marriage. I suppose it's because the whole discovery of my addiction and what I'd done forced me to be honest (C1 - Oliver) (P: 3; L: 38 - 41)</p> <p>It's made me feel a lot more honest and it's enabled me to be honest with myself and with Martha, and that for me is the biggest and the most important of the impacts (C1 - Oliver) (P: 12; L: 21-23)</p>	<p>Honesty/Improvements to relationship after discovery</p>	
<p>it feels like we've both been kind of stripped back of all of our secrets, our inhibitions, our worries, everything, and we're starting over. (C1- Martha) (P: 9; L: 12-14)</p>	<p>Sense of starting over afresh</p>	
<p>, before, for me it was almost out of a sense of guilt and obligation, whereas now there's a real, genuine desire and want for me to be close to Martha and show her that she's the only one(C1 - Oliver) (P: 11;L:3-6)</p> <p>I'm really grateful for her, and it's made me love her more and be so grateful for what we have. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 12;L:28-29)</p>	<p>More genuine feelings towards partner</p>	
<p>, it was only ever the sex, it was very much the sex, whereas now I really feel that we're starting to be able to reclaim the act as something which is more intimate and more honest and more reflective of the way I feel about Martha, and that's really – that's something which I'm really thankful for, and I want that to be – I want that to be the norm (C1 - Oliver) (P: 11; L: 37 - 41)</p>	<p>Intimacy feeling more honest and fulfilling with partner during recovery from addiction</p>	
<p>I suppose she had this picture of me that wasn't real, and now I feel that our love is stronger and I feel that it's far more honest and we're far more transparent with each other (C1 - Oliver) (P: 14; L: 34-36)</p>	<p>Stronger love and transparency</p>	
<p>Then Oliver would openly tell me things, I would open up to him, and it built a very strong foundation for us to move forward (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 47 - 49)</p>	<p>Discovery leading to deeper connection in relationship</p>	

<p>it feels like we've both been kind of stripped back of all of our secrets, our inhibitions, our worries, everything, and we're starting over. (C1- Martha) (P: 9; L: 12-14)</p>	<p>Sense of starting over afresh</p>	
<p>– in the early days of kind of being reborn I suppose, now, and it feels a lot more honest (C1 - Oliver) (P: 11;L:1-3)</p>	<p>Discovery leads to feeling honest</p>	
<p>I'm trying not to do that because it isn't healthy, and we are in a very, very good place. I feel Oliver is now much more open with me, he's honest, and I feel I know him on a much deeper level, which I thought I knew before but actually I didn't (C1- Martha) (P: 28; L: 28 - 31)</p>	<p>Discovery leading to deeper connection in relationship</p>	
<p>it gave me an opportunity to see, to redefine what was important, and to see that actually the emotional connection between us was more important (C1 - Oliver) (P: 13;L:25-26)</p>	<p>Valuing relationship more during recovery</p>	
<p>, I did speak to my sister about it because at the time it was very hard dealing with it on my own (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L 30-31)</p> <p>and my mother also knows the full extent (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 32)</p>	<p>Seeking support from relatives</p>	<p>Talking with others who experience the same difficulties and family members being helpful</p>
<p>I felt a little ashamed to tell people (C1 - Martha) (P: 6; L: 19 -20)</p>	<p>Not being able to tell others</p>	<p>Suffering in silence</p>
<p>I said that he has to go and get some help if we are going to try and build on something (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 11 - 12)</p>	<p>Need of therapy for recovery</p>	<p>Attending and Finding therapy helpful</p>
<p>we both had therapy individually, and we embarked upon couples therapy, which helped (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 14 - 15)</p> <p>So in terms of emotions, you know, we're still processing, we're still together and we have worked through the problems through couples and individual therapy, and that has helped (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 28 - 31)</p> <p>I have a clearer sense now than what I had when I first found out. (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 31 - 32)</p>	<p>Help of therapy</p>	



<p>embarked upon couples therapy together, and again that was great because we was able to – to have somebody there to facilitate and to stop it getting into shouty-shouty, blamey-blamey, we actually just sat sometimes in silence (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 43-46)</p>	<p>Therapy providing calm discussions</p>	
<p>if he is feeling, you know, like he's – not he's going to relapse, but if he is feeling a little unsteady or he's getting thoughts again, you know, we try and work through them, and it has been hard and it is draining, but we have things that we've been told by the therapists that we put in place that have helped (C1- Martha) (P: 8; L: 15- 18)</p>	<p>Learning techniques in therapy to help with communication</p>	
<p>We're in a much better place now, much better, and, you know, in Oliver's defence he has worked incredibly hard, he is very – he tries to be as open and as honest as he can. (C1 - Martha) (P: 5; L: 39 - 41)</p>	<p>Recovery due to therapy</p>	
<p>after many sessions of therapy I realised that it wasn't healthy, me to keep looking back in that past at what he'd done, trying to get, you know, the details, it wasn't healthy. (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 21-23)</p>	<p>Use of therapy leading to recognition of unhealthy behaviours</p>	
<p>together with the help of therapy and with Oliver we drew a line and we now work towards our future (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 24-25)</p>	<p>Creating boundaries</p>	
<p>and to see that we did want our marriage to work but we needed to make some huge changes, well Oliver needed to make some big changes (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 19 - 21)</p>	<p>Relationship recovery</p>	<p>Wanting the relationship to get better</p>
<p>it led to, yeah, I used to work away an awful lot, I still do, but I was obviously in certain places where I was able to go out and, you know, go to red light districts and speak to and eventually frequent prostitutes as well, so it kind of graduated on (C1 -Oliver) (P: 2; L: 36 -39)</p> <p>in Oliver's defence he has worked incredibly hard (C1 - Martha) (P: 5; L: 27 - 28)</p>	<p>Overworking</p>	<p>Struggles to deal with work stress</p>

<p>I mean, it broke my heart to see her so broken by this, and that was really hard, that was really hard to deal with because I knew I was the – there's no one else to blame for that, I was the cause of what she was going through (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 42 - 45)</p>	<p>Affected partner / understanding of one's impact</p>	<p>Addicted partner accepting responsibility for the impact of his sexual behaviours</p>
<p>it gets easier some days, and then some days it's just (...)it's the first thing, even if it's not intentionally mentioned like that, but as soon as something else goes wrong it's the first thing that can be used against (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10; L:27- 32)</p>	<p>Addiction as reoccurring issue during difficult moments</p>	
<p>would he have ever opened up to me? (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 19)</p>	<p>Rumination</p>	<p>non-addicted partner thinking about past, what happened and what could have happened</p>
<p>every discussion, every time, you know, it kind of comes up, you know, because we bicker sometimes and you throw things back in one another's faces a little , (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 26- 28)</p>	<p>Bringing up betrayal in every discussion</p>	
<p>, we take each day as it comes and there is still a lot of hurt, I'm not going to lie, I can't just switch it off, (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 20 - 23)</p>	<p>Finding it hard to move on</p>	
<p>in terms of the future, you know, it's not as easy as just being able to turn a switch and us go back to normal, as obviously you know, Robert, it does require a lot of work every day (C1 - Martha) (P 14; L: 10-12)</p>	<p>Difficulty going back to normal</p>	
<p>– I don't want Oliver to feel ashamed of what he's done (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 25 -)</p>	<p>Not wanting partner to feel ashamed</p>	<p>Non-addicted partner feeling a need to protect addicted partner from children and others</p>
<p>We've tried our hardest to protect them (CHILDREN) from – you know, because I don't want them to feel – I don't want Oliver to feel ashamed of what he's done (c1 - Martha) (P: 6; L: 11 -12)</p>	<p>Feeling protective</p>	
<p>What I found really useful was the techniques that we used to tap into things that both of us didn't really realise were going on. I didn't actually realise, I wasn't aware, of Oliver's upbringing (C1- Martha) (P: 8; L: 27-29)</p>	<p>Improved understanding of addict partner's past</p>	<p>Thinking about partner's past and upbringing, and its impact on his behaviour</p>
<p>I knew his dad wasn't around much, but I didn't know the extent, and Oliver worked a lot on</p>	<p>Not excusing past for present</p>	

<p>that in therapy, not as an excuse as to why he did what he did (C1- Martha) (P:8; L: 30-32)</p>		
<p>– growing up I struggled very much, I struggled with feeling wanted (C1 -Oliver) (P: 4; L: 8 -9)</p> <p>just to put into place his past, to look at why maybe he's gone the way he's gone. (C1- Martha) (P: 8; L: 32- 33)</p>	<p>Struggles during childhood/Not feeling wanted</p>	
<p>I suppose you'd call it Victorian upbringing, and I'm quite a distant father and I found that quite difficult, I never truly had even much love for my mother, it was very distant. (C1 -Oliver) (P: 4; L: 10 -13)</p> <p>I try to be the opposite, I try to be the opposite of how my father was for me, I want to be involved, I want to be there and to be a good father and to let my children know they're loved, (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10; L: 8 -11)</p>	<p>Distant Parents while growing</p>	
<p>I try and understand the obsessions and the addiction, because I understand it is an addiction and addictions are very hard to break and I don't want Oliver to relapse, of course I don't (C1- Martha) (P: 8; L: 11-13)</p>	<p>Trying to understand addiction</p>	<p><b>Non addicted partner worries about the relapse and potential lack of trust</b></p>
<p>I wasn't sure if staying together was right, right for me, right for my children, how did I know that he wouldn't do it again? (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 26 - 29)</p>	<p>Doubts about future relapse</p>	
<p>I was in an absolute state of shock, I was in disbelief, I just couldn't believe that I hadn't picked up on something sooner. I mean, the lies, I was just full of questions, just absolute disbelief, shock, I guess I was in a state of shock. (C1- Martha) (P: 2; L: 28 - 30)</p> <p>This cannot be happening, because surely I would have picked up on this' (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 23-24)</p>	<p>Disbelief and shock</p>	<p><b>Non-addicted partner disbelief and shock</b></p>
<p>it's not the kind of thing that you can just say in one go I suppose, just took a bit of time. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 3; L: 3 -4)</p>	<p>Not easy to open up about addiction</p>	<p><b>Addicted- partner difficulty talking about sexual behaviours and problems</b></p>

<p>I desperately wanted to be honest , I never, ever wanted to hide anything from Martha (C1 - Oliver) (P: 3; L: 40 - 41)</p> <p>I still do struggle to talk about it (C1 -Oliver) (P: 3; L: 46)</p> <p>he tries to be as open and as honest as he can (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 28 - 29)</p>		
<p>I still do struggle to talk about it, I hate what I did, I hate the fact that it went on for so long and that I nearly destroyed our marriage, (C1 - Oliver) (P: 4; L4 - 6)</p> <p>why, why I have this need to just satisfy whatever urges I have (C1 -Oliver) (P: 4; L: 7 - 8)</p>	<p>Anger about addiction</p>	<p><b>Addicted partners's difficulties with hidden sexual behaviours</b></p>
<p>I'd just formed habits, I'd just formed the ways of coping, I had coping mechanisms that just weren't healthy for me (C1 -Oliver) (P: 3; L: 41 - 43)</p>	<p>Acting out as a form of coping mechanism</p>	
<p>Then there's the shame that I hadn't been stronger (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 45)</p>	<p>Shame</p>	
<p>Then there's the shame that I hadn't been stronger, that I hadn't been able to own it, to control it, to stop it (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 45-46)</p> <p>I felt like I just couldn't control it, I felt like I couldn't beat it. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 46)</p>	<p>Lack of control of the addiction/compulsion</p>	
<p>I felt again I was letting them down as well as letting Martha down, and that just made me feel as big a failure as a father as my dad was with me. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10;L: 12-14)</p>	<p>Feeling like a failure</p>	
<p>I'm dealing with that, the guilt that I feel about it (C1 - Oliver) (P: 12; L:24-25)</p>	<p>Feelings of guilt</p>	
<p>I still have those thoughts sometimes(C1 - Oliver) (P: 12; L: 42)</p>	<p>Recurring thought</p>	<p><b>Addicted partner's ongoing struggles</b></p>
<p>think are natural to a certain extent to have thoughts, but it's obviously what I do with</p>	<p>Being able to control</p>	

<p>those, and now, because I can talk about it, I'm able to control it. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 42;L:31-33)</p>		
<p>I fear the biggest thing, the biggest problem moving forward, will be me beginning to hide things again, because it's that slippery slope. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 13;L: 36-38)</p> <p>I suppose it can be a daily issue at times, particularly when I'm really stressed at work and stuff's going south, shall we say (C1 - Oliver) (P: 13; L: 40-42)</p>	<p>Fear of relapse</p>	

## Exploratory comments – couple 2

Transcript (Couple 2 – Liam and Cindy (pseudonyms))	Exploratory Comments (addict & non-addict)	Axial Codes/ Emerging Themes
<p>I was mad, I was really angry, (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2;L:33)</p> <p>for the first few weeks of finding out, he was living with us, and obviously these feelings were still incredibly raw, but I was out of control, my anger was (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7; L: 23-25)</p>	<p>Anger / anger upon discovery / disbelief</p>	<p>Emotional Impact</p>
<p>I felt absolutely betrayed by him. I didn't want him around the children, I thought he would – what he'd done was disgusting. (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2; L: 33-35)</p> <p>he's doing this online, what he was doing, you know, sneaking off to do it, it just felt so – it just felt so wrong and sordid and just disgusting. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3; L: 32-34)</p> <p>I was really disgusted and it did draw a distance (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L:34-35)</p>	<p>Feelings of disgust</p>	
<p>it was awful, and I still am still angry with everything (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L19-20)</p> <p>I still feel angry and I can't help that (couple 2 - cindy) (P:6;L: 45)</p>	<p>Persistent Anger</p>	
<p>I didn't feel good enough for him (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 26)</p>	<p>Not Feeling good enough / Questioning self-worth</p>	
<p>I just hated him, I hated everything about him in that moment. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 24-25)</p>	<p>Feelings of hate</p>	
<p>I've come to realise that I do love him still, and some days, you know, I love what we're trying to save, but other days I can't stand him (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 25-27)</p>	<p>Fluctuation of feelings towards partner</p>	

