



Navigating Pornography Addiction

A Guide for Parents

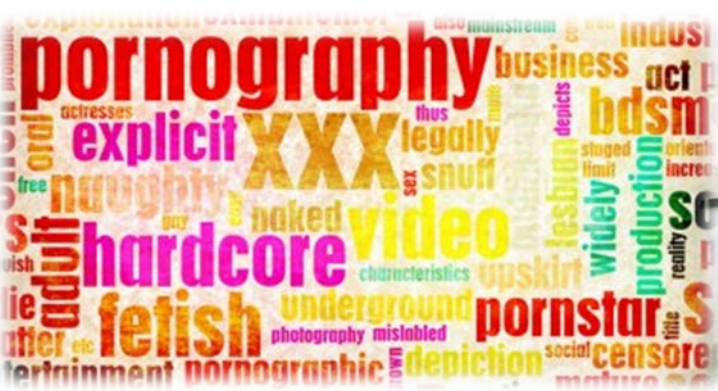


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The Growing Problem of Youth Pornography Addiction

Because of the ease of access to explicit media and the potency of today's pornography, more and more parents are faced with the difficult and uncomfortable task of addressing the topic of pornography use by their children. Many parents are uncertain about how to handle these situations and where to turn for help when the use of pornography by a child becomes habitual.

Research and studies suggest that most pornography and sexual addictions begin during adolescence. Unfortunately, most people don't seek treatment until later in life when the problem has become more pervasive. Our coalition of programs was established in response to the growing number of teens becoming addicted to viewing pornography and the need for clinical treatment to break free from the addiction.

Our mission is two-fold:

- (1) Provide professional help to young people and their parents who are struggling with how to overcome a pornography addiction and its accompanying behaviors.
- (2) Create and train a network of professionals who specialize in working with young people struggling with pornography addiction.



We firmly believe that the earlier in life a young person can learn to manage their urges to view pornography, the greater the likelihood they can live a life free from sexual addiction. Many adults addicted to pornography were exposed and became addicted as youth. It is far wiser to face the problem as a young person, rather than waiting until later in life to deal with the addiction when it has had many years to become an ingrained pattern of behavior.

Typical Behaviors in Teens

Below are typical behaviors of youth who are struggling with an addiction to pornography:

-Living a double or secret life related to pornography use.

- -Tendency to isolate self and stay up late at night on the internet.
- -Hiding or attempting to keep secret the viewing of pornography.
- -An inability to stop viewing pornography despite previous attempts to do so.
- -Denial and anger when asked to stop by parents and adults.
- -Continuing to view pornography despite the known consequences of continued viewing.
- -Depression, irritability and anger.
- -Hypersexual attitude, vocabulary and behavior.
- -Overprotective of their technology (cell phone, I-pod, lap top, etc.)



Many youth are able to keep their addiction secret and hidden from others without outward evidence of the problem. For these youth, because problems don't immediately manifest in their life functioning, they develop a denial that a problem exists and become experts in self-deception believing that the problem will somehow just go away when they get older. When this occurs, the adults in their life may be oblivious to their addiction.

For some, it is not until they have repeatedly attempted to stop viewing pornography on their own without success, that the realization sets in that an addiction has developed. Because of the stigma that often exists with a pornography addiction, it takes a great deal of courage for a youth to admit they have a problem and to ask for help.



Neurological research has found that pornography is particularly addictive because of the neuro-chemical release in the brain that occurs while viewing pornography. For many youth, the euphoric "high" that occurs in this process quickly develops into a coping style for escaping emotional distress.

Pornography Use among Teens Statistics

93 % of boys and **62%** of girls are exposed to internet pornography before the age of 18.

70% of boys have spent at least 30 consecutive minutes looking at on-line porn on at least one occasion.

35% of boys have done this on at least ten occasions.

83% of boys have seen group sex on the internet.

67% of children admit to clearing their internet history to hide their online activity.

79% of accidental exposures to internet porn among kids take place in the home.

56% of divorce cases involve one party having an obsessive interest in online porn.

12% of websites on the internet are pornographic—Approximately **25 million** websites.

2 of the top **100** websites on the internet are porn sites.

40 million Americans regularly visit pornographic websites.

2.5 billion emails per day are pornographic.

25% of search engine requests each day are pornography related—approximately **70 million** per day.

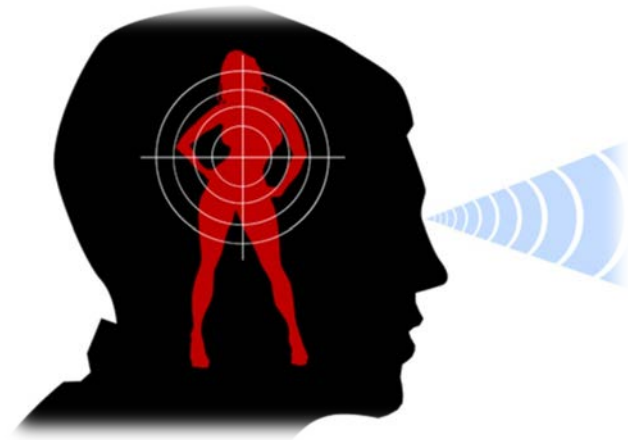
Only **3%** of pornographic websites require age verification.

