

**An Ethnographic Content Analysis of Postings to an Online Group Forum:
Individuals Abstaining from Pornography**

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the experiences of individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography with an aim to better understand its effects. Current research suggests negative effects of excessive pornography use, but without the removal of the variable of pornography, the implications are weak. Many in the counseling profession are ill-prepared to assess for or treat those that report concerns related to pornography use and with the ever-increasing availability of internet pornography, it is more likely than ever that counselors will encounter this issue in their clients. This study utilized an Ethnographic Content Analysis to collect and analyze 700 postings made by 20 individuals on an online group forum designed to assist those that are abstaining from pornography. The studied group exhibits many of Yalom's Therapeutic Factors of Group Counseling (2005), as well as typical online self-help group behaviors (Kim, Faw, & Michaelides, 2017). Three thematic categories, *Imparting Information*, *Catharsis*, and *Instillation of Hope*, were discovered, as well as 10 subcategories. Trending topics throughout all thematic categories were also investigated. This study found that those that choose to abstain from pornography typically report positive changes such as improved sexual experiences, improved confidence and social skills, and more. Other important conversations between participants involved pornography as an addiction, how to tell a significant other about their pornography use, and coping skills to avoid relapse. Overall, the group studied was a supportive and helpful environment for its members.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

In the United States, pornography use has been linked to negative outcomes, especially as it relates to continued use. Available in print, video, and web-based formats, pornography is defined as, “printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings,” (“Pornography,” 2017, p. 1). Researchers purport that in our current era, pornography is primarily accessed via web-based (i.e., internet services) sources that are free and easily accessible to viewers (Sun, Bridges, & Johnson, 2016). With embedded advertisements and highly efficient data tracking methods to determine number of visits per hour, the pornography industry is valued at over 13 billion dollars (Garlick, 2011). It is estimated that approximately 50 to 99 percent of men and 30 to 86 percent of women have consumed pornography (Weir, 2014). According to Pornhub, one of the most popular free web-based pornography services, approximately 80 million videos are watched daily (2017). Notwithstanding its prevalence and seemingly wide spread use, it is reported that pornography use can lead to negative consequences for individuals physically, emotionally, and relationally (Baer, Kohut, & Fisher, 2015; Kingston, Fedoroff, Firestone, Curry, & Bradford, 2008; Szymanski, Feltman, & Dunn, 2015). Negative outcomes include, but are not limited to, reports of sexual dysfunction, relationship dissatisfaction, gender role conflict, and self-esteem issues (Gola, Lewczuk, & Skorko, 2016; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Willoughby, Carroll, Busby, & Brown, 2016). Research indicates that these effects occur in individuals regardless of sexual preference (Rosser et al., 2013; Burke, 2016).

Although pornography is prevalent in the United States, how helping professionals assist when these negative experiences are exhibited is less available, including a lack of formalized

training and assessment procedures (Walters & Spengler, 2016). There is currently no diagnosis for pornography addiction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), but the rate of pornography use and its effects is still on the rise (Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015). Because of this, it is imperative that counselors increase their competency in pornography use (Bloom, Gutierrez, Lambie, & Ali, 2016).

This study examined the responses of individuals who are self-described as using pornography more than they want to and have selected abstinence as a method to decrease their use. Using an Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) research design, this study examined the experiences of these individuals as they chose to abstain from pornography use. This chapter will discuss the current research regarding negative effects of pornography use, implications for the counseling field, and the purpose and significance of the current study.

Pornography and Sex Addiction

Oftentimes the terms “sex addiction” and “pornography use/pornography addiction” are seen together. However, the literature is torn on whether these terms should exist. Some studies produce results proposing that true addiction does occur occasionally with these behaviors (Kraus, Voon, & Potenza, 2016). Conversely, recent research suggests that not only is there a lack in quality scientific evidence to support the use of “addiction” with behaviors such as pornography use and sexual activity, but because of sociocultural biases in interpreting sexual behavior, an addiction model is not appropriate (Williams, 2017). It has also been found that sex addiction and pornography use are not correlated (Bae, Min, & Chung, 2018). With the absence of consistency in the literature and no disorder currently in the DSM V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the term “pornography addiction” will not be used. And for the purposes of this study, pornography use will be separated from other sexual behaviors.

Potential Implications of Pornography Use

Physical and Neurological Implications

A review of clinical reports was published in Behavioral Sciences in 2016 and suggests that pornography use has been found to be a factor in erectile dysfunction and hypoactive sexual interest in opposite-sex partnered sexual interactions (Park et al.). Almost 60% of those that sought help on a medical forum for Erectile Dysfunction (ED) reported to be under the age of 25. In the study, the researchers completed three clinical case reports. All three participants were men 40-years-old or younger and were seeking medical help for ED. Each participant disclosed to a high use of pornography before the ED became apparent, resulting in desensitization and more graphic pornography needed to achieve orgasm. The authors stated that each participant was deemed physically and mentally healthy otherwise. Because traditional factors that once explained these types of sexual difficulties are insufficient for the extreme increase of issues, the authors suggest that pornography is the cause (Park et al., 2016). They reported that two of the three participants gave up pornography use and disclosed to the doctor a few weeks after the initial appointment that the ED had subsided greatly (Park et al., 2016).

An experiment conducted in 2013 investigated the influence pornographic images had on the working memory of 28 heterosexual men, with the mean age of 26 years (Laier, Schulte, & Brand, 2013). Working memory is responsible for executive functioning tasks such as problem solving, reasoning, development of speech, decision making, and more (D'Esposito, 2007). They compared the working memory performance after viewing pornographic images with the working memory performance after viewing neutral, negative, and positive pictures. The results presented that working memory was significantly worse after the participants viewed pornography than it was when they viewed the neutral or positive stimuli (Laier et al., 2013).

Another negative neurological connotation of higher frequency of pornography use was found in brain scans. The scans were conducted to measure the gray matter volume in 64 healthy men that reported using pornography (Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). The magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) measurements were compared to answers from a questionnaire regarding the average amount of hours participants spent viewing pornography per week. Results of the MRIs showed a negative correlation between hours of pornography consumption per week and gray matter volume. There were also negative correlations between pornography consumption per week and blood oxygenation level-dependent signals during sexual cue-reactivity paradigm and functional-connectivity map of the right striatum in the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). Kuhn and Gallinat (2014) suggest that the change in neural plasticity could be due to “an intense stimulation” of the reward center of the brain. These results indicate that as more hours are spent using pornography, participants have less gray matter and neural plasticity, both of which negatively affect one’s perception, self-control, decision-making, emotions, and memory (Weinstein, Livny, & Weizman, 2017; Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014).

Behavioral Implications

Beyond physical and neurological issues that may arise from frequent pornography use, many studies have found relationships between pornography use and interpersonal behaviors. For example, a study from 2015 reviewed 17 articles that discussed sexually risky behaviors and discovered that each one found an association with pornography use (Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015). Risky behaviors included in the findings were unsafe sex practices, lack of condom use, higher number of sexual partners, and more casual sex behaviors (Harkness et al., 2015). Other studies report a correlation between frequency of pornography use and sexual aggression. Findings from a study that examined the contribution pornography consumption has

on recidivism in child molestation found that frequency of pornography use was a predictor for re-offending (Kingston et al., 2008). Another study determined that men that were identified to be in the moderate-severe aggressive group reported higher levels of pornography use, as well as the likelihood to behave in such ways in sexual interactions (D'Abreu & Krahe, 2013).

Sexism, gender-role conflict, and aggression toward women are specific themes in research about the effects of pornography use. This is likely due to the nature of most pornographic material, as videos featuring rape and misogynistic scripts are common. Baer, Kohut, and Fisher (2015) found that men who used less pornography were significantly less likely to use coercive acts in sexual situations. They learned that men that rated higher in the consumption of violent sexual media, not general/consensual pornography, were more likely to participate in sexually coercive acts (Baer et al., 2015). Ade (2016) discovered a strong correlation between past frequent pornography use and specific mindsets that support violence toward women. Similarly, interviews with women that experienced domestic violence reported that they believe pornography played a large role in the abuse they endured from their male partners (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, 2017). Additional research suggests a relationship between pornography use and substance use (Beaver & Paul, 2011).

Psychological Implications

Recently, the research on pornography use has begun to shift its focus from physical and behavioral relationship outcomes of pornography use to psychological outcomes such as depression, lack of concentration, self-worth, and more. An association with higher use and avoidant/anxious attachment styles, poorer relationship quality, and less sexual satisfaction has been found (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014). Specifically, Fall and Howard (2015) determined in an in-depth case study that the participant's multiple inter- and intra-personal

symptoms were caused by his problematic pornography use. Another study focused on pornography use and its relationship to participants' psychosocial functioning, which included anxiety, depression, life satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction (Harper & Hodgins, 2016). In this research by Harper & Hodgins (2016), they established that once pornography use hits the frequency of daily, the association with poorer psychosocial functioning is significant. In a similar study, participants that had higher frequency of pornography views scored higher on all measures of narcissism as compared to those that reported not currently using pornography. Expanding on these findings, research has indicated that there is a significant positive correlation with frequency of pornography use and ratings on the Index of Narcissism scale and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Kasper, Short, & Milam, 2015). Compulsivity and obsessionality have also been linked to pornography use (Egan & Parmar, 2013). The independent variables addressed in one study were sexual preoccupation, excessive internet use, personality, and obsessionality; the dependent variable was internet pornography use. The researchers used multiple online scales/inventories to assess the variables and found that the higher frequency of pornography use produced higher scores on the compulsivity and neuroticism scales and lower scores on the agreeableness and conscientiousness scales (Egan & Parmar, 2013).

Sexual performance anxiety, self-worth, and self-esteem are other common constructs among the current literature regarding pornography use. The ease of obtaining pornography has been identified as a factor in increasing heterosexual men's anxiety regarding their sexual performance (Cook, 2005). Beyond performance, body dissatisfaction has also been reported to be connected to more pornography use, particularly regarding men's penis-size (Cranney, 2015). Another study discovered that frequency of pornography use was negatively correlated to self-

worth and positively correlated to depression symptoms in emerging adult women (Willoughby, Carroll, Nelson, & Pedilla-Walker, 2014).

Furthermore, studies have investigated the relationship between the frequency of pornography use and participants' partnered sexual experiences (Sun et al., 2016). When sexual preferences and concerns are addressed, positive correlations are found between frequency of pornography use and increasingly relying on pornographic images or thoughts in order to achieve orgasm in partnered sex (Sun et al., 2016). Also, as men's frequency of pornography use increases, they are more likely to require and request specific pornography acts of their partner in order to stay aroused (Baer et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2016; D'abreu & Krahe, 2014). These psychological concerns not only affect the pornography user, but also the partners of the users and the satisfaction within the relationship.

Relationship Satisfaction

As mentioned in some of the previously explored literature, the consumption of pornography is associated with lower levels of enjoyment in sexual activities with a partner (Sun et al., 2016). A quote from a case study of a man that believed his depression was caused by his frequent use of pornography states, "What I know is I can no longer be with a real person, not without pulling something out of the archive of images," (Murray, 2017). Not only does it potentially affect the sexual relationship, but pornography use has also been found to be linked to relationship dissatisfaction (Szymanski et al., 2015). For example, a study on women's perceptions of their male partner's pornography use showed many associations with the independent variables that were assessed (Szymanski et al., 2015). They found that women that believed that their partner was using pornography "every day or almost every day" rated lower in relationship trust, relationship investment, and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, these

results occurred even when the women reported a positive attitude toward pornography (Szymanski et al., 2015). Another study evaluated 373 male participants' pornography use in relation to gender-role conflict, attachment styles, relationship quality, and sexual satisfaction (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014). The results found that the men's frequency of pornography use was positively correlated to gender-role conflict, as well as avoidant and anxious attachment styles. Also, the results showed that pornography use was negatively associated with the quality of the individuals' relationship and sexual satisfaction in partnered sexual encounters (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014).

Resch and Alderson (2014) examined whether mutual use of pornography may improve and relationship satisfaction of the female partners of male pornography users. The participants that scored higher on levels of relationship satisfaction and lower on psychological distress reported higher scores on how honest their partner is about his pornography use. Those that believe their partner is deceitful about his pornography use scored lower on relationship satisfaction and higher on psychological distress (Resch & Alderson, 2014). Secondly, the researchers found that mutual use of pornography between partners was not related to relationship satisfaction (Resch & Alderson, 2014). A study published in 2016 revealed in its results that the greater the discrepancy of pornography use between partners, the lower reported feelings of "couple well-being" (Willoughby et al., 2016). These research studies highlight the impact pornography use may have on relationships, regardless of use by both partners.

Limitations of Current Literature

Of the research cited in this dissertation, no studies specified if the pornography being viewed matched the viewer's sexual preferences or history, nor did they explore the nature of the pornography that was viewed by the participants. Also, most of the current research is

quantitative due to the nature of the topic and ease of obtaining participants. Surveys, especially internet-based surveys, are popular for the anonymity and likelihood of reaching a larger sample. Very few research studies that exist in the current literature ask the participants if they think their pornography use has negatively affected them, nor do they evaluate the experiences that occur when pornography use is removed.

As past research has stated, it is unknown if the negative effects found associated with pornography use were precursors to pornography use or if the pornography use caused the effects. Collectively, research has been unable to prove a clear cause and effect between pornography use and the negative effects explored in the literature. Because causality is difficult to prove, the next step is for participants to remove the variable of pornography use to better understand its effects (Park et al., 2016). Correlational studies have offered interesting results, but are unable to establish which factor causes another, so future research should focus on eliminating pornography use (Wilson, 2016).

Counseling Implications

Due to the ever-growing pornography industry and accessibility of it, counselors are more likely to see clients with concerns that could be related to pornography use (Murray, 2017). Professionals believe that adolescents are getting mixed messages from pornography, particularly that public health goals and sex education tends to contradict messages sent by pornography, which typically support gender-roles and unrealistic situations (Mattebo, Larsson, Tyden, & Haggstrom-Nordin, 2014). The participants also reported that they think children and adolescents are using pornography for stimulation and sex education (Mattebo et al., 2014). Studies suggest that adolescents do think there are negative effects caused by pornography use,

but they have not been educated on what those effects are and how to avoid them (Baker, 2016; Spišák, 2016).

This lack of education and discussion of pornography exists not only in the school systems, but also in mental health fields. There are many problematic pornography users that do seek professional help for the issue (Kraus, Martino, & Potenza, 2016), but often times they end up empty-handed and pursue self-help groups instead (Cavaglioni, 2008). This may be best illustrated by a case study by Murray (2017) which discusses a client that came to counseling for depression and then disclosed he believed it was caused by his problematic pornography use. The counselor divulged to feeling very uncertain about treating the client, as the topic was difficult for her because she did not have a background of knowledge on which to base her stance.

Similarly, Walters and Spengler (2016) found that counselors' discomfort regarding pornography stems from having no education on the matter or how to process discomfort talking to clients about sensitive or sexual concerns. Additionally, services provided to clients when clinical judgment is not at its peak, such as in circumstances pertaining to pornography use and counselor discomfort, services rendered could be ineffective or potentially unethical. An in-depth study was conducted on therapists' effectiveness in working with clients with sex addiction or internet pornography use (Short, Wetterneck, Bistricky, Shutter, & Chase, 2016). The researchers surveyed 183 mental health practitioners (MHPs), of which approximately 85% were licensed. The survey questions focused on the practitioners' experiences, beliefs, and observations in working with individuals with issues related to sex or pornography. The data yielded results stating that a significant portion of the MHPs indicated they do not feel competent to treat such concerns, even though most have had experiences with clients that present with

pornography use or sex addiction. Also, to reiterate the literature that associates negative effects with pornography use, the researchers found that of those MHPs that had experiences in treating it, 88% believed there was comorbidity. When asked what disorders were most often observed in the comorbidity, the most common were mood disorders, anxiety disorders, impulse-control issues, and substance abuse (Short et al., 2016).

Counselors may have the difficult task of managing their own discomfort when working with a client who is disclosing pornography use while trying to maintain fidelity to the treatment (Walters & Spengler, 2016). Unexpectedly, one study discovered that counselors that identified as experts on the topic of pornography use reported discomfort or bias regarding the topic, especially in those that were religious (Hinman, 2013). Alternatively, Bloom et al. (2016) surveyed marriage and family therapists (MFTs) and mental health counselors (MHCs) in the state of Florida and assessed their attitudes toward treating pornography use in clients. Only 17.2% reported feeling insecure in treating said issues, and 19% stated they felt neutral about their readiness (Bloom et al., 2016). It should be noted, however, that Florida is one of the few states to require a human sexuality course for counselors-in-training (American Counseling Association, 2010), thus suggesting their preparedness may be higher than those for which no such requirement exists. Researchers concluded that the confidence, which comes from efficient training or preparedness, to treat sexuality likely leads to comfort in working with those clients (Bloom et al., 2016) and the more comfortable a counselor is, the more likely they are to initially assess for pornography use and effectively treat it.

The literature suggests that most counselors are not prepared to assess for or treat problematic pornography use. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) does not require that the topic of pornography use be included in the

counseling curriculum, unless the counselor is seeking an entry-level specialty in marriage, couple, and family counseling (2016). And in that case, it is suggested that “human sexuality” is discussed in course work, not specifically pornography use (CACREP, 2016). The DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) also does not include a diagnosis for pornography abuse or addiction, so the discussion of it likely does not occur naturally in mandatory diagnoses courses. Although it was proposed to add a new diagnosis of hypersexual disorder to the DSM-V, which included a pornography subtype, reviewers ultimately decided there was not enough evidence to do so (Weir, 2014). Because of Code C.2.a in the American Counseling Association’s Code of Ethics (2014), which states that counselors should only practice within their education and training, some counselors may get the impression they should refer clients that present with pornography concerns. However, the prevalence and demand for treatment is showing no signs of slowing down, thus the need for education and training regarding pornography use and its negative effects and comorbidity with other disorders is necessary.

Few studies have investigated the treatment options and/or treatment effectiveness for pornography use (Kraus, Meshberg-Cohen, Martino, Quinones, & Potenza, 2015). Those that have focused research on either deviant pornography use, such as child pornography use, or the use of medication for compulsive behaviors that include pornography use (Seto & Ahmed, 2014; Kraus et al., 2015). With little research on best practices for treating pornography use in the mental health field, counselors agree that more training and additions to the CACREP Standards are necessary (Hinman, 2013).

Pornography Abstinence

As discussed, individuals may feel shame for their concerns related to pornography use (Gola et al., 2016) or treatment options may seem limited (Kraus et al., 2016). Instead of seeking

counseling, individuals may decide to practice self-treatment. One method of self-treatment for excessive pornography use is abstinence. However, self-led abstinence can be difficult and the literature on the matter is deficient. There are a number of means to find assistance, however, such as support groups and forums like Reddit.com's subreddit, *PornFree*. Reddit is a public online forum that covers hundreds of subjects and posters remain anonymous. Subreddits are threads on Reddit that cover specific subjects, like the *PornFree* subreddit which focuses solely on the individual experiences of members that are abstaining from pornography. There are also other online support groups for those that want to abstain from pornography, some of which are paid services. Self-help groups such as the one discussed in this study help individuals remain accountable in their efforts, gives participants the opportunity to anonymously process their experiences (Kim, Faw, & Michaelides, 2017), and they have been found to be just as effective as in-person group counseling (Jasper, Weise, Andersson, Hiller, & Kleinstauber, 2014).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of those that abstain from pornography use, a piece that is lacking from the current literature (Park et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016; Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). The study analyzed postings by individuals that have decided to abstain from pornography on an anonymous online forum. The forum is a sub-thread (referred to on the site as a subreddit) on Reddit.com, titled *PornFree*. The group exists for the purpose of discussing problematic pornography use and the struggles and experiences associated with abstinence. Prudent data was captured by understanding the concerns, questions, and experiences of these individuals. With inductive inquiry, the researcher provided a sufficient cognizance of the culture of pornography abstinence, thus leading to a deeper holistic understanding of how counselors can adequately prepare for and treat individuals with this growing concern.

Significance of Study

This study aimed to help counselors better understand the negative effects and the reported experiences that occur when pornography abstinence takes place. Because there are so many potential correlations between symptoms and pornography use, counselors need to know when and how to assess for the concern. Counselors should utilize new information and seek continued education to remain ethical and be more effective (ACA, 2014). With the high prevalence of the discussed issues that continue to be associated with pornography use, counselors that are aware of such associations will be more likely to notice potential concerns than those that are not.

