Pornography Addiction: A mirage of intimacy

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Let’s talk about SEX baby!
Who was the first person who told you anything about sex?

What did your parents/guardians teach you about sex?

When should you start teaching children about sex?

Behavioral/Process Addictions
Behavioral/Process Addictions

“…a series of actions that expose one to ‘mood-altering events’ on which one achieves pleasure and becomes dependent, which may alter neurotransmitter function, particularly mesolimbic dopaminergic turnover.”

Sussman & Tsi, 2020, Chapter 9, Pg. 241

Behavioral/Process Addictions

“Any compulsive, repeated, and persistent behavior that leads to significant and functionally impairing harm or distress”

Kardefelt-Winther, Heeren, Schimmenti, van Rooij, Maurage, Carras, et al., 2017
Behavioral or Process Addictions

“Anything capable of stimulating a person can be addictive”

“Whenever a habit changes into an obligation, it can be considered as an addiction”

Alavi, Ferdosi, Jannatifard, Eslami, Alaghemandan, & Setare, 2012

1. Is every behavior problem an addiction?
2. Are we overly pathologizing human behavior?
3. I’m a workaholic,” or “I’m a chocaholic?”
Behavioral/Process Addictions

“Any compulsive, repeated, and persistent behavior that leads to significant and functionally impairing harm or distress”

...it must not be explained by an underlying illness, done willingly or done as a coping method, and it must cause significant functional impairment or distress.

Kardefelt-Winther, Heeren, Schimmenti, van Rooij, Maurage, Carras, et al., 2017

Drinking

Drinking alcohol does not equate to having an alcohol use disorder.

Viewing

Viewing pornography does not equate having a pornography addiction
Benefits of pornography

- Ethical pornography
- Can reboot a couple’s sex life
- Stimulate masturbation
- Self exploration
- May increase sex drive

Impulse control vs. behavioral addiction
Impulse control vs. behavioral addiction

Impulse control disorders (ICDs) are characterized by urges and behaviors that are excessive and/or harmful to oneself or others and cause significant impairment in social and occupational functioning, as well as legal and financial difficulties.

ADDITION IS A BRAIN DISEASE!
How addiction happens

Behavioral addictions are characterized by repetitive habits, that parallel substance addiction, further reinforcing such a notion as ‘behavioral addictions’

Wright, Tokunaga, Kraus, & Klann (2017); Grant, Potenza, Weinstein, Gorelick (2010) Shaffer & Shaffer (2022)

This notion that addiction can exist even in the absence of a drug was popularized by Stanton Peele (1985).

According to Peele, addicted individuals are dependent on a specific set of experiences, of which the reaction to a specific chemical substance is only one example (Peel, 1985).

From Peele’s perspective drugs represent one style of maladaptive coping, but people can become addicted a host of non-drug behaviors to maladaptively cope with their environment.
“Go” and “Stop” Circuits

Go Circuit (NAc)
1. Tells us that what we are doing is necessary for survival.
2. Tells us to remember what we did to survive.
3. “Do more of whatever you did. Do it again, until you are satisfied; it’s necessary for your survival.”

Stop Circuit - prefrontal cortex
When the craving has been satisfied, the pain relieved, or the imbalances rectified/satiated, shuts down the do it more message.

What is pornography addiction?
What is pornography addiction?

Problematic pornography use/Compulsive Sexual Behavior

“The inability to regulate use of pornography and when pornography use is often reported to be unwanted by the user and the user lacks the ability to limit or disengage from its use despite the desire to do so, even when experiencing negative consequences

(Kor, Zilcha-Mano, Fogel, Mikulincer, Reid, and Potenza, 2014; Twohig and Levin, 2017).
1. **1 in 5** mobile searches are for pornography.
2. **28,258 users** are watching pornography every second.
3. People addicted to pornography can spend **11 to 12 hours** per week viewing it.
4. **63% of men and 36% of women** report watching porn at work.
5. **$3,075.64 is spent on porn every second** on the Internet.
6. The pornography industry is a multibillion-dollar industry is making more money than **all professional sports combined**.
7. **88% of scenes in porn films** contain acts of physical aggression, and **49% of scenes contain verbal aggression**.
8. **40 million** American people regularly visit porn sites.

**Prevalence of pornography**

7. **35% of all** internet downloads are related to pornography.
8. **34% of internet users** have experienced unwanted exposure to pornographic content through ads, pop up ads, misdirected links or emails.
9. **One-third** of porn viewers are **women**.
10. Divorce rates **double** when people start watching porn.
11. **56 percent** of divorce cases involve one party having an obsessive interest in porn websites.
12. **64% of Christian men** and **15% of Christian** women say they watch porn at least once a month.
Prevalence of pornography

11. Nearly 27% of teens receive sexts.
12. Around 15% are sending them.
13. 51% of male students and 32% of female students first viewed porn before their teenage years.
14. The first exposure to pornography among men is 12 years old, on average.
15. 71% of teens hide online behavior from their parents.
16. A 2016 study on Canadian adolescents showed that 45.3% admitted to problems in erectile dysfunction.
How is pornography perceived

**90% of teens** and **96% of young adults** are either encouraging, accepting, or neutral when they talk about porn with their friends.

