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Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal

Barbara Steffens
New Horizon Press (Aug 25, 2009)
Unknown $14.95 (224pp)
978-0-88282-309-6

When the term Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) came along many years ago, it was generally associated with veterans trying to exorcise their internal demons. Many lives have been ruined forever by it; while some patients struggle along in a somnambulant manner, others turn to alcohol, drugs, and, sadly, suicide. It seemed that either a fragile truce or violent interaction with the disease propelled its victims through society. Now a book, *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse*, opens discussion of another variety of PTSD—that of the spouse of the sexual addict.

These unfortunate victims, overwhelmingly women, are just as damaged as combat veterans. And be sure of this: Dr. Barbara Stephens and Ms. Marsha Means spend a great deal of time and space underscoring the fact that these spousal victims are *not* in any way co-dependents or enablers.

It is shocking to learn that nearly 70 percent of women who are married to sex addicts suffer the varied consequences of PTSD. The authors take the reader step by step, addressing the initial embarrassment of discovery and the affect sexual addiction has on the entire family. It is also interesting to learn that sexual addiction is very much a progressive dependency that can start with something that seems harmless—the internet for instance—and steadily worsens to include infidelity, STDs, and, ultimately, divorce. The rungs on the ladder of sexual addiction are not built far apart.

The structure of *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse* takes the potential victim from discovery to the pain of betrayal and on through the mental health side effects of trauma. The book is written simply, but is not simplistic by any means. The authors ask hard questions and offer unflinching answers. Several real life examples of sexual addiction and its various heinous results fill out the authors' coverage of the topic.

Given its wide range, what is so remarkable about this concise book is that it also devotes a great deal of time toward healing. This is a difficult and, in our society, often mortifying subject, but the authors are clearly on the side of the addict's spouse. The message: the addiction is not the spouse's fault, just a great part of their problem. This distinction is often the first step back to wholeness, whether with the addicted partner, or courageously alone. *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse* is a highly readable and important book for our times. For some families it will be a survival manual.

Review Date: December 2009.
(January 8, 2010)

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