

Help! Someone I Know Has a Problem with Porn
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People's names and certain details of the case studies in this book have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved. However, the facts of what happened and the underlying principles have been conveyed as accurately as possible.

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Help! Foreword

. . . porn is now virtually everywhere. The users are no longer just fraternity boys and those written off as “dirty old men.” Now, the users of virtually unrestricted porn include children, teenagers, and adults of all ages. The victims include not only those whose lives, marriages, relationships, careers, and sexuality are corrupted, but also everyone involved in the vast pornography industry at every stage.¹

These words clearly illustrate that America has a major problem with pornography. In fact, industry statistics indicate that 70 percent of 18- to 24-year-old men visit pornographic websites in a typical

month. Of men in their twenties and thirties, 66 percent report that they are regular users of porn.²

No doubt you've picked up this book because you or someone you love is addicted to viewing pornography. You may be emotionally devastated because you recently discovered that your spouse has been living a "secret life" involving internet pornography. Perhaps you are personally struggling with a pornography addiction—you've been plagued by guilt and shame and you've finally decided to get help.

In this book, my colleague Jim Vigorito will help you tackle this issue head-on. Jim will educate you, challenge you, and come alongside you as a trusted friend and counselor. He'll provide you with the practical steps you need to take to help your loved one—or help yourself.

I pray that God will use this resource to start you and your family down a path toward healing and wholeness!

Dr. Bill Maier

Vice President, Psychologist in Residence

Focus on the Family

Introduction

Sonia's Story

Sonia was sobbing so hard that she could not speak. Amid pauses where she attempted to catch her breath, she told the counselor that she had just found hundreds of nude pictures saved on her husband's computer. She felt completely betrayed by his behavior. How could he take sexual pleasure from an on-screen image while she lay exhausted from a day of caring for two children? On their wedding day, this man had promised to remain faithful to her alone. She was conflicted between her disgust at what he had done and her concern for the person she loved.



Lucy's Story

Lucy couldn't believe that her well-behaved 11-year-old son was looking at images of men having sex with one another. His eyes welled up with tears when she confronted him. He said that one day he and a friend were looking up different Web sites when suddenly a picture of two men kissing came onto the screen. They giggled at first and then tried to exit the site. But new and more-disturbing images came up. They didn't tell anyone because they were afraid of getting into trouble. It wasn't long before they were going back to the computer to see if they could sneak a peek at some new pictures. He told Lucy he knew that what he had been doing was wrong, and that he really wanted to stop. He just didn't know how.



Jose's Story

Jose was shocked when Mike, a coworker and close friend, admitted to him that he had struggled with an attraction to pictures of young girls for many years. The problem started when a friend dared her younger sister to lift her shirt in front of him. Ever since that time, he was drawn to look at pictures of topless preteen girls. Mike didn't think that his porn addiction was a big deal. Jose knew he needed more information before he could confront Mike about the seriousness of porn addiction and offer him the help and support he needed.



Sonia, Lucy, and Jose represent a growing number of people who know someone with a problem with pornography. It has been estimated that the annual revenue of the U.S. porn industry exceeds \$10 billion.

And some surveys show that up to 40 million Americans regularly view Internet pornography.³ These statistics indicate that the chances are good someone you know has a problem with pornography. Maybe your situation is similar to Sonia's—you've discovered that your spouse has viewed pornography online. Or perhaps you've caught another family member in the act. It's possible that you suspect someone you know of having a porn addiction, but you're not sure.

Don't be deceived by cultural misconceptions; pornography use is wrong and not only harms the user, but also his or her family. By picking up this book, you have chosen to take the first step in helping your loved one or friend. This book is designed to offer practical advice by defining pornography, diagnosing the problem, and offering the hope of solutions.



Part
One

Defining Pornography

The word *pornography* is defined in Webster's as "The depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement."

Our word *prostitute* comes from the same Greek root (*porne*). As with a prostitute, the customer viewing pornography pays for sexual arousal apart from any relationship. The sexual desire is entirely fantasy driven, with no connection to real life. It is completely self-preoccupied. The customer determines the content and the timing. Apart from payment, nothing else is either given by or expected from the customer.

Different Outlets of Pornography

Access to pornography has changed dramatically in the past two decades. Magazines, books, and later, films were the primary vehicles of sale in the previous

century. The euphemisms “adult” or “mature” were used to denote themes that society viewed as inappropriate for minors. Apart from mail-order deliveries of pornographic material arriving at the door in brown paper, porn customers ran the risk of personal exposure in pursuit of these items.

The advent of the Internet has brought at least five major changes to the pornography industry:

- Increased accessibility
- Interactive capability
- Dramatic lowering of the age of first exposure
- Expansion of offerings
- Entrée to personal encounters

Pornography is now *instantly accessible* in the home. Unsolicited pop-ups can appear when you make a slight typing error. Images and videos can be down-

loaded without risk of outside exposure. Many of these materials can be obtained and utilized without the knowledge of parents or spouses. Technology permitting downloading to cell phones and other handheld devices means potential access to pornography anywhere and at any time.