The most popular day of the week for viewing pornography is **Sunday**.

10% of pornography users report being addicted.

The average age a child first sees internet pornography is **11**.

70% of young men ages **18-24** visit pornographic websites on at least a monthly basis.



Addiction vs. Inappropriate Behavior

The word “addiction” has a strong and scary sound to it for many youth as it is often associated with behaviors and people who are out of control. Young people are especially concerned about having the term “addiction” associated with their problems and for many struggling with habitual use of pornography, the addiction has been hidden with no outward signs of the problem.



"Addiction" can be defined as a state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming to such an extent that its cessation causes trauma. To further add to the understanding of term addiction, consider this definition: any behavior or activity that is repeatedly engaged in and used to avoid having to deal with the reality of life. As mentioned, addiction is often associated with people who use drugs or alcohol to alter their mood in an attempt to deal with their life problems. Behaviors such as gambling, over-eating, shopping and even working can turn into addictions. People who repeatedly use these behaviors to avoid having to deal with their life responsibilities could be considered addicts.

For young people struggling with the use of pornography, we are less concerned about debating whether it is simply a bad habit or if it is a true addiction, and far more concerned about helping to eliminate the problem whether the pattern has been in place for several years or whether it has just recently formed.

We are often asked the question. Is my son addicted or is he simply engaging in inappropriate behavior. Listed below are ear marks of addictive behavior to help differentiate between addiction and bad habit:

Frequency – Frequency refers to how often the young person engages in the behavior. If viewing pornography only occurs a few times per year, the behavior is not likely an addiction, although the behavior is clearly inappropriate. If the person views pornography three or four times per week, the presence of an addiction is much more likely.

Duration – Duration refers to how long the problem has persisted. Persistent use of pornography over extended periods of time often reflect the young person’s inability to stop viewing. A recurring problem may indicate that problem-solving skills by the young person have been inadequate or insufficient. The longer a problem has continued, the more it may require professional assistance. Some problems require more time and expertise than family members and Church leaders can provide.

Intensity – Intensity refers to the nature of the material viewed. While all pornographic images and content are inappropriate, some types of material are significantly more intense. Media that depict sexual acts are more intense and graphic than media of individuals wearing little or no clothing. The viewing of hard-core, intense pornography increases the likelihood of an addiction.

Risk Taking – Another primary factor of addiction is the level of risk-taking behaviors presented by a young person. The stronger the addiction, the more the young person is willing to take risks to satisfy the addiction. Risk-taking activities in youth may include escalating immoral behavior, skipping school, sexual abuse, lying to parents and church leaders and any unlawful or covert behavior.



Assessment Screening Tools for Addiction

You can use our free pornography addiction screening tools as a means of evaluating the extent to which an addiction may exist in your child. There are three different assessment tools available to you. You can access these tools on our websites or you can use the ones provided in this guide on the following pages.

1. [**The Youth Pornography Addiction Screening Tool \(YPAST\)**](#) is a free on-line initial screening assessment tool for adolescents ages 12 to 18 with potential addiction to pornography. It is being developed with adolescent clients in outpatient settings around the United States. The YPAST provides a profile based on the responses that help to identify adolescents who are addicted to pornography. The responses are chosen by the adolescent client who is being screened for potential addiction to pornography. To complete the test, the youth answers each of the 25 questions by choosing from one of five possible responses.
2. [**The Pornography Addiction Screening Tool \(PAST\)**](#) is a free on-line initial screening assessment tool for young adults ages 18-30 with potential addiction to pornography. It is being developed with young adult clients in outpatient settings around the United States. The PAST provides a profile based on the responses that help to identify individuals who are addicted to pornography. The responses are chosen by the individual who is being screened for potential addiction to pornography. To complete the test, answer each of the 25 questions by choosing from one of five possible responses.
3. [**The Parent Perception Youth Pornography Addiction Screening Tool \(PPYPAST\)**](#) is a free on-line initial screening assessment tool for for parents who have children with potential addiction to pornography. It is being developed with parents in outpatient

settings around the United States. The PPYPAST provides a profile based on the responses that help to identify youth who are addicted to pornography. The responses are chosen by the parent and accuracy of the assessment requires the parent to be highly tuned in to their child's thoughts and behaviors. To complete the test, answer each of the 25 questions by choosing from one of five possible responses.

In the following three pages, you will find copies of the YPAST, the PAST and the PPYPAST that you are invited to use as you screen for possible addiction in your child.