By conducting an Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) on the unprompted, candid postings shared among individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography, the data covered a plethora of topics. This type of qualitative research study presented the opportunity to better recognize experiences that could inform counselors of what and when to assess for excessive pornography use in their clients. The results from this study contribute to a growing body of literature on the topic of pornography use and its effects for which counselors should be aware.

Research Question

Based on recommendations in previous literature and the initial fieldwork of immersion on the forum that will be studied, the research question which guided this study is as follows:

RQ1: What is the nature of the content posted by individuals to an online group forum for those that have chosen to abstain from pornography use?

Conclusion

As technology becomes more accessible for adults and children alike, the prevalence of pornography use is not expected to decrease (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016). Many studies show links between excessive pornography use and negative physical/neurological, behavioral, and psychological effects, but there is more research to be done, particularly so that helping professionals can better understand the problem (Short, Smith, Wetterneck, & Wells, 2012). Counselors can use the findings from this study, as well as those previously discussed, to gain knowledge on pornography use and its many implications for their clients' well-being. This study aimed to open up the discussion about a formerly taboo subject so that those in need of assistance can not only seek help, but find professionals that are educated, prepared, and ready to treat them. This literature review highlights the research that has been completed thus far and discussed why the topic is relevant to the counseling field.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Although negative effects of pornography use have been discussed in the literature, the experiences of individuals that abstain from pornography is limited (Park et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine through qualitative inquiry, the experiences of individuals who self-reportedly abstain from pornography use. Data collected from this study can help to inform counseling professionals on identifying and addressing pornography use with clients. This chapter describes the use of a qualitative method of investigation, Ethnographic Content Analysis, of postings to an online support group forum. The researcher explored the themes of participants' postings within the group *PornFree*, an anonymous online support group forum. This chapter discusses the method of Ethnographic Content Analysis, participants, data collection and analysis, and procedures to assure trustworthiness.

Ethnographic Content Analysis

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of individuals that self-reportedly abstain from pornography. The goal is to go beyond existing frameworks, so a qualitative method and its corresponding data was an appropriate choice (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study intended to explore culture via an online forum and a significant analysis is desired, thus a qualitative approach was most appropriate.

Ethnographic Content Analyses are not rigid, but instead allow for a research design that is focused on exploration (Altheide, 1996). The researcher selected an Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) because it is both inductive and reflexive and highlights themes discovered within the data (Altheide, 1987). Investigating meanings, contexts, patterns, and processes is included in conducting an ECA, and an immersion within the culture being researched by the researcher is required (Altheide, 1996). In order to become immersed and more familiar with the

group for which is the subject of this study, the researcher had access to the forum, *PornFree*, for three months prior to collecting data.

In utilizing ECA, the researcher used a combination of inductive searches with recursive constant comparison, which allowed for identification of specific constructs of interest (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By employing this method, the researcher was required to compare the new data and results to previous literature and identify similarities and differences (Glaser & Stauss, 1967). Originally, ECA was developed for use of researching media, but has also been utilized with other mediums like radio broadcasts, magazines, newspapers, and advertisements (Altheide, 1996). More recently, however, ECA has been employed with online group postings (Porter & Ispa, 2013). This is likely due to the natural change of human behavior because of the growth of technology, therefore offering opportunities for ethnographies to include cultures and social worlds that are internet-based (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012; Kozinets, 2015). As discussed briefly above, the researcher followed Altheide's (1987) steps for conducting an ECA, but with considerations made by Boellstorff et al. (2012) and Kozinets (2015) to address the modern shift of researching an online culture. Further description of these steps are explored in the following sections.

Participants

The participants in this study were self-reported individuals who have chosen to abstain from pornography. These participants were all posters and members of the subreddit thread on Reddit.com, titled *PornFree*. To become a member, individuals simply have to subscribe to the subreddit, which entails clicking on a subscribe button. Once subscribed, the direct link to the subreddit appears at the top of the home-screen for easy access to the forum. As of January 7, 2018, the group had 42,984 members. Beside each member's username is a number that

represents how many days they have abstained from pornography at that point in time. A discussion of the participant demographics is below.

Because the website is publically accessible and postings are anonymous (members use a screen name only to post), demographics were only collected as they were organically mentioned in postings. Of the 20 participants, only five participants blatantly mentioned demographic information. All five declared their age, but one of those also stated his sexual orientation. Although all the participants allude to their gender as male, it is only stated verbatim by the participant that discussed his sexual orientation. Table 1, shown below, provides the demographic information given by those five participants based on the amount of days abstinent they were at the time of data collection.

Table 1: Demographics

Days Abstinent	Age	Sexual Orientation
39	26	-
60	20	-
82	42	-
142	27	-
263	26	Straight (male)

Data Collection

To collect the data used in this study, the researcher followed recommended steps for piloting an ECA (Altheide, 1987; Boellstorff et al., 2012; Kozinets, 2015). First, the researcher became familiar with the data source by immersion for at least three months before data was collected, as suggested by Altheide (1996). The process of selecting an appropriate site, participants, and postings is described below. Inclusionary and exclusionary criteria for data and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Selection of Website and Postings

Online site. Kozinets (2015) suggests that the site chosen for an ECA should be relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous, and data-rich. The online group forum, *PornFree*, was chosen as the data source for this study due to the specific focus of its subject matter and because it fits all of the guidelines discussed above. There are many online groups for excessive pornography users, but this group was chosen as its processing is informal, consequently allowing for more natural and spontaneous dialogues. The group states that its purpose is to provide a place to help people overcome addiction to porn (PornFree, 2017). This group also offers a large amount of potential participants since there were 42,984 members as of January 7, 2018.

Postings. Postings were retroactively collected on March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018, until saturation was reached. This provided rich archival data, a pillar of qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Because initial analyzing occurred throughout the collection process, saturation was met when no new themes arose from the postings and there was enough information to accurately answer the research question (Bowen, 2008). Literature suggests that the depth of data is more important than the numbers, so the researcher took this into consideration when collecting data (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). The researcher then analyzed all of the postings that fit into the inclusionary criteria. Initial posts and responses in threads that pertain to the research question was also included in the data.

Inclusionary and Exclusionary Criteria

The first inclusionary criteria that was used to collect data is that the data must be a posting to the *PornFree* forum on Reddit.com. The postings included pictures, emoticons, emojis, videos, gifs, and other forms of multimedia. However, only the text in the postings were

analyzed. To be a member of the group, members must identify as an individual that is abstaining from pornography use, so it is the researcher's assumption that all members qualified as valid participants. Postings did not need to explicitly state that to meet this inclusionary criterion.

Beside each member's screen name is a counter that displays how many days they have successfully abstained from pornography. Only postings by members that have abstained from pornography for 30 or more days were included in this data. This is an arbitrary number of days due to the lack of literature about how long pornography abstinence should occur before self-reported effects are relevant. The researcher chose 30 days to better identify the experiences of abstinence's effects. Furthermore, a comparison of the nature of the postings was made between participants that had remained abstinent for short amounts of time and those that were abstinent for longer amounts of time. During this data collection stage, the researcher logged into *PornFree* and chose the most recent posts made by a participant that had been abstinent for 30 or more days. To easily view all postings made by a specific member of the group, the researcher clicked the individual's screen name and all postings made by them appeared. This data included each participant's original postings and responses stemming from original postings. Although this process included postings made throughout Reddit.com, the only postings that were included as data were those that were posted to the subreddit, *PornFree*. Half of the data was collected on March, 1, 2018. The researcher collected all of the inclusionary data for 10 participants and returned to the site two days later on March, 3, 2018 to collect all of the inclusionary data for 10 more participants. Saturation was reached early in the data collection process, but the researcher chose to gather data from 20 participants to better represent *PornFree*'s population. The raw data

was copied and pasted into an Excel file titled *Code Index*. No screennames were included in the Excel file, ensuring confidentiality of the data set.

Some data was eliminated from that which was analyzed. Exclusionary criteria include:

1) the poster identifies themselves as a friend/family member/significant other of an individual abstaining from pornography, 2) the writer of the post discloses to being under the age of 19, and 3) the post does not clearly relate to abstinence of pornography or the comment refers to something off-subject.

Ethical Considerations

Because internet-based ethnographies are becoming more commonly conducted, new ethical dilemmas may arise (Boellstorff et al., 2012). The researcher took many precautions to ensure an ethical study. Since this study is observational in nature and only pre-existing data was collected, an informed consent was not necessary. To be certain that no risk was involved in the collection of the data, the researcher sought approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB). There was no intervention or interaction with the human subjects during the data collection process, nor did the researcher have access to any identifying information of the participants, so the researcher expected the IRB to find the current study to be ‘exempt’ from review. The form to request the IRB’s determination of Human Subject Research asked a series of questions about the nature of this study, none of which applied, so IRB stated that completing the form was not necessary to conduct this study. A screen shot of the questions prompted on the determination form is in the Appendices.

To maintain an ethically sound study, the researcher ensured that all participants remained anonymous. On the *PornFree* group forum, members use a self-created screenname that does not provide identifying information. The researcher kept screennames separate from the

data to protect the posters from being identified. Also, if any identifying information was included in a posting, the researcher deleted it and replaced it with a noun descriptor in the file that contains the data.

The researcher also aimed to refrain from any deception, as suggested by Kozinets (2015). *PornFree* is publically searchable, which means anyone can search for the forum if they have internet access, but permission from the forum moderator was obtained by the researcher to further ensure ethical practice. The researcher was transparent with the moderator, explaining an informal description of the study, how data will be collected, and how confidentiality will be maintained. The moderator approved use of data from the forum *PornFree* and requested results from the study once it is complete. Screenshots of this conversation is provided in the Appendices. Also, if the researcher identified a posting as suggesting suicidal or homicidal ideation or intent, she planned to report the username to the moderator. However, no such posting was discovered.

Data Analysis

The researcher copied all postings of the individuals that fit into the inclusionary criteria, and pasted them verbatim into an Excel document. Screenshots were not used to avoid screennames or any identifying information being included with the data. If the posting included any multimedia items, they were described within brackets on the document with the pasted text posting. The postings, as well the number of days the participant had been abstinent by the time of each posting, were collected, stored, and coded in a password protected Excel file that became the researcher's *Code Index*. The *Code Index* holds all raw postings. The *Code Index* was then printed out, as the researcher preferred to code on a hard copy of the data. A three-ringed-binder holds the printed data set and first cycle of codes derived from an emergent coding process. It

also housed the second cycle codes once they were completed (Yin, 2016). Ultimately, the hard copy of the *Code Index* included highlighting that represented the thematic category that each post belonged to and handwritten codes beside the data that represented its corresponding subcategories. The printed *Code Index* also contained data that was initially included in the data set, but was later deemed as exclusionary during the coding process. Those data that were excluded were blacked out. In the following section, the procedures for attaining the thematic categories, subcategories, and supporting codes are discussed in detail.

Coding Process

Emergent and inductive coding was utilized for this research study. Yin (2016) suggests that there should be five phases of analyzing. The first stages are to compile the data, disassemble the data, then reassemble it (Yin, 2016). The fourth and fifth phases are to interpret the data and conclude (Yin, 2016, pg. 186).

Compiling. Compiling begins in the data collection phase and consists of refining notes and organizing the data, but not necessarily putting anything in a permanent order (Yin, 2016). This phase was conducted during the creation of the *Code Index* and after all data was collected to establish a completed document.

Disassembling. After compilation, the data needs to be broken down into smaller pieces that will be used in the subsequent reassembling phase (Yin, 2016). The researcher used two forms of open coding to completely disassemble the data, which included descriptive and in-vivo. Saldana (2016) suggests that open coding such as this is an appropriate first step in analyzing ethnographies with a wide range of data. Descriptive codes are typically nouns or short phrases appointed to a general topic and In-vivo codes are direct words or phrases from the data, which

can become codes themselves (Saldana, 2016). The process of disassembling was done so in the audit trail and was repeated multiple times in order to refine the labels or codes (Yin, 2016).

Reassembling. Reassembling is the act of reorganizing the pieces from the disassembling process into new, more meaningful groups and sequences (Yin, 2016). The researcher resumed coding with descriptive codes, as well as pattern codes and sub-coding, as described by Saldana (2016). To ascertain the emerging thematic categories, the researcher focused on pattern coding, which identifies similarly coded data and assists in discovering the major themes (Saldana, 2016). Sub-coding was then used to produce subcategories in each major theme discovered.

A constant comparison, which entails comparing pieces of data with the same code to determine whether they are analogous or unlike, was necessary to avoid discrepancies in the data (Saldana, 2016). To obtain comprehensive results, the researcher used recursive coding by repeating the coding process and by utilizing the procedure of constant comparison.

Interpreting and concluding. A new narrative is to be created after the data is reassembled (Yin, 2016, pg. 187). In qualitative research, particularly in ethnographies (Saldana, 2016), interpreting the reassembled and coded data may lead to the researcher compiling the data in a fresh way. Interpretation and concluded findings will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Code Book

In order to ensure reliable coding, the researcher developed a code book to compile the subcategories found during the reassembling process. They were listed in tabular form (Yin, 2016, pg. 187) by hand in a notebook designated for coding and auditing. The tabs included the thematic categories and subsequent subcategories. Supporting codes were found after coding and noted in the audit trail. This process helped confirm that the coded data was consistently

categorized (Saldana, 2016) and was provided to an outside auditor to give them information they needed when auditing the *Code Index*. Scanned copies of the *Code Book* and *Code Index* are presented in the Appendices.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research requires rigorous criteria to ensure reliability and validity.

Trustworthiness in a researcher's investigations has been identified by many to be the key aspect of providing such rigor (Schwandt, 2007). To deliver trustworthiness, the researcher must follow four criteria, which includes the following: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Schwandt, 2007). The researcher provided assurances that her reconstruction of the data is parallel to the participants' views of said data to follow the credibility criteria. An external auditor will be utilized to establish credibility. To address transferability, the researcher methodically discussed the findings and in what cases the results can be transferred to other cases and in what instances they cannot. Dependability focuses on the process of ensuring that all methods used in the study were logical and appropriately documented (Schwandt, 2007). Confirmability criteria promotes truthful interpretations of the data and proof that the findings were not of the researcher's imagination (Schwandt, 2007). In order to establish both dependability and confirmability, the researcher for this study completed a meticulous audit trail. The audit trail offers detailed explanations of the research process. The researcher retained the external auditor to review the audit trail, *Code Book*, and *Code Index*. The use of an external auditor provides the study with confirmation of codes, themes, and findings (Schwandt, 2007).

The external auditor was chosen because of her background in professional writing and research. She has professional training in qualitative inquiry and application, appropriate coding methods, and grant reading. She has also participated in multiple national, regional, and state

presentations, many of which utilized qualitative inquiry. Beyond her professional experience, she was also intently interested in the topic of pornography and its potentially damaging effects to excessive users, so she had a clear understanding of the language and trends within the online community, *PornFree*. Based on her knowledge and experiences, the researcher was confident in her ability to accurately audit the *Code Book*, *Code Index*, and audit trail for this study.

The Researcher

One individual conducted this study. The researcher is a 30-year-old cisgender female. She does not belong to the community for which this study is based and has presented on topics related to this study at state and regional conferences. She has also provided individual counseling services to clients that report excessive pornography use and concerns related to pornography. She has obtained professional and advanced training in the theory and application of qualitative research.

Conclusion

This chapter stipulates descriptions of the research methodology used to explore individuals' self-reported experiences that occur during pornography abstinence from the online group forum, *PornFree*. An Ethnographic Content Analysis was used to collect and analyze data. Postings made by individuals that have abstained for 30 days or more by the time of the data collection were collected retroactively on two dates, March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018, then the data was analyzed. The coding process followed the suggestions of Yin (2016, pg. 186), which include compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Data comprised of text postings from the online forum of individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography use. Lastly, methods to establish trustworthiness and an ethical approach in this qualitative research study were discussed.

CHAPTER III: FINDINGS

This chapter presents a summary of the results from the analysis of the online community, *PornFree*. *PornFree* is a sub thread of the website Reddit.com and its purpose is for members to discuss their experiences abstaining from pornography. The nature of the thread is much like a self-help group, with members sharing their experiences and asking each other for opinions and advice (Kim et al., 2017). The researcher also discovered *PornFree* presents some of the primary therapeutic factors of group counseling (Yalom, 2005). For this research study, 700 postings made by 20 individuals on *PornFree* were collected and analyzed. On March 1st, 2018, and March 3rd, 2018, the researcher selected participants that had abstained from pornography for 30 days or more and collected all of their postings to *PornFree* that were made during the time of abstinence. The data was analyzed by utilizing an Ethnographic Content Analysis and the purpose of this examination was to gather information on the nature of the postings of individuals that chose to abstain from pornography with the goal to better inform counselors and counselor educators for service of this population. This was done by investigating the participants' original and responsive postings within the *PornFree* group. The postings collected for this study ranged from four words to 2,267 words and covered countless topics. To better understand the nature of these postings, thematic categories and corresponding subcategories were exposed, along with trends that were common throughout the data set. In order to be included in the data set, postings had to be made by a member of *PornFree* that had abstained from pornography for 30 or more days at the time of the data collection. An explanation of validation and the process of analyzing the data is discussed in the following sections.

Validation

The researcher aimed to conduct an ethical study, so steps were taken to ensure such considerations. To avoid researcher bias, the researcher kept a detailed audit trail. An external auditor was utilized throughout the entire process of coding the data, discussing the results, and exploring the implications. The external auditor reviewed the *Code Book*, *Code Index*, and audit trail. All concerns of the external auditor were addressed by the researcher. Additionally, the *Code Book* and *Code Index* are available in the Appendices. Because initial analyzing occurred throughout the collection process, saturation was met when no new themes arose from the postings and there was enough information to accurately answer the research question (Bowen, 2008). If a posting replied to an unrelated topic, it was deleted from the data set. This resulted in 700 total postings from 20 participants.

Coding Process

The data were initially coded through a combination of In-Vivo and Descriptive coding. Descriptive codes are typically nouns or short phrases appointed to a general topic and in-vivo codes stem from exact phrases in the data (Saldana, 2016). By disassembling and reassembling the data set, as suggested by Yin (2016), this process resulted in three broad Thematic Categories: 1) Catharsis, 2) Imparting Information, and 3) Instillation of Hope. Initially, the researcher titled the thematic categories using general terms that represented what was occurring in the posting, such as 'Updating,' 'Giving,' and 'Requesting.' After the analysis occurred, the researcher discovered that the thematic categories align with the therapeutic factors within group counseling (Yalom, 2005) and they were renamed as such to more accurately embody the experience of the participants. Although this study is inductive in nature, the themes that arose from the data set align with the purpose of online self-help groups, which comprises of helping

individuals remain accountable in their efforts and providing a space where they can anonymously process their experiences (Jasper et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2017). Furthermore, the data supports Yalom's Therapeutic Factors (2005) that occur in group counseling. Three specific factors, Imparting Information, Catharsis, and Instillation of Hope, became the thematic category labels of the data set after analyzation (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005). The other therapeutic factors that are demonstrated throughout *PornFree* include Universality, Altruism, and Group Cohesiveness (Yalom, 2005) and will be discussed in the following chapter.

The researcher determined that the thematic categories from this study represent the areas addressed in self-help groups and in group counseling (Kim et al., 2017; Yalom, 2005), such as 'Imparting Information,' which is providing advice, support, etc., 'Catharsis' or updating the group on progress or setbacks, and 'Instillation of Hope' that includes requesting opinions, resources, and more from other members of the group. Those discovered thematic categories were broken down into 10 specific Subcategories, which comprise of the following: 1) Catharsis: Positive, Negative, and General/Neutral, 2) Imparting Information: Advice, Insight, Resources, and Support/Encouragement, 3) Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice, Seeking Support/Encouragement, and Seeking Insight. Additionally, across all thematic categories and subcategories, common topics and trends were presented that also connect to previous studies regarding pornography use (Fall & Howard, 2015; Sun et al., 2016). Because of the length and depth of the data set's postings, many could potentially fit into multiple codes, but they were placed in the code that best represented their nature. For example, some postings provided the other members with advice and resources, but if the posting was more focused on the advice than the resources, they were coded as *Imparting Information: Advice* instead of *Imparting Information: Resources*. Presented in tabular form in Tables 2-6 are the frequencies and

percentages of the postings as coded into their thematic categories and subcategories. The common topics within the subcategories are discussed and exact quotations will be used to maintain the authenticity of the postings. Thematic categories and subcategories were coded by hand, so all of the scanned pages of original data and two rounds of coding can be found in the Appendices, labeled as the *Code Index*. The Appendices also include the key used during coding, which is titled the *Code Book*.