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<p>I'm working through that in my own individual therapy, and as a result of it I've started suffering with terrible panic attacks and anxiety, something I never had experienced, (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 6; L:45-48)</p>	<p>Anxiety/Panic Attacks</p>	
<p>We're not fully intimate yet, we've had a kiss, we've cuddled, you know, but we're not fully there yet. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7; L: 39-40)</p> <p>I have no sex life (couple 2 - liam) (P: 10; L: 48)</p> <p>I haven't done for 18 months (couple 2 - liam) (P: 10; L: 49)</p> <p>he's probably thinking about sex, for me that's the last thing on my mind right now. (C2 - Cindy) (P: 12; L: 1-2)</p>	<p>No intimacy</p>	<p><b>Damaged Intimacy</b></p>
<p>we haven't been sexually intimate for a long time (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 5;L: 40)</p>	<p>Not being intimate for long after discovery</p>	
<p>my distance came from many years of me trying to get my husband to open up to me about why he felt the need to keep going online, masturbating over other women, and can't he see that that would have an effect on me? (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 21-24)</p>	<p>Partner not understanding the impact on relationship</p>	
<p>it was compulsive masturbation, emotional affairs, using web cameras, paying for, you know, these websites, and it's since come out that he was, you know, going to have a massage and getting a happy ending or the benefit at the end of it. (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2;L:5-8)</p>	<p>Affairs</p>	<p><b>Exposing betrayal and feeling hurt</b></p>
<p>I know he's had a lot of emotional affairs online (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2;L:14-25)</p>	<p>Multiple Affairs</p>	
<p>because I want this to go back to normal, I want us to be living together, I want us to try and give those children a proper, normal, whatever is normal, upbringing, and I don't feel that Cindy's allowing us to do that at the moment, because she's still stuck in a rut on this. So that's how it's affected us, the relationship is – you know, it's stuck in a rut, (C2 - Liam) (P: 10; L: 32-35)</p>	<p>Relationship getting stuck</p>	
<p>we don't have a marriage at the moment, it's just a piece of paper at the moment, (C2 - Liam) (P: 10; L: 26-27)</p>	<p>Marriage falling apart / crashing</p>	

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<p>just an arrangement of childcare at the moment, that's how it feels like (C2 - Liam) (P: 10; L: 29-30)</p>		
<p>and said 'Mom, I've found this on dad's computer' (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2; L22-23)</p> <p>He would – it would, gosh, just be so shameful for the children to know that. I mean, the fact my nine year old son came across it was horrifying for me. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2; L: 35-37)</p>	<p>Children finding out</p>	<p>Exposed children to explicit messages/images</p>
<p>for the first few weeks of finding out, he was living with us, and obviously these feelings were still incredibly raw, but I was out of control, my anger was – I mean, it was not nice for the children. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7;L:23-25)</p> <p>but he's confused and upset about it, and I don't know what to say to him. (couple 2 - liam) (P: 11;L:7-8)</p>	<p>worrying about children and their emotions</p>	<p>Negative impact on childrens' wellbeing and behaviour</p>
<p>my son particularly gets cross that daddy's not at home, he's a real daddy's boy, he blames me for making daddy live on his own. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 6; L:23-25)</p>	<p>Kids being unhappy about one parent moving out</p>	
<p>after a lot of anger, yeah, on my part, but rightly so, I got him to move out because I didn't think he was setting a great example to the kids. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 35-37)</p>	<p>Living apart to protect children</p>	<p>Prioritising children</p>
<p>after a lot of anger, yeah, on my part, but rightly so, I got him to move out because I didn't think he was setting a great example to the kids. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 35-37)</p>	<p>Living apart to protect children</p>	
<p>I've been living away in a flat three miles away for the past 18 months or whatever, and I only get to see my children now at the weekends, (C2 - Liam) (P:9; L: 46-48)</p>	<p>Not being able to see children</p>	<p>Decrease in parental role on children</p>
<p>I do spoil them because I don't get to see them all the time and because I don't know what else to do, because when I've got them now I want</p>	<p>Spoiling children</p>	



Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<p>to show them that I love them, you know (C2 - Liam) (P: 9-10;L: 49-3)</p>		
<p>children and the family, you know, they ask questions, the lad does, he asks questions at times and asks why I'm not – why I'm still living in a flat, when am I going to be coming home, when am I – and he worries about it. (C2 - Liam) (P: 11;L: 3-5)</p>	<p>Children asking questions</p>	<p>Children concerns about parents</p>
<p>I just have to say that mommy and daddy are, you know, just having to work through a few things and that sometimes, you know, adults have to take time to think about things apart, (C2 - Liam) (P: 11; L: 8-10)</p>	<p>Lying to children</p>	<p>Protecting issues from children</p>
<p>the worst of it was, when I confronted him, he denied it (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2;L:39)</p> <p>He denied it (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2;L:39)</p>	<p>Denial when confronted</p>	<p>Denial of the compulsive sexual behaviours</p>
<p>In the past I've confronted him about it, because I knew he would masturbate a lot and I knew he would use these different porn sites, and I'd confronted him in the past and he said 'I haven't got a problem' (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2;L 44-47)</p>	<p>Denial of having a problem</p>	
<p>the lying about it, the lying was an even bigger, bigger breach for me, because don't stand there now I've seen the evidence and lie, categorically lie to my face, (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 40-43)</p>	<p>Denial being the biggest problem</p>	
<p>And then it got excessively worse going into our marriage, and I brought it up several times, but he assured me that there was nothing wrong. (couple 2 - cindy) (P:1;L:42-44)</p>	<p>marriage affected yet nothing wrong</p>	
<p>For a long time he was in denial, he just kept saying 'I don't have a problem, it isn't a problem, loads of men do it. I bet if you ask your friends, all of their husbands look at sites', (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L:16-19)</p>	<p>Overgeneralising the problem</p>	
<p>all my friends, you know, any of my male colleagues that I'm aware of, they all watch porn (C2 - Liam) (P: 9; L: 35-36)</p>	<p>Everyone does it - approach</p>	

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<p>part of me then felt a bit of blame, because I felt maybe I didn't give him enough love. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 19-20)</p> <p>was it something in me, was I to blame (couple 2 - cindy)(P: 4;L:36-37)</p>	<p><b>Blaming oneself for partner's actions</b></p>	<p><b>Victim's self blame and self-questioning; also sustained by perpetrator</b></p>
<p>I didn't feel good enough for him (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 26)</p>	<p><b>Not Feeling good enough / Questioning self-worth</b></p>	
<p>but the fact that he kept doing it was like he didn't care for my feelings and the fact I kept bringing it up. He didn't respect that it was bothering me and I grew very distant, and when I confronted him he used my distance as a way of why he does what he does (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2-3;L47-2)</p>	<p><b>Blaming partner for one's addictive behaviours</b></p>	
<p>it's a fact that you withdrew and that that made things a lot worse (couple 2 - Liam) (P: 3; L: 6)</p>	<p><b>Withdrawal of (non-addicted) partner making things worse</b></p>	
<p>I felt so traumatised by his sexual behaviour (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4; L: 36)</p>	<p><b>Feeling of trauma</b></p>	<p><b>Discovery of addicted partners' sexual behaviours leading to trauma</b></p>
<p>my distance came from many years of me trying to get my husband to open up to me about why he felt the need to keep going online, masturbating over other women, and can't he see that that would have an effect on me? (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 21-24)</p>	<p><b>Partner not understanding the impact on relationship</b></p>	<p><b>Distancing from addicted partner</b></p>
<p>it was our joint money that was paying for these sites, paying for prostitutes. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 5; L:26-27)</p> <p>and at the time of him using all these sites it was coming out of both of our monies (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 10;L: 14-15)</p>	<p><b>Spending money on sexual activities</b></p>	<p><b>Negative financial impact</b></p>
<p>I do still love him and I do want our marriage to work, and I'm willing to put time and I'm willing to put the effort in, but I need time. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 6;L: 38-40)</p>	<p><b>Efforts to make the relationship work</b></p>	<p><b>non-addicted partner needing time</b></p>
<p>I need time. (C2 - Cindy) (P: 11; L: 39-40)</p>	<p><b>Needing time</b></p>	

<p>it's been 18 months, but for me, some days it feels like it was only yesterday (C2 - Cindy) (P: 11; L: 41)</p> <p>a few times he's hinted at staying over and having – you know, 'Let's have a takeaway, let's have a few drinks', I'm just not ready for that, because I know what he's thinking. (C2 - Cindy) (P: 13; L: 32-35)</p> <p>I just want him to understand that it's not a quick fix and 18 months is not a long time. (C2 - Cindy) (P: 14;L: 19-20)</p>		
<p>, porn and only porn for years until I had – you know, literally the marriage had become that dead and dry that I had nothing else, that I just – then it progressed (C2 - Liam) (P: 9; L: 2-4)</p>	<p>Porn as a starting point</p>	<p>Gradual progression from porn and development of sexual compulsions</p>
<p>it's destroyed my life at present (C2 - Liam) (P: 11; L: 20)</p>	<p>Destruction of life</p>	<p>Dramatic change of life</p>
<p>it's affected lots, it's affected our whole life, everything's different, you know. The only thing that's stayed the same really is work, you know, and that's a godsend, to be honest (C2 - Liam) (P: 11; L: 11-13)</p>	<p>Discovery impacting every aspect of life</p>	
<p>he's all about timeframes, the timing, 'When can I come back in the house? When can we get intimate again? When?', you know. (C2 - Cindy)(P: 11; L: 47-49)</p>	<p>Partner wants things to be as before</p>	<p>Addicted partner's urgency to move forward and wanting the future to be better</p>
<p>but how long have I got to wait? (C2 - Liam) (P: 12; L: 25)</p> <p>this is what I mean, every time it's 'How long have I got? (C2 - Cindy) (P: 12; L: 28)</p> <p>how long have I got to wait, because that's how I'm feeling at the moment. (C2 - Liam) (P: 12;L: 31-32)</p>	<p>Impatient</p>	
<p>it's been good to be able to talk about it, it's been good to be able to, you know, express how I'm feeling as well (C2 - Liam) (P: 12; L: 44-45)</p>	<p>Expressing feelings post-discovery makes him feel good</p>	

<p>I've really found benefit from chatting to other people who are in similar situations, who have had similar issues with their relationships, and that's really helped, you know, that's really, really helped. (C2 - Liam) (P: 12-13; L: 49-2)</p>	<p>Talking to others being helpful</p>	<p>Talking with others who experience the same difficulties and family members being helpful</p>
<p>It's just very hard, because I haven't been able to be very honest with other people as to why he's not living at home, even the kids, you know. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 5;L: 9-11)</p> <p>for so long, I was so ashamed I couldn't tell anybody (c2 - cindy) (P: 11;L:45)</p> <p>. I, Robert, haven't had really anybody, I haven't told my mom and dad for fear that they would look at Liam differently, I haven't told any of my friends for fear of that. (c2- cindy) (P: 14;L: 9-12)</p> <p>I do not want other people's opinions of him ruining that. (c2 - cindy) (P: 14; L: 14-15)</p>	<p>Not being able to tell others</p>	<p>Suffering in silence</p>
<p>we decided that we was going to try and work things out, so we both agreed to having therapy, individually, but, you know, Liam needed to have that therapy if we was ever going to build any kind of bridge again (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 43-45)</p>	<p>Recognising the need for therapy</p>	<p>Attending and Finding therapy helpful</p>
<p>We also had couples therapy, and after time he did – he stopped denying and he started to take responsibility for what he had done. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L:46-47)</p>	<p>Couple therapy leading to taking responsibility</p>	
<p>We are working through things. We're in a much better place now, a year and a half down the line of having therapy, both individually and together. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 5;L:1-2)</p>	<p>Therapy leading to betterment of relationship</p>	
<p>I'm working through that in my own individual therapy, (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 6;L: 45-46)</p> <p>we are having sex therapy, which is helping, it is. (c2 - cindy) (P: 13;L:29)</p>	<p>Therapy</p>	
<p>I do love him and I do want this to work so badly, not just for me, for our children, for Liam,</p>	<p>Wanting relationship to work</p>	<p>Wanting the relationship to get better</p>

<p>but just – yeah, it just still needs time. (couple 2 - cindy) (P:7; L: 27-29)</p> <p>I want this to work (couple 2 liam) (P: 10;L:31)</p> <p>I want this to go back to normal, I want us to be living together, I want us to try and give those children a proper, normal, whatever is normal, upbringing (couple 2 - liam) (P: 10;L: 31-34)</p> <p>I want this to be right and I only want that to be with Cindy (couple 2 - liam) (P: 11;L: 1-2)</p> <p>I do want us to get back on track, of course I do, I want this marriage to work, you know, and I do love Liam (C2- Cindy) (P: 12 ;L: 16-17)</p> <p>I want us to have a family and I want us to look after the children together in the same house, I want the marriage to work, that's what I want. (C2 - Liam) (P: 13;L: 40-41)</p>		
<p>I still attend that support group, and we've had couples therapy, you know, you name it, if there is something that Cindy wanted us to do in order to make this better I've done it. I've jumped through every hoop, I've done everything I can. (C2 - Liam) (P: 11;L: 34-37)</p>	<p>Trying to make things better</p>	
<p>I've been very honest and said I'm willing to do anything to get us back to where we need to be, (C2 - Liam) (P: 13; L: 14-15)</p>	<p>Honesty/Wanting to make things work</p>	
<p>it was terrible, because there was just so much anger, and I just couldn't seem to move on from it. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4; L: 15-16)</p>	<p>Finding it hard to move on</p>	<p><b>Non addicted partner leaving the betrayal behind</b></p>
<p>I became quite obsessed with wanting to know why (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L:35)</p>	<p>Wanting to know why</p>	<p><b>Non-addicted partner obsession with trying to understand the addicted partner's compulsive behaviours</b></p>
<p>it has been useful having him out of the house. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7; L: 18)</p>	<p>Living apart being helpful</p>	<p><b>Separation being helpful</b></p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<p>Since he's gone I feel a sense of calm in myself. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7; L: 26)</p>	<p>Calmness since living apart</p>	
<p>at this stage now I am really, really frustrated (C2 - Liam) (P: 8; L: 24)</p> <p>I'm frustrated, if I'm being completely honest with you, Robert, that's the overwhelming – that's the overwhelming feeling right now. (C2 - Liam) (P: 8;L: 37-38)</p>	<p>Frustration</p>	<p><b>Being unable to change what happened</b></p>
<p>Everything's changed for me in the sense that I'm doing everything I can to put this right, everything I can to put this right, but it's just never enough (C2 - Liam) (P: 8; L: 30-32)</p> <p>just what else do I need to do?(C2 - Liam) (P: 8;L:44)</p>	<p>Efforts not being seen enough</p>	
<p>I'm frustrated, if I'm being completely honest with you, Robert, that's the overwhelming – that's the overwhelming feeling right now. (C2 - Liam) (P: 8;L: 37-38)</p>	<p>Overwhelmed</p>	
<p>I know I've done wrong, I know I made mistakes, I know I – you know, what I did was abhorrent in many ways and that it's really upset Cindy, (C2 - Liam) (P: 8;L: 25-27)</p> <p>I get that, I get that, you know, that I've hurt her (C2 - Liam) (P: 9; L: 9)</p>	<p>Acceptance of impact of compulsive behaviour on partner</p>	<p><b>Addicted partner accepting responsibility for the impact of his sexual behaviours</b></p>
<p>I've protected, I have protected, I have protected the situation and what we went through for him, because I do want this to work and I do want us to move forward, and I do not want other people's opinions of him ruining that.(C2 - Cindy) (P: 14; L: 12-15)</p>	<p>Feeling protective</p>	<p><b>Non-addicted partner feeling a need to protect addicted partner from children and others</b></p>

