



Pornography - Is it really that bad?



In today's society, unless you grew up in the "church world," pornography is hardly seen as controversial. It's promoted as a healthy expression of sexuality, used as the punchline in many sitcoms, and even advised as a way to maintain fidelity within marriages or committed relationships because "it's not really cheating." It's not a "substance" so many believe it can't be a formal addiction. The real question is, are these messages accurate?

Street Grace CEO, Bob Rodgers, has been quoted saying "If you've told yourself 'this is the last time' more than once, you have a problem." It's a simple statement, but it clearly demonstrates the compelling gravity that pornography can have on men and women alike. The average age for pornographic exposure is between 7-9 years old. Exposure alone at that

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age is considered Sexual Trauma due to the inability of the child's brain to process what he/she has seen. I mention that fact not because you fit this age range, but to remind you that it's probable the first time you were exposed to this type of explicit content, you weren't looking for it. Likely it was shown to you, forced upon you, or it was an accident you stumbled upon. Other times, it's natural curiosity that causes us to go searching. Maybe that is due to a mom or dad who never had conversations of a sexual nature with us, or maybe it's because a scene in a movie or an attractive person sparked a

sense of arousal which caused curiosity to rise. Regardless of the origin, the fact that you've stumbled across this page lets me know this has likely gone further than you ever intended it to. With that in mind, let's take a shot at answering the question posed above.

Pornography is always a superficial fix for a very real need. Deep within us lies a desire for intimacy, closeness, and to be truly known. It's innate and unlearned. It's why we have a culture completely obsessed with love, and completely unsuccessful at maintaining it. The fact that you use pornography is not a sign that you are broken, it's a sign that you're human. The irony is that this "fix" is fleeting and harmful. It could be equated to using a band aid on an arm that needs to be amputated. Because it is a superficial fix, it actually impedes us from closeness with those we wish to be connected to. Pornography's impact is detrimental for many reasons, but one of the loudest reasons is the subsequent disconnect it causes in our lives. Maybe you're a pastor who keeps his porn use hidden, maybe you're a college kid who sees this as no big deal. Pornography doesn't discriminate. Regardless of your age, race, socioeconomic status, gender, background, or marital status, it impacts us all alike. If you are



using pornography you are not connecting as intimately to people, if you haven't seen this in your life so far it is only a matter of time. It is used as a shield, something to get a quick high or to release stress, shame, or anger.

The power of shame is almost unmatched. To define, shame is the statement "I am bad," opposed to the concept of guilt which would say "I did a bad thing." Shame is personal and paralyzing. It undermines our community with others, ourselves, and to our Creator. Shame creates a cycle that keeps us stuck. When we are feeling the intensity of our shame, we look for something to alleviate it. Pornography. It gives us that temporary high which erases our problems, we write it off in our heads saying it was the last time, and we try to go about our day. But that won't work. The shame comes back, likely stronger because of our conviction about using it again, and we find ourselves self-medicating with shallow entertainment and an orgasm in an attempt to find relief. The cycle is addictive and powerful. It becomes all-consuming and we eventually find that this thing we were using to cope has complete control over our day. Maybe you're rolling your eyes right now. Maybe it doesn't feel like you're out of control. If that's the case I'd challenge you to think through some of these scenarios. If you've ever found yourself staying up late to get time with a device away from your family, being late to an event because of looking at pornography, rearranging your schedule in order to continue having privacy, having unsuccessful attempts to decrease your pornographic use, deleting browser history, using private browsing modes, telling "little white lies" to those around you to keep hidden, or feeling anxious if someone else picks up your phone, you might want to take a more honest look at who is in the driver's seat of your life.

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The harmful impacts of pornography are not just emotional. For example, there is a rise in Erectile Dysfunction (ED) among men who should not be experiencing it. This is due to the unconscious training of their body to only respond to pornographic content or their own manual stimulation. This immediate gratification can lead to individuals feeling frustrated and

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unsatisfied with a healthy sexual relationship. The unrealistic expectation that a normal person could compete with the airbrushed, retouched, perfectly manufactured, false example of sexual intimacy is just that, unrealistic. It creates disappointment in both parties for unknown reasons (or maybe even known)

when reality doesn't seem to live up to our expectations. This typically causes shame in both partners. Shame for the one who can no longer be aroused, and shame for the partner who assumes their spouse is no longer interested in them. Further creating a disconnect which takes hard work to reignite.



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Viewing pornography is not a victimless act. It also creates generational harm. The reality is that if you are struggling with pornography, you will not talk to your children about effective ways to steer clear of its addicting grip. These conversations would hit too close to home, we would rather avoid the twinge of guilt which could rise up when talking with our little ones about safe internet use. When this occurs, we allow another generation to grow up feeling as if it's normal. Ignoring their needs and suffocating in the shame of our own secrets.

There are MANY more things that could be said, we've only scratched the surface, but for now I feel you've had a good introduction to pornography and its impacts on individuals and relationships. I will leave you with this. In most cases, people did not wake up one day and decide to look on the internet to purchase sex. Most of the time, this journey began on a much smaller scale and somewhere along the way - it escalated. If that is true for you, there is hope. If you're on the opposite side and have only recently found yourself engaging in this risky behavior...don't take it lightly. For both parties, use this opportunity to make a change and make it now.



For more information, please visit streetgrace.org.