

Am I Addicted? The 5 Stages of Porn Addiction

Pornography usage affects your life in many ways—your relationships, your job, your social interactions and so much more. Perhaps you've begun to wonder if you're addicted to porn.

First, not everyone who views porn is an addict. But there are patterns and symptoms that can be very good indicators that you can use to see if you are in danger of porn addiction.

Many of these signs are almost identical to the indicators used to classify substance addiction like drugs and alcohol.

Focus on the Family notes that there are five stages of pornography addiction.

1. Early Exposure

Most men who become addicted started at an early age. This could have been looking at a magazine or a video clip. But that first exposure started their relationship with porn.

2. Addiction

At this stage, you keep seeking out more porn to view. You have started to make it a regular part of your life, and not just an occasional peek.

3. Escalation

Now you have become so accustomed to seeing porn that you need to find more graphic material. You may not have even considered this more explicit porn before, but now you have started to enjoy it.

4. Desensitization

You have reached the stage where you have become numb to porn. Even the most disgusting, graphic types of porn now seem boring or unexciting to you. You are desperate to find that same type of thrill you use to get but you can't seem to find anything to replace it.

5. Acting out sexually

You have finally reached the point where you are willing to risk making the dangerous jump from visual fantasy to acting out in the real world.

Of course, everyone is different, so you may find that this pattern varies for you. If you're uncertain about the extent of your struggle with sex addiction, you can take the Sexual Addiction Screening Test anonymously and online for free.

Symptoms of Addiction

As with any addiction, there are several signs and symptoms of porn addiction. Here's a partial list of some common ones:

- Unable to stop using porn despite trying to do so
- Becoming angry, defensive, or irritable when asked to stop viewing porn
- Increased sense of shame and guilt
- Decreased time spent with family and friends
- Denial that you have a porn problem
- Lying and being more secretive about activities
- Reduced interest in sexual, emotional or physical interaction with your spouse
- Intense feelings of shame and guilt
- Feeling like you're living a double life
- Blaming others for your porn use
- Loss of interest in work, socializing, hobbies and other activities

Whether your journey with pornography has led to a full blown addiction or is an intermittent struggle, there is help for

you.

Trying to regain control over your life

Most men who use porn are trying to self-medicate. They have experiences in their past that have left painful memories and marks on their heart. Viewing porn makes them feel good momentarily and provides a fleeting relief to the pain they try to heal. Any enjoyment quickly gives way to shame, which drives the user back to their virtual electronic drug all over again.

Porn also gives addicts a feeling of being able to control at least a part of their lives.

Dr. Peter Kleponis, a licensed clinical therapist, wrote for *Covenant Eyes*: