



## **FETISHISTIC DISORDER**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The etymology of the word Fetish is from Latin, Facere, which means “to make”, which evolved into Factitius, “made by art”, from which the Portuguese word Feitico was derived, or in French, Fetiche, which led to the English Fetish. A Fetish in this context was defined as “Something irrationally revered” - an object in which power or force was concentrated. The first recorded use of the word Fetishist to indicate an object of desire, someone who is aroused due to a body part, or an object belonging to a person who is the object of desire was in 1897 (Harper, 2014). There are those to whom an object or body part has the power to captivate and enthrall. Such a focus itself is not considered a disorder, unless it is accompanied by distress or impairment. Fetishistic Disorder is a DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition), diagnosis assigned to individuals who experience sexual arousal from objects or a specific part of the body which is not typically regarded as erotic. Almost any body part or object can be a Fetish. Examples include: clothes, shoes, stockings, gloves, hair, or latex (Comfort, 1987). Fetishists may use the desired article for sexual gratification in the absence of a partner, by touching, smelling, licking, or masturbating with it (Meston & Frohlich, 2013). Fetishism is seen almost exclusively in men, and 25% of men with Fetishes are homosexual (Meston and Frohlich, 2013). In some cases, Fetishistic Disorder is a result of Classical and Operant Conditioning. One possible Scenario: A neutral stimulus, such as a pair of knee high leather boots are worn by a woman. Foreplay begins, and the boots are removed to the accompaniment of growing sexual desire, which is an unconditioned response. The association between the unconditioned response of sexual desire during foreplay turns the previously neutral stimulus of knee high leather boots into a conditioned stimulus. Through repeated trials, e.g. sexual encounters, the boots produce a conditioned response of sexual arousal through the sensory stimuli of the smell, appearance, and texture of the boots. Sex may not be as satisfying, or erection may not even be possible unless leather boots are present. Operant Conditioning can occur as the person will experience anticipatory pleasure or reinforcement from the process of coming into contact with the boots.

**Always consult a mental health or medical professional regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.**



## SYMPTOMS:

According to the DSM-5, there are three criterion for Fetishistic Disorder, and four specifiers that can be applied:

A. Over a six month period, the individual has experienced sexual urges focused on a non-genital body part, or inanimate object, or other stimulus, and has acted out urges, fantasies, or behaviors.

B. The fantasies, urges, or behaviors cause distress, or impairment in functioning.

C. The Fetishistic object is not an article of clothing employed in cross dressing, or a sexual stimulation device, such as a vibrator.

- Specifiers for the diagnosis of Fetishistic Disorder include the type of stimulus which is the focus of attention.
- Body Part(s) (non-genital or erogenous areas of the body - e.g., feet or hair). This is also referred to as Partialism- preoccupation with a part of the body rather than the whole person.
- Non-living Object(s) e.g. shoes or boots.
- Other- situations or activities- e.g.- smoking during sex.

Other specifiers are:

- In a controlled environment where Fetishistic Disorder cannot readily be engaged in, such as an institutional setting.
- In remission: No distress or impairment of functioning for a five year period, exclusive of a controlled environment (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

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### TREATMENT:

The DSM-5 does not specify treatment options for Fetishistic Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). If the etiology of the disorder is a learned behavior, CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) using a form of systematic desensitization- gradual exposure to the Fetishistic object, coupled with a neutral response, rather than a sexual response may work to lower or eliminate sexual arousal associated with an object.

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