Breaking news without ads. $4.99 per month Subscribe now

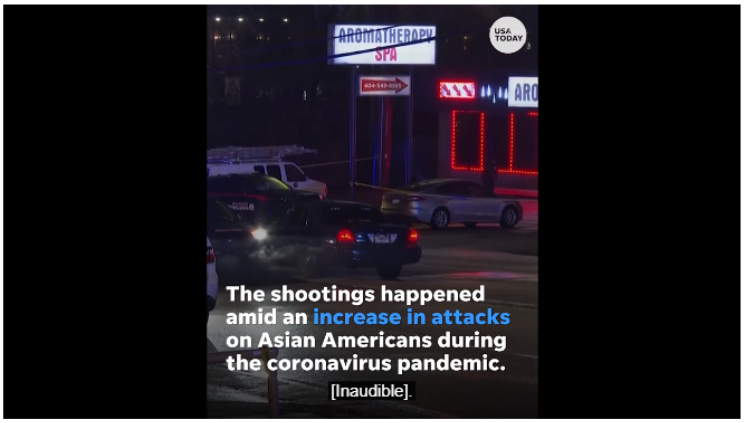
Advertisement - scroll for more content

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

'Most sex addicts are not murderers': Experts explain sex addiction after Atlanta shootings

Adrianna Rodriguez USA TODAY

Published 3:27 p.m. ET Mar. 18, 2021 | Updated 3:29 p.m. ET Mar. 18, 2021



Atlanta spa shootings: Suspect claims sex addiction as motive

The suspect says sex addiction drove him to commit drives, according to police. Eight people are reported to have been killed in the shootings. *Staff video, USA TODAY*

A 21-year-old man, who is suspected of killing eight people at three Atlanta-area spas Tuesday night, claimed his sex addiction motivated the deadly attack.

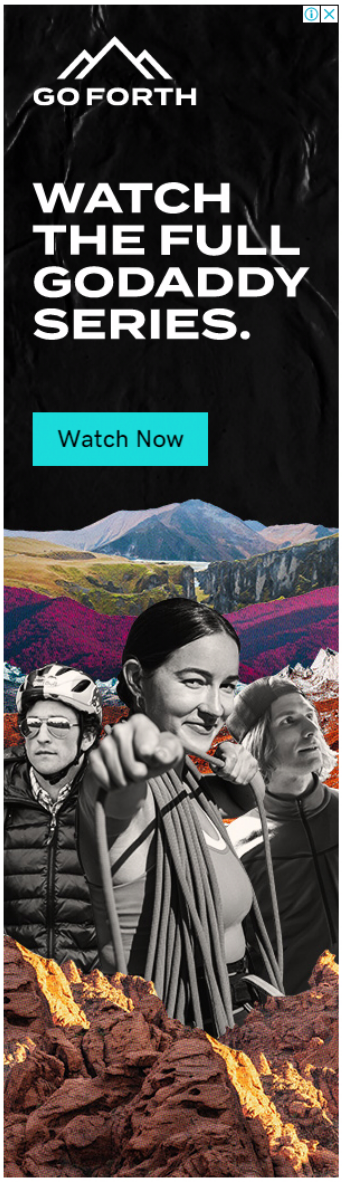
Although sex addiction is more common than people think, experts say, the disorder itself does not lead to violent or criminal behavior.

"Most sex addicts are not murderers or thieves or embezzlers or other criminal types," said Dr. Douglas Weiss, psychologist and president of the American Association for Sex Addiction Therapy. "There's a difference between addiction and these kinds of behaviors."

Carol Juergensen Sheets, a certified sexual addiction therapist, made a similar point in 2018 when speaking about Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein and actor Kevin Spacey, high-profile figures who have been accused of sexual abuse. She said the proper classification for the behaviors they were accused of was "a disorder of power and control, not sex addiction."

Advertisement

Advertisement



More Stories

Michael Phelps on Meghan Markle, mental health amid COVID pandemic
LIFE

Kylie Jenner Instagram GoFundMe flub says a lot on

Latest Collection
Levi's

What is sex addiction?

Compulsive sexual behavior – commonly known as sex addiction – is an excessive preoccupation with sexual fantasies, urges or behaviors that is difficult to control, causes distress or negatively affects one's health, job or relationships, according to the Mayo Clinic.

It may include a range of different behaviors such as masturbation, cybersex, multiple sexual partners, pornography or paying for sex. Sex addiction could damage one's self-esteem, relationships, career, health and other people if it goes untreated.

"It's a repeated pattern of not being able to stop and feeling a sense of regret if you don't stop, so you may build up anger and resentment," Weiss said. "(But) I've been treating sex addicts for 30 years and less than 1% commit any violent act."