**55% of adults** 25 and older believe porn is wrong.

Teens and young adults 13-24 believe not recycling is worse than viewing pornography.

**43% of teens** believe porn is bad for society, compared to 31% of young adults 18-24, 51% of Millennials, 44% Gen-Xers, and 59% of Boomers.
Why are we talking about porn?

We are facing a pornography global pandemic, empowered by high-speed digital revolution!
1. Pornography addiction has become rampant since the advent of the internet/high speed,
2. Pornography is easily, and freely available and in a variety of genres.
Pornography and Victimization
Arousal gone wild

Visual stimulation will often increase sexual arousal in both men and women, but when much of their time is spent viewing and masturbating to pornography, it is likely they will become less interested in real-world sexual encounters...

“I have been able to give up cigarettes, cocaine and eating meat, but for the life of me, I can’t give up porn.”

“We’re here because…I’ve seen better, comparing me to his porn.”

“He sent a picture of me in my bathing suit to his ___”

“I’m not gay, but I started looking at gay porn.”
The problem with pornography/Adolescents

1. Concentration problems
2. Low motivation
3. Depression
4. Social anxiety
5. Negative self-perception (bodies/sexual performance)
6. Erectile dysfunction

The problem with pornography is

Harm to the individual
- Unsatisfiable sexual appetite
- Observing sex and not engaging in it.
- Not real sex/Will never be satisfied
- Consequences to intimacy and bonding
- Physical performance
- Pornography is destructive to the developing brain
Erectile Dysfunction

For instance, for men (who are the largest consumers of pornography) pornography addiction, because of the frequency of masturbation leads to erectile dysfunction.


Pornography addiction also harms families, couples, adults, children, work productivity, and society.

Among younger populations, there is a relationship between pornography use and both decreased friendship quality and higher levels of body monitoring in young women. (Padilla-Walker et al., 2010; Maas and Dewey, 2018).
The relationship between pornography consumption and loneliness is bidirectional.

Relationship distress due to pornography use increases loneliness, while loneliness encourages pornography consumption due to its potential use as a coping mechanism. Butler et al. (2018).

Among younger populations pornography use and both decreases friendship quality and causes to higher levels of body monitoring in young women. (Maas & Dewey, 2018)

In families and couples, pornography use leads to marital unhappiness, cheating, separation, and divorce (de Alarcón et al, 2018).
Pornography addiction affects relationships

Furthermore, research also shows that pornography consumers tend to become:

- Less committed to their partners (Minarcik, Wetterneck, & Short, 2016; Lambert, Negash, Stillman, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2012)
- Less satisfied in their relationships (Wright, Tokunaga, Kraus, & Klann, 2017)
- More accepting of cheating (Rasmussen, 2016)
Pornhub Insights: 2021 Year in Review

Top 20 Countries by Traffic

- United States
- United Kingdom
- Japan
- France
- Italy
- Mexico
- Canada
- Germany
- Philippines
- Brazil
- Spain
- Australia
- Poland
- Ukraine
- Netherlands
- Argentina
- Colombia
- Russia
- Sweden
- Chile

United States Top Relative Searches

Terms Searched More Often in Each State When Compared to All Others

- CREAMPIE
- QUICKIE
- CARTOON
- ANAL
- GIGOLES
- SEXY
- DOLL
- LEATHER
- VODKA
- HANLEY
- GIN
- ASIAN
- DEEP THROAT
- THICK
- LATIN
- STRIP

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What does pornography addiction look like?

Symptoms of pornography addiction

1. The amount of time spent watching porn keeps growing.
2. There is a need for porn to feel good or okay.
3. Feel guilty about the consequences of viewing porn.
4. Spend hours on end perusing online porn sites, even if it means neglecting responsibilities or sleep.
5. Insist that a romantic or sexual partner views porn or acts out porn fantasies even though they don’t want to.
6. Unable to enjoy sex without first viewing porn.
7. Unable to resist porn even though it’s disrupting your life.
Treating pornography addiction

Assess degree of porn use/affects on individual and relationships
- Problematic Pornography Consumption Scale (PPCS)
- Sex Addiction Screening Test

Individual therapy (CBT, MI & various techniques)

Group therapy

Treating pornography addiction

Teach clients to have a healthy relationship with sex

Teach kids about sex (age appr.) – by age 8

Include Accountability (human or tech.)

Teach relapse prevention techniques

Support group (SAA, SA, nofap, etc.)
Questions?

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