


**Laurel Centre**  
 Founded by Paula Hall

# ChemSex Lifestyle Choice or Addiction?



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## What is ChemSex?

Concurrent sex & drug use for the express purpose of enhancing sexual enjoyment and reducing inhibition

### The Unholy Trinity


1. **Mephedrone** (M, Meow meow, M-cat)  
*creates euphoria, alertness, affection*
2. **GHB/GBL** (G)  
*relaxes, generates self confidence, increases libido*
3. **Crystal Meth** (Tina)  
*creates euphoria, increases libido, heightens arousal*

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## ChemSex – the highs

- Increased libido
- Heightened arousal and orgasm
- Lowered inhibitions
- Increased self confidence
- Feeling 'loved up'
- Community
- Fun




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## ChemSex – the highs

- Panic attacks
- Paranoid
- Sexual health concerns
- Decreased sexual functioning
- Overdose
- Abuse
- Increased loneliness and isolation
- Addiction



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## Resistance to change

- Intrinsic part of gay lifestyle
- Pathologises GSRD lifestyles
- Heteronormative definitions of 'positive' sexuality
- Sex will be boring, or impossible, without Chems
- Losing community

**But if harm-reduction strategies aren't working – addiction?**

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## Integrative Treatment Model

### C.H.O.I.C.E.

- C – Challenge Core Beliefs
- H – Have a Vision
- O – Overcome Compulsive Behaviours
- I – Identify Positive Sexuality
- C – Connect with Others
- E – Establish Confident Recovery

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## C - Challenge Core Beliefs

### *“I don't need to change”*

- Highlight actual & potential harmful consequences
- Challenge cognitive distortions

### *“I don't want to change”*

- Empathise with loss
- MI techniques

### *“I can't change”*

- Psycho-educate
- Identify negative self statements
- Reduce shame

The CHOICE Recovery Model

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## H – Have a Vision



- Identify values
- Teach to dream
- Create vision
- Set goals

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The CHOICE Recovery Model



## O – Overcome Compulsive Behaviours

- Identify and avoid triggers
- Establish relapse prevention strategies
- Establish recovery routines
- Explore underlying trauma/attachment issues
- Identify unmet needs

Get off the cycle of addiction

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The CHOICE Recovery Model



## I – Identify Positive Sexuality

*Positive sexuality is....*

- In line with personal values
- Respectful of self and others
- Pleasurable
- Mutually fulfilling (when partnered)
- Not shameful
- Confidence and esteem building

*To achieve it.....*

- GSRD affirmative sex education
- Positive sex plan
- Psychosexual therapy to overcome sexual dysfunctions

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## C – Connect with Others

*“The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, the opposite of addiction is connection”*

Johann Hari

- Friends
- Family
- Partnered relationships
- Recovery groups
- 12-step fellowship

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The CHOICE Recovery Model



## C – Establish Confident Recovery

*“Recovery is not about what you give up, it’s what you take up”*

- Establish emotional stability
- Develop assertiveness
- Daily recovery disciplines
- Healthy pursuits & pastimes

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The CHOICE Recovery Model



## Summary

Working with ChemSex requires a multi-disciplinary approach

- Sexual health
- Chemical addiction recovery
- Sex addiction recovery
- Psychosexual therapy

*ALL – from a GSRD affirmative approach*

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## Thank You

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## Services (UK, Holland, Dubai, South Africa)

### Therapy

- Individual & Couple Psychotherapy
- Psychosexual Therapy
- Intensive & Weekly Addiction Recovery Groups
- ChemSex recovery groups
- Support groups for partners

### Training - ISAT (Institute for Sex Addiction Training)

- Accredited Diploma in Sex Addiction Counselling
- CPD