<p style="text-align: center;">Youth Pornography Addiction Screening Tool (YPAST)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Responses should be based on behavior over the past six months.)</p>	Never	1-2 times	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently
1. Do you view pornography in order to avoid or escape your feelings or to deal with stress or boredom?	0	1	2	3	4
2. Have you protected your pornography by hiding it from your parents and others?	0	1	2	3	4
3. Do you think about sex more than you would like to?	0	1	2	3	4
4. Does it sometimes seem as if there is a force inside of you that drives you to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
5. Do you feel empty or shameful after viewing pornography or masturbating?	0	1	2	3	4
6. Have you ever promised yourself that you would never again view pornography or masturbate?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Have you lied to your parents, church leaders or other adults about your pornography viewing?	0	1	2	3	4
8. Would you rather view pornography or masturbate than spend time with others?	0	1	2	3	4
9. Have you stayed up late at night or woke up during the night to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
10. Have you erased the history on the computer to "cover your tracks" in an effort to avoid being caught on pornographic websites?	0	1	2	3	4
11. Do you rationalize, justify, minimize or make excuses about your pornography use?	0	1	2	3	4
12. Do you somehow end up looking at pornography nearly every time you get on the internet?	0	1	2	3	4
13. Do you worry something is wrong with you because of your sexual thoughts and feelings?	0	1	2	3	4
14. Have you participated in on-line/internet sexual chats, emails, posts or in sexting?	0	1	2	3	4
15. Have you lied, stolen or manipulated others in order to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
16. Have you used someone else's computer or cell phone to view pornography without them knowing?	0	1	2	3	4
17. Do you find yourself viewing more and more pornography to feel satisfied?	0	1	2	3	4
18. Do your sexual thoughts and feelings interfere with your religious beliefs or your family values?	0	1	2	3	4
19. Do your sexual thoughts and behaviors cause you to feel that you are unclean or unworthy?	0	1	2	3	4
20. Do you browse through newspapers and magazines or flip through channels on the television just to find something that will stimulate you sexually?	0	1	2	3	4
21. Do you look for opportunities to be alone so that you can find pornography or masturbate?	0	1	2	3	4
22. Do you masturbate while viewing pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
23. Do you use pornography or masturbation as a reward for accomplishing something?	0	1	2	3	4
24. Do you continue to view pornography even after encountering problems related to your viewing?	0	1	2	3	4
25. Do you worry about being caught viewing pornography by your parents or others?	0	1	2	3	4
Totals					

Total Score:

Scoring Guide

- 0-25 Normal sexual development & typical curiosity.** No treatment is needed. Monitoring of youth's on-line activity is recommended along with education regarding dangers of pornography and open dialogue about sexuality.
- 26-49 Reason for concern regarding involvement with pornography.** Monitoring of youth's on-line activity along with preventative education is recommended. Youth is vulnerable for possible future addiction. Youth requires education regarding dangers of pornography and open dialogue about sexuality.
- 50-69 Emerging pornography addiction.** Vigilant monitoring of youth's on-line behavior is needed. Treatment is needed to prevent more pervasive addiction. Distorted view of sexuality and hypersexual behaviors may begin to manifest. Healthy coping skills begin to stagnate. Increased risk for emotional, social and legal problems related to pornography addiction.
- 70-100 Youth is addicted to pornography.** Vigilant monitoring of youth's on-line behavior is needed. Treatment is necessary to disrupt the addiction. Youth is unable to break free from the addiction without professional treatment. Healthy coping skills are replaced with addiction. Youth's judgment and priorities become distorted by the addiction. High risk for emotional, social and legal problems related to pornography addiction.

