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How to Stop Addiction to Pornography from Taking Control of Your Life

A Woman Finding Out

In the fall of 2003 I was 20 years old and I had been dating a guy named Matt (not his real name) for 2 years. Matt and I were in love and happy, yet we had some issues. Matt had some bad habits that I did not like and it caused us to have some serious fights. Matt was a guy who often watched pornography and masturbated to it. This habit of his made me very jealous and I lost a lot of my confidence. Finally I told Matt, if he does not cut down and eventually stop, it would be over for us. Matt decided he would cut down altogether. Instead of looking at the very bold pornography, Matt was going to try looking at soft porn and hope this would eventually help him stop. Months and months went by and I still had this feeling that something was not right. Whenever I questioned him, he always has the perfect answer for me. Finally, on the night of December 7, 2003, Matt told the truth. His exact words were, "Lisa (not her real name), I have been lying to you, these past months when you thought I was not looking at a lot of porn and masturbating much, it was all a lie. I have been looking at the dirty stuff and masturbating to it, more often than I should have". I could not believe what I had just heard. This could not be true, I felt so angry but mostly betrayed. I even slapped Matt across the face. My whole life felt like it was

falling apart, this guy that I had loved and trusted had been lying to me for months, "how could he do this to me," I thought to myself. "How can he say he loves me", I felt so betrayed so hurt and I hated Matt for what he had done. I started yelling at him; to me he was nothing but a shallow pervert. At the same time I felt like I was no good that I was the reason why he turned to images of other women to satisfy himself. I kept trying to figure out what I had done wrong as a girlfriend. I kept thinking maybe if I was prettier or had a sexier body he would not have done this. I finally asked him why, he said he didn't know that he wanted to stop and that he does want to stop but the temptation was so strong and he did not know how to fight it. The next day Matt and I talked about it some more, we fought and talked, Matt kept telling me how sorry he was and how he did not mean to hurt me, and even though I was mad about the lying I could not figure out why he just could not give up on porn. Matt and I later got into another big fight, after yelling and yelling at each other, I locked both Matt and I in a room until we calmed down and can figure out what was really going on with him. That is when it hit Matt; he finally realized what he was doing needed to stop. I realized this habit of Matt's went a lot deeper than I thought.

For many women, when they discover their husband, fiancé, or boyfriend involve in pornography, they often view the porn involvement as a betrayal and even as an affair, and they feel like they are not good enough. Addiction to pornography and viewing women as sexual objects is one of the most secretive problems facing men from all walks of life today. According to Jennifer Schneider, co-author of *Cybersex Exposed: Simple Fantasy or Obsession*, the Internet is the crack cocaine of sexual addiction. At the 2003 meeting of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, a majority of the 350 lawyers who attended said the Internet played a significant role in divorces, with excessive interest in online pornography contributing to more than half of the cases (Time, Canadian Edition, February 9, 2004).

Pornography is not about sex. It is about the experience of restoring control and power, soothing and comforting

the mind and body, relieving stress and tension, and running away from pain, problem, and reality. **Pornography is a drug/medication to relieve pain** associated with rejection, insecurity, fear, failures, abandonment, disapproval, and boredom and loneliness. **Pornography is highly addictive and abusive to our body.** When a man is sexually aroused by watching pornographic materials and subsequent masturbating, the man's pain-killing centre in his mid-brain is activated during peak arousal. Signals from this part of his brain instruct his body to release **beta-endorphins and corticosteroids**, which can temporarily numb physical and possibly emotional pain, as well as reduce anxiety, ease fear, and have a calming effect. Sexual arousal and releasing of the body's natural painkillers by means of pornography is a form of abusing the biochemical resources of the physical body and medicating oneself for the sole purpose of pain relief. Therefore,

addiction to pornography is more than a moral and a man's issue; it is a mental health matter. Frequent or recreational use of pornography is not victimless. It induces feelings and actions of uncleanness, and carries long-term effects. Experts say men who frequently view porn may develop unrealistic expectations of women's appearance and behaviours, have difficulty forming and sustaining relationships and feeling sexually satisfied (Time, Canadian Edition, February 9, 2004). Physical attraction to the opposite gender is natural and normal. However, when a man purposefully looks at and focuses his attention on the sexual parts of a woman's body and nothing else, he is treating the woman as a sexual object and using or borrowing her body to fulfill something missing in him. As a result, the man is objectifying and sexualizing women, i.e., seeing them as an assemblage of breasts, legs, and buttocks, and risking a dependency on visual imagery for arousal.

