

An Open Letter to Russell Brand on Pornography Addiction

Dear Russell,

Welcome to the modern-day abolitionist movement. I know you haven't officially joined us or any group in the campaign against commercial sexual exploitation, but the clear stand you are taking to warn people of the harmful effects of pornography is big.

Much of what you declare about porn on your Trews podcasts has my cohorts and me nodding in affirmation. You see, we have been fighting this battle for more than eight years and to have an actor and comedian of your fame proclaim the toxic nature of both hardcore and softcore porn strengthens our cause. When you speak, people listen (and are amused or bemused and sometimes challenged or annoyed), as having 1 million subscribers to your relatively new podcast attests.

On the subject of porn, you are right on point. Your bold condemnation of the porn industry's objectification of women and commodification of sex is a clarion call. Thank you. You are convincing as you unfurl statistic after statistic about the insidious affect it has on a person's physical, mental, social and spiritual lives. Thanks again. And you are authentic and persuasive when you confess your own struggle with porn. I relate. I've been there.

But you stop too soon! You present the problem but no answer. I understand, what you face is a classic and epic human struggle.

As a former heroin addict, you know the power of a life-controlling addiction. By your own testimony you are now free

of drugs, and I applaud your breakthrough. But as happens with many people, porn has filled the addiction gap.

To your credit, with a tone of distress you identify pornography as the “hub” of your inner conflict and doubt. You see your new uncontrollable addiction as the result of an underlying biological urge to procreate plugged into a culture that has groomed you (and all of us) to think of women as objects.

Russell, it is obvious that you are acutely aware of the destructive power porn is having on your life and on the culture around you, but you then raise the white flag, insisting that you are powerless to stop watching it. Here is what you said: “If I had total dominion over myself I would never look at pornography again.”

Hmm. I have heard this retort somewhere before. I probably thought it a time or two myself. But what it reminds me of is Mr. Hyde. You know, Mr. Hyde of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the 19-century classic penned by Robert Louis Stevenson. (Since you were recently named the Fourth Most Influential Thinker in the world by *Prospect* magazine—congrats—I am sure you are familiar with Stevenson.)

As you know, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a tale about a man whose desire to make positive contributions to society was eclipsed by an even stronger desire to express his vices without care or conscience. The fictional Dr. Jekyll had long suppressed evil desires he could not fulfill without endangering his social reputation and career status. So he concocted a potion that would allow his dark side to be personified in a hideously deformed demon of lust and violence known as Mr. Hyde. (Yes, we all have a Mr. Hyde side!)

At first the transformations were controllable. Dr. Jekyll gleefully utilized the potion to become a monster free from moral restraint. Under the guise of Mr. Hyde he could indulge

his basest desires, even frequent brothels without fear of detection. However, his appetites grew darker and more insatiable. He pushed the boundaries and mined the depths of depravity.

As Mr. Hyde was given more control something unplanned happened: Mr. Hyde took control. Dr. Jekyll's transformations into Mr. Hyde became involuntary. Simultaneously, larger and larger doses of potion were required to return to his Dr. Jekyll state. Eventually the potion became impotent. Dr. Jekyll had been methodically displaced by the heinous Mr. Hyde. The transformation to the dark side was complete.

Russell, from watching your podcasts it seems that one part of you is akin to the kindly Dr. Jekyll making positive contributions to further advances to society—you are good-hearted. But lurking beneath the surface of the public image belies a darker personality that is bent on satiating a black hole of carnal appetites.

As a cultural crusader, you expose the evil agendas of corporate greed and stand firm against the porn industry. You are a good guy striving to make positive contributions in the world. Then in the next moment you cave to the cravings you publicly denounce. You metamorphose into an impish creeper trolling the shadow world of pornographic vice. You sputter as a helpless victim of your own sexual appetite. You succumb to your darker side, your Mr. Hyde side.

Russell, you want justice for the little guy but then you allow injustice to reign over your desires. Ouch.

You are not alone in your struggle. Each of us, if we are honest, knows the feeling. This battle is not something new. You frequently refer to the Bible, even holding a copy of it during one of your podcasts, so you no doubt know of the Apostle Paul. He relates too. Check it out: "For the good I desire to do, I do not do, but the evil I do not want is what

I do" (Rom. 7:19). Paul understood this struggle as a war between flesh and spirit.

Russell, where are you with your inner Mr. Hyde? Have you conceded defeat? Or have you really gone for the jugular to overcome that which torments you? You are a fighter for justice in our world. Are you also fighting for what's right for your soul?

The Apostle Paul prescribes the only way forward: "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Rom. 8:13).

This isn't easy, but it can be done.

As a culture, we cannot advance this fight against the dark side evidenced in porn, much less win it, without strategically targeting the demand side of the commercial sex equation. The simple fact is commercial sex does not exist without men demanding it. By killing demand, we will spare the lives of women and children.

Russell, we welcome you as an unofficial cohort in our fight against the perils of porn. Your voice lends credence to what we seek to accomplish. But even more important than what you can do for our cause is what you do about Mr. Hyde.

Your inner Mr. Hyde has no interest in a peace treaty, so there is no compromise to be made. There can be only one victor. Only when you slay your inner Hyde will you have the fortitude to lead a cultural revolution and the inner peace you seek. Russell, think about this. Isn't this what you really want? You say if you could, you would stop. Well, you can.

It's time to declare war! Mr. Hyde must die!

Stevenson nailed it: "In each of us, two natures are at

war—the good and the evil. All our lives the fight goes on between them, and one of them must conquer. But in our own hands lies the power to choose—what we want most to be, we are.”

In our hands lies the power to choose good or evil. We can choose to value women as the creations of God they are or choose to see them as disposable sex dolls that exist solely for male pleasure. We can choose to stand up for the voiceless and oppressed or we can unwittingly side with the oppression. Death to Mr. Hyde will result in lives saved and souls revived.

Russell, we applaud you lending your voice to this fight. Your Dr. Jekyll side shines, but now what will you do about Mr. Hyde?

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