

Pornography Addiction

What is Pornography Addiction?

Addiction to pornography falls under the broader category of sexual addiction. Sexual addiction can be defined as sexual thoughts, desires, urges, or behaviors that can't be controlled and that cause distress or harm to relationships, finances, or other aspects of one's life.

Sexual addiction is similar to an addiction to food, drugs, alcohol, gambling, or shopping/ spending. The same mechanisms and structures within the brain are impacted when one becomes addicted, regardless of the type of addiction. The use of pornography, substances, or other addictive behaviors usually starts out as a way to bring comfort, calm, or relaxation to the person, but over time progresses into a pattern of use that becomes problematic.

Sexual addiction can take many forms and involve different types of sexual behavior. Pornography is sexual images of people or people engaged in sexual acts. Pornography addiction specifically involves excessive viewing or collecting sexual photos or videos. While simply viewing pornography is generally not problematic, any explicit content involving minors is an illegal act and when the viewing becomes so frequent or intense that it causes problems in a person's life, an addiction may have developed.

How to Tell if You (or Someone You Know) is Addicted to Pornography?

Common signs that someone may be addicted to pornography include the following:

- Excessive time is spent thinking about, planning for, and/or viewing pornography
- Frequently engaging in pornography viewing as a way to deal with stress or other negative mood states
- Unsuccessful attempts to control or reduce viewing pornography
- Engaging in use of pornography despite negative consequences from doing so (i.e., fights with significant others, use in inappropriate places/situations, neglecting personal responsibilities due to use, etc.)

Two key things to consider that might signify pornography use has become an addiction:

- Loss of control: a failure to resist urges despite attempts to do so; more time is spent than intended and attempts to control the amount of time are unsuccessful
- Strong cravings: Intense urges, preoccupation with thoughts about using and when use can occur; an uncomfortable feeling when one wants to use, but is unable to at that time

What to Do if You Believe You (or Someone You Know) is Addicted to Pornography?

- Know the signs of pornography addiction
- Talk to a trusted friend or support person about the issue
- Create a prevention plan to keep on hand when tempted
- Use filters and internet blocking software to prevent access
- Keep the computer and devices in a central location
- Limit time/access to devices where pornography may be viewed
- Take advantage of local and online resources, such as 12-step programs and recovery support groups
- Enlist the help of a licensed professional therapist

Resources

The following websites have a wealth of helpful information, including resources, information about sexual addictions, and listing of 12-step support groups.

- Sexual Addicts Anonymous <https://saa-recovery.org>
- S.A. Lifeline Foundation <https://salifeline.org/for-addiction/>



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This content is provided as a support resource and is not intended to replace recommendations from a physician or licensed mental health professional. Dial 911 for life threatening events.

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