



A new sex addiction clinic has been opened here in the Fylde.

Jacqueline Morley reports

SEX addicts – or serial adulterers looking for a clinical excuse for letting loved ones down so badly? Hiding behind a label may be just what the shrink rather than doctor might have ordered for celebrities trying to get off the hook after being caught out by the paparazzi.

We couldn't help it, we're hooked. Michael Douglas, David Duchovny, and Russell Brand, have all been outed as sex addicts, with golf star Tiger Woods the latest to be spotted at a specialist treatment centre.

Today other tawdry sex soap sagas are being played out in the national press – sex texts of celebrities, footballers as philanderers.

A Bispham-based psychotherapist who has set up a sex addiction clinic claims that it's not a cop out and there's no "typical sex addict."

Steven Pope adds: "They come from all walks of life and 20 per cent are female. There's a high correlation between childhood abuse and sexual addiction in adulthood.

"Some addicts on the Fylde, and I counselled 65 last year alone, report experiencing emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

"There is a growing body of evidence and opinion that early abuse is a primary factor. It also limits the ability to inhibit behaviour."

Psychologists estimate two million people in the UK are sex addicts. Conversely, there's even a condition called sexual anorexia.

Experts estimate 87 per cent of the addicts come from troubled families with a strong likelihood of other family members having an addiction of some other kind.

Local therapist Pope claims that for every celebrity caught countless more live in every community.

He's not talking about occasional opportunist sex, small town infidelity, drunken one night stands, or a risqué text message, but full on, out of control, risk taking behaviour.

He adds: "According to conservative estimates, between three and six per cent of the population experience sexual addiction, but it's likely that the real figure is much higher.

"As addiction can be accompanied by feelings of shame and embarrassment, sex addicts often find it difficult to seek help.

TREATMENT: Tiger Woods (left) was seen in the grounds of a sex addiction clinic while Russell Brand (centre) and Michael Douglas (above) have had counselling

Pope's a reformed addict himself. His addiction to cocaine cost his high flying career as a lawyer and his relationships with loved ones.

At rock bottom he got professional help and he's since reinvented himself with the help of his earlier law psychology degree and specific counselling qualifications in 2004.

Initially he set up a practice Over Wyre specialising in drug addiction. Now he's based at Bispham, and offers a broader based programme. He runs patient-based treatment programmes, offering individual counselling and group therapy.

Pope also works closely with Fleetwood Town FC to help players fulfil their potential and "avoid distractions." He stresses behaviour off the pitch is as important as conduct on.

He said: "You find behaviour patterns go much deeper. With players it's simply a matter of getting to the root of what holds them back, or what makes them repeat the same mistakes. It's about making them realise every drink costs them big time in training or on the pitch. We can train our minds to achieve great things. I coach sports people and teams to focus on winning, and also help individuals attain ambitious life goals, too."

While Tiger Woods' display of public contrition made for uncomfortable viewing Steve reckons such issues should be thrashed out publicly.

He's one of a few UK agencies now offering specialist counselling to sex addicts, and lays claim to several clients locally.

One patient, Danny James, 27, now living in south Fylde, made national tabloid headlines (and breakfast telly this week) with his claim to have bedded 500 women. He blamed it for the breakdown of his business, and his relationship with his regular girlfriend. Since receiving counselling from Pope he attributes it to his "need to be needed."

Pope adds: "The very words sexual addict are just a label but what really matters is if someone is displaying behaviour that is having a negative impact on their life something needs to be done.

"Addicts don't recover from a label, they recover from their reliance on an unhealthy pattern of thoughts and behaviours."

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Addicted to love

WHAT MAKES AN ADDICT

Steven Pope (right) has this diagnostic criteria...

■ Does your sexual behaviour preoccupy you and/or does it feel out of control?

"Tiger Woods has moved from extra marital relationship to relationship out of a sense of need and had lost control of his life and without third party professional intervention his behaviours could have continued to escalate."

■ Do you try to stop and find that you cannot?

"Countless times I have heard sex addicts vow never again. Without support it's almost inevitable."

■ Does your behaviour bring real or potentially harmful consequences?

"In Tiger's case, certainly yes, look at the tortured individual who faced the press."



"For those who think sexual addiction is a 'cop out', the following figures portray the grim reality of the dire straits the sexual addict can find themselves in.

"The cycle of destruction leaves 72 per cent suffering from suicidal thoughts and 17 per cent attempting suicide. It can be a terminal condition.

"Many may get to the very top of their professions but this illness is a killer and non-

selective.

"I have worked with sex addicts who have thrown out the pornographic magazines, videos, and DVD's in disgust and then start to collect them all over again.

"Many have severe relationship problems, inevitable financial losses, spending beyond means, job loss, career pressures, professional embarrassment, and there are other risks of unprotected sex clearly."

My partner, who is in his early 50s, has a progressively degenerative disease which affects the nerves. I do not wish it to be named to avoid distress to other sufferers.

His father died at 48 from the same condition. He knew his chances were 50-50. He has already outlived his father.

But my partner saw the painful and humiliating progress of the disease and how it turned his father from a tall, physically active and imposing figure of a man into a stooped, frail figure who could not do anything for himself, or by himself.

His father had to be assisted with the most basic functions and although this was done with great grace and forbearing by those who

Livewire

A weekly look at the issue of the moment **Assisted suicide debate**

By a Fylde coast businesswoman who wishes to be known only as AJ

loved him, and who had money enough to employ specialist care, and make the sort of adaptations to his home, which would keep him at home, it was clear that, given a choice

in the matter, he would have chose to depart this life sooner rather than later.

My partner is now on that path. These are early days and we are both working through our pain, and

TOMORROW: Jon Rhodes wants A Word In Your Ear



our wishlist of things to do before we die, which included a cruise last year, and a garden makeover this year.

We count ourselves fortunate in that we too have sufficient funds to fulfil our dreams, for the foreseeable future.

However, we know the time will also come when, if he follows the same course as his father, the deterioration will be such he will, as he tells me now, no longer be the same man, and certainly not the man he was.

He will still be the man I love and it is for that reason, and that reason alone, that I applaud the brave stance of Ray Gosling (pictured). I could not bring myself to do the same but I do believe my partner has the right to assisted suicide.

My partner saw not just his father's rapid deterioration over a far shorter period, but his mother's anguish in the midst of it all, from which she has never recovered.

At the height of that suffering the family's golden retriever Bess fell ill, and took to fitting. He took her to the vet's for a humane end to her suffering.

The words were left unspoken until he returned to our apartment: "Why can't they do that for dad?" At that point his father could no longer speak, or swallow.

Today it is our turn to suffer. And my partner would rather die with dignity.

What gives others the right to say he should continue suffering?

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