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# WHAT IS SEX THERAPY?

Baton Rouge Retired Social Workers Group  
August 15, 2025  
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Sex Therapy is a specialized form of psychotherapy that addresses concerns related to human sexuality.

# AASECT

American Association of Sexuality Educators  
Counselors and Therapists

# The Path to Certification

# The Path to Certification

Membership in AASECT  
Acceptance of the Code of Conduct

# The Path to Certification

Academic Experience

Post-Degree Professional Experience

2 years for Master's Level

1 year for Doctoral Level

# The Path to Certification

Professional Licensure in One's Area



# The Path to Certification

Education

# Education

Buehler Institute ([LearnSexTherapy.com](http://LearnSexTherapy.com))

University of Michigan –  
Sexual Health Certificate Program

Widener University –  
Center for Human Sexuality Studies

 SPRINGER PUBLISHING

THIRD EDITION

# What Every Mental Health Professional Needs to Know About Sex

Stephanie Buehler



SPRINGER PUBLISHING  
DIGITAL  
ACCESS

What Do We Study?

# What Do We Study

Core Knowledge Areas  
(90 Hours)

# What Do We Study?

Sex Therapy Skills Training  
(60 Hours)

# Sexuality Attitude Reassessment (14 Hours)

# Supervision

(50 hours; 25 must be one-to-one)  
(20 must be with a primary Supervisor)



# Mentorship







# Categories of Disorders Associated With Sexuality

Sexual Dysfunctions  
Gender Dysphoria  
Paraphilic Disorders

# Categories of Disorders Associated With Sexuality

## Sexual Dysfunctions

- a) Desire Disorders
- b) Arousal Disorders
- c) Orgasm Disorders
- d) Pain Disorders

# NIH Statistics Say approximately:

43% of women have some level  
of sexual dysfunction  
31% of men do

# Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorders

30% of women  
15% of men



# Arousal Disorders

10-20% of both men and women  
(erectile dysfunction in men)  
(high correlation with age in men)

# Orgasm Disorders

10-15% of women

30% of men report early ejaculation

# Sexual Pain Disorders

10-15% of women have  
Genito-Pelvic Pain / Penetration  
Disorder  
(formerly dyspareunia & vulvodynia)

less than 5% of men

# Categories Associated With Sexuality

Gender Dysphoria Disorders

# Categories Associated With Sexuality

Paraphilic Disorders

# My Common Areas of Practice

# My Common Areas of Practice

Gender

# My Common Areas of Practice

Out-of-Control Sexual Behavior  
(OCSB)



# My Common Areas of Practice

Sexual Wellness

# Six Sexual Health Principles

Consent

Non-exploitation

Consideration of Avoiding Unwanted  
Pregnancy and STIs

# Six Sexual Health Principles

Honesty

Shared Values

Mutual Pleasure

# My Common Areas of Practice

Sexual Functioning & Dysfunction

(All those disorders we discussed)

# My Common Areas of Practice

Couples and Couplings

# Couples and Couplings

Kink

# Kink Defined:

Consensual providing / receiving  
heightened  
sensation for the purpose of heightened  
emotional  
and / or sexual pleasure

# Couples and Couplings

## Consensual Non-Monogamy

“Open”

“Poly”

“Swinger” (The “Lifestyle”)

“Monogam-ish”



# My Common Areas of Practice

Care for LGBTQ+ / Queer  
Folks

Certified Sex Therapist

Vs

Certified Sex Addiction Therapist

# Certifying Organization

AASECT (American Association of Sexuality  
Educators, Counselors & Therapists)

VS

IITAP (International Institute for  
Trauma and Addiction Professionals)

# Theoretical / Therapeutic Orientation

Broad, inclusive, sex-positive; diverse  
orientations

vs

Focused on addiction model (Carnes model)

# Clinical Experience Requirements

300+ hours of direct client work in sex therapy

vs

Must have clinical experience;  
6 “sexual addiction” case consults

# Sexual Attitude Reassessment (SAR)

Required (10+ hours)

vs

Not required

# Populations / Issues Addressed

Broad – (Sexual disorders, sexual wellness, LGBTQ+, kink, differently-abled, relationship diversity, OCSB, straight, cis, “vanilla”, etc.)

vs

Primarily those identifying with compulsive sexual behavior

# Weaknesses of the “Sex Addiction” Approach

Lifelong disease assignment

The diagnosis, label, stigma, and the treatment approach can all do harm.



# Weaknesses of the “Sex Addiction” Approach

Enforces cultural biases.

Rooted in moralistic concepts.

# Weaknesses of the “Sex Addiction” Approach

Makes the normative pathological  
(pathologizes non-“vanilla  
behaviors;  
Higher sex drive partner)

# Strengths of the Sex Therapy Model

Conceptualizes behaviors as problematic and out-of-control

The goal is to move toward healthy sexuality as defined by the client

Empowers clients and is non-shaming

# Strengths of the Sex Therapy Model

Is an open & affirming process without moral judgment ( e.g. - homosexuality, fetishes,kinks, BDSM, Erotica, Consensual non-monogamy)

# The PLISSIT Model

# The PLISSIT Model

**P**ermission

# The PLISSIT Model

**Limited Information**

# The PLISSIT Model

## **S**pecific **S**uggestions



# The PLISSIT Model

Intensive **P**sychotherapy

Then there's the  
EX-PLISSIT Model

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