Beyond the nature of the postings found on *PornFree*, the researcher examined the difference in the nature of the postings based on how many days abstinent the participants were at the time of data collection. The frequencies of postings and their corresponding thematic categories and subcategories per participant are presented in Tables 7-10.

Thematic Categories and Subcategories

Within the 700 postings, three thematic categories were discovered. In order of frequency, they include *Imparting Information* (77.6%, n=543), *Catharsis* (20.7%, n=145), and *Instillation of Hope* (1.7%, n=12). Table 2 presents the thematic categories and the subcategories and Table 3 shows the description for the codes that were used during analysis. The trends within the subcategories are provided in successive sections.

Table 2: Thematic Categories and Subcategories

Total Postings (N=700)					
Thematic Category	<i>n</i>	%	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%
Imparting Information	543	77.6%	Insight	274	39.1%
			Advice	134	19.1%
			Support/Encouragement	105	15.0%
			Resources	30	4.3%
Catharsis	145	20.7%	Positive	55	7.9%
			Negative	7	1.0%
			Neutral/General	83	11.9%
Instillation of Hope	12	1.7%	Seeking Advice	8	1.1%

Seeking Support/Encouragement	2	0.3%
Seeking Insight	2	0.3%

Table 3: Description of Subcategories

Thematic Category	<i>N</i>	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%	Coding Description
Imparting Information	543	Insight	274	50.5%	Posting shares an opinion or personal experience to group members
		Advice	134	24.7%	Posting shares a specific piece of advice to group members
		Support/Encouragement	105	19.3%	Posting provides support or encouragement to group members
		Resources	30	5.5%	Posting provides a concrete resource to group members
Catharsis	145	Positive	55	37.9%	Posting provides update that expresses a generally positive experience
		Negative	7	4.8%	Posting provides update that expresses a generally negative experience
		Neutral/General	83	57.2%	Posting provides update that is either general, both positive and negative, or indicates a neutral experience
Instillation of Hope	12	Seeking Advice	8	66.7%	Posting seeks advice from group members
		Seeking Support/Encouragement	2	16.7%	Posting seeks support or encouragement from group members
		Seeking Insight	2	16.7%	Posting seeks specific opinion or experience of other group members

Imparting Information

Imparting Information had the highest frequency of the thematic categories with 543 of the 700 postings, which is 77.6% of the data set. Originally titled ‘*Giving*,’ the thematic category

code of *Imparting Information* was given to postings that provided some sort of information, typically in response to an unseen question or prompt, although some were original postings that addressed the entire group with information. *Imparting Information* is a therapeutic factor in group counseling and refers to the process of providing the group with suggestions, advice, or direct guidance (Yalom, 2005). Four subcategories occurred within *Imparting Information*, with the largest subcategory being *Insight* at 39.1% of the total data set (n=274, N=700) and 50.5% of the thematic category (n=274, N=543). The next highest subcategory was *Advice* at 24.7% of the *Imparting Information* thematic category (n=134, N=543). *Support/Encouragement* came next at 19.3% (n=105), followed by *Resources* at 5.5% (n=30). Table 4 shows the frequencies and percentages of these four subcategories.

Table 4: Frequencies of Subcategories: ‘Imparting Information’

Thematic Category	<i>N</i>	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%
Imparting Information	543	Insight	274	50.5%
		Advice	134	24.7%
		Support/Encouragement	105	19.3%
		Resource	30	5.5%

Insight

The subcategory of *Imparting Information: Insight* was given to postings that were predominantly focused on providing a specific opinion or personal experience, many times in response to an unseen prompt or question from another *PornFree* member. This subcategory was originally titled ‘*Opinions/Experiences*,’ but was changed after the results were compared to the group counseling literature, which focused on ‘Insight’ as the term used to encompass one’s experiences and opinions on a subject (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2009). Although some of the postings within this subcategory could be seen as providing some type of advice, it was placed in

the subcategory of *Insight* if the nature of the posting was more about sharing what their personal experience or opinion was instead of specific advice. *Imparting Information: Insight* was the most popular subcategory of all 10 with 39.1% of the data set (n=274, N=700). The personal opinions and experiences varied greatly, but some obvious trends arose in the topics addressed in these postings, such as discussing pornography as an addiction, when and how to discuss pornography use to significant others, and if masturbation should be a part of the abstinence process.

Pornography as an addiction. Conversations regarding whether participants viewed their excessive pornography use as an addiction were common. One participant posted,

“I like your response. I felt empowered after many years when I finally admitted that I was addicted to porn. For me, it's an addiction. But it really doesn't matter what you want to call it. It doesn't even matter if 100 different studies come out and say that porn is not addictive. All I know is that porn is harmful to me and I want it out of my life.”

Another member noted, “Porn detox is real,” while a third compared it to alcohol addiction by saying,

“When I truly came to feel and know that porn was not for me, it stopped becoming such a battle. Alcoholics Anonymous says if you're not sure you're an alcoholic, go and try some controlled drinking. And I recommend the same - if you're not sure porn is a problem for you, then maybe you have some good old-fashioned convincing to do.”

Other participants casually mentioned their pornography use as an addiction and overall, the term was used frequently.

Disclosing porn use to a significant other. Many participants discussed when and if it is appropriate to disclose their pornography use to their significant others. For example, one posting stated,

“...I've talked about porn very generally with my wife. She's known that it's something that has recurred for various reasons. She says she is open to talking more, hearing more in detail about my struggles and challenges, and I really, really appreciate where that's coming from. My challenge is that I anticipate that despite her openness and acceptance of me along with my struggle, I believe that as i share in more detail she'll become really anxious and body image issues will rear their heads more than they already do. One of my triggers is a (seemingly) significant libido mismatch between me and her. I believe that, in part, is influenced by her poor (very whacked) body image, (thanks, repressive mother/religion). So you see the potential negative feedback loop that could occur, despite all good intentions? That being said, I intend to get more specific with her when I hit 6mo using pornfree, relapses or otherwise. PFree is a great tool and I'm really happy about what it can represent over time. Relapses or no, its a record of sustained effort. Seems important to bring that to the table if I want to really be accountable. Seems important as a record showing my struggle really isn't about her, it's about me overcoming my insecurities, laziness, bad habits. Right now, she asks me very generally, really low key, how I'm doing, or how I'm feeling. Maybe once every 4-5 months. It felt great 3 days ago to let her know things were going very well, knowing I was at 30something days totally clean. Not kinda clean, not some pretty-okay-compared-to-most-dudes clean. Totally clean. But that's my experience. I'm certain that each

partnership/marriage has its peculiarities and communication style. In the short run, I've got nothing specific for you. But long run, it seems like increasing transparency is good.”

Those that discuss disclosing their pornography use to their significant others are most frequently for it, with very few postings advising against it.

Masturbation. *PornFree* is a forum for those that choose to abstain from pornography, but there is no mention of whether participants should give up masturbation as well. It is a highly debated topic within the community, as there is another forum on Reddit.com called *NoFap* that adamantly promotes no pornography or masturbation. Some *PornFree* members believe abstaining from pornography and masturbation, even for just a small amount of time, is a good way to “reset” their minds and bodies, as expressed by the comment,

“Looking at porn and masturbating are too intertwined to expect that fapping [masturbation] won't increase your temptation to also look at porn. There is nothing wrong with giving both a break for a while. One way I'm trying to approach it is that looking at porn was very habitual for me. Most of the times, I wasn't really even in the mood to do either, but out of habit I would start looking at porn which would get me aroused and then I would masturbate. Because the fapping usually comes from looking at porn, when you stop looking at porn, you will probably feel less need to masturbate. I made a rule for myself to not cause a new habit out of masturbating. I don't want it to be something that I just do out of some routine. Instead, if I get aroused naturally (such as waking up in the morning with an erection), then maybe I will take care of business. But, I'm not going to force myself to get hard just because I mentally feel like I need to do things on some schedule.”

However, most of the members are neutral on the matter. One participant said, “As for masturbation, I think it takes some trial and error to figure out what works for you. I have come to the conclusion that it's best not to overthink it.” Another post stated,

“... Eating is necessary to survive, masturbation is not. What I wanted to show you is that even the most necessary activity will be wrong when done too much. And porn and masturbation come hand in hand for most of people, so it's obvious that people think whether they should do it and how often. Hence you asking this question, right?”

A participant that once tried to abstain from masturbation as well as pornography commented,

“I gave noFap an honest try. I did 90 days and then I gave it a benefit of a doubt and continued for another 100 days. It did diddly-squat for me. Not a single one of the ‘super powers’ I was lured in with manifested even slightly. It's just a huge circle-jerk, ironically, which I wouldn't mind so much, that's how 99% of reddit works. But noFap is also hugely anti-sexual. I have tons of guilt and shame surrounding my sexuality already, I don't need an extra helping. So yea, I agree that pornfree should be its own thing without any comparison to noFap. But when asked, I won't hesitate to shit on that dishonest pseudo-religion.”

General experiences. Postings that fit into this trend revolved around a member describing their experiences before, during, or after abstinence. For example, one participant compared his brain on porn to a possession. The participant stated,

“Everybody's got a collection of competing interests, many of which are at cross-purposes to each other. Isn't it crazy that difference between being driven by the pornbrain and then waking up back in your own brain the next morning? It's no wonder people can aptly describe the experience as possession, or being haunted.”

Another common trend within the experiences of those abstaining is discussions about mental health concerns. One participant answered another member's question about his depression, stating,

“Short answer: In my case, depression is probably the cause, porn the symptom. Long answer: It's a bit muddy. I started using porn before I had serious mental problems but I don't think it would have escalated to the same degree over the years if I had been healthy and would have had romantic and sexual success. Yes, since I quit porn, my mental health has improved but there are a lot of other factors I changed since then that seem far more likely to be responsible for improving my situation. I think quitting porn is generally advisable but it won't have massive health benefits (or any huge benefits in general) on its own.”

One member responded to a prompt about what has changed since he became abstinent from pornography. He had been 246 days abstinent at the time of the response,

“Less objectification of women and better relationships with them. I actually got together with my current girlfriend of 2+ years when I was first starting out on this journey. My relationships with other women who are my friends, colleagues, etc. have also vastly improved. I am learning to sexualize women in a healthy way. I still find women other than my girlfriend attractive, but I no longer see some girls as ‘super attractive’ and the rest as ‘meh’. I actually find that I'm attracted to almost all of them in some way, and beyond just their looks, also to their quirks and personalities. More realistic expectations about sex, and a new approach to it that is more spiritual, emotional and overall feels more mature. Still a work in progress but I feel good about the path I'm on. Less fear about sex and physical intimacy in general. Less anxiety, depression, and brain fog. I still

have anxiety some days but on this current streak I'm really much more clear-headed than I ever remember being. Exercise, healthy diet, and a meditation practice help too I think, but I really do think cutting out porn makes a noticeable difference. Feel better about myself as a person and as a man. So all in all it's been well worth it.”

Advice

The subcategory of *Imparting Information: Advice* included postings that provided specific advice to members. Although these postings may have included encouragement or insight, the nature of the posting was mostly focused on advice giving. *Imparting Information: Advice* accounts for 24.7% of the *Imparting Information* thematic category (n=134, N=543) and 19.1% of the entire data set (n=134, N=700). The advice given in these postings revolved around the topics of coping skills, relapse prevention, counseling, and using *PornFree* as a tool.

Coping skills and relapse prevention. Participants advised other members on various coping skills to deal with the negative effects of abstinence and how to avoid relapsing. One posting said,

“You can do it! :) Analyze what time of the day is critical for you. Start with that and then think what you should do instead. For example workout, read some self improvements books, search new music, hang out with friends, go on a hike....its so much to live instead of being at home watching porn. Best is to stay busy from the moment you wake up till when you fall asleep. Use that libido on your girlfriend and show her your animal drive, she'll sure love it!”

Another participant advised, “-Don't look photos of Girls. Plus avoid looking half-naked girls in the streets. -Use internet filters. -Acknowledge why you shouldn't watch Porn

every time you crave. -Never be unhappy and depressed. If you are depressed, be aware that you are vulnerable to Porn.”

Using milestones and rewarding those milestones as a tool was also a trend within

Imparting Information: Advice. For example, one participant said,

“Setting milestones is important during recovery. It shows that we are engaged in planning our recovery, it marks our progress, and it signifies a fulfillment of a goal. It should be a motivator for each of us. Milestones will be different for each of us. For some, a milestone may be one week or one month. Maybe it's shorter or maybe it's longer. I'm presently at 35 days. My next milestone is 60 days. When you achieve a milestone, revisit your plan, think about your progress, and set a new milestone to reach. Also, don't forget to set up a reward for each milestone reached. You deserve it. You worked hard for it. Recovery isn't just a period of great challenge and difficulty. It is also a time to live life and celebrate your successes. Rewards will be different for each of us. I bought a new book when I hit 30 days. When I hit 60 days, I'm going hiking in the Allegheny Mountains. Try setting your reward at the same time you set your milestone so that you have something to aim for. So, what's your milestone and what will your reward be?”

Some other coping skills advised throughout the data include meditation, dating, finding new hobbies, creativity, accountability, and more.

Counseling. Counseling and related programs were mentioned as possible strategies multiple times within this data set. For example, one participant said,

“A therapist is a good bet. Your general practitioner could also be open to it. There are 12-step groups (SAA and SLAA) that are very helpful if you're open to that.”

Sex Addicts Anonymous was brought up by another member that stated,

“Have you considered attending Sex Addicts Anonymous meetings? Not only would those meetings provide you with recovery tools, but you would be able to connect with others who won't cause you to feel shame. Also, your addiction seems to have a porn component, but it also reaches into other areas of sex addiction. Give it some thought.”

Using *PornFree*. Because so many members have experienced the benefits of posting onto the *PornFree* forum, many suggested it as an important tool for new or disengaged members. One member posted,

“Yes, talking about it will be of immense help to you. No need to feel embarrassed. Sharing is one of the best ways to learn, grown, and cast off the shame that we feel. Good luck!”

Another participant discussed the usefulness of reading the postings on *PornFree*. He said,

“Also, browsing through peoples posts might give you an amplified perspective of the real impact of porn in real peoples lives, beyond just conflict with cultural norms, countless wasted hours, and blunted cognitive abilities.”

General advice. Much of the advice given to other members on *PornFree* is rather general in nature and covers many areas. Some of it focuses on avoiding relapse, like one participant's statement, “It comes in waves. Just ride it out and it will pass. Just be extra careful to not inch toward it or you will surely get swept away.” That same participant also advised working out by saying,

“...One thing that helps fight addiction is to get out of your old routines. Replace the time that you would have spent in the unhealthy activities with something positive. Go to a

gym, or get involved in something. Change your life and be proud of yourself for doing it!”

Another participant discussed the importance of discovering a new hobby. He posted, “Next step is to find something (not someone) that makes you happy. Even if it takes a lot of hard work, trial and error and patience to find it. Porn is an instant fix, things that are truly worthwhile only come through patience and persistence. But those who seek tend to find.”

Other posts focused on self-reflection, like one participant’s posting that stated, “You must acknowledge why are you here during this journey my fellow friends. If you learn your cause, you will be extremely strong. You need to break these chains.”

Support/Encouragement

The subcategory *Imparting Information: Support/Encouragement* ranked third for most common subcategory within the entire data set at 15.0% (n=105, N=700) and 19.3% in the *Imparting Information* thematic category (n=105, N=543). This subcategory included postings that were intended to support or encourage other members in *PornFree*. Some of the postings within the subcategory of *Imparting Information: Support/Encouragement* provide advice or insight, but the main element of the post is to provide support. Providing community, encouraging statements, and motivation were trends found within the *Support/Encouragement* subcategory.

Community. Several postings showed support by agreeing with what another member said or by relating to another member. For instance, one member said to another, “both you and I almost caved in. Keep going strong man!!!!” One participant agreed with a member’s perspective and replied,

“Yes! My biggest problem with porn is that it's life negative... it's like an escape from life. I don't want to escape from life. I want to embrace it. I like the way you put it.

Thanks for sharing.”

Other comments were just general support to the entire group, embracing the community feel of it. One participant posted,

“Give yourself an applause. Here's why... ‘My good friend, dont be hard on yourself. For starters you are standing up to a difficult problem but you know youve got what it takes to beat it. And for second, you have to admire your courage trying to battle this. Hey, no one said it will be easy. We’re all in this together! Don’t give up. And its never too late! Btw, give yourself an applause!!”

‘Keep it up.’ When a member posts an update on how they are doing, many times other members will encourage them with statements such as, “Keep it going! The mind wants its fix and will learn to adapt in time.” Another statement following this theme was, “Congratulations! I knew you were going to make it to this milestone. You’ve made tremendous progress. Keep it going!” Support in this form was used often, with many comments like the following,

“Remember it's a process, starting to figure it out is better than being stuck in an endless loop. I know that after this time, you'll start ro recognize the signs and reign it in before it's too late. Keep at it, dude!”

Motivation. Postings that revolved around motivation were typically responses to members that had either relapsed or were concerned of relapsing. For instance, one participant stated, “Luck brother! Everybody here wants you to win today!” Motivation comments also came in forms such as,

“Great post, it was a great read. I really like the fact that you're focusing in on the internal changes and not necessarily just white knuckling porn out of your life. I have been on this journey for about 3 years and have built some good streaks but also relapsed many a time. Now the goal is to quit porn for good but it really took some good hard relapsing for me to convince myself that porn really wasn't for me. I like to say that I prefer an honest relapse to a fake recovery. So I had a few honest relapses, and now I'm having an honest recovery. A quote I like is – ‘don't try to be wise before experience’. Also funny about your brother having porn. I remember finding porn on my brother's computer when we were both teenagers. Odds are that most young guys look at porn, sure, but I reckon odds are even higher that it runs in the same family. Anyway, congratulations mate.

Thanks for sharing. :)”

General support. The postings that are within this general theme of *Imparting Information: Support/Encouragement* were not specific enough to be included in one of the other themes, such as, “Keep going, the flatline can be an absolute nightmare and feel impossible but in the long run it'll all be worth it” and, “You’ve made a great decision. Welcome to the rest of your life, Regular You.”

Resources

The subcategory of *Imparting Information: Resources* was focused on providing the group members with a particular resource. Some of the other subcategories may include resources, but the essence of those that belong in *Imparting Information: Resources* are focused purely on giving the group information regarding a specific resource. Because of this stipulation, this subcategory only represents 5.5% of *Imparting Information* (n=30, N=543) and 4.3% of the entire data set (n=30, N=700).

PornFree offers a sidebar with resources linked. Many participants posted about utilizing those, such as, “Have a look at the resources in the sidebar, if you haven't yet.” In the sidebar is a link to the website called Your Brain on Porn that has a video series available on it, a link to an mp3 that helps with meditation, and a link to an old post that is called, ‘Concrete Tips for Quitting Porn.’ Podcasts were also mentioned as a resource by many members, particularly a podcast called “Pornfree Radio.” Fight The New Drug’s website was also brought up by many members, as well as the videos that famous ex-football player Terry Crews created after he publicly disclosed to being addicted to pornography. The book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl, was discussed by one member and various motivational quotes and sayings were also popular within the data set.

Catharsis

The thematic theme of *Catharsis* was ranked as the second most common thematic category with 20.7% of the total postings (n=145, N=700). Originally, the *Catharsis* thematic category was labeled ‘Updating,’ but was later changed to *Catharsis* to reflect the expression of feelings that occurs in group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009). The postings that were coded as part of the *Catharsis* thematic category were predominantly centered on updating the group on their progress. Three subcategories surfaced from *Catharsis* and include positive, negative, and neutral/general updates. *Catharsis: Neutral/General* represented the majority of the thematic theme *Catharsis* with 57.2% (n=83, N=145). The *Positive* subcategory was second largest at 37.9% with 55 postings of the 143. *Catharsis: Negative* was the smallest of this thematic category at 4.8% (n=7, N=143). Table 5 shows the three subcategories’ frequencies and percentages.