Disclaimer: This assessment is for informational purposes only and cannot substitute for a full evaluation by a clinical professional.
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Pornography Addiction Screening Tool (PAST) (Responses should be based on behavior over the past twelve months)	Never	1-2 times	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently
1. Do you view pornography in order to avoid or escape your feelings or to deal with stress or boredom?	0	1	2	3	4
2. Have you protected your pornography by hiding it from others?	0	1	2	3	4
3. Do you think about sex more than you would like to?	0	1	2	3	4
4. Does it sometimes seem as if there is a force inside of you that drives you to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
5. Do you feel empty or shameful after viewing pornography or masturbating?	0	1	2	3	4
6. Have you ever promised yourself that you would never again view pornography or masturbate?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Have you lied to your family members, church leaders or others about your pornography viewing?	0	1	2	3	4
8. Would you rather view pornography or masturbate than spend time with others?	0	1	2	3	4
9. Have you stayed up late at night or woke up during the night to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
10. Have you erased the history on the computer to "cover your tracks" in an effort to avoid being caught on pornographic websites?	0	1	2	3	4
11. Do you rationalize, justify, minimize or make excuses about your pornography use?	0	1	2	3	4
12. Do you somehow end up looking at pornography nearly every time you get on the internet?	0	1	2	3	4
13. Do you worry something is wrong with you because of your sexual thoughts and feelings?	0	1	2	3	4
14. Have you participated in on-line/internet sexual chats, emails, posts or in sexting?	0	1	2	3	4
15. Have you lied, stolen or manipulated others in order to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
16. Have you used someone else's computer or cell phone to view pornography without them knowing?	0	1	2	3	4
17. Do you find yourself viewing more and more pornography to feel satisfied?	0	1	2	3	4
18. Do your sexual thoughts and feelings interfere with your religious beliefs or your family values?	0	1	2	3	4
19. Do your sexual thoughts and behaviors cause you to feel that you are unclean or unworthy?	0	1	2	3	4
20. Do you browse through newspapers and magazines or flip through channels on the television just to find something that will stimulate you sexually?	0	1	2	3	4
21. Do you look for opportunities to be alone so that you can find pornography or masturbate?	0	1	2	3	4
22. Do you masturbate while viewing pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
23. Do you use pornography or masturbation as a reward for accomplishing something?	0	1	2	3	4
24. Do you continue to view pornography even after encountering problems related to your viewing?	0	1	2	3	4
25. Do you worry about being caught viewing pornography by others?	0	1	2	3	4
Totals					

Total Score:

Scoring Guide

- 0-25 Normal sexual development & typical curiosity.** No treatment is needed. Monitoring of on-line activity is recommended along with education regarding dangers of pornography and open dialogue about sexuality.
- 26-49 Reason for concern regarding involvement with pornography.** Monitoring of on-line activity along with preventative education is recommended. Individual is vulnerable for possible future addiction. Individual requires education regarding dangers of pornography and open dialogue about sexuality.
- 50-69 Emerging pornography addiction.** Vigilant monitoring of on-line behavior is needed. Treatment is needed to prevent more pervasive addiction. Distorted view of sexuality and hypersexual behaviors may begin to manifest. Healthy coping skills begin to stagnate. Increased risk for emotional, social and legal problems related to pornography addiction.
- 70-100 Individual is addicted to pornography.** Vigilant monitoring of on-line behavior is needed. Treatment is necessary to disrupt the addiction. Individual is unable to break free from the addiction without professional treatment. Healthy coping skills are replaced with addiction. Individual's judgment and priorities become distorted by the addiction. High risk for emotional, social and legal problems related to pornography addiction.

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Parent Perception Youth Pornography Addiction Screening Tool (PPYPAST)	Never	1-2 times	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently
(Responses should be based on behavior over the past six months.)					
1. My child views pornography in order to avoid or escape feelings or to deal with stress or boredom.	0	1	2	3	4
2. My child has protected his/her pornography by hiding it.	0	1	2	3	4
3. My child thinks about sex more than he/she would like to.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Does it seem as if there is a force inside of your child that drives him/her to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
5. Does your child feel empty or shameful after viewing pornography or masturbating?	0	1	2	3	4
6. Has your child ever promised that he/she would never again view pornography or masturbate?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Has your child lied to you, church leaders or other adults about his/her pornography viewing?	0	1	2	3	4
8. Would your child rather view pornography or masturbate than spend time with others?	0	1	2	3	4
9. Has your child stayed up late at night or woke up during the night to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
10. Has your child erased the history on the computer to "cover tracks" in an effort to avoid being caught on pornographic websites?	0	1	2	3	4
11. Does your child rationalize, justify, minimize or make excuses about his/her pornography use?	0	1	2	3	4
12. Does your child end up looking at pornography nearly every time he/she gets on the internet?	0	1	2	3	4
13. Do you worry something is wrong with your child because of his/her sexual thoughts and feelings?	0	1	2	3	4
14. Has your child participated in on-line/internet sexual chats, emails, posts or in sexting?	0	1	2	3	4
15. Has your child lied, stolen or manipulated others in order to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
16. Has your child used someone else's computer or cell phone to view pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
17. Does your child seem to be viewing more and more pornography to feel satisfied?	0	1	2	3	4
18. Do your child's sexual attitudes interfere with your religious beliefs or your family values?	0	1	2	3	4
19. Do your child's sexual thoughts and behaviors cause him/her to feel unclean or unworthy?	0	1	2	3	4
20. Does your child browse through newspapers and magazines or flip through channels on the television just to find something that will stimulate him/her sexually?	0	1	2	3	4
21. Does your child look for opportunities to be alone so that they can find pornography or masturbate?	0	1	2	3	4
22. Does your child masturbate while viewing pornography?	0	1	2	3	4
23. Does your child use pornography or masturbation as a reward for accomplishing something?	0	1	2	3	4
24. Does your child continue to view pornography even after encountering problems related to viewing?	0	1	2	3	4
25. Does your child worry about being caught viewing pornography by you or others?	0	1	2	3	4
Totals					

Total Score:

Scoring Guide

0-25 Normal sexual development & typical curiosity. No treatment is needed. Monitoring of youth's on-line activity is recommended along with education regarding dangers of pornography and open dialogue about sexuality.

