

Pornography and Addiction

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As we become increasingly more connected with the world, and our access to the internet progresses from being a novelty to a way of life, pornography is becoming an increasingly pervasive issue in our society. Pornography addiction is becoming more and more prevalent as a treatment issue. Not long ago, the pornography industry was commonly associated with seedy theaters and bookstores, but today's industry promotes pornography with such blistering technological advances that extremely graphic and violent images are becoming increasingly more accessible.

It is estimated that 70% of males age 18-24 visit pornographic sites on a monthly basis. In the United States alone, it is estimated pornographic sites get 40 million visitors a year. The pornography industry is estimated to generate 13 billion dollars annually. It is not surprising that the prevalence of pornography and risk of addiction has soared. Unlike other addictions that may have more overt consequences, pornography's use and consequences are often shrouded in seclusion and secrecy. Usage can occur in the home or in the workplace, often within a few feet of family, friends, or colleagues. The impact pornography addiction has on trust, communication, and intimacy in a marriage or relationship can be devastating. Fear of shame, reprisal, or other consequences forces these behaviors into secrecy until the addiction is discovered, resulting in devastating feelings of betrayal, and even dissolution of the relationship or marriage.

Recent research has revealed that recurrent pornography use creates addiction at a neurological level. Users become increasingly desensitized to the images, creating a desire over time to view even more graphic or intense images. Spouses of those who use pornography are more likely to report decreased satisfaction in their physical relationships with their partners. Not surprising, there is a strong correlation between pornography use and infidelity.

The scope of treatment for pornography addiction should reflect the scope of the consequences on the relationship, marriage and/or family. Individual therapy, using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques, can be effective in addressing belief systems held by the user that perpetuate the use of pornography. Conjoint therapy, such as marital or family therapy, can also be incredibly important, as these methods provide a forum where dialogue can occur and impacted family members can have a voice to address their feelings. Software programs such as Covenant Eyes can also be beneficial as a monitoring tool for internet use. Ultimately, the goal of treatment is to address the pervasive feelings of mistrust and betrayal and create opportunities for healing.

If you feel that you or someone you know may be suffering or at risk of having an addiction to pornography, Arbor Counseling Center can assist with confidential screenings and counseling services as well as referrals to community-based support groups, treatment resources and medication management. Call us at 847-913-0393 for more information or to make an appointment.