

Love and Addiction: Noji comes clean on the sex addiction storyline and her own real-life battle with an eating disorder

*{mosimage}General Hospital's Minae Noji talks to Soapdom about the seriousness of the issue plaguing her alter-ego – Dr. Kelly Lee – and the ways in which she hopes her efforts make a difference in the lives of some viewers.*

Proponents and defectors of soap operas disagree on the cultural relevance of such storytelling, but the one time these two foes do not feel the need to fall into an absorbed debate is when it comes to romance, and thereby, sex, functioning as the main staples of the genre. However, General Hospital took the latter of the two fixtures and developed a serious forum for an illness too often ignored:

Sexual addiction.

The lucky actress chosen to tell the story was Minae Noji (Dr. Kelly Lee) and almost immediately she and GH head writer Robert Guza, Jr. worked to offer a realistic tale that would be devoid of giggles or dismissed as a joke by viewers and critics alike.

Sexual addiction is defined as any sexually-related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment. Sex becomes the organizing principle of addicts' lives.

Quickly, Noji began to do her homework on the illness because she knew "if done right, the storyline would prove very special." At the same time, the actress tells Soapdom she did not have to look too far to gain a certain familiarity with the perils of addiction – no matter the type.

As Noji explains, "I definitely gave my character a specific history about what led to her addiction.

Also, I personally grew up around addiction so a lot of my childhood memories fed into my storyline."

Many will remember that Dr. Kelly Lee's unhealthy behavior first came to light on SoapNet's General Hospital: Night Shift and this OBGYN's rounds went above and beyond the boundaries of the rest of her colleagues. Noji laughs when this reporter suggests we review a sampling of her handy work on Night Shift and GH, but proves game.

The list of Adonis' is as follows:

Stan Johnson (Kiko Ellsworth), Andy Archer (Ron Melendez), Dr. Leo Julian (Dominic Raines) and a titillating game of footsies with Jerry Jacks (Sebastian Roche').

Anyone looking a little flushed?

Noji realized that the job set forth would be hard work, but someone had to take one for the team.

In truth, Noji, who joined the daytime drama in April of 2006, discovered the many layers that come in to play for those suffering from sexual addiction and it became clear that the illness was only now starting to be recognized as a serious disease as Soapdom also uncovered on its own. It is reported that 3 to 6 percent of Americans are said to suffer from sexual addiction with the cause stemming from heavy scars carrying over from childhood: 72 percent had been physically abused; 97 percent were emotionally abused; while 81 percent admit to some sort of sexual abuse.

Given these tragic numbers, the actress was determined to know what she was talking about so that her Kelly would not come off as a caricature.

"My first stop was the library," begins an invigorated Noji as she tells Soapdom the progression of her knowledge, "I also spoke to former addicts to hear their personal stories.

I am very thankful to those who spoke to me (about addiction).

They were all so open and sincere and I had the opportunity to get a glimpse into their lives; they're true warriors."

"Part of the problem is that there is a lot of shame in sex addiction, so often times the disease is not acknowledged. I believe sex addiction is a difficult concept for people to grasp since it's not an actual addiction to a 'tangible' substance like drugs or alcohol," explains Noji on why this illness remains in the shadows.

the same:

hopelessness.

people to know they are not alone ... that there is hope.

"The core, however, for any addict is worthlessness and

I want

You just need to make the big leap and reach out; there is an entire community of people who share your pain and have made it through."

The urgency in her voice is a direct effect of her own battle with demons. “I went through an eating disorder for years and I can’t describe to you how alone I felt.

My addiction to food was not to the food itself, but it was to what the food represented and did for me,” she candidly speaks.

“I felt so out of control and alone that reaching out (to someone) was the last thing on my mind.

When I finally decided to love myself and get help, I opened my eyes to the root of my pain and healed my soul not through food but through love and nurturing.”

It is obvious that Noji has been remarkably affected by her real and fictional life and the journey it took her on... not that viewers have seen the last of her character continue to struggle. “I hear that eventually down the road, the reason for Dr. Lee’s pain will surface. If this turns out to be the case, I will be very excited to see where Kelly’s storyline goes!”

Until then, the multi-talented GH star keeps extremely busy with her growing business, EmyMinae, established with friend Emy Coligado. EmyMinae is a company that designs and produces unique handmade woman’s accessories for boutiques like Fred Segal and Planet Blue. Noji has been known to spend her downtime on set weaving scarves or sewing flowers.

With the two performers hectic schedules, Noji only recently began to create some items on her own.

“My plan is to start selling my merchandise on my website [minaenoji.com](http://minaenoji.com),” she informs Soapdom.

“I am now not only doing knitting and weaving, but I am also working a lot with stained glass items and paintings.

Art soothes my soul, so whenever I could spread the love through creativity and joy I am one happy girl!”

If you or someone you know suffers from sexual addiction, there is help located at Sexaholics Anonymous International Central Office ( [www.sa.org/steps.php](http://www.sa.org/steps.php) ); email: [salco@sa.org](mailto:salco@sa.org) ; phone: 866 424 8777.

One’s anonymity will be protected.