26-49 Reason for concern regarding involvement with pornography. Monitoring of youth's on-line activity along with preventative education is recommended. Youth is vulnerable for possible future addiction. Youth requires education regarding dangers of pornography and open dialogue about sexuality.

50-69 Emerging pornography addiction. Vigilant monitoring of youth's on-line behavior is needed. Treatment is needed to prevent more pervasive addiction. Distorted view of sexuality and hypersexual behaviors may begin to manifest. Healthy coping skills begin to stagnate. Increased risk for emotional, social and legal problems related to pornography addiction.

70-100 Youth is addicted to pornography. Vigilant monitoring of youth's on-line behavior is needed. Treatment is necessary to disrupt the addiction. Youth is unable to break free from the addiction without professional treatment. Healthy coping skills are replaced with addiction. Youth's judgment and priorities become distorted by the addiction. High risk for emotional, social and legal problems related to pornography addiction.

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Frequently Asked Questions from Parents

[How do I differentiate between whether my child's viewing pornography is inappropriate behavior or whether it is an addiction?](#) (Click to view short video clip)

[Why can't my son just stop viewing pornography?](#) (Click to view short video clip)

[Is professional treatment really needed to overcome pornography addiction?](#) (Click to view short video clip)

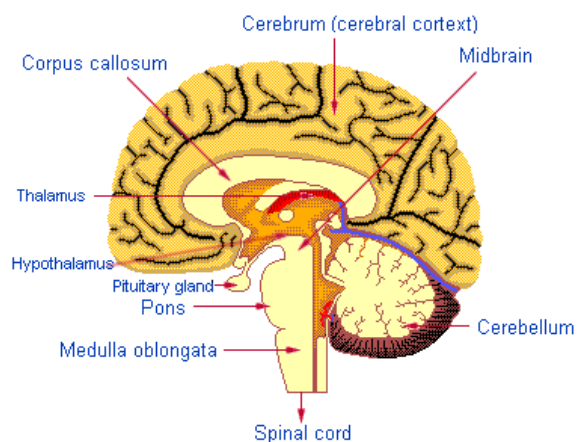
[What can I do as a parent to support my child struggling with pornography?](#) (Click to view short video clip)

[What is the difference between the Mending The Armor program and LDS Addiction Recovery meetings?](#) (Click to view short video clip)

Understanding the Neuroscience of Pornography Addiction

Neurological research has found that viewing pornography does have an impact on the brain. Scientists believe that several parts of the brain are affected by viewing pornography. For instance, the thalamus has many important functions. Among those functions include the processing and sending of sensory information. The thalamus, along with the brain stem plays a role in regulating arousal, level of awareness, and activity. It is believed that the pleasure and

reward centers which would include sexual senses are controlled by the thalamus. Research suggests that addiction, including pornography addiction, leads to this part of the brain physically shrinking .



Another part of the brain that is impacted by viewing pornography is the cerebral cortex. This is the part of the brain where memories are stored. The images viewed in pornography create a strong impression and are burned into our memory, making them difficult to forget.

Scientists believe that the cerebral cortex also shrinks as a result of addiction. This results in increased problems with compulsivity and impulsivity which make it difficult to break free from an addiction. The frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex is where benefits and risks of pleasurable stimulus are weighed. It is the decision making part of the brain. When its capacity to weigh the

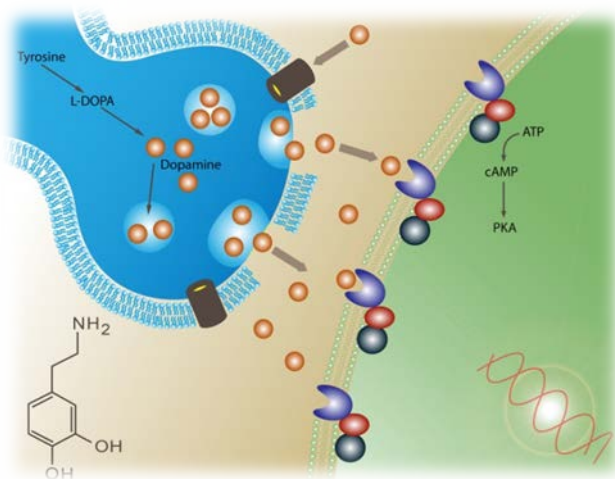
pros and cons of decisions is decreased, our ability to make wise choices is influenced and we tend to become more impulsive and driven by desires rather than logic.