GETTING TO KNOW THE ADDICTIVE CYCLE OF A MAN WHO FREQUENTLY USES PORNOGRAPHY

- The man is consciously or unconsciously experiencing pain (e.g., fear, feeling rejected, insecurity, boredom, looking for excitement, etc.)
- The man is vulnerable and his mind/body is looking for pain relief and comfort
- The man's eyes and mind focus on viewing women as sexual objects, publicly and privately
- The man's conscience sends out moral resistance
- The man's internal agitation increases
- The man succumbs to the strong desire for pain relief by renting a soft porn video or going into a porn site on the Internet
- His mind search for the right packages of women and images to facilitate the best release of tension and restoration of control
- The man masturbates to the porn images and experiences the relief (short-term)
- The man's mind/body no longer looks for pain relief and the images and activities on the video/Internet become gross, dirty, and immoral in his eyes
- The man rewinds and returns the video or turn off the Internet site
- The above same cycle returns the next time the man feels vulnerable

Life time tools to overcome addiction to *pornography*

Life time strategy #1

Putting all images associated with women as sexual objects "under the ban" or devoted to total destruction

Destroy all images/visual packages of sexual objects in your home and office (images contained in magazines, newspapers, CD covers, Superpages). Do not add unhealthy sexual files in your mind. Cut them up. Shred them. Throw them away. Treat yourself like an alcoholic who cannot even have a drop of alcohol. You cannot allow yourself to view just for a moment any images associated with women as sexual objects, otherwise you are trapped again in the addictive cycle

Life time strategy #2

Neutralize the power of viewing women as sexual objects

- Rehearse to yourself the word "neutralize"
- Whenever you want to look at a woman as a sexual object, say to yourself the word "neutralize" and turn your eyes away. Look at objects neutral to sexual seduction – a piece of furniture, an office sign, the window, a decoration, etc.
- When you spot a woman "miles ahead" that fits the package of sexual objects in your mind, bring up the word "neutralize," and start looking at neutralized objects, and let the woman be gone from your sight
- Stay away from and keep your eyes away from newsstands that sell soft porn men's magazines. If you want to read other magazines, take the magazines and read them somewhere away from the newsstands that have soft porn men's magazine in their display
- For Internet users, install a program, e.g., Cybersitter, to block accessibility to porn sites. For drastic measure, disconnect the Internet
- At your workplace, keep your office door opened. If possible, re-arrange your office furniture so that co-workers walk by can see your computer screen
- Display inspirational photos around the office computer screen. Family photos can serve as good reminders of the reasons to avoid sexual content at work.

Life time strategy #3

Develop healthy ways to relieve pain

- Detect your own mental and behavioural signs of vulnerability (e.g., cannot sleep; want to control more; want more sex from your wife; masturbate more; feeling tense and anxious; increased frequency viewing women as sexual objects; increased anger outbursts etc.)
- Label your vulnerability. Is it rejection? Is it insecurity? Identify the source of your pain. What are you afraid of? What is the fear in your heart?
- Talk to your spouse/partner about your fear, anxiety, insecurity, and worries. Externalize your pain. Internalizing your pain will increase your vulnerability to use pornography as a medication to soothe your pain and regain control
- Talk to a man whom you trust and respect about your fear, anxiety, insecurity, and worries (e.g., a pastor, a trusted friend, a colleague)
- Keep your relationship boundary clear. Do not share your vulnerability, personal and marital problems with a woman who is not your spouse or immediate family member (e.g., parent, sister)
- Use exercises and sports (running, work out in the gym, swimming, squash, hockey) to clear your mind and release your endorphins in a healthy way
- Improve your self-esteem to better manage disappointments, rejection, and insecurity. If necessary, seek professional counselling to deal with personal/ marital issues and/or unfinished business in your life

Quoted

Many people don't know the difference between physical attraction or sexual arousal, and lust. They are not the same. God made every one of us a sexual being and that is good. Attraction and arousal are the natural, spontaneous, God-given response to physical beauty, while lust is a deliberate act of the will. Lust is a choice to commit in your mind what you'd like to do with your body ... But attraction is not lust until you begin to dwell on it.

-Rick Warren, Purpose Driven Life

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