

# ***COUNTERFEIT Self-Soothing*** **The Psychology of Pornography®**

THE SCIENCE, THE EFFECT ON YOUR MARRIAGE OR VOCATION, AND THE GOSPEL TAKE ON IT

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# Disclosures

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- There are no conflicts of interests connected to this presentation.
- This presentation is presented to assist a Christian audience from a Christian perspective. It intersects the Gospel with what we know about science.
- I wish to express gratitude to the contributions of Dr. Joshua B. Grubbs, a researcher in Pornography located at the Dept. of Psychology, Bowling Green State University. Email: [grubbsj@bgsu.edu](mailto:grubbsj@bgsu.edu)
- With permission, he has shared with us some of his slides. These slides are identified in quotes with the reference: (Courtesy of JBG)
- In addition we express gratitude to the CMDA (Christian Medical and Dental Associations) which has published a position paper on *Pornography and Interactive Sexual Devices* from which we have quoted extensively as indicated.

# Disclaimer

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- *PLEASE NOTE: THIS WEBINAR IS NOT THE PROVISION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, NOR IS IT MEANT TO TREAT ANY MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION OR PROVIDE ADVICE IN ANY PARTICULAR CASE.*
- *IT DOES NOT INVOLVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CLIENT – PSYCHOLOGIST RELATIONSHIP.*

# Learning Objectives

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- Is it an addiction or a compulsion?
- Comorbidity with other mental health disorders.
- Understanding some of the causes & reasons why persons of both sexes engage in pornography;
- How pornography affects their relationships.
- Wounds pornography inflicts on matrimony.
- What is its psychological function?
- How does it affect marital intimacy?
- The effect of pornography jointly shared in the marital bed.
- What underlying areas often need developing & healing to overcome pornography?
- What happens when these are not specifically addressed and the person just stops?
- Are there risks in stopping pornography without addressing underlying issues? If so, what are they?
- Exploring the betrayal wound made by pornography use and the definition of PTSD.
- What are the necessary ingredients for the traumatized spouse to be healed?
- What is the porn-engaging partner's responsibility and task in the healing process?
- What controls over the situation can be attained?

# Clinical Prevalence

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- “Up to 7% of women and 11% of men in the U.S. report concerns about compulsive sexual behaviors.” (Dickenson et al., 2018)
- “In 2016 in the USA, 91% male univ. students, 62% females viewed internet porn during adolescence; with 49% of males viewing before age 13.” (National Center on Sexual Exploitation, 2017)
- “64% ages 13-24 actively pursue viewing biweekly or more.”(National Center on Sexual Exploitation, 2017)
- Xvideos.com ranks currently (Oct. 2021) #10 among all the most visited websites in the world (as the world’s most popular pornography website. This is ahead of Netflix, LinkedIn and Zoom. (Similarweb, 2021)
- Pornhub in 2018, next in ranking, averaged 92 million daily visits (2018 stats) and a total of 33.5 billion visits. (2018, Pornhub Insights) (Note the world’s population is 7.53 billion).
- Adult websites in general rank as of October 2021 #4 in the most visited websites in the world. (This is the proportion of a pandemic plague.) Zoom (#15) and Netflix (#17) Similarweb, 2021).
- “One in four Internet users view porn in any given month.”(National Center on Sexual Exploitation, 2017)
- “Sexually explicit dress, actions, and dialog are common in purportedly family friendly programs, and “soft” porn publishing is increasing.” (CMDA Position Paper, 2020)
- “Among practicing Christians, 2% seek out porn daily, 5% weekly and 6% once or twice a month. 21% of youth pastors and 14% of senior pastors admitted to using regularly.” (McDowell, 2016)
- “Among the users, 56% of the youth pastors and 33% of the senior pastors said they were addicted.” (McDowell, 2016)

# Clinical Prevalence

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- “Mental health providers (Short et al., 2016) [Disabato et al., 2016]
  - 39.4% report having seen someone with a “sex addiction”
  - 48.8% report having seen someone with problematic pornography use
- College Counseling Centers (Giordano & Cashwell, 2018)
  - 84% of therapists reported treating compulsive sexual behaviors in the past 12 months” (Courtesy of JBG)



# The big debate: Is it an addiction, a compulsion, or a type of “Substance” Use Disorder?

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- We know pornography becomes a compulsion, but what about an addiction?
- Is it a process or a behavioral addiction?
- Is it also a true physiologically-based addiction?
- Is a compulsivity itself an addiction?
- Is it akin to a “Substance” Use Disorder?
- If you purport to be a follower of the Gospel, what does it say about it?

We will look at it from each of these perspectives.

# What is the definition of addiction?

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- In the psychology world the term addiction is controversial. Let's continue to look at it from the secular attempt to define it.
- Central to its definition is the dependence on a substance or activity.
- “Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.”

*Adopted by the ASAM Board of Directors September 15, 2019*

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# What Is a Substance Use Disorder?

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- “**Substance use disorder (SUD)** is complex a condition in which there **is uncontrolled use** of a substance **despite harmful consequence**. People with SUD have **an intense focus on using** a certain substance(s) such as alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs, to the point where the person’s ability to function in day to day life becomes impaired. **People keep using** the substance **even when they know it is causing or will cause problems**. The most severe SUDs are sometimes called addictions.
- People with a substance use disorder may have **distorted thinking and behaviors**. **Changes in the brain’s structure and function** are what cause people to have intense cravings, **changes in personality, abnormal movements, and other behaviors**. Brain imaging studies show changes in the areas of the brain that relate to judgment, decision making, learning, memory, and behavioral control.
- Repeated substance use can cause changes in how the brain functions. These **changes can last long after the immediate effects** of the substance wears off, or in other words, after the period of intoxication. Intoxication is the **intense pleasure, euphoria, calm,** increased perception and sense, and other feelings **that are caused** by the substance. Intoxication symptoms are different for each substance.
- When someone has a substance use disorder, they usually **build up a tolerance** to the substance, meaning **they need larger amounts to feel the effects.**”

Addiction and Substance Use Disorders. American Psychiatric Association. Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse. These principles are detailed in NIDA’s *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide*.