## Exploratory comments – couple 3

Transcript (Couple 3 –Ben and Joan (pseudonyms))	Exploratory Comments (addict & non-addict)	Axial Codes/ Emerging Themes
To say she was livid would be an understatement. She was very, very angry (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 23)	Anger / anger upon discovery / disbelief	<b>Emotional Impact</b>
The middle child, who's 16, she feels angry, she feels – she went through a period of she couldn't even – she wouldn't even talk to him. (C3 - Joan) (P: 10-11; L: 49-2)	Persistent Anger	
one minute I would be fine, I would be doing the washing up, and the next minute I would be screaming at the top of my voice at him. (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 44-46)	Mood swings / changes of emotional states	
I guess I went through an awful lot of emotions, from anger to hurt, to hate, to feeling betrayed, to guilt, to blame, (C3 - Joan) (P: 11; L: 30-31)	Mood swings / changes of emotional states	
almost like – I guess, I've only experienced it with grandparents, but like a bereavement almost (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 19-20)	Feeling of grief upon discovery	
I found it very hard at first to sit there and look Ben in the eye, but over the weeks and months I've managed it, and we hold hands occasionally if we're walking, (C3 - Joan) (P: 13; L: 2-4)	Not being intimate for long after discovery	<b>Damaged Intimacy</b>
<p>we were having this breakdown of our marriage in front of our children. (C3 - Ben) (P:3;L:27-28)</p> <p>we were having this breakdown of our marriage in front of our children. (C3 - Ben) (P:3;L:27-28)</p> <p>everything we had built together for over 20 years has just come crashing down (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 23-24)</p>	Marriage falling apart / crashing	<b>Broken/Damaged Relationship</b>
<p>It's fractured our family I think. (C3 - Ben) (P: 5; L: 32)</p> <p>it's fractured the relationship with all of us, with our girls, with us two. (C3 - Joan) (P: 12; L: 38-39)</p>	Fractured family	

<p>she saw (eldest daughter while helping with a work project on my phone) , a couple of messages that pinged up on my phone and was concerned and showed them to my wife. (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 9-10)</p> <p>we were having this breakdown of our marriage in front of our children. (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 27-28)</p> <p>I'm ashamed that they saw those messages (C3 - Ben) (P: 4; L: 19-20)</p> <p>it's affected them (children) certainly with our relationship and it's created a sort of – I suppose you would say a division in the household (...) so it's created a division almost within them as sisters (C3 - Ben) (P: 4;L: 18-23)</p> <p>she noticed some quite explicit messages coming through, to which obviously she came and told me and made me aware (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 1-2)</p>	<p>Children finding out</p>	<p>Exposed children to explicit messages/images</p>
<p>it's affected them (children) certainly with our relationship and it's created a sort of – I suppose you would say a division in the household (...) so it's created a division almost within them as sisters (C3 - Ben) (P: 4;L: 18-23)</p>	<p>Dividing children</p>	<p>Negative impact on children's' wellbeing and behaviour</p>
<p>so they're (children) still very angry and hurt about it as well (C3 -Ben) (P: 4; L: 21)</p> <p>I hope to god it hasn't and doesn't affect their ability to have trusting relationships moving forward ((C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L42-43)</p> <p>I would hate to feel that that shattered their image of what a relationship can be or should be. (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 45-46)</p> <p>My eldest two have a lot of anger towards him, my eldest I think more so because she obviously found the messages (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 11-12)</p> <p>The middle child, who's 16, she feels angry, she feels – she went through a period of she couldn't even – she wouldn't even talk to him. (C3 - Joan) (P: 10-11; L:49-2)</p>	<p>worrying about children and their emotions</p>	



<p>We're now working very hard to mend those fractures and to bring back some sort of stability for the girls (C3 - Joan) (P: 12; L: 42-43)</p>	<p>Protecting children</p>	
<p>I suppose I'm more concerned about their ability to forgive me than I am Joan's (C3 - Ben) (P: 7; L: 1-2)</p> <p>she was quite rightly angry, and it didn't help that I was quite resistant to being open with her, (C3- Ben) (P: 3; L: 28-30)</p> <p>he threw every excuse at us, telling us it was something to do with an app he'd downloaded, oh I don't know, and eventually he opened up, but it took a while (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 12-14)</p> <p>At first he went through a stage of denial (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 39)</p> <p>, it was getting ridiculous, some of the excuses that he was coming up with, and he just kept on trying to convince me that it wasn't true (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L 39-39-41)</p>	<p>Denial when confronted</p>	<p>Denial of the compulsive sexual behaviours</p>
<p>I tried to deny and deflect and claim that there was some kind of mistake and that it was all untrue, (C3 - Ben) (P: 3;L: 14-16)</p>	<p>Denial at first</p>	
<p>I tried to – very much tried to distance myself from the truth (C3 - Ben) (P: 3;L: 18-19)</p>	<p>Distance from truth</p>	
<p>felt that I couldn't be honest with myself or her for fear of losing everything, like my family and her (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 32-33)</p>	<p>Reluctance to be honest due to fear of losing family/partner</p>	
<p>, I also felt an element of guilt and blame, that it was maybe me, you know, this is why he's had to turn to having affairs and pornography and webcams and whatever else. (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 6-8)</p>	<p>Blaming oneself for partner's actions</p>	<p>Victim's self blame and self-questioning; also sustained by perpetrator</p>
<p>. I started feeling panicky, my chest would feel tight. I at times just wanted to scream and at times, if I'm honest, I wanted to just run away or not be here to deal with it (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 1-4)</p>	<p>Feeling of trauma</p>	<p>Discovery of addicted partners' sexual behaviours leading to trauma</p>
<p>Financially, I have taken some time off from work, I suppose you'd call it a sabbatical, which I felt I needed to do in order to really focus on</p>	<p>Spending money on sexual activities</p>	<p>Negative financial impact</p>

<p>this and to try and give it – and also to show to Joan that this, what we have, what she is to me, what my girls are to me, is more important than my job, anything. So I suppose, yes, there is a financial implication of that, of taking that time off, but [laughs] worth every penny, and obviously the therapy itself always has a cost, but again worth every penny. (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 26- 29)</p>		
<p>it started as pornography, you know, via online mainly, and then that led later on to webcam use, and eventually it led to engaging in or allowing myself to get embroiled in a series or a number of affairs at work, yeah, with colleagues. (C3 - Ben) (P: 2; L: 29- 32)</p>	<p>Porn as a starting point</p>	<p><b>Gradual progression from porn and development of sexual compulsions</b></p>
<p>it's started to actually strengthen our relationship, because we've been attending a couples therapy where we have – we've chatted to other couples that have been through this and then come out the other side, (C3 - Ben) (P: 5-6; L: 48-2)</p>	<p>Discovery leading to deeper connection in relationship</p>	<p><b>Positive outcome of discovery</b></p>
<p>it's difficult because you want to know from people that have been there rather than people that maybe are just looking at you and listening to you with sympathy and pity (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 7-9)</p> <p>It's been really useful to hear how other people have – what they've done proactively to make a difference, (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 14-15)</p>	<p>Benefit of speaking to people with same experiences</p>	<p><b>Talking with others who experience the same difficulties and family members being helpful</b></p>
<p>I don't know, but we've been chatting to other people and it's so difficult, isn't it, because although we've both shared with our families and our families both have, quite surprisingly in some cases, been very supportive (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 4-7)</p>	<p>Sharing with family being helpful</p>	
<p>it's been great doing the couples intensive programme because we've met other couples, and it's eradicated the shame that you feel from talking to maybe other couples who have no experience of it, so actually befriending and listening and supporting and being with other people who have gone through a similar journey has helped immensely. (C3 - Joan) (P: 11; L: 40-44)</p>	<p>Talking to others being helpful</p>	

<p>also with meeting other couples who have gone through a similar experience. (C3 - Joan) (P: 13; L: 11-12)</p> <p>it was such a relief to just be able to be open and honest and to hear their stories, and to know that we're not alone. (C3 - Joan) (P: 13; L: 15-18)</p>		
<p>At first my brother was very reluctant as to why I was still willing to give this a try, he was quite angry, he's always been very protective of me, my eldest brother, but he's come to realise that we want to make it work for our girls, for us, for our future, and our parents are the same. (C3 - Joan) (P: 12; L: 12-15)</p>	<p>Seeking support from relatives</p>	
<p>we've been doing some really useful couples therapy actually, which has been a real big step forward for us (C3- Ben) (P: 3; L: 45-46)</p> <p>since doing all the therapy I have a greater understanding of Ben, the person Ben is, I feel we engage with one another a lot more. (C3 - Joan) (P: 11; L: 31-34)</p> <p>, the therapies provided a safe space for us both to, you know, communicate with one another without it turning very sour, and we've in turn become a lot more supportive with one another.(C3 - Joan) (P: 11; L: 34-36)</p>	<p>Therapy leading to betterment of relationship</p>	<p>Attending and Finding therapy helpful</p>
<p>I'll do anything in order to try and make this right. (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 49)</p>	<p>Willing to do anything to make things rights</p>	<p>Wanting the relationship to get better</p>
<p>We're now working very hard to mend those fractures and to bring back some sort of stability for the girls (C3 - Joan) (P: 12; L: 42-43)</p>	<p>Working hard to bring back stability</p>	
<p>I had to show that I was willing to make a change (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 42)</p>	<p>Willingness to change for relationship to survive</p>	
<p>I want to be a good father and I want to be a good husband, and I wasn't before. You know, life is difficult, there are things going on, I didn't deal with the stresses and the pressures of work and general life and being a parent very well, but, you know, they're excuses (C3 - Ben) (P: 7; L:15-18)</p>	<p>Wanting to improve</p>	

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<p>I was working, working away a lot. I mean, I do have a demanding job (...) and often work unsociable hours (C3 - Ben) (P: 4; L: 44- 42)</p>	<p>Overworking</p>	<p>Struggles to deal with work stress</p>
<p>, the impact on her has been her ability to trust me, (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 23)</p>	<p>Betrayed partner's reduced ability to trust</p>	<p>Non addicted partner difficulty leaving betrayal behind</p>
<p>I was living a lie and I can reflect now that I'm responsible for that and I take – I do, I take full responsibility for that (C3 - Ben) (P: 7; L: 11-12)</p>	<p>Living a lie - Taking full responsibility</p>	<p>Addicted partner accepting responsibility for the impact of his sexual behaviours</p>
<p>I almost thought 'This is a bad dream, it's a sick joke', (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 9-10)</p> <p>I just struggled to understand how this could have gone on for as long as it did and to the extent at which it did. (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 28-29)</p>	<p>Disbelief and shock</p>	<p>Non-addicted partner disbelief and shock</p>
<p>I'm ashamed (C3 - Ben) (P: 4; L: 18)</p>	<p>Shame</p>	<p>Addicted partners's difficulties with hidden sexual behaviours</p>
<p>I wasn't really around much at home, and when I was back I was dealing with the guilt of everything that was going on and trying to make up for not being there, but not really coping with it very well and I wasn't happy (C3 - Ben) (P: 4; L: 46- 49)</p>	<p>Feelings of guilt</p>	<p></p>
<p>I feel like I'm learning to understand and try and engage with my emotions more and try to become more compassionate, more empathetic, and this process is helping me do that because it's helping me try to connect the heart and the mind, (C3 - Ben) (P: 8;L: 10-13)</p>	<p>Learning to regulate emotions</p>	<p>Addicted partner's ongoing struggles</p>
<p>I couldn't rationalise it, I couldn't control it, I felt out of my depth (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 1)</p>	<p>Not being able to rationalise</p>	<p>Non-addicted partner not being able to think clearly</p>

## Exploratory comments – couple 4

Transcript (Couple 4 –Shelly and Jamie (pseudonyms))	Exploratory Comments (addict & non-addict)	Axial Codes/ Emerging Themes
<p>I felt completely bewildered, betrayed, confused, angry, hurt, distressed, just so, so confused. Questioning myself a lot as well. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 9-11)</p> <p>, I've almost questioned my own sexuality, in that my femininity. I feel I'm not enough for him, you know, because he's basically been with everyone, and it makes you question yourself, my own self-esteem, my own confidence as a woman, I feel that's sort of been taken away from me, he's made me question that. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 35-38)</p> <p>it's reared a lot of questions about myself, myself as a woman, was I enough for him, am I enough (C4 - Shelly) (P: 7; L: 21-22)</p>	<p>Not Feeling good enough / Questioning self-worth</p>	<p>Emotional Impact</p>
<p>it's drained both of us emotionally, we're running on empty, or we have been running on empty for a long time. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 38-40)</p>	<p>Feeling drained</p>	
<p>one minute I want him to go away, the next minute I want him to stay, (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 27-28)</p>	<p>Mood swings / changes of emotional states</p>	
<p>It's damaged me, if I'm honest, emotionally, physically, mentally. I just feel very broken, I feel just constantly questioning everything that our relationship stood for. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 34-36)</p>	<p>Damaged emotionally, physically, mentally</p>	<p>Impact on health</p>
<p>We are not, and will not be for a while, we're not sexually active at all (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 45-46)</p> <p>we've not been able to be intimate for – well ever since obviously Shelley found out about it, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 42-43)</p>	<p>Not being intimate for long after discovery</p>	<p>Damaged Intimacy</p>
<p>I found out that he'd been having an affair with one of his colleagues at work, it was actually a</p>	<p>Affairs</p>	<p>Exposing betrayal and feeling hurt</p>

<p>male colleague, right. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 2; L: 18-19)</p> <p>He's been having affairs with men and women, and transsexuals as well. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 2; L: 22-23)</p>		
<p>I felt very betrayed and hurt. I wanted him, if I'm totally honest, to leave. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 43-44)</p>	<p>Feeling betrayed</p>	
<p>he works away he has been meeting with men, as I said, yeah, meeting with men, women, transsexuals. Lots of online encounters as well, prostitutes, yeah (C4 - Shelly) (P: 2; L: 33-35)</p>	<p>Meeting other people (acting out)</p>	
<p>I feel its permanently scarred our relationship, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 23)</p>	<p>Permanent damage</p>	<p><b>Broken/Damaged Relationship</b></p>
<p>It's just been really damaging, (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 26)</p>	<p>Discovery of addiction leading to damage in relationship/putting a wall between the couple</p>	
<p>we're still – we're very much trying for the sake of the children to maintain a relationship, mom and dad, so we'll still eat together, we'll still sit and watch a film together, we'll still go and spend weekends together. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L : 21-24)</p> <p>I've made a really extra special commitment to make sure we eat together like we've always done and spend weekends together, going out for walks, you know, watching a film all together, playing with the kids together, I've made that – and Jamie has as well, he was very much, you know, on the same page, that the kids have to be our priority. (C4- Shelly) (P: 7; L: 8-11)</p> <p>We've tried really hard to protect them both and to keep them separate from this, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 13; L: 13-14)</p>	<p>Protecting children</p>	<p><b>Prioritising children</b></p>
<p>I've made a really extra special commitment to make sure we eat together like we've always done and spend weekends together, going out for walks, you know, watching a film all together, playing with the kids together, I've made that – and Jamie has as well, he was very much, you know, on the same page, that the</p>	<p>emotional stability for children</p>	

