

HELP! I'M ADDICTED TO PORN

I am addicted to pornography—and don't tell me it's as simple as staying away from it, because to be honest, pornography is everywhere. Even while doing research for my class paper, some of the search results came up with pornographic images. And with top entertainers like Nicki Minaj making the statement that a sexual fantasy plays through her mind every 30 seconds—what hope is there for someone like me?

You're absolutely right. Staying away from something addictive, like pornography, is no simple task; if it were, you wouldn't be writing us. The world surrounds us with temptation, particularly the media. Realize that what is portrayed on TV and on the Internet is not necessarily reality. It may also seem like everyone participates in unhealthy sexual behavior, but this is not the case.

There are others who practice healthy sexual attitudes and behavior, and surrounding yourself with healthy people is crucial. But certainly, you are not alone. There are lots of people dealing with pornography addiction. Like drug or alcohol addiction, pornography addiction is a compulsive, obsessive relationship with an object or substance. Notice we've said 'object', because porn involves objectifying another human being – treating them as a "thing".

Chances are you feel guilty and ashamed about your behavior. That's common too, but in order to work through your addiction, you must talk honestly about what you are going through.

Begin this process by praying about what need pornography is meeting for you. II Corinthians 12:9 tells us, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest upon me."

Then examine your life. The Sexual Recovery Institute states that typically, individuals who are addicted to porn tend to replace important relationships and commitments with sexual imagery.

Self-honesty begins by talking to a person who is knowledgeable in breaking pornography addiction and requires that you admit the entire the problem to them. This also means not omitting the embarrassing or humiliating parts.

Working through any addiction is a process, one that requires an active commitment. It is challenging, and at times discouraging.

Freedom, however, is possible. These tips can help:

- 1** You needn't struggle alone. Finding someone you can trust to talk with (a pastor, trusted friends, family, a sexual addiction counselor) can help you separate fantasy from reality and can help to keep you accountable.
- 2** Everyone experiences sexual fantasies. The key is the way that we deal with those fantasies and the thoughts and feelings that they stir up within us.
- 3** Avoid situations that will likely tempt you to act on your addictive impulses. Set the content filter on your Internet search engine to block inappropriate content when you must use the Internet. If you're watching TV or listening to the radio for example, and you're confronted with suggestive material, change the channel, turn it off, go elsewhere. Do something to remove yourself from the stimulus.
- 4** Create a list of activities to do when you are tempted, like talk to your supports, write in your journal/log book, and pray. This will help you to replace your addiction with positive ways of coping.
- 5** Keep a printout of your favorite texts and scriptures handy. Remember you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.
- 6** Participate in counseling with a therapist or pastor who has specialized training in sexual addiction. Or, join a 60-day interactive online course titled "Setting Captives Free". This course was reported to help some individuals overcome their Internet addiction. There are also 12-step groups that can provide support and keep you accountable.
- 7** Don't give up. Change will not happen overnight, it's a process. Stick with it! ■

Answers provided by the following Educational and Counseling Psychology Ph.D students: Carmen Bieske, Jessica Dettmann, Rachael Hooley, Carlton Martin, Stacey Nicely, Quentin Stubbins, Helen Rolle.