**As you think about it, many of these aspects apply to pornography.**

# Process Addictions or Behavioral Addictions

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- “Addiction can occur in many forms. Often, it is assumed that physical dependence characterized by withdrawal symptoms is required in order for someone to be diagnosed with an addiction disorder, but the fact is that **behavioral addiction can occur with all the negative consequences in a person’s life** minus the physical issues faced by people who compulsively engage in drug and alcohol abuse. [But there are physical issues: ex. **changes in the brain as we will see; Increasing arousal issues, erectile issues, etc.]**
- It is **the compulsive nature of the behavior that is often indicative of a behavioral addiction, or process addiction, in an individual.**
- The **compulsion to continually engage in an activity or behavior despite the negative impact on the person’s ability to remain mentally and/or physically healthy and functional in the home and community defines behavioral addiction.**
- The person may find the behavior **rewarding psychologically or get a “high” while engaged in the activity but may later feel guilt, remorse, or even overwhelmed by the consequences of that continued choice.**
- Unfortunately, as is common for all who struggle with addiction, people living with behavioral addictions are **unable to stop engaging in the behavior for any length of time without treatment and intervention.”**

(American Addiction Centers, website)

# The scientific community & addictions

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- Until recently, “non-substance related behavioral addiction” was not listed in the two internationally used diagnostic manuals of mental disorders, i.e. DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and ICD-10 (International Classification of Disease). (Alavi et al., 2012)
- The DSM-5 now has listed two of such: **Gambling Disorder & Internet Gaming Disorder**. In the psychological community there are issues in the definitions of what type of usage constitutes “a disorder”.
- “A **blurring of demarcation lines between physiology and pathology** complicate the epidemiologic investigation and diagnostic assessment of BAs {Behavioral Addictions}. Moreover, the lack of valid screening tools and the frequent comorbidity with other mental disorders further hinder the diagnostic approach to BAs”. (Pina et. al., 2015)
- Contrary to the commonly held belief that holds addiction to be a particular kind of dependence on drugs and chemical substances such alcohol, nicotine and heroin, **behavior science experts believe that any source which is capable of stimulating an individual, could become addictive**. The change of behaviors such as gambling, drug abuse, computer gaming or chatting and internet browsing from habits into obligatory behavior, can be considered as the development of addiction. (Peele & Brodsky, 1979)

Maybe what matters most is the compulsive aspect and the difficulty overcoming it.

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- Behavioral addiction such as pornography addiction is similar to drug addiction except that in the former, the individual is not addicted to a substance but the behavior or the feeling brought about by the relevant action.
- However, the neuroscience is showing us that the effects on the brain are similar. Let's look at that next.
- **Hilton, D. & Watts, C. (2011) present interesting neurological findings.**

# Hilton & Watts

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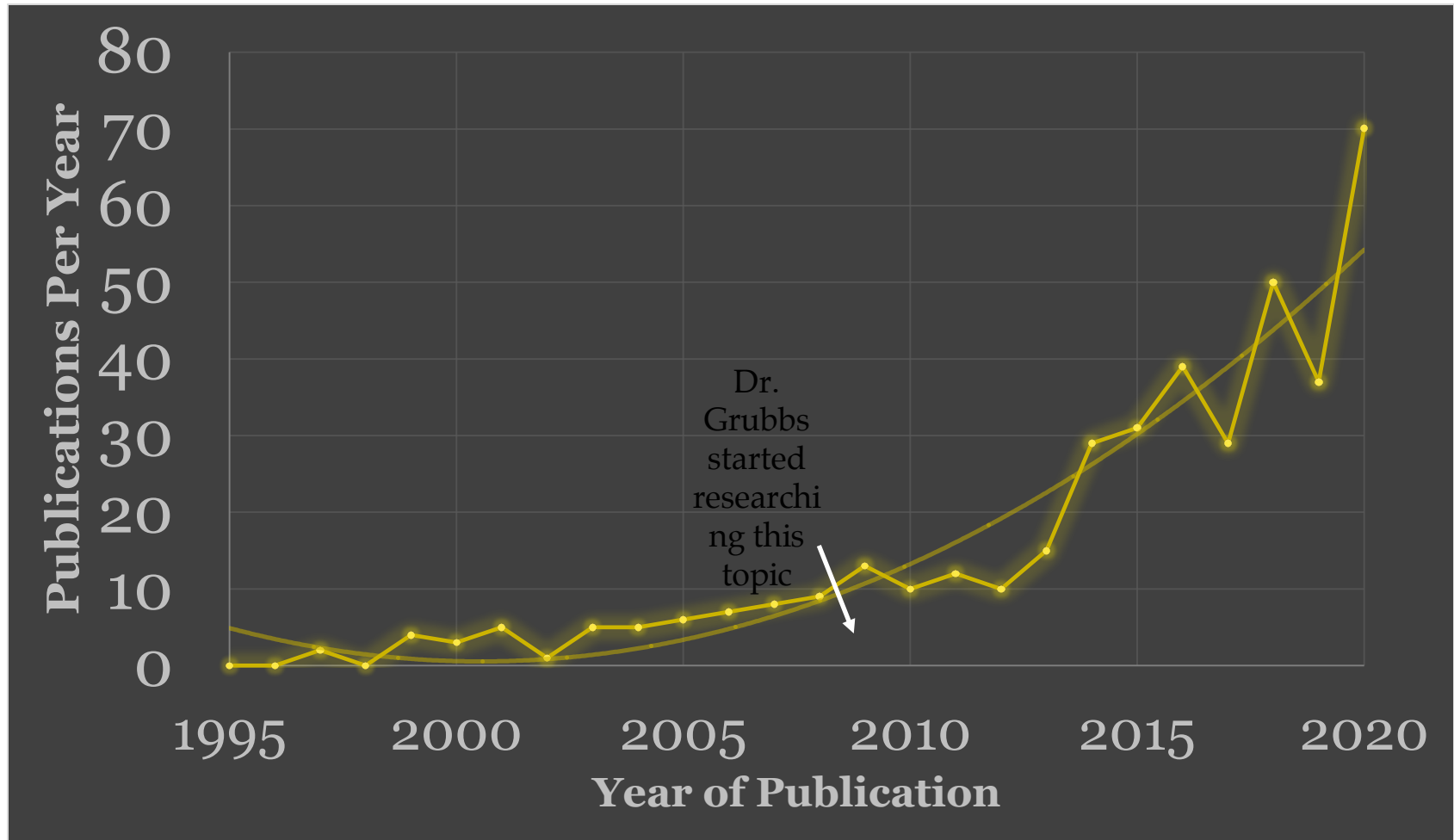
- “A significant postulate of this commentary is that **all addictions create, in addition to chemical changes in the brain, anatomical and pathological changes which result in various manifestations of cerebral dysfunction collectively labeled hypofrontal syndromes.** In these syndromes, the underlying defect, reduced to its simplest description, is damage to **the “braking system” of the brain.** They are well known to clinical neuroscientists, especially neurologists and neurosurgeons, for they are also seen with tumors, strokes, and trauma. Indeed, anatomically, loss of these frontal control systems is most apparent following trauma, exemplified by progressive atrophy of the frontal lobes seen in serial MRI scans over time.
- Although the key elements of hypofrontal syndromes—impulsivity, compulsivity, emotional lability, impaired judgment—are well described, much of the process is still unknown. **One emerging aspect of these hypofrontal states is their similarity to findings in addictive patients.** Addressing hypofrontality, Fowler *et al.* noted, ‘studies of addicts show reduced cellular activity in the orbitofrontal cortex, a brain area...[relied upon]...to make strategic, rather than impulsive, decisions. *Patients with traumatic injuries to this area of the brain display problems—aggressiveness, poor judgment of future consequences, inability to inhibit inappropriate responses that are similar to those observed in substance abusers.*’ (Fowler *et al.*, 2007) (emphasis added).