<p>kids have to be our priority (C4 - Shelly) (P: 7; L: 8-11)</p>		
<p>I mean, the children are very young, which is a saving grace in all of this. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 6; L: 48)</p>	<p>Children unaware</p>	<p>Protecting issues from children</p>
<p>He never offered anything, it was always me having to really – you know, just keep banging on at him, because he would quite happily have denied it all. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 21-23)</p>	<p>Denial when confronted</p>	<p>Denial of the compulsive sexual behaviours</p>
<p>He denied everything, well the affair with Mike, so he denied, denied it all, (C4 - Shelly)(P: 3; L: 15)</p> <p>I tried to deny it (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10; L: 9)</p>	<p>Denial at first</p>	
<p>. Then he eventually, eventually, after a while and after obviously me telling him about the private investigator, he came clean about everything. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 35-37)</p>	<p>Acknowledgment of betrayal after seeing evidence</p>	
<p>is he gay?, and then I was like 'But he's also having encounters with women, he may be bisexual'. He assured me, and he still does, that he's heterosexual and that it's more fantasy based. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3-4; L: 49-3)</p>	<p>Just a fantasy</p>	
<p>I felt completely bewildered, betrayed, confused, angry, hurt, distressed, just so, so confused. Questioning myself a lot as well. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 9-11)</p> <p>, I've almost questioned my own sexuality, in that my femininity. I feel I'm not enough for him, you know, because he's basically been with everyone, and it makes you question yourself, my own self-esteem, my own confidence as a woman, I feel that's sort of been taken away from me, he's made me question that. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 35-38)</p> <p>it's reared a lot of questions about myself, myself as a woman, was I enough for him, am I enough (C4 - Shelly) (P: 7; L: 21-22)</p>	<p>Not Feeling good enough / Questioning self-worth</p>	<p>Victim's self blame and self-questioning; also sustained by perpetrator</p>
<p>he's also spent an extortionate amount of money, and we've agreed and he's agreed that I want a full disclosure on everything before we</p>	<p>Spending money on sexual activities</p>	<p>Negative financial impact</p>

<p>can begin to get back what we had, if we ever can. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 28-30)</p> <p>I mean, huge. He has spent an extortionate amount of money. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 47)</p> <p>we have a joint account and there's a lot of money that I spent that was ours, which I've used to indulge myself in the past, in the past few years (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 48-49)</p> <p>in retrospect, it makes me even more ashamed, the amount, because there's money there that could have gone towards so many other things that we want for our children and our future. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 12; L: 46-48)</p>		
<p>we kind of touch, we might hold hands occasionally if we're out, but it's still, yeah, very early days. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 6; L: 38-39)</p>	<p>Needing time</p>	<p>non-addicted partner needing time</p>
<p>At first Jamie said that was it and there was nobody else, but since he's disclosed that he's been using internet porn, masturbation, compulsive masturbation, male and female porn. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 2; L: 19-22)</p> <p>He's been visiting lots of websites, he does these games I think, I didn't know much about them, to be honest, until now, you know, where it's very heightened sexual activity, very graphic material online, books, pretty much everything. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 2; L: 23-26)</p> <p>looking at male and female and also other types of pornography, transgender pornography. It eventually led to me meeting up with people in various ways, of both sexes, and sometimes paying for sex, other times just meeting up just on adult websites, that kind of thing, and also an affair that I had, one main affair with a co-worker. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 9; L: 36-40)</p>	<p>Porn as a starting point</p>	<p>Gradual progression from porn and development of sexual compulsions</p>
<p>it's impacted in the sense of how we live day-to-day, it's impacted in the sense of our physical intimacy, and obviously on trust, (c4 - Jamie) (P: 11; 45-46)</p>	<p>Discovery impacting every aspect of life</p>	<p>Dramatic change of life</p>
<p>It's just been really damaging, (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 26)</p>	<p>Discovery of addiction leading to damage in relationship/putting a wall between the couple</p>	



Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<p>he would like to get back to a relationship, obviously a sexual relationship. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 25-26)</p>	<p>Partner wants things to be as before</p>	<p>Addicted partner's urgency to move forward and wanting the future to be better</p>
<p>I've just learnt to, now, just not keep bringing it up I guess and not keep fixating and obsessing about what's gone on in the past, and just try, as hard as it is some days, to look to the future. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 15; L: 20-23)</p>	<p>Looking into the future</p>	
<p>much more honest relationship than what we ever had (C4 - Shelly) (P: 7; L: 44-45)</p> <p>there's an honesty there, and for me there's a real sense of – there's a strange sense of happiness that she knows me and that she's still willing to fight for the marriage and to be with me, which I greatly, greatly appreciate and love her for. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 33-36)</p>	<p>Discovery leading to honesty</p>	<p>Positive outcome of discovery</p>
<p>it's helped me to become a more open person and, particularly with Shelley, to be more honest with her. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 13; L: 32-34)</p>	<p>Honesty/Improvements to relationship after discovery</p>	
<p>I suppose for me, once everything came out I was finally completely honest. I feel I suppose now, I feel closer to Shelley than ever before, I feel like she knows the real me now rather than just the person that she knew before who had lots of secrets. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 26-29)</p>	<p>Feeling closer now</p>	
<p>I suppose I felt a little bit of relief, Robert, a little bit of relief, just the fact that I suppose she's found out, there was a little bit of that, because I'd kind of known it was going to happen at some point, you know. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10-11; L: 47-1)</p>	<p>Positive effects of discovery</p>	
<p>I find great comfort in talking to others who have been through a similar journey. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 8; L: 1-2)</p> <p>just having the opportunity to talk with other people who have been through it, because I haven't spoken to anybody who knows me. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 9; L: 1-3)</p>	<p>Talking to others being helpful</p>	<p>Talking with others who experience the same difficulties and family members being helpful</p>

<p>I think if it wasn't for this, if it wasn't for the fact that I've had the opportunity to get help with this and to talk to someone and to receive non-judgemental help and advice, just someone who would listen, that I think eventually I would have probably, you know – oh god knows, but I worry about where my future was going (C4-Jamie) (P: 15; L: 5-8)</p>		
<p>I haven't spoken to anybody in my family about what's gone on, purely because I feel – I feel a bit ashamed, I feel guilty, embarrassed. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 6; L: 12-13)</p> <p>I don't feel like I've got anybody that I can – that is close enough, even close friends I've not been able to disclose this to. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 6; L: 19-20)</p>	<p>Not being able to tell others</p>	<p>Suffering in silence</p>
<p>my family are still totally oblivious. That has been incredibly hard. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 6; L: 14-15)</p>	<p>Not sharing with family</p>	
<p>So we've started doing a sex therapy programme, which is actually very – you know, it's been really helpful because it kind of takes you right the way back to the very basics of just sitting, looking at one another, eye contact. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 8; L: 38-40)</p>	<p>Therapy leading to betterment of relationship</p>	<p>Attending and Finding therapy helpful</p>
<p>Jamie's doing incredibly well with the therapy he's having, the 12 steps. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 46-47)</p>	<p>Therapy – doing well</p>	
<p>the couples therapy is also helping, Jamie has a sponsor, as I said, he's doing the 12 steps and he's made amazing progress. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 8; L: 8-9)</p>	<p>Help of therapy</p>	
<p>My job is always high pressured and I've always got – you know, there's always stress and pressure related to that, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 1; L: 10-13)</p>	<p>Stressful job</p>	<p>Struggles to deal with work stress</p>
<p>I probably was too work focused before, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 13; L: 27)</p>	<p>Overworking</p>	
<p>he wasn't very forthcoming at all about, you know, the extent of everything that had happened and gone on, and I didn't trust him. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 30-31)</p>	<p>Betrayed partner's reduced ability to trust</p>	<p>Non addicted partner leaving the betrayal behind</p>

<p>it impacted her because obviously I'd broke her heart and I've never regained her trust since, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10; L: 40-41)</p>		
<p>, I suppose this has always been a part of who I am (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 16)</p>	<p>Identifying with addiction</p>	<p><b>Addicted partner accepting responsibility for the impact of his sexual behaviours</b></p>
<p>I also learnt a little bit about, you know, through the therapy, his childhood and the relationship he had with his mom, which I wasn't aware of. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 8-10)</p>	<p>Distant Parents while growing</p>	<p><b>Thinking about partner's past and upbringing, and its impact on his behaviour</b></p>
<p>I felt ashamed and I felt guilty, they were my two biggest things (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10; L: 46)</p> <p>I found it difficult for a long time to look at Shelley in the eyes directly after all this came out, because I felt so ashamed. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 14; L: 38-39)</p>	<p>Shame</p>	<p><b>Addicted partners' difficulties with hidden sexual behaviours</b></p>
<p>– I can't believe this is where I am, I can't believe that this has happened, I can't believe that we've got to this stage, I can't believe that this is where I find myself now(C4 - Jamie) (P: 12; L: 16-18)</p>	<p>Difficulty believing in what happened</p>	
<p>– I can't believe this is where I am, I can't believe that this has happened, I can't believe that we've got to this stage, I can't believe that this is where I find myself now(C4 - Jamie) (P: 12; L: 16-18)</p>	<p>Doubts about partner's honesty</p>	<p><b>Addicted partner's loss of credibility in the eyes of the partner</b></p>
<p>– I can't believe this is where I am, I can't believe that this has happened, I can't believe that we've got to this stage, I can't believe that this is where I find myself now(C4 - Jamie) (P: 12; L: 16-18)</p>	<p>Loss of confidence</p>	
<p>I was so confused, because, to my knowledge, my husband, the man I'd known for seven years, was heterosexual, (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L 5-7)</p> <p>I felt completely bewildered, betrayed, confused, angry, hurt, distressed, just so, so confused. Questioning myself a lot as well. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 9-11)</p>	<p>Feeling confused</p>	<p><b>Non-addicted partner not being able to think clearly</b></p>

## Exploratory comments – couple 5

Transcript (Couple 5 – Eva and Noel (pseudonyms))	Exploratory Comments (addict & non-addict)	Axial Codes/ Emerging Themes
I'm very angry (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 34)	Persistent Anger	Emotional Impact
it's exhausting and it's the constant questioning, and I'm questioning myself constantly. (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 27-28)	Not Feeling good enough / Questioning self-worth	
it's had a deep emotional impact on me (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 44)	Deep Emotional impact	
she'd had a history of depression, I think it's safe to say it threw her into quite a dark place (C5 - Noel)	Going to the dark place due to the discovery	
she'd had a history of depression, I think it's safe to say it threw her into quite a dark place (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 44-45)	Breaking heart	
There isn't one at all at the moment (C5 - Eva) (P: 4; L: 20)	No intimacy	Damaged Intimacy
Communication with us is amicable, as I've said, but it's strained at times, strained, there's still very much a presence of the trauma and how broken I feel I am and our relationship is (C5 - Eva) (P: 5; L: 21-23)	Feeling relationship is broken	Broken/Damaged Relationship
but the one thing we do do well together is we try and protect our children and love our children, (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 28-29)	Protecting children	Prioritising children
I denied everything originally (...), hoped it would go away (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 34-35)	Denial at first	
after a lot of pushing and prodding and poking around, Noel eventually confessed. (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 14-15)	Acknowledgment of betrayal after seeing evidence	
it's exhausting and it's the constant questioning, and I'm questioning myself constantly. (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 27-28)	Not Feeling good enough / Questioning self-worth	Victim's self blame and self-questioning; also sustained by perpetrator
Just I guess it was incredibly traumatic. (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 21)	Feeling of trauma	Discovery of addicted partners' sexual behaviours leading to trauma

<p>Yeah, it's been hard, it's been very difficult, and it's just been so traumatic, the whole upheaval of everything, (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 25-26)</p> <p>Communication with us is amicable, as I've said, but it's strained at times, strained, there's still very much a presence of the trauma and how broken I feel I am and our relationship is (C5-Eva) (P: 5; L: 21-23)</p> <p>Communication with us is amicable, as I've said, but it's strained at times, strained, there's still very much a presence of the trauma and how broken I feel I am and our relationship is (C5-Eva) (P: 5; L: 21-23)</p>		
<p>I hope we can and I've seen change and I think that things are getting better, but at the moment, the way – with me not being in the home, with the current setup, just being weekends and then Eva not being there, it's very difficult outside of the therapy itself to build much (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 19-23)</p>	<p>Difficulties to reconnect as a couple</p>	<p><b>Distancing from addicted partner</b></p>
<p>It's created a barrier which, at the moment, I don't know if we can get over, (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 18-19)</p>	<p>A barrier between couple</p>	
<p>is response was he became very cold and quite withdrawn. (C5- Eva) (P: 3; L: 35-36)</p>	<p>Addicted partner becoming cold and withdrawn post discovery</p>	
<p>He's spent an absolute fortune on these online sites, these pornography sites, prostitutes, having affairs with prostitutes, taking women out, and this all comes at a cost. (C5 - Eva) (P: 4; L: 4-7)</p> <p>she wanted to know obviously why, why there was significant debt on both cards (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 32-33)</p> <p>Huge debt (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 33)</p>	<p>Spending money on sexual activities</p>	<p><b>Negative financial impact</b></p>
<p>obviously putting things in place which are helping us through this, but it's by no means</p>	<p>Needing time</p>	<p><b>non-addicted partner needing time</b></p>

fixed and we're a very long way from that (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 47-48)		
the behaviour itself, which started around about 10 years ago, originally started out with a simple usage of pornography and then eventually graduated into using prostitutes on a regular basis. (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 12-14)	Porn as a starting point	Gradual progression from porn and development of sexual compulsions
I feel that I am really trying to do everything possible, I possibly can, to create a better future for us, to do everything I can to make tomorrow a better day than today (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 43-45)  . I want us to live in the future, not in the past (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 45)	Looking into the future	Addicted partner's urgency to move forward and wanting the future to be better
, I feel like I'm living a more honest life (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 39)	Discovery leads to feeling honest	Positive outcome of discovery
I was supported by them to do it was really transformative and really helpful. (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 2-3)	Sharing with family being helpful	Talking with others who experience the same difficulties and family members being helpful
So we both want the marriage to continue and to work, so we're just trying to be honest with one another. (C5 - Eva) (P: 6; L: 23-24)	Honesty/Wanting to make things work	Wanting the relationship to get better
I've done most of what my wife has asked me to do at every stage. (C5 - Noel) (P: 11; L: 5-6)	Did what partner asked to do	
, I'm very guilty of being too work centric (...) because of the pressures that are placed upon me. I live in a very unstable and fluid workstream where there's constant change, there's constant challenge, there's constant pressure (C5 - Noel) (P: 8; L: 35-38)	focused on work	Struggles to deal with work stress
I know he's had a lot of stresses at work (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 41-42)	Overworking	
I feel better equipped to deal and cope with the pressures that I feel sometimes from work (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 40-41)	Feel better equipped	
An easy whipping stick which can be used against me at time, but then I suppose I do deserve that. (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 33-34)	Issues used against the addict	Non addicted partner leaving the betrayal behind