Table 5: Frequencies of Subcategories: ‘Catharsis’

Thematic Category	<i>N</i>	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%
Catharsis	145	Positive	55	37.9%
		Negative	7	4.8%
		Neutral/General	83	57.2%

Neutral/General

The *Catharsis: Neutral/General* subcategory included postings that either included positive and negative comments about their progress or the comments were neutral or general in nature. Representing 57.2% of the *Catharsis* thematic category ($n=83$, $N=145$) and 11.9% of the entire data set ($n=83$, $N=700$), *Neutral/General* updates were the most common type of update.

Includes positives and negatives. Some updates by members of *PornFree* would include both positive and negative comments within them. An example of this comes from a participant’s posting that states,

“Keeping busy but I have also noticed my steady routine of meditating and journaling is helping me to realize that while I do not have control over every thought that pops into my head, I have the choice whether or not to act on it. Also that every emotional state is temporary; urges are the same, they will pass.”

Another participant discussed his experience at 263 days abstinent with the comment, “This journey has been crazy - Crazy good. Right now I'm struggling a bit, sometimes the weight of all this is just too much for me. That's honest. But at the same time I feel strong. I'm not near ready to give up, and know that I don't have to. I can't put words to it, they just don't do it justice. But there are some really crazy things going on in my life right now, things that are crazy good. I don't mean that it's always a cakewalk or I'm walking around with a grin all the time, but, there's something really deep going on inside

of me and in my life. I attribute it to my openness towards life, and to new experiences, both good and bad. Porn has no place in that for me. I'm just happy to be alive. Thanks folks.”

‘Check-in.’ A core component of *PornFree* is for members to ‘check-in’ and discuss what’s been going on during the abstinence process. Moderators of the group will occasionally assign a challenge and request that those that participate in the challenge to check-in throughout. An example of a monthly challenge check-in is, “Checking in for the second half of February! My girlfriend and I are tackling this together!” Other check-ins may occur when a member just wants to update the group on how they are doing based on how many days they have been abstinent. For example, one participant wrote on day 82 of his abstinence, “Checking in. Still good.” Another participant describes his experience more in-depth by posting,

“Day 23 - First off a shoutout to all of you. The past week has been especially rough not just because of porn and having this community has been huge. This is more just so I can get this out in writing, because I'm too emotionally drained to get into detail. The past 24 hours has been especially rough, but I'm still going and that's what's important. We can all do this. I admire all of you deeply, and that has helped keep me going. It takes a lot of balls to look a problem in the eye and say I'm going to fix this. The balls that many people in this world think they have when in reality, they don't. That's all I got. Stay strong and much love.”

Neutral. Some updates do not necessarily fit into a positive or negative category, but rather present with more of a neutral or general nature. For instance, one participant posted, “I am glad I found this subreddit before it is too late.” And others are just thoughts that the

participant wants to share with the group. An example of a neutral update is when a participant posted at 194 days abstinent,

“Addiction is real, but so is self-control and discipline. As someone who has an addictive personality and could have rolled with the worst addict on here, I have some thoughts. You can lean on your impulses, that are real, and use the medical diagnoses of addiction to continue down a destructive, guilt-ridden path. OR You can use your higher level thinking to A) understand that you have these impulses and strong desires that you need to overcome AND B) That you can have the self-control to just say no. I went from a hardcore, drug-induced, junkie in my late teens to a sober person in one night. I had tried to quit many times and relapsed, but this one night I woke up and just decided that I could die like this or make a change. I wanted a change. A university degree, 12 years sobriety (from drugs) later, and never one relapse. I often wondered why that time was different. Why on that singular night and every night that followed was my ability to avoid drugs opened to me? Upon reflection, I found that it was because I truly wanted to stop. In my mind, my higher order of thoughts, I acknowledged the harm I was causing and took responsibility for it. I also took personal responsibility for my actions and made intention to never do it again. You can let the fact that you're a chemically impulsive person drive your inability to stop or to excuse your relapses. Or, you can use your intelligence to understand how you're wired, stop making excuses, and use self-control to allow you to drive your life again. At the end of the day, you have to really want it. Saying you want it doesn't mean shit. It's like an obese person who constantly moans that they want to get in shape. No they don't. If they did, they wouldn't moan. They would buy

healthy food and start working out. Instead of them talking about doing something, people would come to them and say, wow, you're losing weight.”

Positive

Positive updates were the second most common type of updates in this particular data set with 37.9% of the *Catharsis* thematic category (n=55, N=145) and 7.9% of the entire data set (n=55, N=700). This subcategory of *Catharsis: Positive* was assigned to the updates that were principally positive in nature. There were specific noted trends within the positive updates, such as reported positive changes and less desire to use pornography.

Positive changes. One participant reported that he has noticed his frustration levels decreasing. He said,

“Checking in. Will try to post regular updates. I'm in this for the long haul. 11/6: I have more energy, it's easier to get out of the house, and I get less frustrated with complicated tasks at work...”

Another participant stated,

“Effects this sub can have - I dunno if it's from not using anymore, but now whenever I go outside I notice how vibrant the sky is, each and every time. I never noticed this before. Cool feeling.”

One *PornFree* member reported feeling more at peace by saying,

“...Gonna be a quick one. Lots and lots of gratitude to hand out. Gratitude for all the people in my corner (this sub reddit, my karate instructor, my family, my friends, my girlfriend, my girlfriend's friends, my band, etc. etc.) And gratitude to God (using the term liberally here) for all the wonderful things that have been given to me. Feeling really peaceful and grateful today. Thanks folks.”

Another participant celebrated a milestone by deleting the pornography he kept on his computer. He stated,

“Well, I just performed my olympic event. I deleted the stash. 500gb! All gone and it feels great. By the way, the special occasion was that I talked with my wife about my struggles last night. This feels like a bit of a victory lap!”

Less desire to use pornography. Many participants claimed to have less desire to use pornography after abstaining. One posted,

“40 Days Clean: My Thoughts - Honestly don't remember the last time I reached this amount of days to be honest, I feel so clear headed yet everyday is an emotional roller coaster. There is still some attraction to porn but it's at an all time low. Amazingly enough I only had one minor slip up this month, caught myself admiring a profile on fb but immediately came to my senses. Started school this year as well so that also is tremendously helping me stay pornfree. Hope everyone is doing well today!”

Another celebrated hitting three weeks without using pornography by posting,

“Three weeks today! Well, I'm at 3 weeks today, and I feel great about it. To me, the first couple of days are always the most difficult. It becomes a bit easier every single day because it feels like caving now would be throwing away everything I've been working for in this battle. I can honestly say that I'm getting to the point where I don't even really think about it much anymore. It's like the temptation isn't even really there. The last couple of weeks have been really stressful for other reasons, and I haven't even really considered using porn as a way to cope. My past failures have taught me my likely triggers, so I try to stay clear of the things that caused me to fail before. There are no failures as long as you learn something from it! I'm in such a good place with this all

right now and although I have a long ways to go, I'm starting to think that this may actually be the time where I finally win this war forever.”

Negative

The least common subcategory of *Catharsis* is fully negative updates. *Catharsis: Negative* accounts for 4.8% of the *Catharsis* thematic category (n=7, N=145), and only 1.0% of the entire data set (n=7, N=700). To be coded as *Negative*, the posting had to be a comment that is considered as a negative experience. One participant said, “Day 52 - still flatlining, depressed. Is this normal?” Another described his issues with sexuality after giving up pornography by posting,

“I hate Valentine's Day. I hate that it makes me feel even lonelier than usual. I hate that I fall for this made-up, corporate holiday that has no meaning. I hate that porn still seems like salvation, offering at least the illusion of human companionship and sexuality. I hate that I can't barely masturbate to my fantasy anymore because I have no reference anymore and my brain rejects it all as implausible. Masturbation is the only form of sexuality I can experience, I don't want to lose it.”

Other negative experiences reported in the data included “withdrawal symptoms,” lower sex drive, and shame of past pornography use.

Instillation of Hope

Instillation of Hope was the least common thematic category and required a specific request made in the posting to be coded as such. During the reassembling phase of coding, this thematic category was broadly titled ‘*Requesting*.’ The name of the thematic category was later changed to *Instillation of Hope*, as the nature of the postings within it align with Yalom’s curative factor of the same name (2005). *Instillation of Hope* is defined as a desire for feelings of

hope about one’s concerns in group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005), and accurately represents the postings of members that are seeking ideas that will improve their hopelessness in regards to pornography use. Many postings in the entire data set included a request, but were coded into different thematic categories because requesting, or seeking *Instillation of Hope*, was not the main purpose. Those that were predominantly *Instillation of Hope* accounted for only 1.7% of the data set (n=12, N=700). The subcategories found within *Instillation of Hope* were *Seeking Advice*, *Seeking Support/Encouragement*, and *Seeking Insight*. *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice* was the most common in this thematic category at 66.7% (n=8, N=12), followed by *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Support/Encouragement* at 16.7% (n=2, N=12), and *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Insight* at 16.7% (n=2, N=12). During the second round of coding, the researcher expected to find the subcategory of *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Resources*, but no postings specifically requested a resource. Table 6 provides the frequencies and percentages of these subcategories.

Table 6: Frequencies of Subcategories: ‘Instillation of Hope’

Thematic Category	N	Subcategory	n	%
Instillation of Hope	12	Seeking Advice	8	66.7%
		Seeking Support/Encouragement	2	16.7%
		Seeking Insight	2	16.7%

Seeking Advice.

This subcategory was most popular in postings that were identified as *Instillation of Hope* at 66.7% (n=8, N=12). *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice* represented 1.1% of the entire data set (n=8, N=700). The postings that were placed in this subcategory were those that prompted a specific need for advice for the poster. Some common topics within the *Seeking Advice*

subcategory were requesting advice about masturbation, relapse prevention, and general concerns.

Masturbation. One participant prompted the group for how to use masturbation in a healthy manner. He asked,

“Does anyone have a recommendation for a good balance of masturbation that gives you some of the benefits of occasional abstinence but also keeps your sexual energy in check?”

Relapse prevention. Sometimes, members of *PornFree* reached out to other members for advice on how to avoid relapsing. One member asked,

“Tips to prevent a slip up from turning into a full blown binge? After periods of brief sobriety, my relapses almost never constitute just a slip up , which I might categorize as a short, perhaps low intensity, encounter with porn. Rather, my relapses usually become three or four day affairs where I look at porn multiple time a day, with increasingly intense videos. Usually, my relapse begins as a slip up, and there seems to be a small window where I might be able to stave off a full blown binge, but it never happens. I suppose I just feel bad about myself for slipping up and sometimes will just say, ‘what's the point.’ Or, I will quickly see that the underlying stressor that contributed to the slip up hasn't gone away by looking at porn, which then causes me to feel worthless.

I would consider it great progress for myself if I could better control my relapses and limit the damage created by them. Anyone have tips and pointers for me so that I can stop having so many binges?”

Another member was concerned about how to get over a hangover, since his previous coping skill was to watch pornography. He prompted the group,

“So throughout this process the times I relapse are when I'm hungover. Probably 80% of my relapses are through this... Does anyone have any advice on how to handle hangovers? I know I need to make some strategies, and I've made so much progress I would hate to have it all for naught because I drank too much one night. How do you guys handle this? Thanks in advance for the advice. Much love.”

General concerns. New members occasionally had concerns about what they were experiencing in the abstinence process. One member in particular was concerned about what the group calls “rebooting,” which refers to the process of returning to a “normal” sex-drive, where sexual acts with another person is the main sexual desire, not pornography. He asked,

“Is this progress? Of most recent note I am unsure what to think about this. I wasn't aware to the amount of sexual focus and nudity in the Netflix exclusive show *Altered Carbon* but there is plenty of it. Surprisingly though I have found that I have reacted to it rather neutrally. I don't give it much thought during or afterwards and do not feel the drive to watch more of the show beyond wanting to know more about the story. Is this the stage people call rebooting? I ask because after I realized how unresponsive I have been to the sexual content of the show I realize that I haven't found anything sexually stimulating in over a week. In general I haven't found much of a desire to turn to porn or masturbation beyond fleeting thoughts.”

Seeking Support/Encouragement.

Only two postings requested support or encouragement from the group, representing 16.7% of the *Instillation of Hope* thematic category (n=2, N=12). One stated, “I'm typing in this box because I'm right about to lose it.” The other prompted a response of support or encouragement from the group regarding an old song that he relates to pornography use.

Seeking Insight.

The final subcategory within *Instillation of Hope* was *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Insight*. Two postings of the 12 in this thematic category specifically asked for just an opinion or example of an experience from the other group members. Because there are various ways to abstain from pornography, two members of *PornFree* questioned the group for opinions on abstinence from masturbation. One participant posted,

“Maybe masturbation is getting out of hand too... Hi people, just gonna throw my thoughts out there on this post. Lately I've been struggling a bit with some cravings and images flashing in my head, so I've recurred to masturbating more frequently this past week (3 times overall). Since I've gone pornfree, I had reduced my frequency to around once a week, although before that I was doing it around once a day. I don't know if I should be worried to start compulsively masturbating, or if it's ok to have some periods of increased frequency. What are your thoughts on this?”

The other participant's question about masturbation stated,

“...Today marks 90 days since I last watched porn and/or masturbated, the 'standard' recommended reboot time. And now, I'm unsure what to do next. I had always intended to masturbate again and just go pornfree after my reboot was complete, however, I'm not sure if that is already the case. I don't feel any different at all, I never experience morning wood or spontaneous erections and keeping my hands off of my bits has been easy, I never had any urges at all. Someone suggested a few days ago that this might mean that I still need more time to reboot. I feel that masturbation might actually be beneficial at this point because I went through those 90 days by pretty much repressing any sexual

thoughts at all and I suspect that might have caused my flatline. On the other hand, I don't want to ruin what healing progress I might have made so far.”

Individual Differences of Participants’ Postings

Saturation was met after the researcher collected all of the postings of 20 individuals from the forum *PornFree*. Along with the postings, the amount of time each participant was abstinent from pornography at the time of data collection was included in the data. All participants had been abstinent for at least 30 days at the time of data collection. To further understand the nature of the postings in relation to the length of abstinence, Table 7 shows each participants’ days of abstinence at the time of data collection, number of posts, and frequency of each thematic category. Those that were abstinent longer did not always present with more postings. The highest number of postings (n=158) was posted by the participant that had been abstinent the third longest (245 days). The participant that had been abstinent the longest (491 days) had the fifth highest number of postings (n=56).

Table 7: Frequencies of Thematic Categories Based on Abstinence Amount

Days Abstinent	Total Postings	Imparting Information	Catharsis	Instillation of Hope
37	27	24	3	0
38	1	0	1	0
39	69	48	19	2
40	12	1	9	2
41	10	7	3	0
49	5	2	2	1
49	59	47	11	1
51	1	0	1	0
58	6	5	1	0
60	8	7	1	0
65	50	40	10	0
66	3	1	2	0
70	5	1	4	0
82	6	4	2	0

142	29	21	8	0
150	43	39	4	0
194	1	0	1	0
245	158	137	20	1
263	151	118	32	1
491	56	41	11	4

Imparting Information

To expand on the individual differences in the thematic categories of postings, the following table, Table 8, presents the frequencies of *Imparting Information* subcategories based on participants' length of abstinence.

Table 8: Frequencies of Subcategories Based on Abstinence Amount: 'Imparting Information'

Days Abstinent	Total in Imparting Information	Insight	Advice	Support/ Encouragement	Resources
37	24	10	10	4	0
38	0	0	0	0	0
39	48	11	20	10	7
40	1	0	0	1	0
41	7	4	0	3	0
49	2	0	0	1	1
49	47	18	11	16	2
51	0	0	0	0	0
58	5	2	0	3	0
60	7	2	3	2	0
65	40	28	5	7	0
66	1	1	0	0	0
70	1	0	1	0	0
82	4	0	0	2	2
142	21	16	3	1	1
150	39	10	16	13	0
194	0	0	0	0	0
245	137	40	50	35	12
263	118	98	11	6	3

Catharsis

The table below, Table 9, shows the frequencies of the *Catharsis* subcategories based on how long the participants were abstinent at the time of data collection.

Table 9: Frequencies of Subcategories Based on Abstinence Amount: ‘Catharsis’

Days Abstinent	Total in Catharsis	Positive	Negative	Neutral/General
37	3	2	0	1
38	1	1	0	0
39	19	8	0	11
40	9	2	0	7
41	3	2	0	1
49	2	0	0	2
49	11	5	0	6
51	1	0	1	0
58	1	0	0	1
60	1	1	0	0
65	10	2	0	8
66	2	1	0	1
70	4	2	0	2
82	2	0	0	2
142	8	5	1	2
150	4	1	1	2
194	1	0	0	1
245	20	9	0	11
263	32	14	0	18
491	11	0	4	7

Instillation of Hope

The frequencies of the *Instillation of Hope* subcategories are listed below in Table 10.

Table 10: Frequencies of Subcategories Based on Abstinence Amount: ‘Instillation of Hope’

Days Abstinent	Total in Instillation of Hope	Seeking Advice	Seeking Support/Encouragement	Seeking Insight
37	0	0	0	0
38	0	0	0	0
39	2	2	0	0
40	2	2	0	0
41	0	0	0	0
49	1	0	0	1
49	1	0	1	0
51	0	0	0	0
58	0	0	0	0
60	0	0	0	0
65	0	0	0	0
66	0	0	0	0
70	0	0	0	0
82	0	0	0	0
142	0	0	0	0
150	0	0	0	0
194	0	0	0	0
245	1	1	0	0
263	1	0	1	1
491	4	3	0	0

Unique Finding

PornFree has multiple moderators to maintain the forum. They delete abusive comments, prompt discussions, and create challenges for the members. At some point in time, a moderator conducted a quantitative study within *PornFree*. One posting from the collected data set revealed the results from that study, which provides some basic information from the entire *PornFree* community. Included in the study are topics such as why they chose to abstain from pornography, when they first began using porn, what causes relapses, and much more. Although

the study is amateur, the results provide a unique perspective into the culture of *PornFree* and pornography use in general. The participant stated,

“...This post is a discussion and brief analysis of the second pornfree survey that was conducted between February 3 and February 6, 2018. This survey was designed for the benefit of the pornfree subreddit so that we can better understand our struggles with porn, and learn better strategies in our recovery. It is my hope that the response from the survey will drive a healthy discussion in this community. The full results of the second survey can be found here...Feel free to read through this analysis of the second survey and provide your comments below. Question 1 of the survey asks respondents at what age they started regularly viewing porn. The highest response, at 22%, was 13 years of age, and a whopping 77% of all respondents started regularly viewing porn between the ages of 12 and 16. This clearly illustrates that a porn addiction strikes most individuals when they are in their youth. Question 2 asks respondents how frequently they viewed porn before deciding to live pornfree. The highest response, at 60%, was daily. Next, was multiple days per week, at 37%. Question 3 asks respondents which feelings they regularly experience before viewing pornography. The highest answer, at 85%, is boredom. Next are feelings of loneliness and stress, each at 70%. This is where the hard work should come in for each of us. If 85% of us feel bored just before we act out, then there are things we can do to right now to address these feelings. What are some ideas to address our boredom, loneliness, and stress? Question 4 asks which factor is the primary contributor to acting out. Tied at 28% are lack of a social life and lack of purpose in life. As to the latter, it appears many of us need to do some soul searching and discover who we are and what our place is in this world. Question 5 asks whether the respondent has

had the realization that he is heading toward a relapse before acting out. If so, when does that realization occur? 45% of respondents said minutes before the relapse occurs. 31% said hours before the relapse, and 11% said one to two days before the relapse. These results are interesting. In my experience, a sign of progress in recovery is being able to recognize one's emotional needs and respond to them in a healthy way. Most people who have been successful in their recovery notice that they are slipping days in advance of a possible relapse. Having this realization means that they are able to respond to their emotions in a healthy way before they get too close to the point of no return. Question 6 asks how many days it takes to begin a new sobriety streak after a relapse. 35% of respondents say that it takes 2 to 3 days. A total of 70% of respondents say that it takes anywhere from 2 to 3 days to more than 2 weeks! This suggests that it is a big challenge to secure one's footing after a relapse. This is also a reminder that when your brain says, "just do it this once, and that will be all," your brain is lying to you. If there is a positive result to this question, it's that 30% of respondents were able to return to a sobriety streak within one day of a relapse. Question 7 asks which activities helped the respondent return to sobriety after a relapse. The highest response, at 68%, was visiting the pornfree subreddit or a similar forum. This reaffirms the idea that sharing your struggles with others is a key component for overcoming your porn addiction. Questions 8 through 10 concern whether the respondents have personally shared their struggles with another person, as discussed at the beginning of this post. Question 11 asks whether the respondent regularly sets a weekly or monthly milestone while in recovery. 43% of respondents set milestones while 57% do not. For those who do set milestones, Question 12 asks whether the respondent creates a reward for achieving the milestone. 29% of

respondents create a reward while 71% do not. [Note: I am a big believer of setting milestones and rewards] Question 13 asks what time the respondent goes to bed. A full 52% go to bed between 10:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. 35% go to bed after midnight. If you've heard the old phrase that nothing good ever happens after midnight, perhaps it's worth considering if your porn use increases after midnight. Question 14 asks the respondent whether he/she finds a correlation between playing video games and using porn. 25% say yes and 45% say no. 30% say they don't play video games. Therefore, of the individuals in the survey who play video games, 35% found a correlation between playing video games and their porn use. That is a sizeable number and one that should give gamers a momentary pause. The results to Question 15 are even more obvious. When asked whether respondents find a correlation between social media and their porn use, 52% say yes and 33% say no. What are we doing to limit the impact that social media has on our porn use? Question 16 asks, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much emphasis the respondent places on willpower in his/her recovery. At the highest, 28% of respondent said 8, and a total of 67% respondents said between 7 and 10. Question 17 asks, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much emphasis the respondent places on personal change in his/her recovery. At the highest, 37% of respondent said 10, and a total of 77% respondents said between 7 and 10. Question 18 asks respondents whether they have forgiven themselves for their struggles with porn. 51% said yes and 49% said no. I think this is one area that we can really improve upon. As I recently mentioned, we need to forgive ourselves before we can truly heal. That's it folks. Please take some time to provide your thoughts about these results below or in a separate post. And a special thanks to all those who participated in the survey."