# Hilton & Watts postulate from their research

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- “Even more instructive are similar findings seen with the abuse of a normal biological behavior, eating, leading to addiction and obesity. In 2006, a VBM study was published looking specifically at obesity, and the results were very similar to the cocaine and methamphetamine studies.(Pannacciulli et. al., 2006).The obesity study demonstrated multiple areas of volume loss, particularly in the frontal lobes, areas associated with judgment and control. This study is significant in demonstrating visible damage in a natural endogenous addiction, as opposed to an exogenous drug addiction. Furthermore, it is easy to accept intuitively because the effects of overeating can be seen in the obese person.
- Eating, of course, is essential to individual survival, necessary for survival of the species. Another activity necessary for survival of the species is sex, an observation which leads to a series of logical questions derived from the work on obesity. **Would the findings seen in eating addiction be seen in excessive sexual behavior? Can sex be addictive in the neurological sense? If so, are there associated with the addiction anatomical changes in the brain seen with other addictions?** A recent study supports growing evidence **that compulsive sexuality can indeed be addictive.** In 2007, a VBM study out of Germany looked specifically at pedophilia, and demonstrated almost identical finding to the cocaine, methamphetamine, and obesity studies. (Schiffer et. al. 2007) It concludes for the first time that a sexual compulsion can cause physical, anatomic change in the brain, the hallmark of brain addiction. A preliminary study showed frontal dysfunction specifically in patients unable to control their sexual behavior. (Miner et. al., 2009) This study used diffusion MRI to evaluate function of nerve transmission through white matter. **It demonstrated abnormality in the superior frontal region, an area associated with compulsivity.**” (Hilton & Watts, (2007)

# Research Regarding Compulsive Sexual Behavior/Sexual Addiction Over the Past 25 Years



Reproduced from:

Grubbs, J. B., Hoagland, K. C., Lee, B. N., Grant, J. T., Davison, P., Reid, R. C., & Kraus, S. W. (2020). Sexual addiction 25 years on: A systematic and methodological review of empirical literature and an agenda for future research. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 82, 101925. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2020.101925>

# What is sex addiction?

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- “Compulsive patterns of sexual behavior
- Excessive sexual behavior that interferes with one’s mental, emotional, social, or vocational well-being.” (Reid & Kafka, 2014). (This is not an official diagnosis.)

(Courtesy of J.B.)



# What about Pornography Addiction?

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- Most commonly endorsed form of hypersexual behavior (Reid et al., 2012)
- Equally controversial (Ley et al., 2014).
- Commonly self-diagnosed (e.g., Cavaglione, 2008, 2009; Grubbs et al., 2010; Levert, 2007)
- Classified as “Compulsive Sexual Behavior” in the ICD-11 (WHO, 2017)

(Courtesy of JBG)



# Diagnostic criteria for Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder for ICD-11 (Not included as an addictive disorder but listed under Impulse Control Disorders)

“A persistent pattern of failure to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges resulting in repetitive sexual behavior, must be manifested in one or more of the following:

- 1a. Engaging in repetitive sexual activities has become a central focus of the person's life to the point of neglecting health and personal care or other interests, activities, and responsibilities (yes/no).
- 1b. The person has made numerous unsuccessful efforts to control or significantly reduce repetitive sexual behavior (yes/no)
- 1c. The person continues to engage in repetitive sexual behavior despite adverse consequences (e.g., repeated relationship disruption, occupational consequences, negative impact on health) (yes/no).
- 1d. The person continues to engage in repetitive sexual behavior even when the individual derives little or no satisfaction from it (yes/no).
2. The pattern of failure to control intense, sexual impulses or urges and resulting repetitive sexual behavior is manifested over an extended period (e.g., 6 months or more) (Must be met)
3. The pattern of repetitive sexual behavior causes marked distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (Must be met).

Note: Distress that is entirely related to moral judgments and disapproval about sexual impulses, urges, or behaviors is not enough to meet this requirement.” (Courtesy of JBD

# Dopamine cycles & Neuroscience

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- “Koob and Le Moal (Koob, G. F., & Moal, M. L. (1997) dedicated the final section of their highly detailed review of the allostatic brain reward/anti-reward system to the topic of ‘Nondrug Addictions’. The authors intertwined ‘non-drug and drug addictions’, and concluded with the statement, ‘A case can be made that there **is strong face validity with the addiction cycle of preoccupation/anticipation (craving), binge/intoxication, and withdrawal/negative affect stages for** compulsive gambling, compulsive shopping, compulsive eating, **compulsive sexual behavior**, and compulsive exercise.” (Love et. al., 2015)

# Hypersexual Disorder

- ❖ Field Trial (Reid et al., 2012)
- ❖ Reliably applied
- ❖ Rated as useful
- ❖ Frequent behaviors among treatment seekers:
  - ❖ Compulsive masturbation (78.3%)
  - ❖ Excessive real life sexual encounters (41.1%)
  - ❖ Cybersex (18.1%)
  - ❖ Pornography use (81.1%)

Courtesy of JBG

# The Gospel view for those who purport to follow it:

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- Jesus through the mouth of St. Paul says:

- **“You were bought at a price.**
- **Do not be slaves to men.”**
- **1 Cor. 7:23**

- The reference in the Jerusalem Bible (1966)
- states:

“Spiritually slaves to their outlook and conventions.”

