

INTACTIVISM IS A MENTAL DISORDER

Jonathon Conte, a 34 year-old leader of *Bay Area Intactivists*, tragically took his own life on May 9, 2016.

Five years earlier Conte wrote about his motivations. He grew up feeling normal and whole. When as a teenager he learned about circumcision, he began to blame his own infant circumcision for his genital soreness and discomfort.^[1] He expressed feelings of “incompleteness, both physically and sexually.” He spoke about being broken, sexually deficient, and irreparably harmed, and he battled depression.^[2]

Conte’s friends could have helped him. They could have lifted him him up. They could have assured him that a man is more than just his foreskin. They could have encouraged him to see a physician about his soreness and discomfort. Instead they reinforced his melancholic view of himself as a victim, physically and sexually crippled. They unintentionally encouraged and fed his low self-esteem and self-pity.



Several other activists have associated intactivism with destructive emotions.

- A mental health therapist warned one patient that intactivism might be the cause of her frequent nightmares and flashbacks.
- An author in Alaska admitted that her own obsession led to an emotional breakdown.^[3]
- A British Columbia department store salesman wrote that he reads circumcision stories that trigger his “anxiety and rage.”^[4]
- A Florida man revealed that he was treated by a leading North American trauma specialist for “intactivism-related stress.”^[5]
- A California mother reported that several friends have been diagnosed with depression, OCD, or another disorder caused by their circumcision obsessions.^[6]
- The Pennsylvania director of *Your Whole Baby* reported that many self-identified “regret moms” were so distraught that they considered suicide.^[7]
- Many intactivists say that they have feelings of anxiety and stress whenever they learn that parents are expecting a boy. ^[8]
- The *DelMarVa Area Intactivists* founder described her typical reaction whenever a friend or loved one resists her “gentle education” and chooses circumcision:

“I react by, sometimes not sleeping well for months, not eating well, feeling stressed, depressed and I harbor a deep seated sorrow that just refuses to go away. It's a looming feeling that oppresses my entire being, my very life force. I shrink and I retreat into oblivion.”^[9]

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Despite what intactivists may have come to believe, a fixation on foreskin is not normal behavior. A fixation on circumcision is not healthy behavior. A fixation on a parent's medical decision is not normal or healthy.

A mental disorder is a neurosis in which obsessive thoughts, compulsive acts, and feelings of anxiety dominate one's personality.^[10] Dysmorphia is a mental disorder characterized by preoccupation with a minor or imagined body defect.^[11] You should seek professional counseling if some of these circumstances apply to you.

- You constantly think about circumcision.
- Feeling about circumcision makes you depressed, anxious, irritable, or apathetic.
- You justify behaviors that you previously would have considered unethical (harassing mothers, threatening doctors, body-shaming women and circumcised men.)
- Your activism is interfering with your social relationships.
- Your activism is threatening your marriage or family life.
- Your activism is threatening your career.

You don't have to suffer. Help is available.

[1] "In Memory of Jonathon Conte"; Your Whole Baby – accessible at <https://www.yourwholebaby.org/jonathon>

[2] Jonathon Conte, "Motivations of an Intactivist"; *Intact News*, July 2011 - accessible at <http://intactnews.org/node/134/1318099689/jonathon-conte-motivations-intactivist>

[3] Rosemary Romberg, Facebook post; July 7, 2017 (Facebook.com/rosemary.romberg)

[4] James Ketter, Facebook post; November 18, 2016 (Facebook.com/james.ketter.73)

[5] Jason Fairfield, Facebook post; May 25, 2017 (Facebook.com/jason.fairfield.100)

[6] Ibid, comment posted by Vee Savage; May 25, 2017

[7] Cassie Waldeck, comment on Shelley Wright Facebook post: "What is the best part of having an intact son?"; July 25, 2016

[8] For example, see Michelle Brandt Facebook post and comments; August 3, 2015 (Facebook.com/brandtml)

[9] Shelley Wright, Facebook note: "My personal struggle"; November 23, 2014 (Facebook.com/ms.shelldubz)

[10] Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry

[11] Mayo Clinic Staff, "Body Dysmorphic Disorder"; Mayo Clinic, accessible at

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/body-dysmorphic-disorder/home/ovc-20200935>

If you feel you're in a crisis, please call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at **(800) 273-8255**