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the steps taken in collecting, analyzing, and validating the postings from an online self-help group, and presented the results from the current study. It offered the discovered thematic categories, subcategories, trends throughout the data, along with a specific unique finding. For this research study, 700 postings made by 20 individuals on the online forum, *PornFree* were collected and analyzed. On March 1st, 2018, and March 3rd, 2018, the researcher selected participants that had abstained from pornography for 30 days or more and collected all of their postings to the thread *PornFree*. The data was analyzed by utilizing an Ethnographic Content Analysis. The three overarching thematic categories discovered aligned with those of online self-help groups (Jasper et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016) and Yalom's Therapeutic Factors in Group Counseling (2005) and were titled *Imparting Information*, *Catharsis*, and *Instillation of Hope*. The thematic category code of *Imparting Information* was given to postings that provided some sort of information, typically in response to an unseen question or prompt, and it revealed four subcategories in ranked order: *Insight*, *Advice*, *Support/Encouragement*, and *Resources*. *Imparting Information* is a group counseling factor that is defined as instruction, advice, suggestions, or direct guidance from other group members (Yalom, 2005). The postings that were coded as part of the *Catharsis* thematic category were predominantly focused on updating the group on their progress. *Catharsis*, in group counseling, is the expression and sharing of feelings never shared before (Jacobs et al., 2009). The *Catharsis* thematic category included *Neutral/General*, *Positive*, and *Negative* subcategories, listed in rank order. Finally, the final thematic category discovered was *Instillation of Hope*. In group counseling, *Instillation of Hope* is the desire to feel hopeful about one's situation (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005), so postings that were coded as such sought help from other members and

produced, in rank order, the subcategories of *Seeking Advice*, *Seeking Support/Encouragement*, and *Seeking Insight*.

The most common type of posting found after analysis of the data set of 700 postings was *Imparting Information*, which represented 77.6% of the entire set (n=543, N=700). Most of the *Imparting Information* posts at 50.5% were coded as *Insight*, which were the postings that provided the group with stories of individuals' experiences and opinions they have regarding the process of abstaining from pornography. A major part of being a member of *PornFree* is updating the group on one's current progress, so the second most common theme found was *Catharsis* at 20.7% of the entire data set (n=145, N=700). The most popular subcategory of *Catharsis* was *Neutral/General*, suggesting that most updates included both positive and negative experiences or were neutral in nature. The final and least common thematic category was *Instillation of Hope*, which represented only 1.7% of the entire data set (n=12, N=700). Those that did fit into *Instillation of Hope* were most likely to request specific advice from other members (66.7%), and less likely to request support and insight. Amount of abstinent days at the point of data collection did not appear to greatly affect the amount or type of postings. Common trends throughout the entire data set also emerged, many of which support the negative effects of pornography use found in previous research studies (Fall & Howard, 2015; Sun et al., 2016). Those common trends, a deeper discussion of the findings, and implications to the counseling field are explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

Current literature suggests that excessive pornography use is correlated to negative effects (Baer et al., 2015; Kingston et al., 2008). Although there is no identification of what is considered “excessive,” the research states that as pornography use increases, so do the negative symptoms (Gola et al., 2016; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Burke, 2016). There is a lack of research on what happens when individuals that were using pornography choose to abstain from it (Park et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016; Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). Therefore, to better understand the experiences of those abstaining from pornography use, this study explored the nature of postings made to an online group forum created to discuss such experiences. These unique experiences may increase counselors’ competencies in working with populations that are affected by pornography use.

By utilizing an Ethnographic Content Analysis, data was collected from an online group forum, *PornFree*, and then analyzed. Data was collected from 20 individuals’ postings to the group. Data collection occurred on two days – March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018. Each participant chosen had abstained from pornography for at least 30 days at the time of data collection. All postings to *PornFree* the participants made during their current abstinence period were retroactively collected. After deleting postings that did not fit into the inclusionary criteria, the data set resulted in 700 postings. Three broad thematic categories emerged from the data and align with those of online self-help groups (Jasper et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016) and the therapeutic factors of group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005). Those thematic categories were titled *Imparting Information*, *Catharsis*, and *Instillation of Hope*. Ten subcategories were also discovered during exploration of the thematic categories, revealing deeper insights to the culture of the group.

Imparting Information had the highest frequency of the thematic categories with 77.6% of the entire data set. The thematic category code of *Imparting Information* was given to postings that provided some sort of information, typically in response to an unseen question or prompt, although some were original postings that addressed the entire group with information. Four subcategories occurred within *Imparting Information*, with the largest subcategory being *Insight* at 50.5%, then *Advice* at 24.7%, followed by *Support/Encouragement* at 19.3% and *Resources* at 5.5%.

The thematic theme of *Catharsis* was ranked as the second most common thematic category with 20.7% of the total postings. The postings that were coded as part of the *Catharsis* thematic category were predominantly centered on updating the group on their progress. Three subcategories surfaced from *Catharsis*, including positive, negative, and neutral/general updates. *Catharsis: Neutral/General* represented the majority of the thematic theme *Catharsis* at 57.2%, then the *Positive* subcategory at 37.9%, and *Negative* at only 4.8%.

Instillation of Hope was the least common thematic category by accounting for only 1.7% of the data set and required a specific request made in the posting to be coded as such. The subcategories found within *Instillation of Hope* were *Seeking Advice*, *Seeking Support/Encouragement*, and *Seeking Insight*. *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice* was the most common in this thematic category at 66.7%, followed by *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Support/Encouragement* at 16.7%, and *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Insight* at 16.7%. The following discussion will examine the findings and implications this study presents for counselors and counselor educators. Also, limitations and suggestions for future research will be ascertained.

Thematic Categories and Therapeutic Factors

The three thematic categories were initially named with broad terms to represent the purpose of the postings. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the participants were presenting with benefits of using *PornFree* that are comparable to those found in online self-help groups and to those in group counseling (Kim et al., 2017; Yalom, 2005). For example, the thematic category of *Imparting Information* stems from the therapeutic factor in group counseling of the same name and refers to the process of providing the group with suggestions, advice, or direct guidance (Yalom, 2005). The second thematic category, *Catharsis*, reflects the expression or sharing of feelings that typically occurs in group counseling settings (Jacobs et al., 2009). *Instillation of Hope*, the final thematic category, is defined as a desire for feelings of hope about one's concerns in group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005), and accurately represents the postings of members that are seeking ideas that will improve their hopelessness in regards to pornography use.

Therapeutic factors are listed separately, but are actually quite interdependent (Yalom, 2005). Beyond the thematic categories from this study that exhibit three of Yalom's Therapeutic Factors of Group Counseling, the data set also illustrates some of the other factors such as Universality, Group Cohesiveness, and Altruism (2005). Participants provide unique stories of their pornography use in an attempt to feel or give empathy with other group members, thus encouraging Universality, or the disconfirmation of isolation (Yalom, 2005). Group Cohesiveness is the closeness of members (Jacobs et al., 2009) and is imperative for a group's productivity (Yalom, 2005). This cohesiveness is evident in the current study. Negative comments to other members were rarely presented in the current data, which suggests an overall feeling of comradery within the group *PornFree*. Additionally, Altruism is demonstrated by

participants discussing the benefits of both giving and receiving support and insight by utilizing the forum (Yalom, 2005).

Common Trends and Topics

This study was inductive, which allowed for the researcher to observe trends and topics that were repeated considerably in the data set. Throughout all three of the thematic categories discovered, a few common conversations occurred that could be of interest to counseling professionals. These discovered topics included addiction to pornography, changes that occur after abstinence, and relapse prevention techniques.

Addiction to Pornography

Although pornography addiction is not currently a diagnosable disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the concern is labeled as such in the common language used in *PornFree*. Many members identify as “pornography addicts” and treat their excessive use of pornography similarly to those with other known addictions. The 12-Step process is discussed and utilized often within the group, as well as the suggestion to attend Alcoholics Anonymous or Sex Addicts Anonymous meetings outside of the *PornFree* community. Withdrawal and detox symptoms are also commonly discussed within the group, potentially suggesting a psychological dependence on pornography.

Changes After Abstinence

Members of *PornFree* often update the group on how they are doing in the abstinence process. The postings from this study usually included positive and negative changes they have noticed since abstaining. Some mentioned an increase in confidence and interpersonal skills after abstaining from pornography. Many saw a decrease in negative symptoms such as depression, social anxiety, and the need for pornography. Although countless participants mentioned their

relationships and sex lives improving after abstinence, a frequent concern explored was “flat-lining.” In *PornFree*, “flat-lining” refers to the drop in sex drive that occurs when abstinence from pornography begins. Most often, members of the group reported that the “flat-lining” experience lasted somewhere between two and six weeks and that their sex drive returned and sometimes even improved after. This may suggest a physical response to pornography and its absence. Moreover, several participants that had maintained abstinence past the average “flat-lining” timeframe reported higher relationship satisfaction, or if they were single, increased confidence in speaking with individuals they were sexually attracted to.

Relapse Prevention

Much like other support groups, *PornFree* members spend a lot of time advising each other on how to best remain abstinent. A major topic was avoiding pornography or triggers that could lead to the use of pornography. Some tips given were to delete any pornography they had kept on their computers, utilize internet filters, and avoid sexual material in entertainment choices such as movies and television shows. Beyond avoiding pornography, members also provided each other with resources, such as websites, videos, and podcasts that were helpful in recovery. They also shared what coping skills they utilized, which included techniques such as working out, journaling, meditating, finding new and creative hobbies, and many others.

Limitations

This study offers a limitation by being a single data source that was analyzed by only one researcher. Although an external auditor was utilized, it would have strengthened the results if more than one researcher coded the data. Also, analyzing more than one online group would have reinforced the findings. Another limitation of this study is the lack of interaction with the community. By collecting preexisting data, the researcher was unable to prompt participants

about a meaning or further explanation of certain pieces of data. Having a conversation with the participants could have allowed for more thorough descriptions of their experiences, as well as providing the study with additional demographic information. Because of these limitations, especially in regards to the lack of demographic information, it is imperative that the results are not generalized to all individuals that use pornography.

Implications for Counseling Professionals

Currently, counselors report not feeling adequately prepared to address excessive pornography use with clients (Walters & Spengler, 2016; Bloom et. al, 2016). Because of this, and the anonymity desired for many individuals, those that seek help for their pornography use often utilize the online self-help option (Kim et al., 2017). This is apparent by the 52,150 members of *PornFree* as of May 4, 2018. The community conversations of *PornFree* read much the same as a group counseling session and present many of Yalom's Therapeutic Factors (2005). The request for advice and opportunities to share personal experiences are similar to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, although this particular data source is not affiliated with a professional organization. There is constant support from the other group members with motivation, advice on how to maintain abstinence, when and how to discuss the topic with significant others, and exploration of many other topics related to abstaining from pornography. This study found countless instances of members' thankfulness for being a part of *PornFree*, and the desire to help other members is evident by the fact that 77.6% of the data set was in the *Imparting Information* thematic category.

Although participants in this study report positive changes due to the community, self-help groups such as *PornFree* present some restrictions to the treatment process (Jacobs et al., 2009). With no group therapist or leader, negative dynamics could arise in the group or

productivity has the potential to decrease with no set structure (Jacobs et al., 2009). Nevertheless, knowing these groups exist may help counselors gain more knowledge on the issue and even use communities like *PornFree* as a supplement to treatment. For example, counselors can develop a concurrent individual and “group counseling” plan for clients that present with concerns related to pornography use (Yalom, 2005). The online group can be used as a group counseling substitute where the client obtains valuable information and support from the group members, while also working on the underlying individual concerns with the counselor.

Because individuals may identify as having a pornography addiction, regardless of a professional diagnosis, counselors should be aware of the implications that mindset could have on clients and the treatment process. Not all clients that excessively use pornography will be aware that it could be a problem, however. Counselors that have clients that present with negative symptoms should assess for pornography use, as it has been correlated with multiple concerns (Resch & Alderson, 2014; Willoughby et al., 2014; Szymanski et al., 2015). The findings from this study support that current research by presenting self-reported positive changes that occur once the variable of pornography is removed (Park et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016). By maintaining knowledge on common trends, counselors can better assess for concerns and treat their clients (Walters & Spengler, 2016). Likewise, counselor educators can use the results from this study when educating counselors-in-training on pornography use, its negative effects, and what experiences are reported when individuals abstain from it. Finally, because the online group used for this study supported group counseling’s therapeutic factors (Yalom, 2005), counselor educators can also use the results to encourage students to utilize such groups in future treatment planning.

Future Research

More research is necessary on pornography addiction as a whole. If it remains non-diagnosable, counselors need to know if treating the concern like other addictions that are in the DSM is appropriate or if other treatments are more effective. Although the current study explored the experiences of individuals that chose to abstain from pornography, it did not analyze the reasons why those individuals chose to do so. The amount of time participants were abstinent at the time of data collection did not appear to affect how often they posted to the group forum, so future research should examine other aspects that could play a role in the posting amount and nature of those postings. Because of the lack of demographic information organically discussed in the data, it could not be studied in relation to the experiences of the participants. Furthermore, masturbation was a highly debated topic within the *PornFree* community, posing the question of what changes occur in individuals that choose to abstain from it as well as pornography.

Conclusion

An inductive Ethnographic Content Analysis was utilized to examine 700 postings to the online self-help group forum, *PornFree*. All postings from 20 members of the group were collected on two dates, March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018. The aim of this study was to uncover the nature of postings to *PornFree* by individuals that were abstinent from pornography for 30 or more days. This study sought to uncover information in an area that is lacking in research so that counselors and counselor educators are better informed to competently treat individuals that experience negative effects from pornography use.

Three thematic categories were revealed in the data set. Those themes support Yalom's Therapeutic Factors in group counseling and were *Imparting Information*, *Catharsis*, and

Instillation of Hope. The thematic categories indicated a total of 10 subcategories. Within the subcategories, trends and common topics were found and explored by using specific postings. Numerous conclusions were made by the researcher based on the findings that may be beneficial to counselors and counselor educators. Findings from this study underlined the experiences of individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography. Those experiences ranged from withdrawal and detox symptoms to positive life changes, and most importantly, a need for support or advice on how to maintain abstinence. The majority of postings were found to be of the *Imparting Information* theme, providing the group with their insight, advice, and encouragement, much like online self-help groups and in-person group counseling settings (Jasper et al., 2014; Jacobs et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2017; Yalom, 2005). Negative postings were uncommon, so the overall culture of the community was uplifting and helpful in nature.

CHAPTER V: MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

In the United States, pornography use has been linked to negative outcomes, especially as it relates to continued use. Available in print, video, and web-based formats, pornography is defined as, “printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings,” (“Pornography,” 2017, p. 1). Researchers purport that in our current era, pornography is primarily accessed via web-based (i.e., internet services) sources that are free and easily accessible to viewers (Sun, Bridges, & Johnson, 2016). With embedded advertisements and highly efficient data tracking methods to determine number of visits per hour, the pornography industry is valued at over 13 billion dollars (Garlick, 2011). It is estimated that approximately 50 to 99 percent of men and 30 to 86 percent of women have consumed pornography (Weir, 2014). According to Pornhub, one of the most popular free web-based pornography services, approximately 80 million videos are watched daily (2017). Notwithstanding its prevalence and seemingly wide spread use, it is reported that pornography use can lead to negative consequences for individuals physically, emotionally, and relationally (Baer, Kohut, & Fisher, 2015; Kingston, Fedoroff, Firestone, Curry, & Bradford, 2008; Szymanski, Feltman, & Dunn, 2015). Negative outcomes include, but are not limited to, reports of sexual dysfunction, relationship dissatisfaction, gender role conflict, and self-esteem issues (Gola, Lewczuk, & Skorko, 2016; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Willoughby, Carroll, Busby, & Brown, 2016). Research indicates that these effects occur in individuals regardless of sexual preference (Rosser et al., 2013; Burke, 2016).

Although pornography is prevalent in the United States, how helping professionals assist when these negative experiences are exhibited is less available, including a lack of formalized

training and assessment procedures (Walters & Spengler, 2016). There is currently no diagnosis for pornography addiction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), but the rate of pornography use and its effects is still on the rise (Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015). Because of this, it is imperative that counselors increase their competency in pornography use (Bloom, Gutierrez, Lambie, & Ali, 2016).

This study examined the responses of individuals who are self-described as using pornography more than they want to and have selected abstinence as a method to decrease their use. Using an Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) research design, this study examined the experiences of these individuals as they chose to abstain from pornography use. This chapter will discuss the current research regarding negative effects of pornography use, implications for the counseling field, and the purpose and significance of the current study.

Pornography and Sex Addiction

Oftentimes the terms “sex addiction” and “pornography use/pornography addiction” are seen together. However, the literature is torn on whether these terms should exist. Some studies produce results proposing that true addiction does occur occasionally with these behaviors (Kraus, Voon, & Potenza, 2016). Conversely, recent research suggests that not only is there a lack in quality scientific evidence to support the use of “addiction” with behaviors such as pornography use and sexual activity, but because of sociocultural biases in interpreting sexual behavior, an addiction model is not appropriate (Williams, 2017). It has also been found that sex addiction and pornography use are not correlated (Bae, Min, & Chung, 2018). With the absence of consistency in the literature and no disorder currently in the DSM V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the term “pornography addiction” will not be used. And for the purposes of this study, pornography use will be separated from other sexual behaviors.

Potential Implications of Pornography Use

Physical and Neurological Implications

A review of clinical reports was published in Behavioral Sciences in 2016 and suggests that pornography use has been found to be a factor in erectile dysfunction and hypoactive sexual interest in opposite-sex partnered sexual interactions (Park et al.). Almost 60% of those that sought help on a medical forum for Erectile Dysfunction (ED) reported to be under the age of 25. In the study, the researchers completed three clinical case reports. All three participants were men 40-years-old or younger and were seeking medical help for ED. Each participant disclosed to a high use of pornography before the ED became apparent, resulting in desensitization and more graphic pornography needed to achieve orgasm. The authors stated that each participant was deemed physically and mentally healthy otherwise. Because traditional factors that once explained these types of sexual difficulties are insufficient for the extreme increase of issues, the authors suggest that pornography is the cause (Park et al., 2016). They reported that two of the three participants gave up pornography use and disclosed to the doctor a few weeks after the initial appointment that the ED had subsided greatly (Park et al., 2016).