- Pornography enslaves you to yourself, as well as to the entire morally corrupt industry and the people in it who create computer algorithms to draw you in even further.



# The Christian Gospel take on it:

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- The necessity to remain sexually pure and that sexual activity is to be restricted to monogamous marriage between one man and one woman.
- (Ex 20:14; Ex 22:16-17; Deut 22:13-30; 1 Cor 6:9, 13b-20; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3-5; 1 Thes 4:3-5; Heb 13:4). Courtesy of CMDA Position paper
- St. John Paul II in his Theology of the Body makes clear the teaching of the Church and proclaimed in Scripture that the most intimate expressions of sexuality, including sexual intercourse are uniquely gifts of self that husband and wife give to each other in the sacrament of matrimony. (Song of Songs; Prov 5:15-19; Eph 5:25-31).
- In prophetic fashion, St. John Paul II makes it clear that sexuality between husband and wife is all about the gift of self that is required to be intune with the recipient spouse, given with sensitivity to the receptivity of the spouse. (Sri, 2005)



# Humanae Vitae (Pope Paul VI) on Married Love

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- “9. In the light of these facts the characteristic features and exigencies of married love are clearly indicated, and it is of the highest importance to evaluate them exactly.
- This love is above all fully human, **a compound of sense and spirit**. It is not, then, **merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive**. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfillment.
- It is a love which is total—that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and **not thinking solely of their own convenience**. Whoever really loves his partner **loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's own sake**, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself.
- Married love is also faithful and exclusive of all other, and this until death. This is how husband and wife understood it on the day on which, fully aware of what they were doing, they freely vowed themselves to one another in marriage. Though this fidelity of husband and wife sometimes presents difficulties, no one has the right to assert that it is impossible; it is, on the contrary, always honorable and meritorious.”
  - (Paul VI, 1968).

# Humanae Vitae on Promotion of Chastity

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- 22 “Everything therefore in the modern means of social communication which arouses men's baser passions and encourages low moral standards, as well as every obscenity in the written word and every form of indecency on the stage and screen, should be condemned publicly and unanimously by all those who have at heart the advance of civilization and the safeguarding of the outstanding values of the human spirit. It is quite absurd to defend this kind of depravity in the name of art or culture (Second Vatican Council, 1964) or by pleading the liberty which may be allowed in this field by the public authorities.” (Paul VI,. 1968)



# 887 Self-help books on pornography addiction

Amazon.com search results for "pornography addiction".

Search results: 1-48 of 887 results for "pornography addiction". Sort by: Featured.

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**Stop Viewing PORN.com**  
Presents: A Father's Advice to Son Creates the RAMP Solution

**PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION**  
Breaking the Chains  
A Workbook of Essential Tools for Recovery

**YOUR BRAIN ON PORN**  
Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction

**Treating Pornography Addiction**  
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR RECOVERY

# Algorithms & in Kansas City “They went about as far as they could go...”

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- Artificial intelligence algorithms have been created for people who watch porn online.
- They are designed specifically to pull the individual in and create a desire for more.
- There is now both video and virtual reality that intensify the content of porn. The introduction of sex robots that imitate human speech and sexual behaviors are designed to perform sexual acts with humans are an extreme elaboration of pornography.
- All of these are dangerous. You should by now understand how this is so **PHYSIOLOGICALLY**. We now turn to the psychological, social and spiritual effects, but before we do, let's look at some of the causes connected to pornography use.

# Now we look to some of the causes:

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- It, like any addiction, gives instant gratification.
- Very importantly, like all compulsions, it brings an immediate reduction in anxiety.
- This is classical conditioning. People, like rats, like to hit the internet porn button to get the pellet of food (anxiety relief to feel good, etc. as described previously).
- And the dopamine effects of continuing this cause it to be craved more.
- Girls have as much if not more anxiety than boys, and a recent study shows how Instagram for example, is affecting girls detrimentally with pictures of ideal beauty, increasing their already major pre-occupation with whether I am attractive enough to be wanted and loved. Facebook CEO, Mark Zuckerberg (2019) states: “[c]omparisons on Instagram can change how young women view and describe themselves”, according to his own company’s research. “We make body-image issues worse for one in three teen girls.” (Vincent, J., 2021)

# Then there are family situational factors that increase susceptibility

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- Parents have scant supervision over their children and are often working out of the home, or alternately, pre-occupied in the home.
- Parents in our culture tend to have top-down communication. They speak in conclusions and have learned that from generations of their family history.
- That is, they don't know how to open up and connect to a large extent. They know how to "talk at" their kids. They don't get personally self-disclosing or modeling healthy ways in which they explicitly handle the anxieties of their own life. Chances are, they don't do that too well either. I have parents of college student who want to see me because they are dealing with a worse version of depression and anxiety than their child, but "carry on".

# Many Religious, and Catholic Culture Families

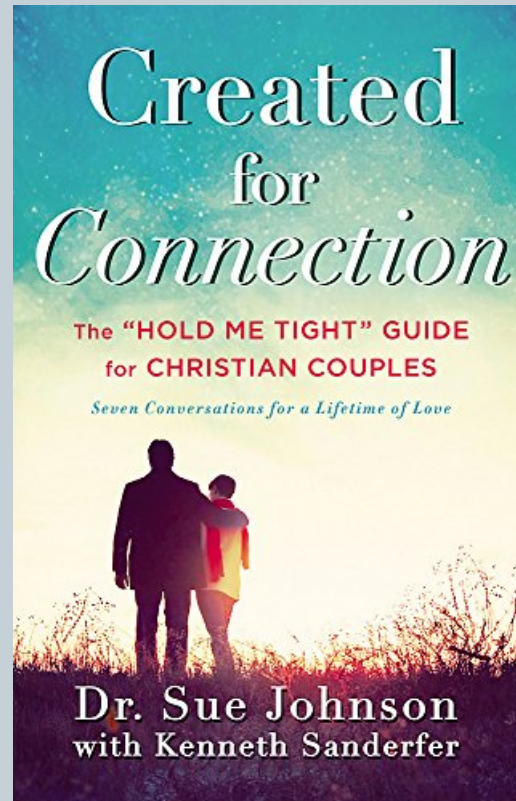
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- Create a culture of the “right way versus the wrong way”.
- The importance of “not making mistakes”.
- The importance of pleasing others and taking responsibility for when you cause harm.
- While these have some good effects in moderation, they quite often create a culture of anxiety, unrelenting standards, and an indomitable Inner Critic.
- Put this together with generations of emotionally independent parents who may hold back in self-disclosure, affection/affirmation, & verbal non-performance related affirmation. Hence there are few resources to offset the Inner Critic strong voice, and secure attachment & emotional resonance suffer impairment. (See YouTube video clip: [The Stillface Experiment](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyCHT9AbD_Y), by Dr. Ed Tronik.) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyCHT9AbD\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyCHT9AbD_Y)
  - This presentation by Drs. Tronik and Sue Johnson demonstrate key responses in love relationships from infancy through adulthood. Dr. Johnson’s book, “Created for Connection” (Sanderfer and Johnson, 2020) , makes the point clear.