The brain produces many natural chemicals that in turn impact the way we think, feel and act. Recent scientific studies have shown that just as using drugs can do, viewing pornography can prompt the brain to produce and release various brain chemicals that can create a pleasurable and euphoric feeling in our bodies. Scientists have identified several chemicals that are part of the pleasure and euphoria that is experienced by viewing pornography. You may have heard of some of these chemicals. They include Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin and Norepinephrine.



You have probably heard the term “runners high” and possibly even experienced it. To some people, the thought of running and rigorous exercise is not appealing because of the physical pain that can be experienced. Many runners and other athletes have realized that after some initial pain, that with prolonged exercise, they begin to experience a good feeling in their minds and bodies, as a result of engaging in rigorous physical exercise. This phenomenon occurs when our brain produces natural chemicals that bring a pleasurable and good feeling. This feeling is what drives many people to run and participate in other exercise. Such feelings are caused by chemicals called endorphins. These chemicals reduce the sensation of pain and affect our emotions to give us a sense of well-being.

Our bodies are designed with a set of chemicals that are naturally released to assist us in finding pleasure and reward as we engage in specific activities that lead to prolonging life. As humans,



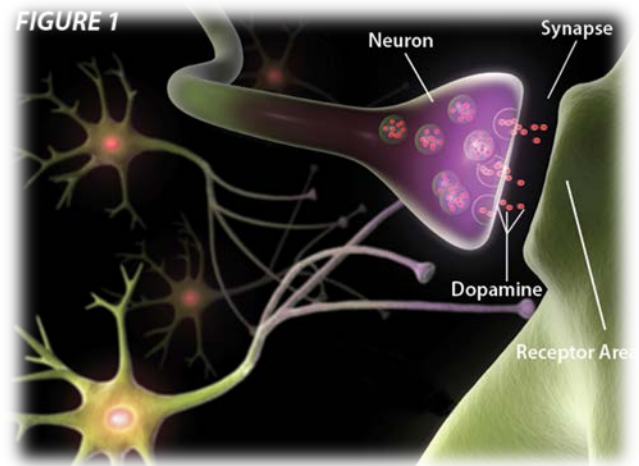
we are driven to feel pleasure. Drug addiction and sexual addictions including pornography are tools that people have learned to use to “trick” our bodies into releasing these chemicals to make us feel good in ways that were not intended. Tricking our bodies into releasing these chemicals is the equivalent of taking a syringe and filling it with several mood altering chemicals and shooting it directly into our blood stream.

Dopamine is a chemical is produced by the brain to provide pleasurable feelings.

Dopamine is commonly associated with the reward system of the brain. This chemical has been linked to providing feelings of enjoyment and reinforcement to motivate a person proactively to

perform certain activities. Dopamine is released by rewarding experiences such as food, sex, drugs and other experiences that become associated with them. Scientific research has shown that dopamine is flooded into the brain while viewing pornography which results in a pleasurable experience. Pornography results in the dopamine systems becoming overused and the dopamine becomes depleted. The brain then begins to associate viewing pornography and other experiences related to viewing it to pleasurable experiences. Pornography has been found to be a more powerful stimulus than natural sexual activity. As a result some married men prefer internet pornography over their spouse. Youth who have been addicted to pornography may be disappointed in natural sexual activity after having engaged in chronic pornography use.

In a way, our brain cells can become desensitized to these natural chemicals. This means that “tricking” our brain into releasing these chemicals through the use of pornography can result in the brain cells decreasing the production of dopamine and thus, the less impact the dopamine has. This condition leads to “craving” which often leads to relapse. The brain cells that receive and manage pleasure can become desensitized to normal activities that should create a dopamine release. This results in normally pleasurable activities not being as rewarding as they should be or used to be which can lead to depression and irritation. The concept of tolerance involves needing more and more of a stimulus to achieve the same euphoric effects. Prolonged exposure to pornography results in the user needing more and more exposure to produce the euphoria. This concept is a phenomenon that occurs in drug addiction as well as pornography addiction. An increased tolerance often times results in a pornography viewer getting deeper and deeper into various forms of pornography that can involve illegal, grotesque and vile images in an effort to experience the euphoric “high” that was once experienced with simple pornographic images.



Oxytocin is a chemical that scientists suggest is related to human bonding and trust. When this chemical is released while viewing pornography, there is the risk that the pornography viewer may experience a bond with the images rather than applying that bond to a real relationship. This can result in damage to real relationships and a stronger drive to view virtual images. A devastating example of this is the fact that some married men addicted to pornography prefer to view internet pornography and masturbate than to engage in sexual activity with their spouse. Pornography addiction is terribly damaging to marriages because of this, and



many other reasons that youth need to understand.

Serotonin is a brain chemical that provides a soothing and calming effect. This chemical tends to be deficient in people that suffer from depression and anxiety. It is believed that this chemical is one of the reasons that an addiction can often be used to sooth emotional discomfort. When this chemical is released while viewing pornography, the pornography viewer may experience a soothing and self-medicating affect that can lead to pornography being used as a form of “numbing” from the pains of everyday life.

