



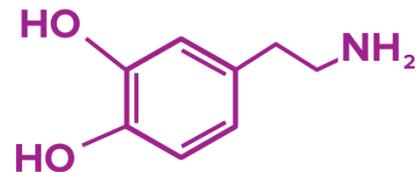
Addiction – How Does It Impact Me?



Society tends to categorize addiction based on what we consume, rather than the effect it has. I think this has done a disservice in understanding the underlying factors which create addiction. Let's take a minute and look into some of these. The high we get from sexual activity isn't just metaphorical. It was designed by God to be exhilarating and arousing. Through perversity and distortion, we have turned it into something it was never intended to be, but the lure is still unmatched. Here's a very simplified lesson on some of what occurs in the brain when we engage in these activities.

We know that Oxytocin (a hormone) and Dopamine (a neurotransmitter) are secreted and increased upon the use of pornography (and even more so when combined with orgasm and masturbation). Oxytocin is known colloquially as the “cuddle hormone” because it is released upon physical contact and connection for the purpose of fostering attachment. This secretion also occurs during orgasm. This feeling of attachment keeps us coming back for more.

Dopamine is the neurotransmitter which regulates the body's pleasure response. It's your body's natural reward system which reinforces behaviors which it finds pleasurable. Substances such as nicotine, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, meth, and others cause an increased release of Dopamine. This becomes problematic because these substances allow our body to produce levels of Dopamine that we are not capable of maintaining on our own. In other words, we develop a tolerance, just like with substances. When tolerance is developed the simple things in life no longer seem to bring us joy. Such as your team winning the game, holding the hand of a loved one, or eating that chocolate cake. We require more to achieve the same high. It's the same with pornography. It requires more and more to satisfy the urge we once had and creates a dependency.



This is where the variety and frequency come into play. Addiction always escalates over time. I guarantee that your behaviors do not look the same as they did 20 years ago. For example, maybe you've gone from looking at porn for 5-10 minutes every month or week, to 30 minutes each day. Or maybe you've gone from what you considered innocent, soft-core, pornography to explicit BDSM. Maybe it has escalated to arousal from images of children, family members, or a variety of fetishes. Likely you've dabbled in chat rooms, video calls, or random hook-ups through apps. Increasing the variety creates a novelty effect which allows for the arousal and excitement to heighten, though only temporarily.



Then it's on to the next high. Maybe you've acquired a taste for exhibitionistic behavior or voyeurism. Regardless of your vice, the pattern of increase is likely visible. This can lead to the creation of dependence.

I hope this article has given you space to gain insight and find hope. When we diminish the severity of something, it often increases the shame we feel around it. Thoughts like "Why can't I just stop, this shouldn't be a big deal" ruminate in our heads making us feel defeated

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without the hope to try again. Knowing the gravity can actually provide the space to readjust focus, and move forward with a different goal in mind. Most people can't kick these habits overnight. It takes months and years to fully change the impact on your brain, go through the dopamine withdraw and adjust to your "new normal." Not to mention repairing any trust that might be damaged with loved ones. That thought can bring dread, but it can

also bring relief. It's okay that you will struggle. It's normal that this won't be easy. It's simple, but difficult. In an additional article we will be discussing resources and recovery. I would encourage you to keep reading or to contact us if you would like additional help in this process.



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