# Books to offset the interpersonal disconnect that is always a part of pornography:

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This can be used for both married couples and applied by extension to celibate life, where the need for connection also requires filling by God, religious community, parish relationships, fraternity, monastic life, etc. We all need to be seen, heard and understood.



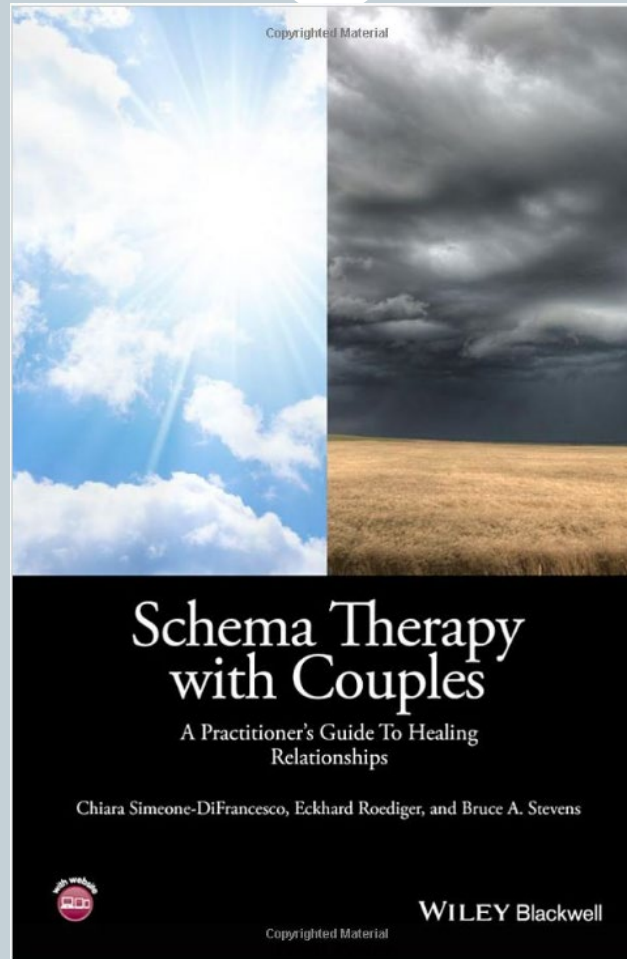


# On the more scholarly level, the academic textbook I and my colleagues wrote:

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Although written as a secular textbook, all of my contributions are biblically based and connected to a Catholic anthropology of the human person. My contribution on Needs versus Wants is taken from Catholic Christian theologians & philosophers and brought down to an applied level by author & colleague, Romuald B. Simeone.

It is shocking, but sex is a Want, not a Need. Needs are universal & connected to human nature, what it takes to be human.



# The Indomitable Inner Critic

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- Yup, the Inner Critic is related to pornography use.

This is a huge contributor. There are many sources you can watch on YouTube and training in Schema Therapy and other therapies that utilize the concept of the Inner Critic.





# What does the Inner Critic do?

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- It tells the person they are “defective”, “unworthy”, “a failure” and other such things. (The Inner Critic also operates without pornography use.)
- And, that combined with other variables often creates what we call comorbid, or co-occurring conditions that are often found along side pornography use, such as:
  - Persistent Depressive Disorder
  - Major Depression
  - Generalized Anxiety Disorder
  - Substance Abuse

# Research on Comorbidities

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- “Most patients were males (94.4%) aged 20–76 years (mean  $40.3 \pm 10.9$ ). **Endorsement of sexual addiction diagnosis varied from 56.9% to 95.8% depending on the criteria used.** The sexual behaviors reported to have the highest degree of functional impairment were having multiple sexual partners (56%), having unprotected sexual intercourse (51.9%), **and using cybersex (43.6%).** **Ninety percent of patients endorsed a comorbid psychiatric diagnosis,** and **60.6% presented at least one paraphilia.**” (Wéry, A., et. al, 2016)
  - (Merriam-Webster: Paraphilia is “a pattern of recurring sexually arousing mental imagery or behavior that involves unusual and especially socially unacceptable sexual practices (such as sadism or pedophilia”).
- “Elevated rates of comorbid psychiatric disorders were systematically shown in samples of sexual addicts. These comorbidities include mood disorders, anxiety disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Berberovic, D. (2013).” (Wéry, A., et. al, 2016)
- “Some limitations of the study have to be acknowledged. First, despite its clinical relevance, the sample used is not necessarily representative in terms of generalizing our findings to other cultures or to non-treatment-seeking patients. Second, some of the measures were self-reported questionnaires that presume respondents are aware of and willing to report their behaviors honestly. Despite these limitations, this study is among the first to investigate the characteristics and psychiatric comorbidities of a large sample of self-identified sexual addicts.” (Wéry, A., et. al, 2016)
- On the whole, our results further support the position that current conceptualizations of sexual addiction lack clinical validity and probably constitute an oversimplification of a heterogeneous and multi-determined phenomenon (Drew & Firestone, 2008; Wéry & Billieux, 2016a).” (Wéry, A., et. al, 2016)
- This further calls for paying attention to the fact that these conditions can often be conceptualized as the consequences of pre-existing psychiatric disorders (Deleuze et al., 2015).” (Wéry, A., et. al, 2016)

# So, play it again: how does it affect relationships and marriage/matrimony?

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- Detached
- Empty shell
- Traumatized spouses
- Disconnected children
- PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome for partners)
- Betrayal wounds
- Children model how you cope, they learn with their eyes, not your words. They see your lack of dialog.
- It's generational, and passed on
- Sexual problems
- Escalated arguments & potential for violence
- Impaired cognitive “breaking system”

# How to connect at the level of one's vulnerabilities

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- Instead of doing this, persons keep their concerns, worries, fears, and anxieties inside. It a pandemic. Insecure attachment and anxiety.
- Most people experience many connection-based anxieties and performance based fear.
- Am I good enough?
- Am I loveable enough?
- Will you stay connected to me when I need you?



