

NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



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Dear Colleague,

This month's issue examines whether and how to address deviant sexual arousal in the sexually abusive adolescents we see in our practices. James Worling discusses the relevance of deviant arousal with adults, but questions how we may choose to apply those principles to the changing landscape of a teenager's life and development. As we develop a more sophisticated understanding of children and adolescents, studies such as this one help us tease out the important issues and the landmines of using our adult knowledge with teens.

We also wanted to let you know that we are continuing our webinar series through June. If you missed one of the webinars with Phil Rich, Robin Wilson, Rob Longo or Keven Creeden, you can listen to the recording on our website at www.nearipress.org/free-webinars. Upcoming webinars will feature NEARI Press authors Geral Blanchard, Keith Kaufman, Tom Leversee, and Pat Wilcox.

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Deviant Arousal

by Steven Bengis, David S. Prescott, and Joan Tabachnick

Question

How should we address deviant sexual arousal when working with sexually abusive adolescents?

The Research

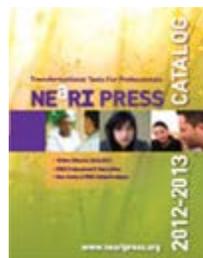
James Worling (2012) reviews the relevance of deviant sexual arousal to re-offense in adults and explores its potential importance to the treatment of certain adolescents. After a comprehensive overview, Worling concludes:

1. Only a small percentage of adolescents appear to have deviant sexual arousal as an issue related to their inappropriate or abusive sexual behaviors;
2. There are no accurate "baselines" of normal arousal for this adolescent population. In other words, we cannot always know what "normal" arousal is. Further, carrying out the studies that would determine that baseline may be unethical (e.g., exposing non-abusing adolescents to deviant material);
3. In the absence of additional research, the accuracy of present measures for adolescents is questionable and open to debate.
4. The relative plasticity of sexual arousal patterns in adolescence suggests that even strong deviant arousal patterns can change over time;
5. There are ethical issues associated with arousal measurement and exposure in an adolescent population. This can include the risk of increasing deviant arousal; and
6. There is very little evidence of the effectiveness of arousal reduction techniques with adolescents.

Given the lack of clear research results on how to determine deviant arousal in adolescents, Worling suggests that clinicians use a combination of approaches (e.g., self-report, other objective measures) to determine deviant arousal. Regarding treatment, Worling suggests that holistic approaches designed to enhance relationship and attachment, increase social skills, and resolve barriers to intimacy may have a positive and direct impact on deviant arousal without addressing it directly. This approach has some support in a 1975 study by William Marshall on adults in which self-esteem interventions reduced deviant arousal on the plethysmograph for adults who had no other intervention.

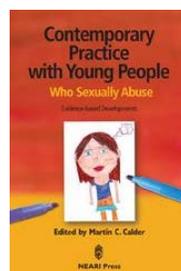
As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@nearipress.org or call us at 413-540-0712, ext 14.

Sincerely,
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis



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FEATURED NEARI RESOURCES



[Contemporary Practice with Young People Who Sexually Abuse](#)

by Martin C. Calder

This volume offers the experienced practitioner invaluable information about the most recent developments and offers others interested in beginning this work a fascinating overview from which to start. Just a sampling of the nearly 20 chapters covers topics such as: a new framework for assessing a child's risk to repeat concerning sexual behaviors (Tracey Curwen); a step-by-step approach to responding to concerning sexual behaviors in children and youth with learning disabilities (Joanne Butterworth

Implications for Professionals

Given the lack of research on deviant sexual arousal in adolescents, there is no clear evidence for using one or another assessment technique or treatment strategy. Professionals should be skeptical of claims that any one assessment or treatment method is superior in all cases. In addition, the benefits of focusing directly on sexual deviancy through the use of various measurements (e.g., plethysmograph, visual time, attentional blinking, and card sorts) and reduction techniques (e.g., arousal reconditioning, covert sensitization, aversive behavioral rehearsal, and masturbatory satiation) is questionable given the possible harm that their use may create (e.g., increasing deviant arousal, perceived re-victimization by the treatment process itself, etc). However, given the increase in re-offense risk that a "deviant arousal pattern" may signal, and the absence of more objective data, it may be wise to adopt a very cautious, "do no harm" approach that incorporates the least intrusive assessment and treatment techniques that have shown some promise.

Implications for the Field

Sexual arousal in adolescents (normal as well as abuse-related) is a very complex issue made more so by the dynamic, normative sexual and cognitive developmental issues in this age group. As we continue to gather more research on the role and importance of abuse-related sexual interests and arousal in adolescent offending, we need to focus not only on management, suppression, and alteration, but also on transformation. Sexual arousal can be a powerful force that overrides the best judgment of even otherwise sane, productive, and socially engaged adults. Teaching youth about healthy sexuality, creative expression, respect, relationships, high-risk but legal activities, joy and love may be as critical to developing healthy and non-deviant sexual interests and behaviors as direct arousal reduction interventions and techniques.

Abstract

The available data suggest that only a minority of adolescents who commit sexual crimes demonstrate deviant sexual arousal to younger children and/or sexual violence. However, deviant sexual arousal is a risk factor for repeated sexual offending, and it is frequently an important target in specialised treatment programmes. This paper provides a review of the various techniques that have been used to measure deviant sexual arousal with adolescents who have offended sexually, including the penile plethysmograph, unobtrusively measured viewing time, and self-report. Common treatment approaches used to address deviant sexual arousal such as behavioural techniques, thought-stopping, and mindfulness are also discussed. Suggestions for building the capacity for future sexual health are offered, given the lack of empirical support for most of the commonly used treatment approaches used to modify or control deviant sexual arousal with adolescents.

Citation

- Worling, J. (2012). The Assessment and Treatment of Deviant Sexual Arousal with Adolescents who have Offended Sexually. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 18, 36-63.

To print a pdf of this article, click [NEARI NEWS](#).

and Tim Plan); typologies of adolescents who sexually harm and the associated risk factors, modus operandi and criminal activities (Nicole Hickey); and a CBT-based treatment approach to reducing shame and increasing responsibility with adolescents who have sexually offended (James Worling, Nina Josefowitz and Melissa Malter).

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NEARI Press Webinar Trauma Informed Treatment: How to Incorporate this Approach into Your Work Everyday

FEBRUARY 5, 2013
2:00pm-3:00pm EST

In the next one-hour NEARI Press Webinar, Pat Wilcox will provide an overview of trauma-informed treatment that can be incorporated into a variety of organizational settings.

Space is limited, so please register now to be guaranteed a spot! To register for this webinar, [click here](#). After you register, we will send you information about how to sign on.

There are six more webinars scheduled in our series, featuring internationally recognized experts such as Keith Kaufman, Geral Blanchard, Su Robinson, Tom Leversee, and Pat Wilcox. If you would like to be a sponsor of this series and to help support these resources -- \$98 for individuals and \$250 for organization sponsors -- we will guarantee you webinar access for 2012-13 series and send you two of NEARI Press's popular titles: *Current Applications* and *Current Perspectives* with a value of \$149. Please see our website for more information at www.nearipress.org.