An experiment conducted in 2013 investigated the influence pornographic images had on the working memory of 28 heterosexual men, with the mean age of 26 years (Laier, Schulte, & Brand, 2013). Working memory is responsible for executive functioning tasks such as problem solving, reasoning, development of speech, decision making, and more (D'Esposito, 2007). They compared the working memory performance after viewing pornographic images with the working memory performance after viewing neutral, negative, and positive pictures. The results presented that working memory was significantly worse after the participants viewed pornography than it was when they viewed the neutral or positive stimuli (Laier et al., 2013).

Another negative neurological connotation of higher frequency of pornography use was found in brain scans. The scans were conducted to measure the gray matter volume in 64 healthy men that reported using pornography (Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). The magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) measurements were compared to answers from a questionnaire regarding the average amount of hours participants spent viewing pornography per week. Results of the MRIs showed a negative correlation between hours of pornography consumption per week and gray matter volume. There were also negative correlations between pornography consumption per week and blood oxygenation level-dependent signals during sexual cue-reactivity paradigm and functional-connectivity map of the right striatum in the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). Kuhn and Gallinat (2014) suggest that the change in neural plasticity could be due to “an intense stimulation” of the reward center of the brain. These results indicate that as more hours are spent using pornography, participants have less gray matter and neural plasticity, both of which negatively affect one’s perception, self-control, decision-making, emotions, and memory (Weinstein, Livny, & Weizman, 2017; Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014).

Behavioral Implications

Beyond physical and neurological issues that may arise from frequent pornography use, many studies have found relationships between pornography use and interpersonal behaviors. For example, a study from 2015 reviewed 17 articles that discussed sexually risky behaviors and discovered that each one found an association with pornography use (Harkness, Mullan, & Blaszczynski, 2015). Risky behaviors included in the findings were unsafe sex practices, lack of condom use, higher number of sexual partners, and more casual sex behaviors (Harkness et al., 2015). Other studies report a correlation between frequency of pornography use and sexual aggression. Findings from a study that examined the contribution pornography consumption has

on recidivism in child molestation found that frequency of pornography use was a predictor for re-offending (Kingston et al., 2008). Another study determined that men that were identified to be in the moderate-severe aggressive group reported higher levels of pornography use, as well as the likelihood to behave in such ways in sexual interactions (D'Abreu & Krahe, 2013).

Sexism, gender-role conflict, and aggression toward women are specific themes in research about the effects of pornography use. This is likely due to the nature of most pornographic material, as videos featuring rape and misogynistic scripts are common. Baer, Kohut, and Fisher (2015) found that men who used less pornography were significantly less likely to use coercive acts in sexual situations. They learned that men that rated higher in the consumption of violent sexual media, not general/consensual pornography, were more likely to participate in sexually coercive acts (Baer et al., 2015). Ade (2016) discovered a strong correlation between past frequent pornography use and specific mindsets that support violence toward women. Similarly, interviews with women that experienced domestic violence reported that they believe pornography played a large role in the abuse they endured from their male partners (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, 2017). Additional research suggests a relationship between pornography use and substance use (Beaver & Paul, 2011).

Psychological Implications

Recently, the research on pornography use has begun to shift its focus from physical and behavioral relationship outcomes of pornography use to psychological outcomes such as depression, lack of concentration, self-worth, and more. An association with higher use and avoidant/anxious attachment styles, poorer relationship quality, and less sexual satisfaction has been found (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014). Specifically, Fall and Howard (2015) determined in an in-depth case study that the participant's multiple inter- and intra-personal

symptoms were caused by his problematic pornography use. Another study focused on pornography use and its relationship to participants' psychosocial functioning, which included anxiety, depression, life satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction (Harper & Hodgins, 2016). In this research by Harper & Hodgins (2016), they established that once pornography use hits the frequency of daily, the association with poorer psychosocial functioning is significant. In a similar study, participants that had higher frequency of pornography views scored higher on all measures of narcissism as compared to those that reported not currently using pornography. Expanding on these findings, research has indicated that there is a significant positive correlation with frequency of pornography use and ratings on the Index of Narcissism scale and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Kasper, Short, & Milam, 2015). Compulsivity and obsessionality have also been linked to pornography use (Egan & Parmar, 2013). The independent variables addressed in one study were sexual preoccupation, excessive internet use, personality, and obsessionality; the dependent variable was internet pornography use. The researchers used multiple online scales/inventories to assess the variables and found that the higher frequency of pornography use produced higher scores on the compulsivity and neuroticism scales and lower scores on the agreeableness and conscientiousness scales (Egan & Parmar, 2013).

Sexual performance anxiety, self-worth, and self-esteem are other common constructs among the current literature regarding pornography use. The ease of obtaining pornography has been identified as a factor in increasing heterosexual men's anxiety regarding their sexual performance (Cook, 2005). Beyond performance, body dissatisfaction has also been reported to be connected to more pornography use, particularly regarding men's penis-size (Cranney, 2015). Another study discovered that frequency of pornography use was negatively correlated to self-

worth and positively correlated to depression symptoms in emerging adult women (Willoughby, Carroll, Nelson, & Pedilla-Walker, 2014).

Furthermore, studies have investigated the relationship between the frequency of pornography use and participants' partnered sexual experiences (Sun et al., 2016). When sexual preferences and concerns are addressed, positive correlations are found between frequency of pornography use and increasingly relying on pornographic images or thoughts in order to achieve orgasm in partnered sex (Sun et al., 2016). Also, as men's frequency of pornography use increases, they are more likely to require and request specific pornography acts of their partner in order to stay aroused (Baer et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2016; D'abreu & Krahe, 2014). These psychological concerns not only affect the pornography user, but also the partners of the users and the satisfaction within the relationship.

Relationship Satisfaction

As mentioned in some of the previously explored literature, the consumption of pornography is associated with lower levels of enjoyment in sexual activities with a partner (Sun et al., 2016). A quote from a case study of a man that believed his depression was caused by his frequent use of pornography states, "What I know is I can no longer be with a real person, not without pulling something out of the archive of images," (Murray, 2017). Not only does it potentially affect the sexual relationship, but pornography use has also been found to be linked to relationship dissatisfaction (Szymanski et al., 2015). For example, a study on women's perceptions of their male partner's pornography use showed many associations with the independent variables that were assessed (Szymanski et al., 2015). They found that women that believed that their partner was using pornography "every day or almost every day" rated lower in relationship trust, relationship investment, and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, these

results occurred even when the women reported a positive attitude toward pornography (Szymanski et al., 2015). Another study evaluated 373 male participants' pornography use in relation to gender-role conflict, attachment styles, relationship quality, and sexual satisfaction (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014). The results found that the men's frequency of pornography use was positively correlated to gender-role conflict, as well as avoidant and anxious attachment styles. Also, the results showed that pornography use was negatively associated with the quality of the individuals' relationship and sexual satisfaction in partnered sexual encounters (Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014).

Resch and Alderson (2014) examined whether mutual use of pornography may improve and relationship satisfaction of the female partners of male pornography users. The participants that scored higher on levels of relationship satisfaction and lower on psychological distress reported higher scores on how honest their partner is about his pornography use. Those that believe their partner is deceitful about his pornography use scored lower on relationship satisfaction and higher on psychological distress (Resch & Alderson, 2014). Secondly, the researchers found that mutual use of pornography between partners was not related to relationship satisfaction (Resch & Alderson, 2014). A study published in 2016 revealed in its results that the greater the discrepancy of pornography use between partners, the lower reported feelings of "couple well-being" (Willoughby et al., 2016). These research studies highlight the impact pornography use may have on relationships, regardless of use by both partners.

Limitations of Current Literature

Of the research cited in this dissertation, no studies specified if the pornography being viewed matched the viewer's sexual preferences or history, nor did they explore the nature of the pornography that was viewed by the participants. Also, most of the current research is

quantitative due to the nature of the topic and ease of obtaining participants. Surveys, especially internet-based surveys, are popular for the anonymity and likelihood of reaching a larger sample. Very few research studies that exist in the current literature ask the participants if they think their pornography use has negatively affected them, nor do they evaluate the experiences that occur when pornography use is removed.

As past research has stated, it is unknown if the negative effects found associated with pornography use were precursors to pornography use or if the pornography use caused the effects. Collectively, research has been unable to prove a clear cause and effect between pornography use and the negative effects explored in the literature. Because causality is difficult to prove, the next step is for participants to remove the variable of pornography use to better understand its effects (Park et al., 2016). Correlational studies have offered interesting results, but are unable to establish which factor causes another, so future research should focus on eliminating pornography use (Wilson, 2016).

Counseling Implications

Due to the ever-growing pornography industry and accessibility of it, counselors are more likely to see clients with concerns that could be related to pornography use (Murray, 2017). Professionals believe that adolescents are getting mixed messages from pornography, particularly that public health goals and sex education tends to contradict messages sent by pornography, which typically support gender-roles and unrealistic situations (Mattebo, Larsson, Tyden, & Haggstrom-Nordin, 2014). The participants also reported that they think children and adolescents are using pornography for stimulation and sex education (Mattebo et al., 2014). Studies suggest that adolescents do think there are negative effects caused by pornography use,

but they have not been educated on what those effects are and how to avoid them (Baker, 2016; Spišák, 2016).

This lack of education and discussion of pornography exists not only in the school systems, but also in mental health fields. There are many problematic pornography users that do seek professional help for the issue (Kraus, Martino, & Potenza, 2016), but often times they end up empty-handed and pursue self-help groups instead (Cavaglioni, 2008). This may be best illustrated by a case study by Murray (2017) which discusses a client that came to counseling for depression and then disclosed he believed it was caused by his problematic pornography use. The counselor divulged to feeling very uncertain about treating the client, as the topic was difficult for her because she did not have a background of knowledge on which to base her stance.

Similarly, Walters and Spengler (2016) found that counselors' discomfort regarding pornography stems from having no education on the matter or how to process discomfort talking to clients about sensitive or sexual concerns. Additionally, services provided to clients when clinical judgment is not at its peak, such as in circumstances pertaining to pornography use and counselor discomfort, services rendered could be ineffective or potentially unethical. An in-depth study was conducted on therapists' effectiveness in working with clients with sex addiction or internet pornography use (Short, Wetterneck, Bistricky, Shutter, & Chase, 2016). The researchers surveyed 183 mental health practitioners (MHPs), of which approximately 85% were licensed. The survey questions focused on the practitioners' experiences, beliefs, and observations in working with individuals with issues related to sex or pornography. The data yielded results stating that a significant portion of the MHPs indicated they do not feel competent to treat such concerns, even though most have had experiences with clients that present with

pornography use or sex addiction. Also, to reiterate the literature that associates negative effects with pornography use, the researchers found that of those MHPs that had experiences in treating it, 88% believed there was comorbidity. When asked what disorders were most often observed in the comorbidity, the most common were mood disorders, anxiety disorders, impulse-control issues, and substance abuse (Short et al., 2016).

Counselors may have the difficult task of managing their own discomfort when working with a client who is disclosing pornography use while trying to maintain fidelity to the treatment (Walters & Spengler, 2016). Unexpectedly, one study discovered that counselors that identified as experts on the topic of pornography use reported discomfort or bias regarding the topic, especially in those that were religious (Hinman, 2013). Alternatively, Bloom et al. (2016) surveyed marriage and family therapists (MFTs) and mental health counselors (MHCs) in the state of Florida and assessed their attitudes toward treating pornography use in clients. Only 17.2% reported feeling insecure in treating said issues, and 19% stated they felt neutral about their readiness (Bloom et al., 2016). It should be noted, however, that Florida is one of the few states to require a human sexuality course for counselors-in-training (American Counseling Association, 2010), thus suggesting their preparedness may be higher than those for which no such requirement exists. Researchers concluded that the confidence, which comes from efficient training or preparedness, to treat sexuality likely leads to comfort in working with those clients (Bloom et al., 2016) and the more comfortable a counselor is, the more likely they are to initially assess for pornography use and effectively treat it.

The literature suggests that most counselors are not prepared to assess for or treat problematic pornography use. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) does not require that the topic of pornography use be included in the

counseling curriculum, unless the counselor is seeking an entry-level specialty in marriage, couple, and family counseling (2016). And in that case, it is suggested that “human sexuality” is discussed in course work, not specifically pornography use (CACREP, 2016). The DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) also does not include a diagnosis for pornography abuse or addiction, so the discussion of it likely does not occur naturally in mandatory diagnoses courses. Although it was proposed to add a new diagnosis of hypersexual disorder to the DSM-V, which included a pornography subtype, reviewers ultimately decided there was not enough evidence to do so (Weir, 2014). Because of Code C.2.a in the American Counseling Association’s Code of Ethics (2014), which states that counselors should only practice within their education and training, some counselors may get the impression they should refer clients that present with pornography concerns. However, the prevalence and demand for treatment is showing no signs of slowing down, thus the need for education and training regarding pornography use and its negative effects and comorbidity with other disorders is necessary.

Few studies have investigated the treatment options and/or treatment effectiveness for pornography use (Kraus, Meshberg-Cohen, Martino, Quinones, & Potenza, 2015). Those that have focused research on either deviant pornography use, such as child pornography use, or the use of medication for compulsive behaviors that include pornography use (Seto & Ahmed, 2014; Kraus et al., 2015). With little research on best practices for treating pornography use in the mental health field, counselors agree that more training and additions to the CACREP Standards are necessary (Hinman, 2013).

Pornography Abstinence

As discussed, individuals may feel shame for their concerns related to pornography use (Gola et al., 2016) or treatment options may seem limited (Kraus et al., 2016). Instead of seeking

counseling, individuals may decide to practice self-treatment. One method of self-treatment for excessive pornography use is abstinence. However, self-led abstinence can be difficult and the literature on the matter is deficient. There are a number of means to find assistance, however, such as support groups and forums like Reddit.com's subreddit, *PornFree*. Reddit is a public online forum that covers hundreds of subjects and posters remain anonymous. Subreddits are threads on Reddit that cover specific subjects, like the *PornFree* subreddit which focuses solely on the individual experiences of members that are abstaining from pornography. There are also other online support groups for those that want to abstain from pornography, some of which are paid services. Self-help groups such as the one discussed in this study help individuals remain accountable in their efforts, gives participants the opportunity to anonymously process their experiences (Kim, Faw, & Michaelides, 2017), and they have been found to be just as effective as in-person group counseling (Jasper, Weise, Andersson, Hiller, & Kleinstauber, 2014).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of those that abstain from pornography use, a piece that is lacking from the current literature (Park et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016; Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). The study analyzed postings by individuals that have decided to abstain from pornography on an anonymous online forum. The forum is a sub-thread (referred to on the site as a subreddit) on Reddit.com, titled *PornFree*. The group exists for the purpose of discussing problematic pornography use and the struggles and experiences associated with abstinence. Prudent data was captured by understanding the concerns, questions, and experiences of these individuals. With inductive inquiry, the researcher provided a sufficient cognizance of the culture of pornography abstinence, thus leading to a deeper holistic understanding of how counselors can adequately prepare for and treat individuals with this growing concern.

Significance of Study

This study aimed to help counselors better understand the negative effects and the reported experiences that occur when pornography abstinence takes place. Because there are so many potential correlations between symptoms and pornography use, counselors need to know when and how to assess for the concern. Counselors should utilize new information and seek continued education to remain ethical and be more effective (ACA, 2014). With the high prevalence of the discussed issues that continue to be associated with pornography use, counselors that are aware of such associations will be more likely to notice potential concerns than those that are not.

By conducting an Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) on the unprompted, candid postings shared among individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography, the data covered a plethora of topics. This type of qualitative research study presented the opportunity to better recognize experiences that could inform counselors of what and when to assess for excessive pornography use in their clients. The results from this study contribute to a growing body of literature on the topic of pornography use and its effects for which counselors should be aware.

Research Question

Based on recommendations in previous literature and the initial fieldwork of immersion on the forum that will be studied, the research question which guided this study is as follows:

RQ1: What is the nature of the content posted by individuals to an online group forum for those that have chosen to abstain from pornography use?

Conclusion

As technology becomes more accessible for adults and children alike, the prevalence of pornography use is not expected to decrease (Price, Patterson, Regnerus, & Walley, 2016). Many studies show links between excessive pornography use and negative physical/neurological, behavioral, and psychological effects, but there is more research to be done, particularly so that helping professionals can better understand the problem (Short, Smith, Wetterneck, & Wells, 2012). Counselors can use the findings from this study, as well as those previously discussed, to gain knowledge on pornography use and its many implications for their clients' well-being. This study aimed to open up the discussion about a formerly taboo subject so that those in need of assistance can not only seek help, but find professionals that are educated, prepared, and ready to treat them. This literature review highlights the research that has been completed thus far and discussed why the topic is relevant to the counseling field.

Methodology

Although negative effects of pornography use have been discussed in the literature, the experiences of individuals that abstain from pornography is limited (Park et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016). The purpose of this study was to examine through qualitative inquiry, the experiences of individuals who self-reportedly abstain from pornography use. Data collected from this study can help to inform counseling professionals on identifying and addressing pornography use with clients. This chapter describes the use of a qualitative method of investigation, Ethnographic Content Analysis, of postings to an online support group forum. The researcher explored the themes of participants' postings within the group *PornFree*, an anonymous online support group forum. This chapter discusses the method of Ethnographic Content Analysis, participants, data collection and analysis, and procedures to assure trustworthiness.

Ethnographic Content Analysis

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of individuals that self-reportedly abstain from pornography. The goal is to go beyond existing frameworks, so a qualitative method and its corresponding data was an appropriate choice (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study intended to explore culture via an online forum and a significant analysis is desired, thus a qualitative approach was most appropriate.

Ethnographic Content Analyses are not rigid, but instead allow for a research design that is focused on exploration (Altheide, 1996). The researcher selected an Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) because it is both inductive and reflexive and highlights themes discovered within the data (Altheide, 1987). Investigating meanings, contexts, patterns, and processes is included in conducting an ECA, and an immersion within the culture being researched by the researcher is required (Altheide, 1996). In order to become immersed and more familiar with the group for which is the subject of this study, the researcher had access to the forum, *PornFree*, for three months prior to collecting data.

In utilizing ECA, the researcher used a combination of inductive searches with recursive constant comparison, which allowed for identification of specific constructs of interest (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By employing this method, the researcher was required to compare the new data and results to previous literature and identify similarities and differences (Glaser & Stauss, 1967). Originally, ECA was developed for use of researching media, but has also been utilized with other mediums like radio broadcasts, magazines, newspapers, and advertisements (Altheide, 1996). More recently, however, ECA has been employed with online group postings (Porter & Ispa, 2013). This is likely due to the natural change of human behavior because of the growth of technology, therefore offering opportunities for ethnographies to include cultures and social

worlds that are internet-based (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012; Kozinets, 2015). As discussed briefly above, the researcher followed Altheide's (1987) steps for conducting an ECA, but with considerations made by Boellstorff et al. (2012) and Kozinets (2015) to address the modern shift of researching an online culture. Further description of these steps are explored in the following sections.

Participants

The participants in this study were self-reported individuals who have chosen to abstain from pornography. These participants were all posters and members of the subreddit thread on Reddit.com, titled *PornFree*. To become a member, individuals simply have to subscribe to the subreddit, which entails clicking on a subscribe button. Once subscribed, the direct link to the subreddit appears at the top of the home-screen for easy access to the forum. As of January 7, 2018, the group had 42,984 members. Beside each member's username is a number that represents how many days they have abstained from pornography at that point in time. A discussion of the participant demographics is below.

Because the website is publically accessible and postings are anonymous (members use a screen name only to post), demographics were only collected as they were organically mentioned in postings. Of the 20 participants, only five participants blatantly mentioned demographic information. All five declared their age, but one of those also stated his sexual orientation. Although all the participants allude to their gender as male, it is only stated verbatim by the participant that discussed his sexual orientation. Table 1, shown below, provides the demographic information given by those five participants based on the amount of days abstinent they were at the time of data collection.