DIG DEEPER
You may also be interested in

- 30 years after Rodney King, Chauvin trial is 'like reliving history'
- No stimulus check yet? Use IRS 'Get My Payment' tool to find the status of new COVID relief payments
- Daughter honors mothers killed in Atlanta shooting
- NCAA acknowledges 'disrespectful' differences in at men's and women's tournaments
- Get the latest news straight to your phone: Download the USA TODAY app

About 3% to 6% of the U.S. adult population suffer from compulsive sexual behavior, estimated Dr. Indra Cidambi, psychiatrist and medical director of the Center for Network Therapy.

Sex addiction is a progressive disorder that typically begins in the late teens to early 20s, she said. The vast majority of people struggling with sex addiction are men, but they include women, too.

The World Health Organization classified "compulsive sexual health disorder" as a mental health disorder in its International Classification of Diseases in 2018. Treatment can range from therapy sessions to stays at rehabilitation facilities to simpler 12-step programs.

Atlanta spa shootings: Asian Americans reflect on murders
Atlanta-area Asian Americans share their thoughts on shootings at three local spas that left eight dead, six of whom were Asian women. Staff video, USA TODAY

wealth, compassion
LIFE

Black bear enjoys relaxing soak in couple's jacuzzi
LIFE

Taboola

Notice our new look? As you get used to things, please let us know what you think!

Advertisement

Asian women. Staff video, USA TODAY

A percentage of sex offenders may be sex addicts, but the majority of sex addicts are not sex offenders, Weiss said.

While the alleged shooter may have blamed Tuesday's attacks on his sex addiction, Cidambi said, it's hard to pinpoint his true motivation without further investigation.

It's also hard to disentangle race from the killings, said Grace Kao, an expert on Asian American studies and the sociology department chair at Yale University.

Advertisement

Six of the eight victims were Asian American women. Stereotypes and hyper-sexualization of Asian women are factors in what drives harassment and violence against them.

A hate crime? Georgia attacks that killed mostly Asian women raise questions of bias, motive

In a statement Wednesday, Asian American Advancing Justice, a non-profit legal aid and civil rights organization, said the broader context of the recent shootings "cannot be ignored."

"The shootings happened under the trauma of increasing violence against Asian Americans nationwide, fueled by white supremacy and systemic racism," the statement read.

Contributing: Will Carless and Caroline Simon, USA TODAY. Follow Adrianna Rodriguez on Twitter: @AdriannaUSAT.

Health and patient safety coverage at USA TODAY is made possible in part by a grant from the Masimo Foundation for Ethics, Innovation and Competition in Healthcare. The Masimo Foundation does not provide editorial input.

Taboola Feed

Hot Pre-IPO Companies to Watch
Crunchbase | Sponsored

People in Mumbai Are Choosing to Donate Meals Like This
Akshaya Patra | Sponsored

Our Chicken's Got It All, Except Harmful Antibiotics.Try now!
FreshToHome | Sponsored

Please Help Me Arrange Rs 15 Lakh To Save My Only Daughter.

Ketto | Sponsored

Become A Business Analyst. No Technical Background Required.

Great Learning | Sponsored

3 BHK Starts 58 Lacs* at Naigaon. No Bank Loan Required. Easy Payment Plan.

Sunteck Realty | Sponsored

Is your kid aged 4-6? Get them Personalized Reading Classes. Free Demo Class!

Vedantu SuperReaders | Online | Sponsored

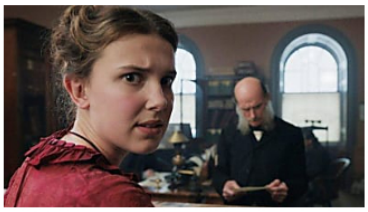
Stay prepared for the unexpected

Save tax under Section 80C, and keep your family safe too. Invest in Star Health Insurance

Star Health Insurance | Sponsored

100% Natural Iran Bam Mazafati Dates

qubedeal.in | Sponsored



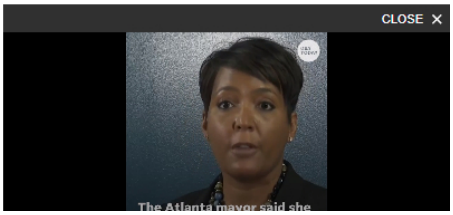
Don't Let Restrictions In India Ruin Your Movie Streaming - Use A VPN Now!

TheTopFiveVPN | Sponsored

Deal of the Day

This Machine Is Like a Keurig for Your Cocktails—and It's on Sale

REVIEWED | USA TODAY Network

View Deal ↗

Recommendations are independently chosen by our editors. Purchases you make through our links may earn us a commission.