# But what happens instead?

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- Modern-day relationships seldom fulfill this “blue leg” connecting (Roediger et. al., 2018).
- When one opens up, they might hear: “Don’t worry.” “Get it together!” “Why aren’t you...” or other expressions that quickly shut down the dialog and the person seeking. They are left feeling it is not cool to need other humans.
- That is the crux of it. It is not cool to NEED other humans. Needing sets you up to be let down, hurt, disappointed, abandoned, and feeling worse when the need is not met.
- So go where its predictable and sure:
  - To their pets.
  - To their Facebook friends where they just “post”, hoping to get a nice response.
  - AND TO PORNOGRAPHY, WHICH NEVER FAILS FOR THE MOMENT & MAKES THEM FEEL GOOD.

# But that then tends to bite you in the rear

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- Because it leaves most people:
  - **EMPTY & CRAVING FOR MORE.**
- And it makes you hardened. We can see extreme criminal examples, but let's take it down to the Christian household level.
- Being pre-occupied with the images and desire for porn, much like alcohol, does not allow you to be in-tune or emotionally present to your spouse or to your children.
- You become like an empty robotic shell to your religious community, parish community, or your spouse. Jesus calls you a “white-washed sepulcher”, (Mt. 23:27) full of dry bones & corruption. Remember though, God can resurrect “dry bones”, see: Ez. 37:1-14, the prophecy.
- And the frequent shame that accompanies porn users makes them hide their inner selves and addictive life.

# Creating a VC to a VC Connection

39

- What's VC? (vulnerable child mode). The more vulnerable attachment-seeking side of ourselves (blue leg in Contextual Schema Therapy), that desires love, belonging and connection, tries to get along, and acts in this softer way. This is called the “Vulnerable Child Mode”. It is like one of the two legs we stand on, and is connected to our parasympathetic nervous system.
- It is distinct from the other leg (red leg), which is connected to our sympathetic nervous system, the Assertiveness or Angry Child side.
- These two polarities or legs need balancing in a Healthy Adult, modeling Christ.
- But the connection leg needs to come first, with a little leading from the assertiveness leg. At this level our needs can get filled and we can connect together this way.

## Detached Protector & Detached Self-Soother Coping modes, extinguishing the light of matrimony & turning it into darkness.

40

- As the porn user detaches in this fashion, he or she no longer engages the same with family members.
- Perhaps the user never did open up and truly reveal their thoughts, feelings and needs.
- But they certainly do not now.
- So the spouse is abandoned by Mistress or Mister Porn. He or she now not only has an unnamed or named competitor in the dance of marital intimacy, they are oft compared, and left stunned when invited ever so nicely or even aggressively to repeat acts seen by pornographers.



# Betrayal Wounds

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- Spouses are left feeling, “what is wrong with me”? “Am I not good enough for you?”
- “How come you don’t come to me?”
- “Don’t I arouse you anymore?”
  - And sadly, the spouse of the porn user often does not any longer arouse the porn user who is used to needing higher and higher levels of stimulation that come from more extreme sexual antics.
- These betrayal wounds go deep in a marriage. They last for years and usually take marital therapy to heal the PTSD impact, and with difficulty.
- Spouses will often say, “I’d rather you had sex with a human you know, rather than aimless people or animation on the Internet. That makes me less desirable than a machine.”

# Lust or Eroticism? A Philosophical perspective & a Religious Application for followers of the 10 Commandments

42

- St. John Paul II explained his view of eroticism by citing the 5th century B.C. Greek philosopher Plato's definition of it as 'that interior force which draws man to what is good and true and beautiful.' (Nov. 5, 1980 Wed. Audience)
- He said “pure lust, which is specifically condemned in the Biblical Sermon on the Mount, is devoid of such qualities.” (Nov. 5, 1980 Wed. Audience)
- He explained that “a man could commit adultery in his heart by lusting after his own wife”. (Nov. 5, 1980 Wed. Audience)
  - Think about the adultery committed by the porn user and amplify this with the magnitude of thousands of repetitions, times years of one's life, coming to perhaps millions of commissions of adultery.
- He later explained the controversial remark by saying that “lust makes whoever it is directed toward **a sexual object rather than a human being of innate dignity**”. (Nov. 5, 1980 Wed. Audience)

## *Loving or Using? A social conscience & values-based perspective*

43

- “**The sexual urge** draws us to the physical and psychological attributes of a person of the opposite sex. But, ultimately, **it is meant to orient us toward another person who possesses those attributes not just the attributes themselves.**” (Sri, 2005)
- “Manifestations of the sexual urge thus present us with a choice between loving the person and using them for their attributes.” (Sir, 2005)
- Some say that “some pornography use is not harmful but even good for marriage and individuals”. I disagree. We will go into more details of why. But ask: Is using another as an object that depersonalizes and is for the sake of self-soothing, ever an okay thing to do? And what about oneself? Is splitting off one’s sexuality into a mere organic animal function and appetite useful to learn and practice?