Table 1: Demographics

Days Abstinent	Age	Sexual Orientation
39	26	-
60	20	-
82	42	-
142	27	-
263	26	Straight (male)

Data Collection

To collect the data used in this study, the researcher followed recommended steps for piloting an ECA (Altheide, 1987; Boellstorff et al., 2012; Kozinets, 2015). First, the researcher became familiar with the data source by immersion for at least three months before data was collected, as suggested by Altheide (1996). The process of selecting an appropriate site, participants, and postings is described below. Inclusionary and exclusionary criteria for data and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Selection of Website and Postings

Online site. Kozinets (2015) suggests that the site chosen for an ECA should be relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous, and data-rich. The online group forum, *PornFree*, was chosen as the data source for this study due to the specific focus of its subject matter and because it fits all of the guidelines discussed above. There are many online groups for excessive pornography users, but this group was chosen as its processing is informal, consequently allowing for more natural and spontaneous dialogues. The group states that its purpose is to provide a place to help people overcome addiction to porn (PornFree, 2017). This group also offers a large amount of potential participants since there were 42,984 members as of January 7, 2018.

Postings. Postings were retroactively collected on March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018, until saturation was reached. This provided rich archival data, a pillar of qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Because initial analyzing occurred throughout the collection process, saturation was met when no new themes arose from the postings and there was enough information to accurately answer the research question (Bowen, 2008). Literature suggests that the depth of data is more important than the numbers, so the researcher took this into consideration when collecting data (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). The researcher then analyzed all of the postings that fit into the inclusionary criteria. Initial posts and responses in threads that pertain to the research question was also included in the data.

Inclusionary and Exclusionary Criteria

The first inclusionary criteria that was used to collect data is that the data must be a posting to the *PornFree* forum on Reddit.com. The postings included pictures, emoticons, emojis, videos, gifs, and other forms of multimedia. However, only the text in the postings were analyzed. To be a member of the group, members must identify as an individual that is abstaining from pornography use, so it is the researcher's assumption that all members qualified as valid participants. Postings did not need to explicitly state that to meet this inclusionary criterion.

Beside each member's screen name is a counter that displays how many days they have successfully abstained from pornography. Only postings by members that have abstained from pornography for 30 or more days were included in this data. This is an arbitrary number of days due to the lack of literature about how long pornography abstinence should occur before self-reported effects are relevant. The researcher chose 30 days to better identify the experiences of abstinence's effects. Furthermore, a comparison of the nature of the postings was made between

participants that had remained abstinent for short amounts of time and those that were abstinent for longer amounts of time. During this data collection stage, the researcher logged into *PornFree* and chose the most recent posts made by a participant that had been abstinent for 30 or more days. To easily view all postings made by a specific member of the group, the researcher clicked the individual's screen name and all postings made by them appeared. This data included each participant's original postings and responses stemming from original postings. Although this process included postings made throughout Reddit.com, the only postings that were included as data were those that were posted to the subreddit, *PornFree*. Half of the data was collected on March, 1, 2018. The researcher collected all of the inclusionary data for 10 participants and returned to the site two days later on March, 3, 2018 to collect all of the inclusionary data for 10 more participants. Saturation was reached early in the data collection process, but the researcher chose to gather data from 20 participants to better represent *PornFree*'s population. The raw data was copied and pasted into an Excel file titled *Code Index*. No screennames were included in the Excel file, ensuring confidentiality of the data set.

Some data was eliminated from that which was analyzed. Exclusionary criteria include: 1) the poster identifies themselves as a friend/family member/significant other of an individual abstaining from pornography, 2) the writer of the post discloses to being under the age of 19, and 3) the post does not clearly relate to abstinence of pornography or the comment refers to something off-subject.

Ethical Considerations

Because internet-based ethnographies are becoming more commonly conducted, new ethical dilemmas may arise (Boellstorff et al., 2012). The researcher took many precautions to ensure an ethical study. Since this study is observational in nature and only pre-existing data was

collected, an informed consent was not necessary. To be certain that no risk was involved in the collection of the data, the researcher sought approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB). There was no intervention or interaction with the human subjects during the data collection process, nor did the researcher have access to any identifying information of the participants, so the researcher expected the IRB to find the current study to be ‘exempt’ from review. The form to request the IRB’s determination of Human Subject Research asked a series of questions about the nature of this study, none of which applied, so IRB stated that completing the form was not necessary to conduct this study. A screen shot of the questions prompted on the determination form is in the Appendices.

To maintain an ethically sound study, the researcher ensured that all participants remained anonymous. On the *PornFree* group forum, members use a self-created screenname that does not provide identifying information. The researcher kept screennames separate from the data to protect the posters from being identified. Also, if any identifying information was included in a posting, the researcher deleted it and replaced it with a noun descriptor in the file that contains the data.

The researcher also aimed to refrain from any deception, as suggested by Kozinets (2015). *PornFree* is publically searchable, which means anyone can search for the forum if they have internet access, but permission from the forum moderator was obtained by the researcher to further ensure ethical practice. The researcher was transparent with the moderator, explaining an informal description of the study, how data will be collected, and how confidentiality will be maintained. The moderator approved use of data from the forum *PornFree* and requested results from the study once it is complete. Screenshots of this conversation is provided in the Appendices. Also, if the researcher identified a posting as suggesting suicidal or homicidal

ideation or intent, she planned to report the username to the moderator. However, no such posting was discovered.

Data Analysis

The researcher copied all postings of the individuals that fit into the inclusionary criteria, and pasted them verbatim into an Excel document. Screenshots were not used to avoid screennames or any identifying information being included with the data. If the posting included any multimedia items, they were described within brackets on the document with the pasted text posting. The postings, as well the number of days the participant had been abstinent by the time of each posting, were collected, stored, and coded in a password protected Excel file that became the researcher's *Code Index*. The *Code Index* holds all raw postings. The *Code Index* was then printed out, as the researcher preferred to code on a hard copy of the data. A three-ringed-binder holds the printed data set and first cycle of codes derived from an emergent coding process. It also housed the second cycle codes once they were completed (Yin, 2016). Ultimately, the hard copy of the *Code Index* included highlighting that represented the thematic category that each post belonged to and handwritten codes beside the data that represented its corresponding subcategories. The printed *Code Index* also contained data that was initially included in the data set, but was later deemed as exclusionary during the coding process. Those data that were excluded were blacked out. In the following section, the procedures for attaining the thematic categories, subcategories, and supporting codes are discussed in detail.

Coding Process

Emergent and inductive coding was utilized for this research study. Yin (2016) suggests that there should be five phases of analyzing. The first stages are to compile the data,

disassemble the data, then reassemble it (Yin, 2016). The fourth and fifth phases are to interpret the data and conclude (Yin, 2016, pg. 186).

Compiling. Compiling begins in the data collection phase and consists of refining notes and organizing the data, but not necessarily putting anything in a permanent order (Yin, 2016). This phase was conducted during the creation of the *Code Index* and after all data was collected to establish a completed document.

Disassembling. After compilation, the data needs to be broken down into smaller pieces that will be used in the subsequent reassembling phase (Yin, 2016). The researcher used two forms of open coding to completely disassemble the data, which included descriptive and in-vivo. Saldana (2016) suggests that open coding such as this is an appropriate first step in analyzing ethnographies with a wide range of data. Descriptive codes are typically nouns or short phrases appointed to a general topic and In-vivo codes are direct words or phrases from the data, which can become codes themselves (Saldana, 2016). The process of disassembling was done so in the audit trail and was repeated multiple times in order to refine the labels or codes (Yin, 2016).

Reassembling. Reassembling is the act of reorganizing the pieces from the disassembling process into new, more meaningful groups and sequences (Yin, 2016). The researcher resumed coding with descriptive codes, as well as pattern codes and sub-coding, as described by Saldana (2016). To ascertain the emerging thematic categories, the researcher focused on pattern coding, which identifies similarly coded data and assists in discovering the major themes (Saldana, 2016). Sub-coding was then used to produce subcategories in each major theme discovered.

A constant comparison, which entails comparing pieces of data with the same code to determine whether they are analogous or unlike, was necessary to avoid discrepancies in the

data (Saldana, 2016). To obtain comprehensive results, the researcher used recursive coding by repeating the coding process and by utilizing the procedure of constant comparison.

Interpreting and concluding. A new narrative is to be created after the data is reassembled (Yin, 2016, pg. 187). In qualitative research, particularly in ethnographies (Saldana, 2016), interpreting the reassembled and coded data may lead to the researcher compiling the data in a fresh way. Interpretation and concluded findings will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Code Book

In order to ensure reliable coding, the researcher developed a code book to compile the subcategories found during the reassembling process. They were listed in tabular form (Yin, 2016, pg. 187) by hand in a notebook designated for coding and auditing. The tabs included the thematic categories and subsequent subcategories. Supporting codes were found after coding and noted in the audit trail. This process helped confirm that the coded data was consistently categorized (Saldana, 2016) and was provided to an outside auditor to give them information they needed when auditing the *Code Index*. Scanned copies of the *Code Book* and *Code Index* are presented in the Appendices.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research requires rigorous criteria to ensure reliability and validity. Trustworthiness in a researcher's investigations has been identified by many to be the key aspect of providing such rigor (Schwandt, 2007). To deliver trustworthiness, the researcher must follow four criteria, which includes the following: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Schwandt, 2007). The researcher provided assurances that her reconstruction of the data is parallel to the participants' views of said data to follow the credibility criteria. An

external auditor will be utilized to establish credibility. To address transferability, the researcher methodically discussed the findings and in what cases the results can be transferred to other cases and in what instances they cannot. Dependability focuses on the process of ensuring that all methods used in the study were logical and appropriately documented (Schwandt, 2007). Confirmability criteria promotes truthful interpretations of the data and proof that the findings were not of the researcher's imagination (Schwandt, 2007). In order to establish both dependability and confirmability, the researcher for this study completed a meticulous audit trail. The audit trail offers detailed explanations of the research process. The researcher retained the external auditor to review the audit trail, *Code Book*, and *Code Index*. The use of an external auditor provides the study with confirmation of codes, themes, and findings (Schwandt, 2007).

The external auditor was chosen because of her background in professional writing and research. She has professional training in qualitative inquiry and application, appropriate coding methods, and grant reading. She has also participated in multiple national, regional, and state presentations, many of which utilized qualitative inquiry. Beyond her professional experience, she was also intently interested in the topic of pornography and its potentially damaging effects to excessive users, so she had a clear understanding of the language and trends within the online community, *PornFree*. Based on her knowledge and experiences, the researcher was confident in her ability to accurately audit the *Code Book*, *Code Index*, and audit trail for this study.

The Researcher

One individual conducted this study. The researcher is a 30-year-old cisgender female. She does not belong to the community for which this study is based and has presented on topics related to this study at state and regional conferences. She has also provided individual counseling services to clients that report excessive pornography use and concerns related to

pornography. She has obtained professional and advanced training in the theory and application of qualitative research.

Conclusion

This chapter stipulates descriptions of the research methodology used to explore individuals' self-reported experiences that occur during pornography abstinence from the online group forum, *PornFree*. An Ethnographic Content Analysis was used to collect and analyze data. Postings made by individuals that have abstained for 30 days or more by the time of the data collection were collected retroactively on two dates, March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018, then the data was analyzed. The coding process followed the suggestions of Yin (2016, pg. 186), which include compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Data comprised of text postings from the online forum of individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography use. Lastly, methods to establish trustworthiness and an ethical approach in this qualitative research study were discussed.

Findings

This chapter presents a summary of the results from the analysis of the online community, *PornFree*. *PornFree* is a sub thread of the website Reddit.com and its purpose is for members to discuss their experiences abstaining from pornography. The nature of the thread is much like a self-help group, with members sharing their experiences and asking each other for opinions and advice (Kim et al., 2017). The researcher also discovered *PornFree* presents some of the primary therapeutic factors of group counseling (Yalom, 2005). For this research study, 700 postings made by 20 individuals on *PornFree* were collected and analyzed. On March 1st, 2018, and March 3rd, 2018, the researcher selected participants that had abstained from pornography for 30 days or more and collected all of their postings to *PornFree* that were made

during the time of abstinence. The data was analyzed by utilizing an Ethnographic Content Analysis and the purpose of this examination was to gather information on the nature of the postings of individuals that chose to abstain from pornography with the goal to better inform counselors and counselor educators for service of this population. This was done by investigating the participants' original and responsive postings within the *PornFree* group. The postings collected for this study ranged from four words to 2,267 words and covered countless topics. To better understand the nature of these postings, thematic categories and corresponding subcategories were exposed, along with trends that were common throughout the data set. In order to be included in the data set, postings had to be made by a member of *PornFree* that had abstained from pornography for 30 or more days at the time of the data collection. An explanation of validation and the process of analyzing the data is discussed in the following sections.

Validation

The researcher aimed to conduct an ethical study, so steps were taken to ensure such considerations. To avoid researcher bias, the researcher kept a detailed audit trail. An external auditor was utilized throughout the entire process of coding the data, discussing the results, and exploring the implications. The external auditor reviewed the *Code Book*, *Code Index*, and audit trail. All concerns of the external auditor were addressed by the researcher. Additionally, the *Code Book* and *Code Index* are available in the Appendices. Because initial analyzing occurred throughout the collection process, saturation was met when no new themes arose from the postings and there was enough information to accurately answer the research question (Bowen, 2008). If a posting replied to an unrelated topic, it was deleted from the data set. This resulted in 700 total postings from 20 participants.

Coding Process

The data were initially coded through a combination of In-Vivo and Descriptive coding. Descriptive codes are typically nouns or short phrases appointed to a general topic and in-vivo codes stem from exact phrases in the data (Saldana, 2016). By disassembling and reassembling the data set, as suggested by Yin (2016), this process resulted in three broad Thematic Categories: 1) Catharsis, 2) Imparting Information, and 3) Instillation of Hope. Initially, the researcher titled the thematic categories using general terms that represented what was occurring in the posting, such as ‘Updating,’ ‘Giving,’ and ‘Requesting.’ After the analysis occurred, the researcher discovered that the thematic categories align with the therapeutic factors within group counseling (Yalom, 2005) and they were renamed as such to more accurately embody the experience of the participants. Although this study is inductive in nature, the themes that arose from the data set align with the purpose of online self-help groups, which comprises of helping individuals remain accountable in their efforts and providing a space where they can anonymously process their experiences (Jasper et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2017). Furthermore, the data supports Yalom’s Therapeutic Factors (2005) that occur in group counseling. Three specific factors, Imparting Information, Catharsis, and Instillation of Hope, became the thematic category labels of the data set after analyzation (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005). The other therapeutic factors that are demonstrated throughout *PornFree* include Universality, Altruism, and Group Cohesiveness (Yalom, 2005) and will be discussed in the following chapter.

The researcher determined that the thematic categories from this study represent the areas addressed in self-help groups and in group counseling (Kim et al., 2017; Yalom, 2005), such as ‘Imparting Information,’ which is providing advice, support, etc., ‘Catharsis’ or updating the group on progress or setbacks, and ‘Instillation of Hope’ that includes requesting opinions,

resources, and more from other members of the group. Those discovered thematic categories were broken down into 10 specific Subcategories, which comprise of the following: 1) Catharsis: Positive, Negative, and General/Neutral, 2) Imparting Information: Advice, Insight, Resources, and Support/Encouragement, 3) Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice, Seeking Support/Encouragement, and Seeking Insight. Additionally, across all thematic categories and subcategories, common topics and trends were presented that also connect to previous studies regarding pornography use (Fall & Howard, 2015; Sun et al., 2016). Because of the length and depth of the data set's postings, many could potentially fit into multiple codes, but they were placed in the code that best represented their nature. For example, some postings provided the other members with advice and resources, but if the posting was more focused on the advice than the resources, they were coded as *Imparting Information: Advice* instead of *Imparting Information: Resources*. Presented in tabular form in Tables 2-6 are the frequencies and percentages of the postings as coded into their thematic categories and subcategories. The common topics within the subcategories are discussed and exact quotations will be used to maintain the authenticity of the postings. Thematic categories and subcategories were coded by hand, so all of the scanned pages of original data and two rounds of coding can be found in the Appendices, labeled as the *Code Index*. The Appendices also include the key used during coding, which is titled the *Code Book*.

Beyond the nature of the postings found on *PornFree*, the researcher examined the difference in the nature of the postings based on how many days abstinent the participants were at the time of data collection. The frequencies of postings and their corresponding thematic categories and subcategories per participant are presented in Tables 7-10.

Thematic Categories and Subcategories

Within the 700 postings, three thematic categories were discovered. In order of frequency, they include *Imparting Information* (77.6%, n=543), *Catharsis* (20.7%, n=145), and *Instillation of Hope* (1.7%, n=12). Table 2 presents the thematic categories and the subcategories and Table 3 shows the description for the codes that were used during analysis. The trends within the subcategories are provided in successive sections.

Table 2: Thematic Categories and Subcategories

Total Postings (N=700)					
Thematic Category	<i>n</i>	%	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%
Imparting Information	543	77.6%	Insight	274	39.1%
			Advice	134	19.1%
			Support/Encouragement	105	15.0%
			Resources	30	4.3%
Catharsis	145	20.7%	Positive	55	7.9%
			Negative	7	1.0%
			Neutral/General	83	11.9%
Instillation of Hope	12	1.7%	Seeking Advice	8	1.1%
			Seeking	2	0.3%
			Support/Encouragement		
			Seeking Insight	2	0.3%

Table 3: Description of Subcategories

Thematic Category	<i>N</i>	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%	Coding Description
Imparting Information	543	Insight	274	50.5%	Posting shares an opinion or personal experience to group members
		Advice	134	24.7%	Posting shares a specific piece of advice to group members
		Support/Encouragement	105	19.3%	Posting provides support or encouragement to group members
		Resources	30	5.5%	Posting provides a concrete resource to group members

Catharsis	14 5	Positive	55	37.9%	Posting provides update that expresses a generally positive experience
		Negative	7	4.8%	Posting provides update that expresses a generally negative experience
		Neutral/General	83	57.2%	Posting provides update that is either general, both positive and negative, or indicates a neutral experience
Instillation of Hope	12	Seeking Advice	8	66.7%	Posting seeks advice from group members
		Seeking Support/Encouragement	2	16.7%	Posting seeks support or encouragement from group members
		Seeking Insight	2	16.7%	Posting seeks specific opinion or experience of other group members

Imparting Information

Imparting Information had the highest frequency of the thematic categories with 543 of the 700 postings, which is 77.6% of the data set. Originally titled ‘*Giving*,’ the thematic category code of *Imparting Information* was given to postings that provided some sort of information, typically in response to an unseen question or prompt, although some were original postings that addressed the entire group with information. *Imparting Information* is a therapeutic factor in group counseling and refers to the process of providing the group with suggestions, advice, or direct guidance (Yalom, 2005). Four subcategories occurred within *Imparting Information*, with the largest subcategory being *Insight* at 39.1% of the total data set (n=274, N=700) and 50.5% of the thematic category (n=274, N=543). The next highest subcategory was *Advice* at 24.7% of the *Imparting Information* thematic category (n=134, N=543). *Support/Encouragement* came next at 19.3% (n=105), followed by *Resources* at 5.5% (n=30). Table 4 shows the frequencies and percentages of these four subcategories.

Table 4: Frequencies of Subcategories: ‘Imparting Information’

Thematic Category	<i>N</i>	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%
Imparting Information	543	Insight	274	50.5%
		Advice	134	24.7%
		Support/Encouragement	105	19.3%
		Resource	30	5.5%

Insight

The subcategory of *Imparting Information: Insight* was given to postings that were predominantly focused on providing a specific opinion or personal experience, many times in response to an unseen prompt or question from another *PornFree* member. This subcategory was originally titled ‘*Opinions/Experiences*,’ but was changed after the results were compared to the group counseling literature, which focused on ‘Insight’ as the term used to encompass one’s experiences and opinions on a subject (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2009). Although some of the postings within this subcategory could be seen as providing some type of advice, it was placed in the subcategory of *Insight* if the nature of the posting was more about sharing what their personal experience or opinion was instead of specific advice. *Imparting Information: Insight* was the most popular subcategory of all 10 with 39.1% of the data set ($n=274$, $N=700$). The personal opinions and experiences varied greatly, but some obvious trends arose in the topics addressed in these postings, such as discussing pornography as an addiction, when and how to discuss pornography use to significant others, and if masturbation should be a part of the abstinence process.