Norepinephrine is a chemical that scientists have suggested results in remembering vivid details of intimate experiences. This chemical being released while viewing pornography can result in having the pornographic images burned into the memory making it difficult to forget or block out. Many people can recall their first experience in viewing pornography as those images were burned deep into their memory, likely aided by the release of this chemical.

Fortunately, these scientific studies concludes that the parts of our brains and the chemical releases that occur with pornography addiction can return to normal functioning with prolonged abstinence from viewing pornography. Healthy living and good mental, emotional and spiritual health involves allowing the brain and the body to experience the pleasures that should normally occur in life without being tricked or misused by viewing pornography and other addictions. Many youth will likely enter a marital relationship in the next few years of their life. It is vital that they don't allow a pornography addiction to interfere with their ability to function within a marriage relationship. Entering a marital relationship addicted to pornography is a recipe for heart ache and pain for both partners.



Pornography addiction can only bring a quick and short-lived pleasure, while the true joys in life can provide long-term happiness and satisfaction that can't be achieved through an addiction. Short-term pleasure versus long-term happiness is the battle that occurs every day of our lives. Pornography is short-term pleasure which can never provide long-term happiness, but ultimately leaves its users increasingly dissatisfied.

Internet Accountability and Filtering

A majority of youth struggling with pornography addiction access explicit materials via the internet. For this reason, it is recommended that parents utilize an internet accountability and filtering system. There are numerous products on the market for this purpose. Our choice for



internet accountability and filtering is Covenant Eyes.

Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability monitors how the Internet is used on computers and mobile devices and rates every page visited, with ratings like T for Teen and M for Mature.

This information is sent in an easy-to-read report so that you can have regular conversations with your kids about their interests, questionable areas online, or even content that is inappropriate.

The reports show the words your kids type into search engines like Google and Bing and the titles of videos watched on sites like YouTube. Plus, your children's reports show the sites and web searches blocked by the filter.

Children, older teens, and adults should not be filtered at the same level. The Covenant Eyes Filter for Windows blocks sites based on age-appropriateness. You select what level of blocking is appropriate for each member of your family.

The Covenant Eyes Filter also blocks sites in real time, unlike other filters that are based on a static "block list" that is only updated periodically. Remember, a new site is launched every 2 seconds; Covenant Eyes keeps up with ever-changing dangers online. The filter also allows you to restrict the times of day and the amount of time per day each of your children may use the Internet.

Strategies for Parents

Discovering that a pornography addiction exists with a child can be a heartbreaking experience. Parents want to do everything in their power to assist their child to overcome the addiction. Parenting a child who is struggling with an addiction to pornography can be frustrating and discouraging at times. The process of recovery frequently involves periods of success and



relapses. Keep in mind that there are steps that parents can take to assist their children in overcoming the addiction. Listed below are 13 strategies for parents to follow as they provide support to a struggling child.

1. **Express Your Love.** Express your love and your desire for your child to have a happy, successful life, and share your concern that involvement in pornography can jeopardize your child's future happiness and well-being. Develop a loving, open, and influential relationship with

- your children, teaching them proper values and healthy attitudes toward sexuality.
2. **Teach.** Teach your child how pornography distorts sexuality, causes users to view others as sexual objects, and is highly addictive. Help family members understand the desensitization process that occurs from repeated exposure to explicit images and behaviors found on the internet, in books, magazines, and popular television programs.
 3. **Follow Up.** Once the problem has been acknowledged, keep the lines of communication open. Addiction thrives in secrecy and is less likely to recur when talked about in a sensitive, caring way.
 4. **Respond Calmly.** Avoid responding with shock and anger. Instead, be genuinely concerned and talk with your child in a respectful way.
 5. **Learn.** Ask how the problem got started, how long it has been going on, and how extensively the child is involved with pornography.
 6. **Accountability.** Utilize internet filtering on computers, and hand held devices. Be aware of all potential sources that could be used to obtain pornography and take measures to prevent pornography from entering your home. Be prepared to take away internet and phone privileges as needed.
 7. **Involve Professionals and clergy.** Encourage your child to talk and get professional and spiritual help.
 8. **Discipline with Sensitivity.** Rather than preaching, threatening, or condemning, appeal to your child's better judgment. Discipline and teach with kindness to listen to your counsel.
 9. **Communicate.** Find out how the child feels about his or her involvement and whether he or she plans to continue that involvement.
 10. **Help.** Provide help and encouragement as the child strives to overcome the problem.
 11. **Protect.** Safeguard your home. As a family, discuss and implement healthy media habits such as limiting television and computer time, installing Internet filters, and placing televisions and computers in high-use areas where the screens are visible to others.
 12. **Exemplify.** Immediately turn away from explicit images and teach your children to do the same.
 13. **Warn.** Warn family members about pornography's ability to enslave and destroy them.