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

Well it impacted it massively, because – well, for me, I just couldn't get passed it for a long time, (C5- Eva) (P: 3; L: 21-22)	Couldn't get over it	
. I mean, it made me become very obsessive in my behaviour, you know, compulsively feeling the need to speak to the credit card company, to look online at internet banking. (C5- Eva) (P: 2; L: 24-26)	Becoming obsessive	
I felt I had that right to know everything(C5- Eva) (P: 3; L: 38)	Feeling the right to know	
I would sort of ruminate an awful lot because I would want to know, and I know that's been an issue for Noel because he doesn't like me keep bringing back the past, and it's caused a lot of issues (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 27-29)	Rumination	<b>non-addicted partner thinking about past, what happened and what could have happened</b>
the minute I draw reference to or I bring anything up hell breaks loose, he doesn't want to talk about it, he shuts down, it causes a lot of arguments. (C5- Eva) (P: 5; L: 4-6)	Still sensitive about the topic of addiction	
I know Noel, with his father, he had a lot of issues there growing up, his father not being present, often away a lot of the time and I believe his father conducted many affairs from what his mom has said. (C5 - Eva) (P: 49-50; L: 49-2)	Distant Parents while growing	<b>Thinking about partner's past and upbringing, and its impact on his behaviour</b>
Deep shame that I was not able to control this, that it in a sense bettered me, in the sense it took over (C5 - Noel) (P: 10;; L: 28-29)	Shame	<b>Addicted partners's difficulties with hidden sexual behaviours</b>
I knew in the back of my mind that I was out of control but I could not – I couldn't find a way to get back on top, I couldn't find a way to regain that control, I couldn't find a way out of it (C5 - Noel) (P: 8; L: 25-27)	Lack of control of the addiction/compulsion	
I was very confused, just so, so confused, and hurt and angry (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 21-22)	Feeling confused	<b>Non-addicted partner not being able to think clearly</b>

## Appendix J



<b>Couple 1</b>						<b>CLUSTER/HIGHER LEVEL THEME</b>					
		<b>(ADDICT)</b>		<b>(PARTNER)</b>		<b>(COUPLE)</b>		<b>CHILDREN</b>		<b>RELATIONSHIP:</b>	
		<p>Addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Progression of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour (SA&amp;CSB) and the impact on self and others</p>		<p>Non-addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Emotional pain through discovery</p>		<p>Fractured relationship</p>		<p>Impact of Sexual Addiction &amp; compulsive sexual behaviours on children</p>		<p>Positive outcomes of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour</p>	
<b>Theme overview</b>		<p>Addicts described how their behaviour initially started with pornography and escalated into more problematic sexual behaviours, impacting self and relationship.</p>		<p>Non addicted partner's discovery of SA&amp;CSB led to emotional reactions, such as, feeling of betrayal, and confusion about partner's denial.</p>		<p>This theme focuses on the consequences of SA&amp;CSB for the couple including damaged attachment, lack of sexual intimacy, and financial strain</p>		<p>Both partners expressed concerns about the potential impact of SA&amp;CSB on children. Some couples shared their concerns for their children being exposed to SA&amp;CSB, and the</p>		<p>After the discovery of SA&amp;CSB, the couple talks of positive communication that occurred as a result of experiencing highly challenging life crises. Some addicts found great sense of relief when their secret was discovered.</p>	

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

				need to protect their children.	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Gradual progression of SA&amp;CSB and lack of control</i>	<i>Discovery: shock, anger, and partner's denial</i>	Damaged attachment	<i>Concern for children</i>	<i>Sense of relief</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>it mainly started around the use of pornography, and then that graduated onto webcams and conversations with girls and ladies. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 2; L: 34 - 36)</p> <p>So I suppose you'd call it compulsive or regular masturbation, I used a lot of pornography, and then webcams, and then that went on to massages and, you know, certain type of massages of course, which then led on to eventually visiting prostitutes and, you know, having a sense of regular relations with certain</p>	<p>I was in an absolute state of shock, I was in disbelief, I just couldn't believe that I hadn't picked up on something sooner. I mean, the lies, I was just full of questions, just absolute disbelief, shock, I guess I was in a state of shock. (C1- Martha) (P: 2; L: 28 - 30)</p> <p>This cannot be happening, because surely I would have</p>	<p>before find out what had happened I was very – you know, I was a very loving, warm, passionate I thought, person, and since this I've gone completely – I went, should I say, completely the other way (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 3-5)</p> <p>Even just, you know, watching television sometimes when the</p>	<p>I'm really grateful to her that she hasn't allowed her pain to affect how she deals with the children (C1- Oliver) (P: 11; L: 34-35)</p> <p>we've got four children together as well, so I was deeply concerned about them and the</p>	<p>it sounds crazy really I suppose, but I had a tremendous sense of relief at first when she found out about it, I'd not had the courage to deal with it, to talk to her about it for years, and I desperately wanted to. (C1 -Oliver) (P: 2; L: 44 - 46)</p> <p>a tremendous sense of relief that not – and tremendous sense of gratitude that Martha</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>prostitutes (C1 - Oliver) (P: 6; L: 45 - 48)</p> <p>I'd just formed habits, I'd just formed the ways of coping, I had coping mechanisms that just weren't healthy for me (C1 - Oliver) (P: 3; L: 41 - 43)</p> <p>Then there's the shame that I hadn't been stronger (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 45)</p> <p>Then there's the shame that I hadn't been stronger, that I hadn't been able to own it, to control it, to stop it (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 45-46)</p> <p>I felt like I just couldn't control it, I felt like I couldn't beat it. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 46)</p>	<p>picked up on this' (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 23-24)</p> <p>At first he sort of tried to deny it, but obviously then he opened up about it. (C1- Martha) (P: 2; L: 9 - 10)</p>	<p>children have gone to bed or they're out at friends houses, sometimes I find I can't – I can't bring myself to snuggle up to him like we used to and watch a film together (C1- Martha) (P:7; L: 8-11)</p>	<p>impact that this would have (C1 – Oliver) (P:3, L: 12- 14)</p> <p>In terms of the children, our youngest, they don't know the extent. Our older son is aware but not the full details. (...), I've tried to protect them. (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 22 - 26)</p> <p>I wasn't sure if staying together was right, right for me, right for my children, how did I know that he wouldn't do it again? (C1-</p>	<p>has forgiven me for it (C1 - Oliver) (P: 4; L: 10 - 11)</p> <p>initially it was a mixture of that relief, horrible, horrible guilt, and shame, because of what I had been doing, what I'd hidden and the lies that I'd told. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 16 - 18)</p> <p>Then just panic I suppose because, you know, the last thing I want and the last thing I wanted was to lose Martha and, you know, for it to affect the family. So it was a mixture of relief leading into panic, and then just gradually, gradually over time, I was able to</p>
--	--	---	---	---	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>I still have those thoughts sometimes(C1 - Oliver) (P: 12; L: 42)</p> <p>I think are natural to a certain extent to have thoughts, but it's obviously what I do with those, and now, because I can talk about it, I'm able to control it. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 42;L:31-33)</p> <p>I fear the biggest thing, the biggest problem moving forward, will be me beginning to hide things again, because it's that slippery slope. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 13;L: 36-38)</p> <p>I suppose it can be a daily issue at times, particularly when I'm really stressed at work and stuff's going south, shall we say (C1 - Oliver) (P: 13; L: 40-42)</p> <p>So I suppose you'd call it compulsive or regular masturbation, I used a lot</p>			<p>Martha) (P: 3; L: 26 - 29)</p> <p>I felt again I was letting them down as well as letting Martha down, and that just made me feel as big a failure as a father as my dad was with me. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10;L: 12-14)</p> <p>In terms of the children, our youngest, they don't know the extent. Our older son is aware but not the full details.</p>	<p>tell her more. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 2-3; L: 48-51)</p>
--	---	--	--	---	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	of pornography, and then webcams, and then that went on to massages and, you know, certain type of massages of course, which then led on to eventually visiting prostitutes and, you know, having a sense of regular relations with certain prostitutes (C1 - Oliver) (P: 6; L: 45 - 48)			(C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 22-23)	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Recognising the impact of SA&amp;CSB on self and relationship</i>	<i>Facing SA&amp;CSB: Emotional reactions</i>	<i>Lack of sexual intimacy after discovery</i>	<i>Change in dynamics</i>	<i>Improved communication</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>I'm dealing with that, the guilt that I feel about it (C1 - Oliver) (P: 12; L:24-25)</p> <p>I felt again I was letting them down as well as letting Martha down, and that just made me feel as big a failure as a father as my dad was with me. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10;L: 12-14)</p>	I struggled an awful lot to come to terms with what had happened, you know. I felt like this huge – I felt like it was a huge trauma in my life, and, you know, I wasn't sure if staying together was right, right for me, right for my children, how did I know that he wouldn't do it again	<p>I've lost a lot of my confidence in that area as a result of everything that's gone on (C1- Martha) (P: 13; L: 13 - 14)</p> <p>– it's taken a good couple of years to get intimate again with Oliver on a sexual level.</p>	Impacted the home because obviously it caused a lot of anguish in the home, which, you know, as Martha's alluded to it, was picked up on by certainly the older children.	I guess it sort of helped us to kind of communicate with one another and enabled me to kind of stop, stop fixating on detail and just my whole reality, the man I'd known for so long and the world I'd known for so long, had come crashing down, and it just enabled us to be able to

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>I mean, it broke my heart to see her so broken by this, and that was really hard, that was really hard to deal with because I knew I was the – there's no one else to blame for that, I was the cause of what she was going through (C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 42 - 45)</p> <p>it pretty much crippled the relationship (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10; L: 45)</p> <p>I desperately wanted to be honest , I never, ever wanted to hide anything from Martha (C1 -Oliver) (P: 3; L: 40 - 41)</p> <p>I still do struggle to talk about it, I hate what I did, I hate the fact that it went on for so long and that I nearly destroyed our marriage, (C1 -Oliver) (P: 4; L4 - 6)</p>	<p>(C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 24-27)</p> <p>you start to think 'Is it me? Am I not attractive any more (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 45 - 46)</p> <p>we've got four children together, we've built a life, we had a wonderful life, and was I not enough for him? You know, all of that I questioned for a very, very long time. (C1- Martha) (P: 4; L: 39 - 41)</p>	<p>(C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 6- 7)</p> <p>for a long time I struggled with getting intimate with Oliver. I just couldn't shift the thought that I maybe wasn't enough for him (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 46 - 47)</p>	<p>(C1 - Oliver) (P: 9; L: 33 - 35)</p> <p>but certainly the older ones, you know, there was a few difficult questions, and again that felt really difficult (P: 9; L: 40-42)</p> <p>and I don't want the children to look at him differently (C1- Martha) (P: 6; L: 26)</p>	<p>communicate (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 15 - 19)</p> <p>the man I'd known for so long and the world I'd known for so long, had come crashing down, and it just enabled us to be able to communicate (C1- Martha) (P: 3; L: 17 - 19)</p> <p>I feel like we're closer and stronger than we've ever been in our marriage. I suppose it's because the whole discovery of my addiction and what I'd done forced me to be honest (C1 -Oliver) (P: 3; L: 38 - 41)</p> <p>It's made me feel a lot more honest and it's</p>
--	---	---	--	--	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>I'm dealing with that, the guilt that I feel about it (C1 - Oliver) (P: 12; L:24-25)</p> <p>and it put a huge barrier up between us because it's always there, it doesn't go away (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10;L: 24-25)</p>			<p>enabled me to be honest with myself and with Martha, and that for me is the biggest and the most important of the impacts (C1 - Oliver) (P: 12; L: 21-23)</p> <p>I suppose she had this picture of me that wasn't real, and now I feel that our love is stronger and I feel that it's far more honest and we're far more transparent with each other (C1 - Oliver) (P: 14; L: 34-36)</p> <p>Then Oliver would openly tell me things, I would open up to him, and it built a very strong foundation for</p>
--	---	--	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

					<p>us to move forward (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 47 - 49)</p> <p>– in the early days of kind of being reborn I suppose, now, and it feels a lot more honest (C1 - Oliver) (P: 11;L:1-3)</p> <p>I'm trying not to do that because it isn't healthy, and we are in a very, very good place. I feel Oliver is now much more open with me, he's honest, and I feel I know him on a much deeper level, which I thought I knew before but actually I didn't (C1- Martha) (P: 28; L: 28 - 31)</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--



Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Wanting the future to be better</i>	<i>Long lasting impact</i>	<i>Financial consequences</i>	<i>Children being exposed to SA&amp;CSB</i>	<i>Understanding and healing</i>
<b>Quote</b>		<p>So in terms of emotions, you know, we're still processing, we're still together and we have worked through the problems through couples and individual therapy, and that has helped (C1-Martha) (P: 3; L: 28 - 31)</p> <p>when he says he's got to work late or he's got to go to a meeting, my little brain switches immediately to 'Is he telling me the truth?'</p>	<p>Financially, no. I mean, you know, apart from paying for all the therapy and all the different programmes we've been through, but to be honest, I'd pay that, I'd pay twice what I paid to get to where we are now, you know. So no, it's not had any long-lasting financial impact on us. (C1 – Oliver) (P:11; L: 1-5)</p>		<p>So about a year ago we started having – sounds very cliché, I know, but we started having date nights, so going back to like we were when we first met, when we were, you know, without kids, and we have – once a fortnight we will go for a meal, we will go out somewhere, something we both enjoy doing, and that has really helped, because it's just us, we haven't got the distraction of work or kids or home life, and that has helped me an awful lot on an intimate level because it's kind</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>(C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 45 - 47)</p> <p>in terms of the future, you know, it's not as easy as just being able to turn a switch and us go back to normal,(C1 - Martha) (P 14; L: 10-11)</p> <p>everything I truly believed and I thought, that we'd built up, had been destroyed in just one discovery of that message on the phone. (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 13 - 14)</p> <p>we take each day as it comes and there is still</p>		<p>of re-lit the flame I guess in some ways. Why I first was attracted to Oliver, and it feels like we've both been kind of stripped back of all of our secrets, our inhibitions, our worries, everything, and we're starting over. (C1 - Martha) (P: 8; L: 33-45)</p> <p>, it was only ever the sex, it was very much the sex, whereas now I really feel that we're starting to be able to reclaim the act as something which is more intimate and more honest and more reflective of the way I feel about Martha, and that's really - that's something which I'm really thankful for, and I</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>a lot of hurt, I'm not going to lie, I can't just switch it off, (C1- Martha) (P: 5; L: 20 - 23)</p> <p>every discussion, every time, you know, it kind of comes up, you know, because we bicker sometimes and you throw things back in one another's faces a little , (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 26- 28)</p>		<p>want that to be – I want that to be the norm (C1 - Oliver) (P: 11; L: 37 - 41)</p> <p>Then Oliver would openly tell me things, I would open up to him, and it built a very strong foundation for us to move forward (C1- Martha) (P: 7; L: 47 - 49)</p> <p>it gave me an opportunity to see, to redefine what was important, and to see that actually the emotional connection between us was more important (C1 - Oliver) (P: 13;L:25-26)</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

