

Pitfalls of Pornography

Part 1

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In an age of tolerance, the humanist philosophy says that every thing is good, as long as you do not hurt another individual. Therefore, pornography must be OK as long as you do not hurt another person. However, it appears from working with clients that pornography is not benign. Let us look at five pitfalls that I have observed related to pornography:

- 1) It's just entertainment.
- 2) It's private, so it does not harm anyone else.
- 3) It doesn't take up much time.
- 4) It is not a spiritual thing.
- 5) It's a simple thing that can just be stopped.

Pitfall #1 - It's Just Entertainment

It is the industry norm that 90% to 95% of all men are involved with pornography in their lifetime, whereas only 5% to 10% of women indulge themselves in this way. Does this disparity mean that men are more entertained by pornography than women? I think the difference relates to how our culture views pornography. When a boy reaches puberty he experiences the sexual pleasure of ejaculation, either as a wet dream or through masturbation. Then, he is culturally introduced to pictures of the opposite sex through a brother's magazines, the magazines at the local barber shop or through friends at school. Since a young teenage boy is unable to satisfy his sexual urges with a female partner, the use of pornography along with masturbation for many becomes the standard accepted practice. Is this activity entertainment? No. It is, in most cases, a private, secret working out of a physical sexual need. Men were designed to be attracted to women so that the human race can be perpetuated. This sexual drive in men is often stimulated by looking at the female body. What starts out as private sexual experimentation (entertainment) that is hooked to the sexual pleasure of masturbation, can turn into a habit and then end up as an uncontrollable addiction.

On the other hand, the majority of women in our culture tend to view pornographic pictures as disgusting, unhealthy and even a perversion. Women appear to be more attracted to the fantasy of Harlequin-type stories where there is romance which produces mental and sexual stimulation. Many women consider their partner's involvement in pornography similar to an affair and they are deeply insulted by the discovery that she is not meeting all of her partner's sexual needs. The euphemism that men call entertainment, women view as a personal assault, which creates an enormous barrier between the male and the female. Since the use of pornography is most often secret, the discovery causes the woman to lose trust in the male and this loss of trust can be a relationship ending trauma. Women feel rejected, hurt, abused and mistreated when their man secretly carries on an affair of the mind using pornography. Pornography is not:



”just entertainment.” It is an adolescent use of sexual images to stimulate sexual pleasure outside of human relationships.

Pitfall # 2 - It's Private So It Does Not Harm Anyone Else

Pornography is one of the fastest growing addictions in the world due to what is called the triple A engine of the internet. The internet offers pornography that is: affordable, accessible and anonymous. Yes, the internet and the use of pornography is private, but that is the essence of the problem. Nobody is looking, so there is not the social embarrassment of buying a magazine from another human being. Pornography on the internet is free and it can be accessed in seconds. Previously, it could take minutes and sometimes hours to drive around and find "the right" pornography. Today the search takes seconds.

But, does affordable, accessible and anonymous pornography just mean that there will be more harmless private consumption? Let's look at the word harmless. Ted Roberts in his book, "Pure Desire", has undertaken research showing that 21% to 29% (depending on the region of the country) of pastors for the church denomination he studied were addicted to pornography. He defined addiction as "deciding not to do something and finding yourself not only doing it, but getting worse". Part of the harm comes from the uncontrollable nature of the addiction. But, more importantly, the use of pornography undermines human relationships. The use of sex objects, including the objectifying of the human body, progressively steals away the desire to relate to a real human being. Pornography becomes sex on command. The person who uses the pornography controls the whole process. The first person that pornography hurts is the user who becomes desensitized to normal healthy sex. The second person who is hurt is the partner of the user. As physical intimacy and sexual intimacy decline in the relationship, the partner is robbed of an important part of healthy relationships. The third group who is harmed is the children of the relationship. Often users of pornography are irritable, impatient, tired, angry and living out of such guilt and shame that they cannot treat their children in a loving and nurturing way. Others who are harmed are the people used in the pornography. Children, women and weak people are often forced to participate in the production of pornography against their wills.

If pornography is so harmless, why do corporations fire employees who are discovered using pornography at the office? If pornography is so harmless, why are users so embarrassed and feel so guilty and bad about using it. Why do they keep it a secret if it is good?