

“Men Have Always Looked at Pornography—What’s the Big Deal?”

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I asked for insight on this question from my friend Emily Efurd, a licensed marriage and family counselor who has been working with sex addicts for over a dozen years. She writes:

The one thing we know from the Bible is that men and women are different. Many people take a statement like that and do a lot of damage with it, but what I mean is that God created them to be different. One of the major differences is that men are sexually aroused by visual stimuli and women are sexually aroused by feeling special, cherished and loved. Many men believe that looking at pornography makes them better lovers for their wives. Unfortunately these men are hacking away at their marriage one piece at a time. Let me tell you a story about a man named Frank.

Frank was well into his twenties when he married. He and his wife had life all planned out. They would mature in the marriage for a few years, then have a family, which they did, with a boy and a girl. He was a professional, had a good job, was a great dad and even went to church occasionally. Frank’s pornography habits were known by his wife, she even shared in watching some of his videos, but she soon grew bored with it. Frank did not get bored with it. His viewing pornography escalated beyond *Playboy* and videos to “peep shows” and trading or buying some “really great stuff” on line. Because his wife didn’t look anymore she missed out on some great things he saw, so he began to ask her to do certain things and dress in certain garments when they made love. She began to wonder if she was not

attractive to him anymore. Frank kept asking his wife to get breast implants, so that she would look like the women in the pictures. At this point she became very self-conscious about her looks, and did not like to even change clothes in front of Frank. He became irritated with her and enjoyed lovemaking with her less and less. She just wasn't as "sexy" as he wanted her to be. He found more pleasure in waiting until his wife had gone to bed (which became earlier and earlier) and sitting in front of the computer with these "beautiful babes" and letting his imagination take over. He enjoyed pleasuring himself rather than taking pleasure in his wife. As the relationship deteriorated, they were barely speaking. As she confided in her friends about what a bum of a husband Frank was, one friend at work kept telling her how beautiful and wonderful she was, and that he'd know how to appreciate a woman like her. I don't need to tell you how that ended. Frank suspected she was having an affair so he turned to the 16-year-old babysitter, because she looked a lot like the porn pictures.

By the time I met Frank, there had been a bitter divorce, fighting each other for custody of the children, and felony charges for aggravated sexual assault of a child (the 16-year-old babysitter). Frank told me that looking at pornography had nothing to do with the problems he had.

How does a person come back from this kind of misery? Understanding how a man conditions his own arousal pattern is the first step. As Frank looked at porn and masturbated to those images, he was conditioning his arousal to more deviant sexual images. Soon *Playboy* just didn't do it for him anymore. He needed more graphic sexual images to masturbate to. As those images became boring he needed something like live images to look at. As this addiction grew it is no wonder that he lost interest in his wife. He became obsessed with finding more graphic images and lost his ability to draw boundaries around what is appropriate

and not appropriate.

Frank's therapy started with getting a clear understanding of how he got where he was. Then he had to make the decision that he didn't want to be there anymore and be willing to make some changes in his behavior. Giving up masturbating was difficult because even without looking at the porn images he had a great collection in his imagination. As he progressed he began to recognize times that he was free of the urge to masturbate. He became more aware of how he objectified women in general. Objectifying women means that you look at them as body parts, rather than as a person. "Wow, great breasts," "Look at that body," and undressing women in your mind is an indication you're objectifying women. I asked Frank to begin to consciously look at women in the face, noting the color of their eyes, and hair. He became more aware of how much he did see women as sexual parts. I'd known Frank about two years when he finally admitted to me that he was the one who destroyed his marriage and he took full responsibility for his other inappropriate behavior. He thanks God for the chance to change his way of thinking and living and often tells people how mighty and powerful the love of God is to forgive and restore him to dignity and integrity.

Psalm 51 tells Frank's story, because it was also King David's story.

Oh loving and kind God, have mercy.

Have pity upon me and take away the awful stain of my transgressions.

Oh wash me; cleanse me from this guilt. Let me be pure again.

For I admit my shameful deed; it haunts me day and night.
It is against you and you alone I sinned, and did this terrible thing.

You saw it all, and your sentence against me is just.

But I was born a sinner, yes from the moment my mother

conceived me.

You deserve honesty from the heart; yes utter sincerity and truthfulness,
Oh give me wisdom.

Sprinkle me with the cleansing blood and I shall be clean again,

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

And after you have punished me, give me back my joy again.
Don't keep looking at my sins—erase them from your sight.
Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires.

Don't toss me aside, banished forever from your presence.

Don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

Then I will teach your ways to other sinners, and they—guilty like me—will repent and return to you.
Don't sentence me to death. Oh my God, you alone can rescue me.

Then I will sing of your forgiveness, for my lips will be unsealed—oh, how I will praise you.

Psalm 51: v. 1-15

I asked Emily for the bottom line steps to overcoming sex addiction:

1. Recognize how you got where you are by examining the small but important choices you have made over time.
(Note: more in-depth information on this step is available [here](#) in the Probe Answer to E-mail "Help! I'm a Compulsive Masturbator!")
2. Confess it all as sin and choose to repent by changing your behavior. Slam the door on your former behaviors.
3. Stop masturbating, which is a type of substance abuse.
(The brain chemicals activated by arousal and orgasm are a specific chemical substance that can become addictive. There is no recovery from substance without giving up

“using.”)

4. Stop objectifying women as sex objects or body parts and train yourself to see them as real people. For example, look them in the eye and note their eye color; note their hair color.

Hope you find this as helpful as I did.

Sue Bohlin

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