					<p>before, for me it was almost out of a sense of guilt and obligation, whereas now there's a real, genuine desire and want for me to be close to Martha and show her that she's the only one(C1 - Oliver) (P: 11;L:3-6)</p> <p>I'm really grateful for her, and it's made me love her more and be so grateful for what we have. (C1 - Oliver) (P: 12;L:28-29)</p> <p>it was only ever the sex, it was very much the sex, whereas now I really feel that we're starting to be able to reclaim the act as something which is more intimate and</p>
--	--	--	--	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

					<p>more honest and more reflective of the way I feel about Martha, and that's really – that's something which I'm really thankful for, and I want that to be – I want that to be the norm (C1 - Oliver) (P: 11; L: 37 - 41)</p> <p>What I found really useful was the techniques that we used to tap into things that both of us didn't really realise were going on. I didn't actually realise, I wasn't aware, of Oliver's upbringing (C1-Martha) (P: 8; L: 27-29)</p> <p>just to put into place his past, to look at why maybe he's gone the</p>
--	--	--	--	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

					<p>way he's gone. (C1- Martha) (P: 8; L: 32- 33)</p> <p>I try to be the opposite, I try to be the opposite of how my father was for me, I want to be involved, I want to be there and to be a good father and to let my children know they're loved, (C1 - Oliver) (P: 10; L: 8 -11)</p> <p>I try and understand the obsessions and the addiction, because I understand it is an addiction and addictions are very hard to break and I don't want Oliver to relapse, of course I don't (C1- Martha) (P: 8; L: 11-13)</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

Couple 2	CLUSTER/HIGHER LEVEL THEME				
	(ADDICT)	(PARTNER)	(COUPLE)	CHILDREN	RELATIONSHIP:
<b>Theme overview</b>	<p>Addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Progression of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour (SA&amp;CSB) and the impact on self and others</p>	<p>Non-addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Emotional pain through discovery</p>	<p>Fractured relationship</p>	<p>Impact of Sexual Addiction &amp; compulsive sexual behaviours on children</p>	<p>Positive outcomes of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour</p>
	<p>Addicts described how their behaviour initially started with pornography and escalated into more problematic sexual behaviours, impacting self and relationship.</p>	<p>Non addicted partner's discovery of SA&amp;CSB led to emotional reactions, such as, feeling of betrayal, and confusion about partner's denial.</p>	<p>This theme focuses on the consequences of SA&amp;CSB for the couple including damaged attachment, lack of sexual intimacy, and financial strain</p>	<p>Both partners expressed concerns about the potential impact of SA&amp;CSB on children. Some couples shared their concerns for their children being exposed to</p>	<p>After the discovery of CSB, the couple talks of positive communication that occurred as a result of experiencing highly challenging life crises. Some addicts found great sense of relief when their secret was discovered.</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

				CSB, and the need to protect their children.	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Graduate progression of SA&amp;CSB and lack of control</i>	<i>Discovery: shock, anger, and partner's denial</i>	Damaged attachment	<i>Concern for children</i>	<i>Sense of relief</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>all my friends, you know, any of my male colleagues that I'm aware of, they all watch porn (C2 - Liam) (P: 9; L: 35-36)</p> <p>porn and only porn for years until I had – you know, literally the marriage had become that dead and dry that I had nothing else, that I just – then it progressed (C2 - Liam) (P: 9; L: 2-4)</p>	<p>I was mad, I was really angry, (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2;L:33)</p> <p>for the first few weeks of finding out, he was living with us, and obviously these feelings were still incredibly raw, but I was out of control, my anger was (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7; L: 23-25)</p>	<p>my distance came from many years of me trying to get my husband to open up to me about why he felt the need to keep going online, masturbating over other women, and can't he see that that would have an effect on me? (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 21-24)</p> <p>we don't have a marriage at the moment, it's just a piece of paper at the</p>	<p>but he's confused and upset about it, and I don't know what to say to him. (couple 2 - liam) (P: 11;L:7-8)</p> <p>after a lot of anger, yeah, on my part, but rightly so, I got him to move out because I</p>	<p>it's been good to be able to talk about it, it's been good to be able to, you know, express how I'm feeling as well (C2 - Liam) (P: 12; L: 44-45)</p>



Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>I felt absolutely betrayed by him. I didn't want him around the children, I thought he would – what he'd done was disgusting. (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2; L: 33-35)</p> <p>he's doing this online, what he was doing, you know, sneaking off to do it, it just felt so – it just felt so wrong and sordid and just disgusting. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3; L: 32-34)</p> <p>I was really disgusted and it did draw a distance (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L:34-35)</p>	<p>moment, (C2 - Liam) (P: 10; L: 26-27)</p>	<p>didn't think he was setting a great example to the kids. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 35-37)</p> <p>I just have to say that mommy and daddy are, you know, just having to work through a few things and that sometimes, you know, adults have to take time to think about things apart, (C2 - Liam) (P: 11; L: 8-10)</p>	
--	--	---	--	--	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>I didn't feel good enough for him (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L: 26)</p> <p>I just hated him, I hated everything about him in that moment. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 24-25)</p> <p>the worst of it was, when I confronted him, he denied it (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2;L:39)</p> <p>He denied it (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2;L:39)</p> <p>In the past I've confronted him about it, because I knew he would masturbate a lot and I knew he would</p>		<p>I was out of control, my anger was – I mean, it was not nice for the children. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7;L:23-25)</p> <p>do love him and I do want this to work so badly, not just for me, for our children, for Liam, but just – yeah, it just still needs time. (couple 2 - cindy) (P:7; L: 27-29)</p> <p>I want this to go back to normal, I want</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>use these different porn sites, and I'd confronted him in the past and he said 'I haven't got a problem' (couple 2 - cindy) (P:2;L: 44-47)</p> <p>the lying about it, the lying was an even bigger, bigger breach for me, because don't stand there now I've seen the evidence and lie, categorically lie to my face, (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 40-43)</p> <p>And then it got excessively worse going into our marriage, and I brought it up several times, but he assured me that there was</p>		<p>us to be living together, I want us to try and give those children a proper, normal, whatever is normal, upbringing (couple 2 - liam) (P: 10;L: 31-34)</p>	
--	--	---	--	---	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>nothing wrong. (couple 2 - cindy) (P:1;L:42-44)</p> <p>For a long time he was in denial, he just kept saying 'I don't have a problem, it isn't a problem, loads of men do it. I bet if you ask your friends, all of their husbands look at sites', (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L:16-19)</p>			
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Recognising the impact of SA&amp;CSB on self and relationship</i>	<i>Facing SA&amp;CSB: Emotional reactions</i>	<i>Lack of sexual intimacy after discovery</i>	<i>Change in dynamics</i>	<i>Improved communication</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>it's destroyed my life at present (C2 - Liam) (P: 11; L: 20)</p> <p>it's affected lots, it's affected our whole life, everything's different, you know. The only thing that's stayed</p>	<p>I'm working through that in my own individual therapy, and as a result of it I've started suffering with terrible panic attacks and anxiety, something I never had</p>	<p>We're not fully intimate yet, we've had a kiss, we've cuddled, you know, but we're not fully there yet. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7; L: 39-40)</p>	<p>my son particularly gets cross that daddy's not at home, he's a real daddy's boy, he blames me for making</p>	

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>the same really is work, you know, and that's a godsend, to be honest (C2 - Liam) (P: 11; L: 11-13)</p> <p>I know I've done wrong, I know I made mistakes, I know I – you know, what I did was abhorrent in many ways and that it's really upset Cindy, (C2 - Liam) (P: 8;L: 25-27)</p> <p>I get that, I get that, you know, that I've hurt her (C2 - Liam) (P: 9; L: 9)</p> <p>I'm frustrated, if I'm being completely honest with you, Robert, that's the overwhelming – that's the overwhelming feeling right now. (C2 - Liam) (P: 8;L: 37-38)</p>	<p>experienced, (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 6; L:45-48)</p> <p>part of me then felt a bit of blame, because I felt maybe I didn't give him enough love. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 19-20)</p> <p>was it something in me, was I to blame (couple 2 - cindy)(P: 4;L:36-37)</p> <p>I felt so traumatised by his sexual behaviour (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4; L: 36)</p> <p>but the fact that he kept doing it was like he didn't care for my</p>	<p>I have no sex life (couple 2 - liam) (P: 10; L: 48)</p> <p>I haven't done for 18 months (couple 2 - liam) (P: 10; L: 49)</p> <p>he's probably thinking about sex, for me that's the last thing on my mind right now. (C2 - Cindy) (P: 12; L: 1-2)</p> <p>we haven't been sexually intimate for a long time (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 5;L: 40)</p>	<p>daddy live on his own. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 6; L:23-25)</p> <p>I've been living away in a flat three miles away for the past 18 months or whatever, and I only get to see my children now at the weekends, (C2 - Liam) (P:9; L: 46-48)</p> <p>I do spoil them because I don't get to see them all the time and</p>	
--	--	---	---	---	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>feelings and the fact I kept bringing it up. He didn't respect that it was bothering me and I grew very distant, and when I confronted him he used my distance as a way of why he does what he does (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2-3;L47-2)</p> <p>it has been useful having him out of the house. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 7; L: 18)</p>		<p>because I don't know what else to do, because when I've got them now I want to show them that I love them, you know (C2 - Liam) (P: 9-10;L: 49-3)</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Wanting future to be better</i>	<i>Long lasting impact</i>	<i>Financial consequences</i>	<i>Children being exposed to SA&amp;CSB</i>	<i>Understanding and healing</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>because I want this to go back to normal, I want us to be living together, I want us to try and give those children a proper, normal, whatever is normal, upbringing, and I don't feel that Cindy's allowing us to do that at the moment, because she's still stuck in a rut on this. So that's how it's affected us, the relationship is – you know, it's stuck in a rut, (C2 - Liam) (P: 10; L: 32-35)</p> <p>but how long have I got to wait? (C2 - Liam) (P: 12; L: 25)</p> <p>I want this to go back to normal, I want us to be living together, I want us to try and give those children a proper, normal, whatever is normal, upbringing (couple 2 - liam) (P: 10;L: 31-34)</p>	<p>I've come to realise that I do love him still, and some days, you know, I love what we're trying to save, but other days I can't stand him (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L: 25-27)</p> <p>it was awful, and I still am still angry with everything (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L19-20)</p> <p>I still feel angry and I can't help that (couple 2 - cindy) (P:6;L: 45)</p> <p>it was terrible, because there was just so much anger, and I just</p>	<p>it was our joint money that was paying for these sites, paying for prostitutes. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 5; L:26-27)</p> <p>and at the time of him using all these sites it was coming out of both of our monies (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 10;L: 14-15)</p>	<p>and said 'Mom, I've found this on dad's computer' (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 2; L22-23)</p> <p>He would – it would, gosh, just be so shameful for the children to know that. I mean, the fact my nine year old son came across it was horrifying for me. (couple 2 -</p>	<p>I've really found benefit from chatting to other people who are in similar situations, who have had similar issues with their relationships, and that's really helped, you know, that's really, really helped. (C2 - Liam) (P: 12-13; L: 49-2)</p> <p>We also had couples therapy, and after time he did – he stopped denying and he started to take responsibility for what he had done. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 3;L:46-47)</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>I want us to have a family and I want us to look after the children together in the same house, I want the marriage to work, that's what I want. (C2 - Liam) (P: 13;L: 40-41)</p> <p>I still attend that support group, and we've had couples therapy, you know, you name it, if there is something that Cindy wanted us to do in order to make this better I've done it. I've jumped through every hoop, I've done everything I can. (C2 - Liam) (P: 11;L: 34-37)</p> <p>I've been very honest and said I'm willing to do anything to get us back to where we need to be, (C2 - Liam) (P: 13; L: 14-15)</p>	<p>couldn't seem to move on from it. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4; L: 15-16)</p> <p>I became quite obsessed with wanting to know why (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 4;L35)</p>		<p>cindy) (P: 2; L: 35-37)</p>	<p>We are working through things. We're in a much better place now, a year and a half down the line of having therapy, both individually and together. (couple 2 - cindy) (P: 5;L:1-2)</p> <p>we are having sex therapy, which is helping, it is. (c2 - cindy) (P: 13;L:29)</p> <p>I've protected, I have protected, I have protected the situation and what we went through for him, because I do want this to work and I do want us to move forward, and I do not want other people's opinions of him ruining that.(C2 - Cindy) (P: 14; L: 12-15)</p>
--	---	--	--	--------------------------------	---



Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<b>Couple 3</b>		<b>CLUSTER/HIGHER LEVEL THEME</b>			
	(ADDICT)	(PARTNER)	(COUPLE)	CHILDREN	RELATIONSHIP:
	<p>Addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Progression of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour (SA&amp;CSB) and the impact on self and others</p>	<p>Non-addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Emotional pain through discovery</p>	<p>Fractured relationship</p>	<p>Impact of Sexual Addiction &amp; compulsive sexual behaviours on children</p>	<p>Positive outcomes of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour</p>
<b>Theme overview</b>	<p>Addicts described how their behaviour initially started with pornography and escalated into more problematic sexual behaviours, impacting self and relationship.</p>	<p>Non addicted partner's discovery of SA&amp;CSB led to emotional reactions, such as, feeling of betrayal, and confusion about partner's denial.</p>	<p>This theme focuses on the consequences of SA&amp;CSB for the couple including damaged attachment, lack of sexual intimacy, and financial strain</p>	<p>Both partners expressed concerns about the potential impact of SA&amp;CSB on children. Some couples shared their concerns for their children being exposed to CSB, and the</p>	<p>After the discovery of SA&amp;CSB, the couple talks of positive communication that occurred as a result of experiencing highly challenging life crises. Some addicts found great sense of relief when their secret was discovered.</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

				need to protect their children.	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Graduate progression of SA&amp;CSB and lack of control</i>	<i>Discovery: shock, anger, and partner's denial</i>	Damaged attachment	<i>Concern for children</i>	<i>Sense of relief</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>it started as pornography, you know, via online mainly, and then that led later on to webcam use, and eventually it led to engaging in or allowing myself to get embroiled in a series or a number of affairs at work, yeah, with colleagues. (C3 - Ben) (P: 2; L: 29- 32)</p> <p>I tried to deny and deflect and claim that there was some kind of mistake and that it was all untrue, (C3 - Ben) (P: 3;L: 14-16)</p>	<p>I almost thought 'This is a bad dream, it's a sick joke', (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 9-10)</p> <p>I just struggled to understand how this could have gone on for as long as it did and to the extent at which it did. (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 28-29)</p> <p>I couldn't rationalise it, I couldn't control it, I</p>	<p>I found it very hard at first to sit there and look Ben in the eye, but over the weeks and months I've managed it, and we hold hands occasionally if we're walking, (C3 - Joan) (P: 13; L: 2-4)</p> <p>it's fractured the relationship with all of us, with our girls, with us two. (C3 - Joan) (P: 12; L: 38-39)</p>	<p>We're now working very hard to mend those fractures and to bring back some sort of stability for the girls (C3 - Joan) (P: 12; L: 42-43)</p> <p>I hope to god it hasn't and doesn't affect their ability to have trusting</p>	<p>it was such a relief to just be able to be open and honest and to hear their stories, and to know that we're not alone. (C3 - Joan) (P: 13; L: 15-18)</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>I tried to – very much tried to distance myself from the truth (C3 - Ben) (P: 3;L: 18-19)</p> <p>felt that I couldn't be honest with myself or her for fear of losing everything, like my family and her (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 32-33)</p>	<p>felt out of my depth (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 1)</p> <p>So I just felt – I felt in utter shock (C3 – Joan) (P:9; L:2)</p> <p>he threw every excuse at us, telling us it was something to do with an app he'd downloaded, oh I don't know, and eventually he opened up, but it took a while (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 12-14)</p> <p>At first he went through a stage of denial (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 39)</p>	<p>It's fractured our family I think. (C3 - Ben) (P: 5; L: 32)</p>	<p>relationships moving forward ((C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L42-43)</p> <p>I would hate to feel that that shattered their image of what a relationship can be or should be. (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 45-46)</p> <p>so they're (<i>children</i>) still very angry and hurt about it as well (C3 -Ben) (P: 4; L: 21)</p> <p>I hope to god it hasn't and</p>	
--	---	--	--	--	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>, it was getting ridiculous, some of the excuses that he was coming up with, and he just kept on trying to convince me that it wasn't true (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L 39-39-41)</p>		<p>doesn't affect their ability to have trusting relationships moving forward ((C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L42-43)</p> <p>At first my brother was very reluctant as to why I was still willing to give this a try, he was quite angry, he's always been very protective of me, my eldest brother, but he's come to realise that we want to make it work for our girls, for us, for our</p>	
--	--	--	--	--	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

				future, and our parents are the same. (C3 - Joan) (P: 12; L: 12-15)	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Recognising the impact of SA&amp;CSB on self and relationship</i>	<i>Facing SA&amp;CSB: Emotional reactions</i>	<i>Lack of sexual intimacy after discovery</i>	<i>Change in dynamics</i>	<i>Improved communication</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>It's fractured our family I think. (C3 - Ben) (P: 5; L: 32)</p> <p>I was living a lie and I can reflect now that I'm responsible for that and I take – I do, I take full responsibility for that (C3 - Ben) (P: 7; L: 11-12)</p> <p>I wasn't really around much at home, and when I was back I was dealing with the guilt of everything that was going on and trying to make up for not being there, but not really coping with it very well and I wasn't happy (C3 - Ben) (P: 4; L: 46- 49)</p>	<p>I guess I went through an awful lot of emotions, from anger to hurt, to hate, to feeling betrayed, to guilt, to blame, (C3 - Joan) (P: 11; L: 30-31)</p> <p>almost like – I guess, I've only experienced it with grandparents, but like a bereavement almost (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 19-20)</p>	<p>We haven't embarked upon – I mean, that sounds very formulaic, but we haven't been sexual. (C3- Joan) (P:13, L: 3-4)</p>	<p>The middle child, who's 16, she feels angry, she feels – she went through a period of she couldn't even – she wouldn't even talk to him. (C3 - Joan) (P: 10-11; L:49-2)</p> <p>it's affected them (children) certainly with</p>	<p>since doing all the therapy I have a greater understanding of Ben, the person Ben is, I feel we engage with one another a lot more. (C3 - Joan) (P: 11; L: 31-34)</p> <p>the therapies provided a safe space for us both to, you know, communicate with one another without it turning very sour, and we've in turn become a lot more supportive</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>we were having this breakdown of our marriage in front of our children. (C3 - Ben) (P:3;L:27-28)</p> <p>everything we had built together for over 20 years has just come crashing down (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 23-24)</p> <p>she was quite rightly angry, and it didn't help that I was quite resistant to being open with her, (C3- Ben) (P: 3; L: 28-30)</p> <p>the impact on her has been her ability to trust me, (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 23)</p>	<p>. I started feeling panicky, my chest would feel tight. I at times just wanted to scream and at times, if I'm honest, I wanted to just run away or not be here to deal with it (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 1-4)</p> <p>I also felt an element of guilt and blame, that it was maybe me, you know, this is why he's had to turn to having affairs and pornography and webcams and whatever else. (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 6-8)</p>		<p>our relationship and it's created a sort of – I suppose you would say a division in the household (...) so it's created a division almost within them as sisters (C3 - Ben) (P: 4;L: 18-23)</p> <p>My eldest two have a lot of anger towards him, my eldest I think more so because she obviously found the messages (C3 - Joan) (P: 10; L: 11-12)</p>	<p>with one another.(C3 - Joan) (P: 11; L: 34-36)</p>
--	---	---	--	---	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Wanting future to be better</i>	<i>Long lasting impact</i>	<i>Financial consequences</i>	<i>Children being exposed to SA&amp;CSB</i>	<i>Understanding and healing</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>I'll do anything in order to try and make this right. (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 49)</p> <p>I want to be a good father and I want to be a good husband, and I wasn't before. You know, life is difficult, there are things going on, I didn't deal with the stresses and the pressures of work and general life and being a parent very well, but, you know, they're excuses (C3 - Ben) (P: 7; L:15-18)</p> <p>I had to show that I was willing to make a change (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 42)</p>	<p>one minute I would be fine, I would be doing the washing up, and the next minute I would be screaming at the top of my voice at him. (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 44-46)</p>	<p>Financially, I have taken some time off from work, I suppose you'd call it a sabbatical, which I felt I needed to do in order to really focus on this and to try and give it – and also to show to Joan that this, what we have, what she is to me, what my girls are to me, is more important than my job, anything. So I suppose, yes, there is a financial implication of that, of taking that time off, but [laughs] worth every penny, and obviously the therapy itself always has a cost, but again worth every penny. (C3 - Ben) (P: 6; L: 26- 29)</p>	<p>she saw (eldest daughter while helping with a work project on my phone) , a couple of messages that pinged up on my phone and was concerned and showed them to my wife. (C3 - Ben) (P: 3; L: 9-10)</p> <p>I'm ashamed that they saw those messages (C3 -</p>	<p>it's started to actually strengthen our relationship, because we've been attending a couples therapy where we have – we've chatted to other couples that have been through this and then come out the other side, (C3 - Ben) (P: 5-6; L: 48-2)</p> <p>I feel like I'm learning to understand and try and engage with my emotions more and try to become more compassionate, more empathetic, and this process is helping me do that because it's</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

				<p>Ben) (P: 4; L: 19-20)</p> <p>she noticed some quite explicit messages coming through, to which obviously she came and told me and made me aware (C3 - Joan) (P: 9; L: 1-2)</p>	<p>helping me try to connect the heart and the mind, (C3 - Ben) (P: 8;L: 10-13)</p> <p>we've been doing some really useful couples therapy actually, which has been a real big step forward for us (C3- Ben) (P: 3; L: 45-46)</p>
--	--	--	--	---	---



## Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

Couple 4	CLUSTER/HIGHER LEVEL THEME				
	<p>(ADDICT)</p> <p>Addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Progression of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour (SA&amp;CSB) and the impact on self and others</p>	<p>(PARTNER)</p> <p>Non-addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Emotional pain through discovery</p>	<p>(COUPLE)</p> <p>Fractured relationship</p>	<p>CHILDREN</p> <p>Impact of Sexual Addiction &amp; compulsive sexual behaviours on children</p>	<p>RELATIONSHIP:</p> <p>Positive outcomes of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour</p>
<p><b>Theme overview</b></p>	<p>Addicts described how their behaviour initially started with pornography and escalated into more problematic sexual behaviours, impacting self and relationship.</p>	<p>Non addicted partner's discovery of SA&amp;CSB led to emotional reactions, such as, feeling of betrayal, and confusion about partner's denial.</p>	<p>This theme focuses on the consequences of SA&amp;CSB for the couple including damaged attachment, lack of sexual intimacy, and financial strain</p>	<p>Both partners expressed concerns about the potential impact of SA&amp;CSB on children. Some couples shared their concerns for their children being exposed to</p>	<p>After the discovery of SA&amp;CSB, the couple talks of positive communication that occurred as a result of experiencing highly challenging life crises. Some addicts found great sense of relief when their secret was discovered.</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

				SA&CSB, and the need to protect their children.	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Graduate progression of SA&amp;CSB and lack of control</i>	<i>Discovery: shock, anger, and partner's denial</i>	Damaged attachment	<i>Concern for children</i>	<i>Sense of relief</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>I tried to deny it (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10; L: 9)</p> <p>– I can't believe this is where I am, I can't believe that this has happened, I can't believe that we've got to this stage, I can't believe that this is where I find myself now(C4 - Jamie) (P: 12; L: 16-18)</p> <p>looking at male and female and also other types of pornography, transgender pornography. It eventually led to me meeting up with</p>	<p>I felt completely bewildered, betrayed, confused, angry, hurt, distressed, just so, so confused. Questioning myself a lot as well. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 9-11)</p> <p>I felt very betrayed and hurt. I wanted him, if I'm totally honest, to leave. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 43-44)</p>	<p>I feel its permanently scarred our relationship, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 23)</p> <p>It's just been really damaging, (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 26)</p> <p>we kind of touch, we might hold hands occasionally if we're out, but it's still, yeah, very early days. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 6; L: 38-39)</p>	<p>we're still – we're very much trying for the sake of the children to maintain a relationship, mom and dad, so we'll still eat together, we'll still sit and watch a film together, we'll still go and spend weekends together. (C4 -</p>	<p>I suppose for me, once everything came out I was finally completely honest. I feel I suppose now, I feel closer to Shelley than ever before, I feel like she knows the real me now rather than just the person that she knew before who had lots of secrets. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 26-29)</p> <p>I suppose I felt a little bit of relief, Robert, a</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>people in various ways, of both sexes, and sometimes paying for sex, other times just meeting up just on adult websites, that kind of thing, and also an affair that I had, one main affair with a co-worker. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 9; L: 36-40)</p> <p>I suppose this has always been a part of who I am (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 16)</p> <p>– I can't believe this is where I am, I can't believe that this has happened, I can't believe that we've got to this stage, I can't believe that this is where I find myself now(C4 - Jamie) (P: 12; L: 16-18)</p>	<p>He never offered anything, it was always me having to really – you know, just keep banging on at him, because he would quite happily have denied it all. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 21-23)</p> <p>He denied everything, well the affair with Mike, so he denied, denied it all, (C4 - Shelly)(P: 3; L: 15)</p> <p>Then he eventually, eventually, after a while and after obviously me telling him about the private investigator, he came clean about everything. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 35-37)</p>		<p>Shelly) (P: 5; L : 21-24)</p> <p>We've tried really hard to protect them both and to keep them separate from this, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 13; L: 13-14)</p> <p>I've made a really extra special commitment to make sure we eat together like we've always done and spend weekends together, going out for walks,</p>	<p>little bit of relief, just the fact that I suppose she's found out, there was a little bit of that, because I'd kind of known it was going to happen at some point, you know. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10-11; L: 47-1)</p>
--	---	---	--	---	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>At first Jamie said that was it and there was nobody else, but since he's disclosed that he's been using internet porn, masturbation, compulsive masturbation, male and female porn. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 2; L: 19-22)</p> <p>he wasn't very forthcoming at all about, you know, the extent of everything that had happened and gone on, and I didn't trust him. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L: 30-31)</p>		<p>you know, watching a film all together, playing with the kids together, I've made that – and Jamie has as well, he was very much, you know, on the same page, that the kids have to be our priority. (C4-Shelly) (P: 7; L: 8-11)</p> <p>I mean, the children are very young, which is a saving grace in all of this. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 6; L: 48)</p>	
--	--	---	--	---	--

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Recognising the impact of SA&amp;CSB on self and relationship</i>	<i>Facing SA&amp;CSB: Emotional reactions</i>	<i>Lack of sexual intimacy after discovery</i>	<i>Change in dynamics</i>	<i>Improved communication</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>it impacted her because obviously I'd broke her heart and I've never regained her trust since, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10; L: 40-41)</p> <p>I feel its permanently scarred our relationship, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 23)</p> <p>it's impacted in the sense of how we live day-to-day, it's impacted in the sense of our physical intimacy, and obviously on trust, (c4 - Jamie) (P: 11; 45-46)</p> <p>I felt ashamed and I felt guilty, they were my two biggest things (C4 - Jamie) (P: 10; L: 46)</p>	<p>, I've almost questioned my own sexuality, in that my femininity. I feel I'm not enough for him, you know, because he's basically been with everyone, and it makes you question yourself, my own self-esteem, my own confidence as a woman, I feel that's sort of been taken away from me, he's made me question that. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 35-38)</p> <p>It's damaged me, if I'm honest, emotionally, physically, mentally. I just feel very broken, I feel just constantly questioning everything that our relationship</p>	<p>We are not, and will not be for a while, we're not sexually active at all (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 45-46)</p> <p>we've not been able to be intimate for – well ever since obviously Shelley found out about it, (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 42-43)</p> <p>it's impacted in the sense of how we live day-to-day, it's impacted in the sense of our physical intimacy, and obviously on trust, (c4 - Jamie) (P: 11; 45-46)</p>		<p>much more honest relationship than what we ever had (C4 - Shelly) (P: 7; L: 44-45)</p> <p>there's an honesty there, and for me there's a real sense of – there's a strange sense of happiness that she knows me and that she's still willing to fight for the marriage and to be with me, which I greatly, greatly appreciate and love her for. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 33-36)</p> <p>it's helped me to become a more open person and, particularly with Shelley, to be</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>I found it difficult for a long time to look at Shelley in the eyes directly after all this came out, because I felt so ashamed. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 14; L: 38-39)</p>	<p>stood for. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 34-36)</p> <p>it's reared a lot of questions about myself, myself as a woman, was I enough for him, am I enough (C4 - Shelly) (P: 7; L: 21-22)</p> <p>I was so confused, because, to my knowledge, my husband, the man I'd known for seven years, was heterosexual, (C4 - Shelly) (P: 3; L 5-7)</p>	<p>You know, Jamie would like it to get back, and I'm not speaking for him here, but he would like to get back to a relationship, obviously a sexual relationship. At the moment that's not on the cards for me, or for him I think. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 24-27)</p> <p>he would like to get back to a relationship, obviously a sexual relationship. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 25-26)</p>		<p>more honest with her. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 13; L: 32-34)</p>
--	--	---	---	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Wanting future to be better</i>	<i>Long lasting impact</i>	<i>Financial consequences</i>	<i>Children being exposed to SA&amp;CSB</i>	<i>Understanding and healing</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>it was a betrayal, and I suppose the impact on the relationship is the fact that I have been living – well I've been staying in a different room in the house, we've not been able to be intimate for – well ever since obviously Shelley found out about it, although hopefully, with this new course, that might change in the future, I hope, if Shelley's able to trust me. (C4 – Jamie) (P:11; L: 40-45)</p> <p>now I really put my focus on investing my time in Shelley and trying to get this back to where it needs to be, where I want it to be, and listening to the family. (C4 – Jamie) (P: 13; L: 28-30)</p> <p>I've just learnt to, now, just not keep bringing it up I guess and not keep fixating and obsessing about what's</p>	<p>it's drained both of us emotionally, we're running on empty, or we have been running on empty for a long time. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 38-40)</p> <p>one minute I want him to go away, the next minute I want him to stay, (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 27-28)</p> <p>it's reared a lot of questions about myself, myself as a woman, was I enough for him, am I enough (C4 - Shelly) (P: 7; L: 21-22)</p>	<p>he's also spent an extortionate amount of money, and we've agreed and he's agreed that I want a full disclosure on everything before we can begin to get back what we had, if we ever can. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 28-30)</p> <p>I mean, huge. He has spent an extortionate amount of money. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 5; L: 47)</p> <p>we have a joint account and there's a lot of money that I spent that was ours, which I've used to indulge myself in the</p>		<p>So we've started doing a sex therapy programme, which is actually very – you know, it's been really helpful because it kind of takes you right the way back to the very basics of just sitting, looking at one another, eye contact. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 8; L: 38-40)</p> <p>it just was never the future I imagined for myself, but at the same time I feel like there's some kind of gradual journey towards me understanding more about why I am the way I am. (c4 - Jamie) (P:12; L: 18-21)</p>



Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>gone on in the past, and just try, as hard as it is some days, to look to the future. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 15; L: 20-23)</p>		<p>past, in the past few years (C4 - Jamie) (P: 11; L: 48-49)</p> <p>in retrospect, it makes me even more ashamed, the amount, because there's money there that could have gone towards so many other things that we want for our children and our future. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 12; L: 46-48)</p>	<p>For me, I've just learnt to, now, just not keep bringing it up I guess and not keep fixating and obsessing about what's gone on in the past, and just try, as hard as it is some days, to look to the future. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 15; L 20-23)</p> <p>I mean, I think Shelley mentioned before to you that if I'm having a difficult day, or she is, we will make time every day to sit and talk, and we try, you know, we do try to sit and look at each other in the eyes. (C4 - Jamie) (P: 14;L: 35-38)</p>
--	---	--	---	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

					<p>I find great comfort in talking to others who have been through a similar journey. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 8; L: 1-2)</p> <p>just having the opportunity to talk with other people who have been through it, because I haven't spoken to anybody who knows me. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 9; L: 1-3)</p> <p>I think if it wasn't for this, if it wasn't for the fact that I've had the opportunity to get help with this and to talk to someone and to receive non-judgemental help and</p>
--	--	--	--	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

					<p>advice, just someone who would listen, that I think eventually I would have probably, you know – oh god knows, but I worry about where my future was going (C4- Jamie) (P: 15; L: 5-8)</p> <p>I also learnt a little bit about, you know, through the therapy, his childhood and the relationship he had with his mom, which I wasn't aware of. (C4 - Shelly) (P: 4; L: 8-10)</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--

## Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

Couple 5	CLUSTER/HIGHER LEVEL THEME				
	(ADDICT)	(PARTNER)	(COUPLE)	CHILDREN	RELATIONSHIP:
<b>Theme overview</b>	<p>Addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Progression of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour (SA&amp;CSB) and the impact on self and others</p>	<p>Non-addicted partner's response:</p> <p>Emotional pain through discovery</p>	<p>Fractured relationship</p>	<p>Impact of Sexual Addiction &amp; compulsive sexual behaviours on children</p>	<p>Positive outcomes of Sexual Addiction &amp; Compulsive Sexual Behaviour</p>
	<p>Addicts described how their behaviour initially started with pornography and escalated into more problematic sexual behaviours, impacting self and relationship.</p>	<p>Non addicted partner's discovery of SA&amp;CSB led to emotional reactions, such as, feeling of betrayal, and confusion about partner's denial.</p>	<p>This theme focuses on the consequences of SA&amp;CSB for the couple including damaged attachment, lack of sexual intimacy, and financial strain</p>	<p>Both partners expressed concerns about the potential impact of SA&amp;CSB on children. Some couples shared their concerns for their children being exposed to SA&amp;CSB, and the need to protect their children.</p>	<p>After the discovery of CSB, the couple talks of positive communication that occurred as a result of experiencing highly challenging life crises. Some addicts found great sense of relief when their secret was discovered.</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Graduate progression of SA&amp;CSB and lack of control</i>	<i>Discovery: shock, anger, and partner's denial</i>	Damaged attachment	<i>Concern for children</i>	<i>Sense of relief</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>I denied everything originally (...) , hoped it would go away (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 34-35)</p> <p>Deep shame that I was not able to control this, that it in a sense bettered me, in the sense it took over, and got me to the point where I knew in the back of my mind that I was out of control but I could not – I couldn't find a way to get back on top, I couldn't find a way to regain that control, I couldn't find a way out of it. I was spending and I was taking more and more risks, and becoming more and more dependent on the thrill that it provided me. (C5 - Noel) (P: 8;; L: 23-27)</p> <p>the behaviour itself, which started around about 10 years ago, originally started out with a simple usage of</p>	<p>I was very confused, just so, so confused, and hurt and angry (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 21-22)</p> <p>I feel like, for me, life has been tipped upside-down, I'm very angry. I've got so much – or I had, it's going slightly, but so much rage towards Noel (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 30-32)</p> <p>after a lot of pushing and prodding and poking around, Noel eventually confessed. (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 14-15)</p>	<p>I hope we can and I've seen change and I think that things are getting better, but at the moment, the way – with me not being in the home, with the current setup, just being weekends and then Eva not being there, it's very difficult outside of the therapy itself to build much (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 19-23)</p> <p>It's created a barrier which, at the moment, I don't know if we can get over, (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 18-19)</p>	<p>but the one thing we do do well together is we try and protect our children and love our children, (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 28-29)</p> <p>when I first found out I was very mindful, and so was Noel, of protecting the children (C5 - Eva) (P: 4; L: 26-27)</p> <p>. We're trying to be the best parents we can</p>	

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	pornography and then eventually graduated into using prostitutes on a regular basis. (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 12-14)			for the children (P: 5; L: 27)	
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Recognising the impact of SA&amp;CSB on self and relationship</i>	<i>Facing SA&amp;CSB: Emotional reactions</i>	<i>Lack of sexual intimacy after discovery</i>	<i>Change in dynamics</i>	<i>Improved communication</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>Deep shame that I was not able to control this, that it in a sense bettered me, in the sense it took over (C5 - Noel) (P: 10;; L: 28-29)</p> <p>I think it's safe to say it threw her into quite a dark place, understandably, and I decided I needed to get help, that's where my journey into therapy began and eventually our journey into therapy. (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 34-37)</p> <p>I deserved it. I panicked, because my family, my marriage, despite how distant it had become and I suppose how pedestrian it had become,</p>	<p>Just I guess it was incredibly traumatic. (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 21)</p> <p>Yeah, it's been hard, it's been very difficult, and it's just been so traumatic, the whole upheaval of everything, (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 25-26)</p> <p>it's exhausting and it's the constant questioning, and I'm questioning myself</p>	<p>There isn't one at all at the moment (C5 - Eva) (P: 4; L: 20)</p> <p>is response was he became very cold and quite withdrawn. (C5-Eva) (P: 3; L: 35-36)</p>	<p>at the weekends he comes and looks after the children(C5 – Eva) (P: 5; L: 12)</p> <p>The 16 year old has got a lot of questions, and the 14 year old, you know, they're not stupid, they're nearly adults themselves (P: 5; L: 28-30)</p>	<p>So we both want the marriage to continue and to work, so we're just trying to be honest with one another. We do hit stumbling blocks because, I've said it quite a few times, I am still very much on my journey of why, and I do bring it up sometimes and I know that Noel hates it when I do. I'm trying not to do that because I know that's a personality flaw in myself, I do that a lot in life in</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>certainly between us in many ways, it still was my world, it's all I really care about. I mean, none of the other things that happened meant anything, it was just more I suppose stress relievers, they were a way of – they're escapism, they were a guilty secret and, you know, almost just a way of tuning out. It made me panic that I had thrown all that away (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 42-49)</p> <p>So I felt – I suppose I was feeling – there was a fair part of me that felt trapped, to be completely honest with you, Robert, completely trapped (C5 - Noel) (P: 8; L: 38-39)</p> <p>why my coping mechanisms led me to making bad decisions, and just helping to teach me that there are other options, that I don't have to necessarily just allow myself to be an addict to those things, that I can be stronger and I can have the strength to say no and to seek better</p>	<p>constantly. (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 27-28)</p> <p>Communication with us is amicable, as I've said, but it's strained at times, strained, there's still very much a presence of the trauma and how broken I feel I am and our relationship is (C5- Eva) (P: 5; L: 21-23)</p> <p>Communication with us is amicable, as I've said, but it's strained at times, strained, there's still very much a presence of the trauma and how broken I feel I am and our relationship is (C5- Eva) (P: 5; L: 21-23)</p>			<p>general, so we're just trying to talk about the future, to look to the future, but at the same time just taking it very slowly and continuing our therapy. (P: 6; L: 14-21)</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--



Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>alternatives.(C5 - Noel) (P: 11; L: 23-27)</p> <p>An easy whipping stick which can be used against me at time, but then I suppose I do deserve that. (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 33-34)</p>				
<b>Sub-theme</b>	<i>Wanting future to be better</i>	<i>Long lasting impact</i>	<i>Financial consequences</i>	<i>Children being exposed to SA&amp;CSB</i>	<i>Understanding and healing</i>
<b>Quote</b>	<p>I feel that I am really trying to do everything possible, I possibly can, to create a better future for us, to do everything I can to make tomorrow a better day than today (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 43-45)</p> <p>. I want us to live in the future, not in the past (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 45)</p>	<p>I'm very angry (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 34)</p> <p>I would sort of ruminate an awful lot because I would want to know, and I know that's been an issue for Noel because he doesn't like me keep bringing back the past, and it's caused a lot of issues (C5 - Eva) (P: 2; L: 27-29)</p>	<p>He's spent an absolute fortune on these online sites, these pornography sites, prostitutes, having affairs with prostitutes, taking women out, and this all comes at a cost. (C5 - Eva) (P: 4; L: 4-7)</p> <p>she wanted to know obviously why, why there was significant debt on</p>		<p>I feel like I'm living a more honest life (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 39)</p> <p>So we're taking, you know, each step at a time, which I know sounds very clichéd, but we are. We're trying to be open and honest. (C5- Eva) (P: 5; L: 22-23)</p>

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

	<p>I feel better equipped to deal and cope with the pressures that I feel sometimes from work, I feel like I have been given better coping mechanisms and ways to deal with those things. And I feel that I am really trying to do everything possible, I possibly can, to create a better future for us, to do everything I can to make tomorrow a better day than today. I want us to live in the future, not in the past, I want us to get back fully together, and I believe that we can do that. So, you know, it's had a massive effect in helping me hopefully restart and build things properly, from a real point of trust and honesty. (C5 - Noel) (P: 10; L: 25-33)</p> <p>I've done most of what my wife has asked me to do at every stage. (C5 - Noel) (P: 11; L: 5-6)</p>	<p>Well it impacted it massively, because – well, for me, I just couldn't get passed it for a long time, (C5-Eva) (P: 3; L: 21-22)</p> <p>the minute I draw reference to or I bring anything up hell breaks loose, he doesn't want to talk about it, he shuts down, it causes a lot of arguments. (C5-Eva) (P: 5; L: 4-6)</p> <p>I mean, it made me become very obsessive in my behaviour, you know, compulsively feeling the need to speak to the credit card company, to look online at internet</p>	<p>both cards (C5 - Noel) (P: 7; L: 32-33)</p> <p>Huge debt (C5 - Noel) (P: 9; L: 33)</p>		<p>I guess it's understanding why we've got to the point we've got to, why we are here and what went wrong, and we've investigated a lot about our own childhood, you know (C5 – Eva) (P: 5; L: 39-41)</p> <p>, I suppose I try not to keep things, to bottle things up any more, I try to name what it is that I'm feeling at the time, what it is I'm experiencing, I try to name it and let it just be so that it doesn't eat away at me, so that's part of that whole honesty message I suppose I</p>
--	---	--	---	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

		<p>banking. (C5- Eva) (P: 2; L: 24-26)</p> <p>I felt I had that right to know everything(C5- Eva) (P: 3; L: 38)</p> <p>obviously putting things in place which are helping us through this, but it's by no means fixed and we're a very long way from that (C5 - Eva) (P: 3; L: 47-48)</p>		<p>was talking about before. Apart from that, I mean, I don't – yeah, I'm just trying to manage my behaviour on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, and be a good husband, a good father, a good son to my parents, who have stood by us, by me more appropriately I suppose with what's gone on. I'm trying to be a better individual. (C5 - Noel) (P: 11; L: 9-16)</p> <p>Well we're in the middle of the couples therapy, which is slow going but it is going and that's better. I think</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Exploring the Impact of SA&CSB on Couples' Relationships

					<p>for years it was only going one way and that was backwards, and now at least it's going in a more positive direction(C5 - Noel) (P: 11; L: 33-35)</p> <p>I know Noel, with his father, he had a lot of issues there growing up, his father not being present, often away a lot of the time and I believe his father conducted many affairs from what his mom has said. (C5 - Eva) (P: 49-50; L: 49-2)</p>
--	--	--	--	--	--