Beyond increased accessibility, the Internet has *interactive capability*, which permits exchange of conversation and personal images in a way that was hardly imaginable a short time ago. Through chat rooms and video exchange, participants explore sexual fantasy from the privacy of their homes. Because people from all over the world can be signed on, locating someone interested in sex is never a problem. Previous limitations of geographical location and after-hours availability are a thing of the past.

It also appears that the Internet has *dramatically lowered the age of first exposure* to pornography. The young, the curious, and the inexperienced were, and still are, the most vulnerable customers. While there were always exceptions, pornography use tended to peak in adolescence and early adulthood. Pornography access for young children was limited to materials left around by parents or other elders. Focus on the Family now receives a number of calls from parents of preteens, such as Lucy. Their children have access to and are compulsively viewing pornography before even reaching puberty. In many cases, their Internet access has not been supervised closely enough.

Internet access has also resulted in an *expansion of offerings* in pornography. Having worked in the rehabilitation of sexual offenders for more than 25 years, I

used to think that I had heard it all. But with its worldwide clientele, the Internet now makes it profitable to cater to very specific and ever-changing sexual tastes. Web sites and chat groups pander to an endless variety of sexual preferences that run the gamut from sadomasochism to dressing as infants.

As serious as the first four changes are, *the entrée to personal encounters* represents the greatest safety risk for porn users of any age. Pornography has always served as an entryway to greater sexual deviance and potential harm. The impression is given that the inevitable next step after porn use is personal physical involvement. And unlike infamous porn stars of the past (many of whom were forced to perform out of drug dependency and worse), present-day online participants may wish to be contacted. The next step in their virtual

sexual exchange is a real-life meeting with someone they know almost nothing about.

Despite countless newspaper accounts of the risk of murder and sexual assault, husbands, fathers, wives, and mothers suddenly disappear, taking the family savings or a credit card to finance a cross-country rendezvous. Children and teens also fall into this trap, leaving home to meet strangers, ignoring the danger. They may not know the person's real identity, let alone previous criminal activities or presence of sexually transmitted diseases. A 16-year-old girl may think she's going to see a boy her age, only to meet a middle-aged sex offender.

Gender Differences in Pornography Usage

Not that long ago, viewing pornography magazines was primarily a male thing.

Many in society accepted the practice as a male rite of passage. Over time, the women models wore less, and the poses became more explicit and provocative. The women were treated as objects at best, and sex was always portrayed as an activity devoid of commitment or self-sacrifice.

Once initiated into the world of pornography, many men found that magazines did not compare to live action. Adult films left nothing to the imagination. It was not unusual for my male counseling clients to talk about following particular female porn stars throughout a series of films. The men were attracted to these women on the basis of a particular hair color, height, or specific body build. It was as if the criteria of attractiveness involved a set of visual templates. The objects of their attraction were two-dimensional

cutouts bearing no resemblance to flesh-and-blood personalities.

Men in particular have a capacity to *compartmentalize*. They view their lives in separate compartments rather than as a consistent whole. On Sunday mornings, they enter the church compartment. On Tuesday evenings, while their wives are at aerobics class or choir practice, they enter the “little something for me” compartment. They don’t see the bearing one has upon the other. Those who use pornography on occasion may fail to appreciate the extent to which it can totally disrupt their lives and the lives of others. But the more one engages in the activity, the greater the likelihood that it will consume one’s thoughts.

In the past, women were drawn mostly to steamy romance novels. Instead of playing the visual card, women chose a

relational alternative. In greatest demand were men who listened, sacrificed, and catered to their every wish. *Rich* didn't hurt, but conversationalists able to appreciate more than just physical beauty were highly sought after. At the time, it seemed harmless to leave the demands of daily routine for just a little escape and a sense of appreciation.

Chat rooms have drastically changed the pornography playing field for both men and women. Men who barely speak in the home stay up all night chatting with their newly-found soul mates. Women who are discreet in dealing with men at church or in the workplace let down their guard in the anonymity of their home computer. Internet games and chat rooms provide the illusion of security. Fantasy role-play provides the opportunity to try a different personality

without the commitment of an ongoing relationship.

Pornography's Damage to the Family

The first obvious danger of porn is the time it takes away from important responsibilities. Not only does viewing pornography take time away from family and friends, but in some cases pornography has also overtaken users' lives—even causing men and women to lose their jobs. A growing number of men and women are accessing Internet pornography while at work.

As with any addiction, the compulsion grows as the habit is fed. The desire for more outweighs the importance of other duties. For example, a man can't give his very best at his job for eight hours, come home and willingly help his wife with

Notes

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5. Matthew 7:1-5.
6. Author Unknown, *Lessons on Life*, http://www.mil.ufl.edu/3701/pear_tree.html (accessed May 12, 2006).
7. Dr. James C. Dobson, *Love Must Be Tough* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1996), 57.