Why is Treatment Necessary?

As part of our efforts to spread our programs, we have had the chance to visit with many parents, church leaders, therapists, youth and young adults from various parts of the country on the topic of pornography addiction. Based on these conversations, it seems clear that there are many youth and young adults struggling with the addiction, but we have been surprised by how few actually seek professional treatment for dealing with the addiction. Here are three misconceptions that we believe explain why more youth don't seek treatment:

1. Yes, it's a problem.....but is professional intervention really needed?



Too often, the chronic use of pornography by youth is not viewed as an addiction, but rather just a bad habit. The word “addiction” is strong and there is hesitancy on the part of parents, church leaders and youth to accept that an addiction exists. Because of shame and embarrassment, youth may minimize or downplay the extent of the problem. As a result, parents and church leaders are often not fully aware of the depth of the issue resulting in the conclusion that professional help is not necessary. The unfortunate reality of pornography addiction is that most are unable to break free on their own without help.

2. “You just need to try harder.”

Overcoming an addiction to pornography can be very difficult. Too often, those not familiar with the strength of the addiction simplify the process and expect that more desire and more willpower should result in terminating the addiction. It is hard for those not familiar with addiction to comprehend why some youth continue to relapse into viewing pornography despite every intention to remain abstinent. While increased commitment and effort are vital to overcoming the addiction, we need to empower our youth with every possible tool for learning to manage the addiction including spiritual support, emotional support, internet accountability and professional intervention. In fighting pornography addiction, there is no such thing as too much intervention.

3. A few months abstinence equals recovery.

Some addicted youth are able to refrain from viewing pornography for several weeks and even months using willpower. While this shows a strong effort on their part, too often youth who have not participated in treatment will eventually relapse back into viewing pornography. It is important for youth, parents and church leaders to recognize the need for those who have been addicted to have the opportunity to analyze and explore the nature of the addiction including the underlying emotional and psychological issues that lead to the formation of the addiction. Too often, a few months abstinence is misinterpreted as the problem being resolved and thus, no need for participation in professional treatment.

The unfortunate reality for those who develop a pornography addiction, is that without help, the prognosis for breaking free from the addiction is poor. Most simply can't do it on their own. For this reason, treatment is necessary and the earlier in life this occurs, the better. Research suggests that pornography and sexual addiction typically firsts manifests during the teen years. We strongly suggest to parents that as soon as a pornography addiction is discovered, they should seek treatment for their struggling child. We have also found that even when a youth participates in treatment, sometimes the struggle to achieve a recovery can be difficult and take time. The strength of a pornography addiction should not be underestimated.



Treatment Options

Pornography addiction treatment that is designed specifically for teens and young adults can be difficult to find as few programs of this nature currently exist. Listed below are a continuum of treatment options that have been tailored to address the therapeutic needs of teens and young adults who are struggling with pornography addiction.

STAR Guides outpatient network

is an outpatient treatment program designed for youth and young adults striving to conquer pornography and sexual addiction. When problems related to pornography addiction and other unwanted sexual behaviors arise, STAR Guides provides families with navigation through these challenges. This program is available in numerous outpatient offices around the United States. [Click here to view a list of locations.](#)



Mending The Armor

Is an outpatient treatment program designed for LDS youth and young adults who have an interest in living a morally clean life, but are struggling with an addiction to pornography and its accompanying behaviors. Mending The Armor was born from the need for an effective treatment option for LDS youth struggling pornography addiction. Addicted youth experience tremendous shame which often prevents them from being open, honest and getting help. Many attempt to overcome the addiction on their own, relying on willpower, only to remain abstinent for short periods of time before relapsing and experiencing continued shame and feelings of failure. Mending The Armor is available in numerous outpatient offices around the United States. [Click here to view a list of locations.](#)



STAR Guides wilderness

Is a short-term, intensive outdoor wilderness experience designed for teens and young adults who are striving to break free from pornography and sexual addiction. Youth in this program can participate in a five day weekend expeditions, or a 30-60 day expedition. These life-changing, highly impactful expeditions involve learning to live in a primitive fashion in the remote, high-desert of Southern Utah while participating in intensive daily individual and group therapy sessions with



some of the nation's leading expert therapists in pornography addiction.

Mt. Pleasant Academy



Is a residential treatment program for youth who stand in need of longer-term out of home placement. Mount Pleasant Academy is a residential treatment center designed to assist adolescent troubled boys and their families who are struggling with compulsive sexual behaviors, sensitive sexual issues, and/or digital addictions. The program offers a safe, secure, and professional program in a beautiful and serene group home setting. The dedicated clinical staff specialize in the therapeutic treatment and intervention of sexual disorders and sexual addictions for troubled boys. Youth participate in intensive therapy and are able to continue to progress academically in an accredited school setting.