

## Chapter 1 Consequences of porn use

What influence has porn on its users? Isn't porn just a natural male need? Which consequences are noticeable concerning the people surrounding a porn user?

### Influences of porn

Many men and women first encounter porn in the beginning of puberty. They found porn belonging to their father or brother, or a friend or classmate showed them. Watching porn and masturbating are exciting and interesting at first. It may seem like a whole new world is opening. This is an important event considering the teen's development of sexuality, both physical and emotional. Porn does not stimulate a careful and easy development of sexuality, it rather forces the belief that sex equals lust and is all about orgasms. Porn is all about male pleasure. It shows crude, cold and technical sexual acts, without intimacy, safety and tenderness. Consequently, a teenager using porn will learn sexuality is about quick, short and selfish satisfaction. Porn shows sex as an egoistical act. Porn disrupts the sexual development of teenagers and people find themselves at quite a young age stuck in a pattern of self-satisfaction. If children start watching porn at a young age, they are more likely to become stuck in this pattern. Often, this leads to relationship- and marriage problems later in life. For these persons the frequent use of porn leads them to a distorted longing to experience in reality the acts seen.

With the rise of the internet and the possibility of cybersex, more people encounter porn at a very young age. The age at which boys get acquainted with porn is around ten years of age, according to Canadian research. Compare this to marketing targeting children: the sooner children start a commitment to a particular brand or product, the bigger the chance they will stay committed later in life. Boys of ten are too young to face the emotional and physical challenge porn presents to them. Consequently, sex and sexual arousal isn't experienced within a relationship, but as egoistical lust. Sexual arousal experienced in accord with intimacy and safety does not produce problems or addiction. It often happens porn use follows father to son. Fathers watching porn become limited in their emotional responses and teach their children likewise.

It is quite easy to see how the availability, accessibility and early exposure of porn will result in a growth of porn users. A Dutch research company (IVO) has studied the nature, seriousness and the extension of online porn in the Netherlands. In this study: 'Beyond excitement' (De opwindende voorbij) ((2011)) researchers find a 72 percentage of men seeking online pornography. 'It has become apparent that among certain groups (especially younger single men), people spend a lot of time viewing online pornography. Although it is possible to link several problems to pornography (addiction, problems concerning sexual development and resulting values), it isn't within the scope of this study to conclude an expansion of problems caused by pornography, although there is some indication that the number of problem cases is increasing.'

According to this research, porn does not equal serious trouble in most cases. However, this is a short-term study. We, as therapists, have noticed long term suffering in men, women, families and marriages, caused by compulsive use of porn. Marriages end because of the partner's feelings of betrayal and hurt. Sexuality within marriage becomes a highly-strung affair for both partners. Users lose important relationships,

because of the time consumed watching porn. People suffer from guilt and shame, feelings of aggression and frustration. We encounter in our practices men so desperate and full of self-loathing, that they are suicidal.

### **Consequences of porn use.**

Porn use is sometimes seen as innocent and as a normal need of every man. When men are over-sexed, these needs can find an outlet and satisfaction in porn. However, porn increases the need for sex. The use of porn influences the thoughts, feelings and acts of the person watching, and even the people in their proximity. Some consequences are:

- Women are seen as sex-objects
- Unrealistic view of sex
- Unrealistic expectations of sex
- Increase of desire to have selfish and self-serving sex
- Decrease of pleasure having intimate sex with partner
- Loss of interest in intimate sex
- Decrease of emotional connection with partner
- Loss of intensity of feelings in general
- Isolation
- Relationship problems
- Temporal impotence
- Increase of porn use and progression to extreme types of porn

### **Sex- and porn-addiction**

Dr. Patrick Carnes, who is a leading professional in the field of sex addiction and relationship counseling, has done research into sex addiction and has found several characteristics of sex addiction. He describes them as follows:

- Addicts suffer from an uncontrollable pattern of sexual behavior, with serious consequences in daily life
- This patterned behavior becomes high risk, and attempts to stop behaving this way fail.
- Sexual behavior functions as a 'painkiller', to avoid feelings of pain and disillusionment
- Sexual behavior takes up a lot of time and leads to very conflicted feelings. The user is neglecting responsibilities and important tasks.
- Users lead double-lives. There is a safe world behind the computer and daily life, where users experience loneliness, anxiety and insecurity.

Sex or porn becomes more and more important. In time it becomes more important than spouse, family, work or friends. Addicts are convinced of only being happy when occupied with sex or porn. During the watching of porn, addicts will not be confronted with criticism, emotional unsafe environments or stress, which will confront them at work, while studying or with their families. A 'normal' state of mind is described as flat, cheerless and empty. It is difficult to separate addiction from non-addiction. In general, porn use results in repetition of this use. However, a person is addicted when he or she:

- Behaves this way against their will.
- Behaves in a way conflicting with their principles
- Keeps this behavior secret and is ashamed of it.
- Experiences this behavior as a hindrance to their faith

### **Other causes**

It is possible for some men or women to develop a problematic pattern of sexual behavior without numbing problems or being unhappy. The attraction in those cases is often the excitement, curiosity or experimentation, that results in sexual behavior. This can lead to loss of control concerning the use of porn and sex.

The need for excitement and satisfaction is often not all there is to problematic sexual behavior. Porn use can be a signal of unconscious uneasiness and unhealthy tension. Therapy, for those persons, should not just focus on quitting the behavior, but also on the reasons and incentives for watching porn.

A disturbed view of sex, caused for example by sexual abuse in the past or when a person has crossed sexual boundaries themselves, can culminate in porn use. These persons need for intimacy has been damaged, and this need translates sexually. Porn is familiar and safe for them, because abuse is all they are familiar with. Watching porn cannot be a solution to the abuse, but will be a repetition of the abuse. In these cases, we strongly recommend seeking help with a professional therapist. Secrets keep people trapped in fear of discovery, shame and loneliness. The first step out of the trap for most people is seeking help.