# Pornography is harmful to individual users from a Christian Perspective

- “Trains them to think that sexual gratification is obtained with images or objects that exist for the user’s pleasure, rather than with an ensouled, thinking and feeling person who bears the image of God. (Lim et al., 2015; Tylka, 2015);
- Promotes the myth that the purpose of sex is primarily to take rather than give pleasure. (Lim et al., 2015)
- Is not a morally neutral substitute for fornication or adultery. There is no honor or virtue in having sex with a thing. (Martins et al., 2016)
- Defiles their bodies and souls with lust for something illusory and unreal and, in the case of sex robots, further defiles their bodies and souls by physical coupling with an interactive artificial humanoid device.(Facchina et al., 2017)
- Supports the sexual revolution’s lie that sexuality is all about orgasm and personal gratification. (Tylka, 2015)
- Is addictive. Like a potent drug, pornography releases dopamine in the brain, providing a transitory escape from stress, disappointment, boredom, and facing one’s responsibilities, while over the long term placing the user who desires more and more pornography at risk of becoming socially crippled and emotionally stunted. (Lim et al., 2015; Kühn & Gallinat, 2014; Gola et al., 2017)
- May lead to employment termination in the case of workplace viewing. [23,20] 23. (Cameron, 2012)
- Contributes to loneliness.(Tylka, 2015)
- May encourage a variety of sexually deviant behaviors. (Klein & Cooper, 2018; Babchishin et al., 2010; Hagan, 2018)
- [Definitely] leads to estrangement from God. (Grubbs, J. et. al., 2017)”
  - Note: God who is pure, cannot connect with what is impure. That is why we need Jesus both God & man to bridge the gap.
  - (Quoted from the CMDA Position Paper on Pornography and Interactive Sexual Devices)

# For Christians who wish to practice living the Gospel:

45

- Pornography is against the 10 commandments (Ex. 20:1-17):
  - #1 “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”
    - ✦ “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them (**PORN**), nor serve them (**PORN**): for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me.” (**Therapists see porn use down the generations of a family, setting up the children’s children.**)
  - # 7 “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”
  - # 10 “...Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife...”
- It is against the greatest commandment that Jesus gave us.
  - Mt. 22:37-39 “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.’ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

# Pornography is Animal-level sex from the perspective of nature & values-based responsibility

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- “It is important to note that the sexual urge in human persons is not the same as the sexual instinct found in animals. Pope John Paul II explains that in animals, the sexual instinct is a reflex mode of action, which is not dependent on conscious thought. For example, a female cat in heat does not reflect on what is the best time, place, or circumstance for her to mate, and she does not ponder which male cat in the neighborhood would make the ideal partner. Cats simply act reflexively according to their instincts.
- Human persons, however, do not have to be enslaved to what is stirring within them in the sexual sphere. In the end, the person is in control of the sexual urge not the other way around. The person can choose how he or she wants to use it (p. 50).
- A man, for example, may experience a sexual attraction to a woman. He may sometimes even experience this attraction as something happening to him something that begins to take place in his sensual or emotional life without any initiative on his part. However, that attraction can and should be subordinated to his intellect and will. While a person may not always be responsible for what spontaneously happens to him in the arena of sexual attraction, he is responsible for what he decides to do in response to those interior stirrings.” (pp. 46-47 Sri, E. 2007)
  - *Note: even though pornography has addictive qualities, it does not suspend your free will. It may be impaired, but not suspended, and it can be strengthened once again.*

# Pornography is harmful to marriages & matrimony

47

- “Leads to decline in sexual satisfaction within marital relationships. (Grubbs, J. et. al., 2017; Malcolm & Naufal, 2016)
  - Leads to destruction of loving relationships. (Malcolm & Naufal, 2016; Ley et al., 2014)
  - Further separates the goods of love and the potential for generation of life from love and mutual giving. (Malcolm & Naufal, 2016; Shor & Seida, 2019)
  - Encourages a “throw-away” culture of disposable relationships, leading to more single-parent, divorced, and fractured families. (Perry & Snawder, 2017; Malcolm & Naufal, 2016; Perry & Schleifer, 2018) Diverts finances from legitimate family needs to narcissistic sexual gratification. (Wondracek et al., 2010)
  - Denies the legitimacy of sexuality and family as defined by God.” (Perry & Snawder, 2017)
- [Quoted from the CMDA Position Paper]



# Betrayal trauma is a type of Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)

48

- Both pornography and affairs can cause PTSD.
- Drs. John & Julie Gottman (2016) provide a compendium of research on PTSD, treatment and a philosophical stance on couples and PTSD. They state: “The DSM-5 states that PTSD can only occur when there has been a death, life-threatening injury, or sexual violence to the self or someone close. The criterion assumes that “a life” refers to a physical life. **But does survival of a life only pertain to the physical realm?...In this context PTSD is not only caused by the experience of death, injury, rape or violence—all the damaging to one’s physical well-being; PTSD is also caused by affairs and other serious and unpredictable relationship betrayals that rock one’s emotional and spiritual well-being.** With profound relationship betrayal, one’s underlying values, beliefs, and emotional world collapse, along with the relationship that has sustained them. Many of the symptoms seen in the worst of physically-related trauma reactions show up in those who have been betrayed by their intimate partners.” [p.17] (Gottman, J & Gottman, J. 2016)

# The ripple effect

49

- Pornography is never an isolated act.
- It also harms the children of the user.
- It harms those used in the creation of it.
- It is harmful to society.

Further information can be found on the CMDA position paper cited in the references.

# God sees

50

- He sees all that is done in secret: (Ezek 8:7-13; Matt 10:26; 1 Tim 5:24)
- Well, what IS His view?
- God makes it clear: defiling the mind and heart with lust is sinful and the moral and spiritual equivalent of adultery. (Ex 20:17; 2 Sam 11:2-5; Ps 66:18; Ezek 23:5-10; Matt 5:28; Rom 1:24-28; Col 3:5; 1 Pet 2:11).

# Yet...

51

- God reaches out with the open arms of Jesus His Son, offering forgiveness even as we are sinning, and inviting those who engage in pornography to the Sacrament of Penance that calls us to repent of that sin, change the attitude and the behavior to one of purity and chastity, and do penance to rectify the damage done by the ripple effect.
- Primarily to yourself, to your relationship with God, and if married, to your spouse to whom you belong, body, mind and spirit. To your children, your spiritual community, to the persons you used as objects, to your ministry if you have one, and to your witness as a Christian.

