



Psychiatry & Behavioral Science Section - 2016

I17 Autoeroticism in Autism Spectrum

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After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about potential sensory motivations in the autoerotic sexual behaviors in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Attendees will receive a summary of relevant research on sensory functioning and sexual behavior in ASD.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by enhancing competence in performing psychosexual evaluations in both clinical and forensic contexts involving individuals with ASD.

Could sensory fascinations and core social skills deficits predispose ASD individuals toward autoerotic types of paraphilic disorders? Sensory response abnormalities are now included among the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-Fifth Edition (DSM-5™)* criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), but little is known on how sensory issues impact the sexual behavior in this population. Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory stimuli and unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment may possibly manifest in restricted, repetitive patterns of sexual interests and/or sexual masturbation rituals that qualify as paraphilic behavior. That is, sensory sensitivities or, in some cases, insensitivities could explain paraphilic behavior among some ASD individuals.

The ASD adolescent may not experience masturbation exactly like the non-ASD adolescent, or so-called neurotypical, does. The ASD adolescent may struggle with either or both gross and/or fine motor skills such that he/she will use objects to better grasp, bind, or apply pressure to genital areas for the purpose of sexual gratification. Perhaps more significantly as it pertains to sex and sensuality, the ASD adolescent may be drawn to specific tactile, olfactory, other sensory, and even painful stimuli because of atypical proclivities. Sensory-specific masturbatory rituals in adolescence may crystallize into autoerotic or solitary and object-oriented paraphilic disorders in young adulthood. Autoerotic-type paraphilic disorders include Fetishistic Disorder, Transvestic Disorder, and Sexual Masochism Disorder. Published cases suggest that some ASD individuals may develop an autoerotic type of paraphilia associated with atypical sensory interests. Clinical cases outside of forensic contexts have emerged more frequently as well. In one case, an adult ASD male with Sexual Masochism Disorder experienced pinpricks and being bound tightly as pleasurable and necessary for sexual climax. When he was a teenager, he incidentally discovered that he liked pain-inducing stimuli and deep tactile pressure during masturbation while in the shower when he would shave with a straight razor around his genitals. He used a bathrobe belt to tie around his penis to pull it away from his body as he shaved himself cleanly and this is how binding became a necessary component to his masturbation ritual. He understood his hyposensitivity issues and sought noxious stimuli because without it he could not experience sexual satisfaction even with a partner.

Uncovering and clarifying behavioral motivations in both clinical and forensic contexts can make a difference in tailoring treatment recommendations and in making risk assessments, especially among individuals with ASD who may be more vulnerable to treatment failure, marginalization, stigma, and/or punitive treatment by others. This presentation will provide a review of published cases of ASD individuals with autoerotic type paraphilic behaviors with focused discussion on sensory motivations and relevant research on sensory abnormalities in ASD.

Autism Spectrum, Sensory, Paraphilia