# Though Forgiveness is for the asking, healing is a journey.

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- Being self-convinced that all is “well” because “I have stopped.” is an easy delusion.
- The porn user/viewer needs to learn many new skills in order to be healed. It’s not just about whether you are addicted or not.
- These include coping skills for opening up in true honest and transparent ways.
- Transforming a view yourself and others from the sexual “machines”, or worse as “objects” & toys to be played with, the reality of pornography, but as persons deserving respect, including oneself.
- Inline with the later, washing clean the sordid and rising up to real intimacy that views sexuality as a participation in love and holiness and self-giving within matrimonial total-person unity: mind, body and spirit.
- Learning not to avoid conflict and failed bids for connection, but to connect-and re-connect in a constant “tango” (Wéry et al., 2016; Johnson, 2015) of steps throughout the day, with the beloved.
- Learning how to handle anger and its sisters, irritation and impatience.
- Learning how to approach in gentle “blue leg” ways that are inviting for dialog.
- Learning how to heal all the way back to childhood one’s view of self, the value of self, your sexuality that may have damaged at an early age, and heal what we call the early maladaptive schemas that keep one trapped in failure, defectiveness, unrelenting standards, abandonment fears, etc.

A “dry” porn addict is like a “dry drunk”. Just stopping the porn doesn’t make it all better.

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- That means, one needs to work at a total inside-out conversion and way of looking at self and other human beings.
- Usually just as they objectify the objects of their lust, so too, does the user objectify themselves, often into performance machines with “masks” on their faces: I’m just fine, and you?
- And just as with other obsessions, the role of the family plays into the maintenance of the behavior. Just as spouses play into compulsions that their OCD mates have, usually trying to be helpful, so too, the spouse of the porn user. The spouse not only need therapy to heal betrayal wounds, but also to not feed into the cycle of non-connecting, avoidance and the making of productivity the ultimate (personally devaluing) goal. Where is the spouse’s focus? Usually by now, they are also avoidant, shut down, hurting, helpless... Each can learn to restart empathic connection (union) and maintain it.

# Matrimony: a sacrament of union

54

- Porn within matrimony makes it become a farce, the exact opposite of its definition. It is a prison in which two lost souls cope on their own. Both the porn victim and the spouse victim.
- Yes, you both are victims.
- And the ripple effect: the family is also victimized.
- This is truly a **demonic influence** in the Christian family. It breaks it down from the inside out.
- It's worse than an intruder with a gun, holding you captive to destroy you, and its an intruder that is a moving target. You can't shoot back at all of the ways porn can enter the sanctity of the home.

# Pornography use among celibate clergy and religious or consecrated celibates.

55

The same individual effect is present as discussed above:

The means to resolution are as with other Christians and Catholic Christians: prayer, meaningful participation in Eucharist and Penance, the practice of meditation on the virtues and the examples of the saints, spiritual direction by a wise and experienced confessor;

- Psychotherapy for true growth; Learning healthy coping vs. detached self-soothing. Healing the underlying wounds. Perhaps there is childhood abuse in the background, including being used sexually which needs to be addressed. (This applies to everyone to examine.) Learning how to flourish in positive Godly ways.
- Connecting deeply to Jesus where love of Him is always first priority.
- Interpersonal connection in brotherhood or sisterhood with at least one other trust confidante that is part of your spiritual “family”. God always gives us at least one other person. This person can help hold you accountable and help you grow. In this relationship, the principles for open and positive sharing, as exemplified above between spouses, apply. If it is superficial, it defeats the purpose.
- And the Lectio Divina sharing described in family on the next page.



The family that spontaneously prays together: (APPLYING GOSPEL SCRIPTURE TO THEIR LIVES, AND SHARING ON IT), has a better chance of staying together, and eliminating pornography.

56

- In family we each are called to be transparent to each other before the Lord. But this takes real dialog about life, an opening up with each other.
- We can hide behind any kind of religious practice when it is devoid of personal impactful meaning, including mindless going to Mass, mouthing the words of the rosary without entering into Christ's model and life, etc.
- It is harder to hide when you have to share on something that calls you out to reflect on your own relationship with Jesus in in the here and now moment, speaking for yourself, and trying to apply a certain passage of Scripture.
- Are you shallow with not much to say? Hmmm, maybe the addict's head is still empty because the space is taken up by the porn instead of "meditating on the Lord day and night", as the psalmist rejoins us. Let's fill it up with good things instead.

# Psalm 1:1-3 & Jn. 7:38

57

- Happy the man who never follows the advice of the wicked [*pornographers*], or loiters on the way that sinners take, or sits about with scoffers [*Porn scoffs at matrimony.*], but finds his pleasure in the Law of Yahweh, and murmurs his law day and night. [*Soaks it up, shares it, and lives it.*] He is like a tree that is planted by water streams, [*No abandonment in his marriage, and he is refreshed and fed.*] yielding its fruit in season [*children and peace*], its leaves never fading; [*True intimacy is loving self-giving and receiving of Jesus-centered connection.*]
- Jesus declares: “Anyone who comes to me shall have living water springing up in him!” Jn. 7:38  
(The Jerusalem Bible, 1990)

# As with all plagues, a Christian needs to protect themselves and their families against pornography

58

- See helpful websites, the last slide of this presentation.
- Block pornographic and lustful material from your family's Internet usage on ALL devices.
- Use a filtering program.
- Become an accountability partner from a program like Covenant Eyes, to keep the user on the purity track and held accountable.
- Majorly focus on prevention by sharing with your children and Christian students about the positive benefits of following the Lord and His ways; witness your own faith journey! Get personal and chatter about it.
- Share what you have learned in the intimacy of your home. How you have handled life, anxiety, temptation, etc.
- Witness purity to your spouse and children; let your speech and dress be pure, and reward and encourage it.
- Help your children see others as persons and not objects by inviting them to reflect on the personal assets of each other and setting up a culture of affirmation in the home.
- Talk to your children and your spouse about God's plan for human sexuality and start when they are young and able to understand appropriately. If you don't, their peers and school will. Let them see them see normal non-sexual affection between spouses and get them used to witnessing that being filled with love.
- Talk to your spouse about your intimacy and chastity.

# Be children of the Light

59

- Romans 13:12-14
- “The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon—let us give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of the dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light. Let us live decently as people do in the daytime: no drunken orgies, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy. Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ; forget about satisfying your bodies with all their cravings.”

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# Helpful websites

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- [Humanae Vitae Encyclical](#)
- Conquer Series
- <https://conquerseries.com>
- Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability Service
- <https://www.covenanteyes.com>
- Living Without Lust
- <http://www.livingwithoutlust.com>
- Operation Integrity
- <https://operationintegrity.org>
- Your Brain on Porn
- <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com>
- Matt Fradd
- <https://integrityrestored.com/author/mattfradd/>
- Mark & Debra Laaser
- <https://faithfulandtrue.com/>