Pornography as an addiction. Conversations regarding whether participants viewed their excessive pornography use as an addiction were common. One participant posted,

“I like your response. I felt empowered after many years when I finally admitted that I was addicted to porn. For me, it's an addiction. But it really doesn't matter what you want to call it. It doesn't even matter if 100 different studies come out and say that porn is not addictive. All I know is that porn is harmful to me and I want it out of my life.”

Another member noted, “Porn detox is real,” while a third compared it to alcohol addiction by saying,

“When I truly came to feel and know that porn was not for me, it stopped becoming such a battle. Alcoholics Anonymous says if you're not sure you're an alcoholic, go and try some controlled drinking. And I recommend the same - if you're not sure porn is a problem for you, then maybe you have some good old-fashioned convincing to do.”

Other participants casually mentioned their pornography use as an addiction and overall, the term was used frequently.

Disclosing porn use to a significant other. Many participants discussed when and if it is appropriate to disclose their pornography use to their significant others. For example, one posting stated,

“...I've talked about porn very generally with my wife. She's known that it's something that has recurred for various reasons. She says she is open to talking more, hearing more in detail about my struggles and challenges, and I really, really appreciate where that's coming from. My challenge is that I anticipate that despite her openness and acceptance of me along with my struggle, I believe that as i share in more detail she'll become really anxious and body image issues will rear their heads more than they already do. One of my triggers is a (seemingly) significant libido mismatch between me and her. I believe that, in part, is influenced by her poor (very whacked) body image, (thanks, repressive

mother/religion). So you see the potential negative feedback loop that could occur, despite all good intentions? That being said, I intend to get more specific with her when I hit 6mo using pornfree, relapses or otherwise. PFree is a great tool and I'm really happy about what it can represent over time. Relapses or no, its a record of sustained effort. Seems important to bring that to the table if I want to really be accountable. Seems important as a record showing my struggle really isn't about her, it's about me overcoming my insecurities, laziness, bad habits. Right now, she asks me very generally, really low key, how I'm doing, or how I'm feeling. Maybe once every 4-5 months. It felt great 3 days ago to let her know things were going very well, knowing I was at 30something days totally clean. Not kinda clean, not some pretty-okay-compared-to-most-dudes clean. Totally clean. But that's my experience. I'm certain that each partnership/marriage has its peculiarities and communication style. In the short run, I've got nothing specific for you. But long run, it seems like increasing transparency is good.”

Those that discuss disclosing their pornography use to their significant others are most frequently for it, with very few postings advising against it.

Masturbation. *PornFree* is a forum for those that choose to abstain from pornography, but there is no mention of whether participants should give up masturbation as well. It is a highly debated topic within the community, as there is another forum on Reddit.com called *NoFap* that adamantly promotes no pornography or masturbation. Some *PornFree* members believe abstaining from pornography and masturbation, even for just a small amount of time, is a good way to “reset” their minds and bodies, as expressed by the comment,

“Looking at porn and masturbating are too intertwined to expect that fapping [masturbation] won't increase your temptation to also look at porn. There is nothing

wrong with giving both a break for a while. One way I'm trying to approach it is that looking at porn was very habitual for me. Most of the times, I wasn't really even in the mood to do either, but out of habit I would start looking at porn which would get me aroused and then I would masturbate. Because the fapping usually comes from looking at porn, when you stop looking at porn, you will probably feel less need to masturbate. I made a rule for myself to not cause a new habit out of masturbating. I don't want it to be something that I just do out of some routine. Instead, if I get aroused naturally (such as waking up in the morning with an erection), then maybe I will take care of business. But, I'm not going to force myself to get hard just because I mentally feel like I need to do things on some schedule.”

However, most of the members are neutral on the matter. One participant said, “As for masturbation, I think it takes some trial and error to figure out what works for you. I have come to the conclusion that it's best not to overthink it.” Another post stated,

“... Eating is necessary to survive, masturbation is not. What I wanted to show you is that even the most necessary activity will be wrong when done too much. And porn and masturbation come hand in hand for most of people, so it's obvious that people think whether they should do it and how often. Hence you asking this question, right?”

A participant that once tried to abstain from masturbation as well as pornography commented,

“I gave noFap an honest try. I did 90 days and then I gave it a benefit of a doubt and continued for another 100 days. It did diddly-squat for me. Not a single one of the ‘super powers’ I was lured in with manifested even slightly. It's just a huge circle-jerk, ironically, which I wouldn't mind so much, that's how 99% of reddit works. But noFap is also hugely anti-sexual. I have tons of guilt and shame surrounding my sexuality already,

I don't need an extra helping. So yea, I agree that pornfree should be its own thing without any comparison to noFap. But when asked, I won't hesitate to shit on that dishonest pseudo-religion.”

General experiences. Postings that fit into this trend revolved around a member describing their experiences before, during, or after abstinence. For example, one participant compared his brain on porn to a possession. The participant stated,

“Everybody's got a collection of competing interests, many of which are at cross-purposes to each other. Isn't it crazy that difference between being driven by the pornbrain and then waking up back in your own brain the next morning? It's no wonder people can aptly describe the experience as possession, or being haunted.”

Another common trend within the experiences of those abstaining is discussions about mental health concerns. One participant answered another member's question about his depression, stating,

“Short answer: In my case, depression is probably the cause, porn the symptom. Long answer: It's a bit muddly. I started using porn before I had serious mental problems but I don't think it would have escalated to the same degree over the years if I had been healthy and would have had romantic and sexual success. Yes, since I quit porn, my mental health has improved but there are a lot of other factors I changed since then that seem far more likely to be responsible for improving my situation. I think quitting porn is generally advisable but it won't have massive health benefits (or any huge benefits in general) on its own.”

One member responded to a prompt about what has changed since he became abstinent from pornography. He had been 246 days abstinent at the time of the response,

“Less objectification of women and better relationships with them. I actually got together with my current girlfriend of 2+ years when I was first starting out on this journey. My relationships with other women who are my friends, colleagues, etc. have also vastly improved. I am learning to sexualize women in a healthy way. I still find women other than my girlfriend attractive, but I no longer see some girls as ‘super attractive’ and the rest as ‘meh’. I actually find that I'm attracted to almost all of them in some way, and beyond just their looks, also to their quirks and personalities. More realistic expectations about sex, and a new approach to it that is more spiritual, emotional and overall feels more mature. Still a work in progress but I feel good about the path I'm on. Less fear about sex and physical intimacy in general. Less anxiety, depression, and brain fog. I still have anxiety some days but on this current streak I'm really much more clear-headed than I ever remember being. Exercise, healthy diet, and a meditation practice help too I think, but I really do think cutting out porn makes a noticeable difference. Feel better about myself as a person and as a man. So all in all it's been well worth it.”

Advice

The subcategory of *Imparting Information: Advice* included postings that provided specific advice to members. Although these postings may have included encouragement or insight, the nature of the posting was mostly focused on advice giving. *Imparting Information: Advice* accounts for 24.7% of the *Imparting Information* thematic category (n=134, N=543) and 19.1% of the entire data set (n=134, N=700). The advice given in these postings revolved around the topics of coping skills, relapse prevention, counseling, and using *PornFree* as a tool.

Coping skills and relapse prevention. Participants advised other members on various coping skills to deal with the negative effects of abstinence and how to avoid relapsing. One posting said,

“You can do it! :) Analyze what time of the day is critical for you. Start with that and then think what you should do instead. For example workout, read some self improvements books, search new music, hang out with friends, go on a hike....its so much to live instead of being at home watching porn. Best is to stay busy from the moment you wake up till when you fall asleep. Use that libido on your girlfriend and show her your animal drive, she'll sure love it!”

Another participant advised, “-Don't look photos of Girls. Plus avoid looking half-naked girls in the streets. -Use internet filters. -Acknowledge why you shouldn't watch Porn every time you crave. -Never be unhappy and depressed. If you are depressed, be aware that you are vulnerable to Porn.”

Using milestones and rewarding those milestones as a tool was also a trend within *Imparting Information: Advice*. For example, one participant said,

“Setting milestones is important during recovery. It shows that we are engaged in planning our recovery, it marks our progress, and it signifies a fulfillment of a goal. It should be a motivator for each of us. Milestones will be different for each of us. For some, a milestone may be one week or one month. Maybe it's shorter or maybe it's longer. I'm presently at 35 days. My next milestone is 60 days. When you achieve a milestone, revisit your plan, think about your progress, and set a new milestone to reach. Also, don't forget to set up a reward for each milestone reached. You deserve it. You worked hard for it. Recovery isn't just a period of great challenge and difficulty. It is also

a time to live life and celebrate your successes. Rewards will be different for each of us. I bought a new book when I hit 30 days. When I hit 60 days, I'm going hiking in the Allegheny Mountains. Try setting your reward at the same time you set your milestone so that you have something to aim for. So, what's your milestone and what will your reward be?"

Some other coping skills advised throughout the data include meditation, dating, finding new hobbies, creativity, accountability, and more.

Counseling. Counseling and related programs were mentioned as possible strategies multiple times within this data set. For example, one participant said,

"A therapist is a good bet. Your general practitioner could also be open to it. There are 12-step groups (SAA and SLAA) that are very helpful if you're open to that."

Sex Addicts Anonymous was brought up by another member that stated,

"Have you considered attending Sex Addicts Anonymous meetings? Not only would those meetings provide you with recovery tools, but you would be able to connect with others who won't cause you to feel shame. Also, your addiction seems to have a porn component, but it also reaches into other areas of sex addiction. Give it some thought."

Using *PornFree*. Because so many members have experienced the benefits of posting onto the *PornFree* forum, many suggested it as an important tool for new or disengaged members. One member posted,

"Yes, talking about it will be of immense help to you. No need to feel embarrassed.

Sharing is one of the best ways to learn, grown, and cast off the shame that we feel. Good luck!"

Another participant discussed the usefulness of reading the postings on *PornFree*. He said,

“Also, browsing through peoples posts might give you an amplified perspective of the real impact of porn in real peoples lives, beyond just conflict with cultural norms, countless wasted hours, and blunted cognitive abilities.”

General advice. Much of the advice given to other members on *PornFree* is rather general in nature and covers many areas. Some of it focuses on avoiding relapse, like one participant’s statement, “It comes in waves. Just ride it out and it will pass. Just be extra careful to not inch toward it or you will surely get swept away.” That same participant also advised working out by saying,

“...One thing that helps fight addiction is to get out of your old routines. Replace the time that you would have spent in the unhealthy activities with something positive. Go to a gym, or get involved in something. Change your life and be proud of yourself for doing it!”

Another participant discussed the importance of discovering a new hobby. He posted, “Next step is to find something (not someone) that makes you happy. Even if it takes a lot of hard work, trial and error and patience to find it. Porn is an instant fix, things that are truly worthwhile only come through patience and persistence. But those who seek tend to find.”

Other posts focused on self-reflection, like one participant’s posting that stated, “You must acknowledge why are you here during this journey my fellow friends. If you learn your cause, you will be extremely strong. You need to break these chains.”

Support/Encouragement

The subcategory *Imparting Information: Support/Encouragement* ranked third for most common subcategory within the entire data set at 15.0% (n=105, N=700) and 19.3% in the *Imparting Information* thematic category (n=105, N=543). This subcategory included postings that were intended to support or encourage other members in *PornFree*. Some of the postings within the subcategory of *Imparting Information: Support/Encouragement* provide advice or insight, but the main element of the post is to provide support. Providing community, encouraging statements, and motivation were trends found within the *Support/Encouragement* subcategory.

Community. Several postings showed support by agreeing with what another member said or by relating to another member. For instance, one member said to another, “both you and I almost caved in. Keep going strong man!!!!” One participant agreed with a member’s perspective and replied,

“Yes! My biggest problem with porn is that it's life negative... it's like an escape from life. I don't want to escape from life. I want to embrace it. I like the way you put it. Thanks for sharing.”

Other comments were just general support to the entire group, embracing the community feel of it. One participant posted,

“Give yourself an applause. Here's why... ‘My good friend, dont be hard on yourself. For starters you are standing up to a difficult problem but you know youve got what it takes to beat it. And for second, you have to admire your courage trying to battle this. Hey, no one said it will be easy. We’re all in this together! Don’t give up. And its never too late! Btw, give yourself an applause!!”

'Keep it up.' When a member posts an update on how they are doing, many times other members will encourage them with statements such as, "Keep it going! The mind wants its fix and will learn to adapt in time." Another statement following this theme was, "Congratulations! I knew you were going to make it to this milestone. You've made tremendous progress. Keep it going!" Support in this form was used often, with many comments like the following,

"Remember it's a process, starting to figure it out is better than being stuck in an endless loop. I know that after this time, you'll start to recognize the signs and reign it in before it's too late. Keep at it, dude!"

Motivation. Postings that revolved around motivation were typically responses to members that had either relapsed or were concerned of relapsing. For instance, one participant stated, "Luck brother! Everybody here wants you to win today!" Motivation comments also came in forms such as,

"Great post, it was a great read. I really like the fact that you're focusing in on the internal changes and not necessarily just white knuckling porn out of your life. I have been on this journey for about 3 years and have built some good streaks but also relapsed many a time. Now the goal is to quit porn for good but it really took some good hard relapsing for me to convince myself that porn really wasn't for me. I like to say that I prefer an honest relapse to a fake recovery. So I had a few honest relapses, and now I'm having an honest recovery. A quote I like is – 'don't try to be wise before experience'. Also funny about your brother having porn. I remember finding porn on my brother's computer when we were both teenagers. Odds are that most young guys look at porn, sure, but I reckon odds are even higher that it runs in the same family. Anyway, congratulations mate. Thanks for sharing. :)"

General support. The postings that are within this general theme of *Imparting Information: Support/Encouragement* were not specific enough to be included in one of the other themes, such as, “Keep going, the flatline can be an absolute nightmare and feel impossible but in the long run it’ll all be worth it” and, “You’ve made a great decision. Welcome to the rest of your life, Regular You.”

Resources

The subcategory of *Imparting Information: Resources* was focused on providing the group members with a particular resource. Some of the other subcategories may include resources, but the essence of those that belong in *Imparting Information: Resources* are focused purely on giving the group information regarding a specific resource. Because of this stipulation, this subcategory only represents 5.5% of *Imparting Information* (n=30, N=543) and 4.3% of the entire data set (n=30, N=700).

PornFree offers a sidebar with resources linked. Many participants posted about utilizing those, such as, “Have a look at the resources in the sidebar, if you haven't yet.” In the sidebar is a link to the website called Your Brain on Porn that has a video series available on it, a link to an mp3 that helps with meditation, and a link to an old post that is called, ‘Concrete Tips for Quitting Porn.’ Podcasts were also mentioned as a resource by many members, particularly a podcast called “Pornfree Radio.” Fight The New Drug’s website was also brought up by many members, as well as the videos that famous ex-football player Terry Crews created after he publicly disclosed to being addicted to pornography. The book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl, was discussed by one member and various motivational quotes and sayings were also popular within the data set.

Catharsis

The thematic theme of *Catharsis* was ranked as the second most common thematic category with 20.7% of the total postings (n=145, N=700). Originally, the *Catharsis* thematic category was labeled ‘Updating,’ but was later changed to *Catharsis* to reflect the expression of feelings that occurs in group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009). The postings that were coded as part of the *Catharsis* thematic category were predominantly centered on updating the group on their progress. Three subcategories surfaced from *Catharsis* and include positive, negative, and neutral/general updates. *Catharsis: Neutral/General* represented the majority of the thematic theme *Catharsis* with 57.2% (n=83, N=145). The *Positive* subcategory was second largest at 37.9% with 55 postings of the 143. *Catharsis: Negative* was the smallest of this thematic category at 4.8% (n=7, N=143). Table 5 shows the three subcategories’ frequencies and percentages.

Table 5: Frequencies of Subcategories: ‘Catharsis’

Thematic Category	N	Subcategory	n	%
Catharsis	145	Positive	55	37.9%
		Negative	7	4.8%
		Neutral/General	83	57.2%

Neutral/General

The *Catharsis: Neutral/General* subcategory included postings that either included positive and negative comments about their progress or the comments were neutral or general in nature. Representing 57.2% of the *Catharsis* thematic category (n=83, N=145) and 11.9% of the entire data set (n=83, N=700), *Neutral/General* updates were the most common type of update.

Includes positives and negatives. Some updates by members of *PornFree* would include both positive and negative comments within them. An example of this comes from a participant's posting that states,

“Keeping busy but I have also noticed my steady routine of meditating and journaling is helping me to realize that while I do not have control over every thought that pops into my head, I have the choice whether or not to act on it. Also that every emotional state is temporary; urges are the same, they will pass.”

Another participant discussed his experience at 263 days abstinent with the comment, “This journey has been crazy - Crazy good. Right now I'm struggling a bit, sometimes the weight of all this is just too much for me. That's honest. But at the same time I feel strong. I'm not near ready to give up, and know that I don't have to. I can't put words to it, they just don't do it justice. But there are some really crazy things going on in my life right now, things that are crazy good. I don't mean that it's always a cakewalk or I'm walking around with a grin all the time, but, there's something really deep going on inside of me and in my life. I attribute it to my openness towards life, and to new experiences, both good and bad. Porn has no place in that for me. I'm just happy to be alive. Thanks folks.”

‘Check-in.’ A core component of *PornFree* is for members to ‘check-in’ and discuss what’s been going on during the abstinence process. Moderators of the group will occasionally assign a challenge and request that those that participate in the challenge to check-in throughout. An example of a monthly challenge check-in is, “Checking in for the second half of February! My girlfriend and I are tackling this together!” Other check-ins may occur when a member just wants to update the group on how they are doing based on how many days they have been

abstinent. For example, one participant wrote on day 82 of his abstinence, “Checking in. Still good.” Another participant describes his experience more in-depth by posting,

“Day 23 - First off a shoutout to all of you. The past week has been especially rough not just because of porn and having this community has been huge. This is more just so I can get this out in writing, because I'm too emotionally drained to get into detail. The past 24 hours has been especially rough, but I'm still going and that's what's important. We can all do this. I admire all of you deeply, and that has helped keep me going. It takes a lot of balls to look a problem in the eye and say I'm going to fix this. The balls that many people in this world think they have when in reality, they don't. That's all I got. Stay strong and much love.”

Neutral. Some updates do not necessarily fit into a positive or negative category, but rather present with more of a neutral or general nature. For instance, one participant posted, “I am glad I found this subreddit before it is too late.” And others are just thoughts that the participant wants to share with the group. An example of a neutral update is when a participant posted at 194 days abstinent,

“Addiction is real, but so is self-control and discipline. As someone who has an addictive personality and could have rolled with the worst addict on here, I have some thoughts. You can lean on your impulses, that are real, and use the medical diagnoses of addiction to continue down a destructive, guilt-ridden path. OR You can use your higher level thinking to A) understand that you have these impulses and strong desires that you need to overcome AND B) That you can have the self-control to just say no. I went from a hardcore, drug-induced, junkie in my late teens to a sober person in one night. I had tried to quit many times and relapsed, but this one night I woke up and just decided that I

could die like this or make a change. I wanted a change. A university degree, 12 years sobriety (from drugs) later, and never one relapse. I often wondered why that time was different. Why on that singular night and every night that followed was my ability to avoid drugs opened to me? Upon reflection, I found that it was because I truly wanted to stop. In my mind, my higher order of thoughts, I acknowledged the harm I was causing and took responsibility for it. I also took personal responsibility for my actions and made intention to never do it again. You can let the fact that you're a chemically impulsive person drive your inability to stop or to excuse your relapses. Or, you can use your intelligence to understand how you're wired, stop making excuses, and use self-control to allow you to drive your life again. At the end of the day, you have to really want it. Saying you want it doesn't mean shit. It's like an obese person who constantly moans that they want to get in shape. No they don't. If they did, they wouldn't moan. They would buy healthy food and start working out. Instead of them talking about doing something, people would come to them and say, wow, you're losing weight.”

Positive

Positive updates were the second most common type of updates in this particular data set with 37.9% of the *Catharsis* thematic category (n=55, N=145) and 7.9% of the entire data set (n=55, N=700). This subcategory of *Catharsis: Positive* was assigned to the updates that were principally positive in nature. There were specific noted trends within the positive updates, such as reported positive changes and less desire to use pornography.

Positive changes. One participant reported that he has noticed his frustration levels decreasing. He said,

“Checking in. Will try to post regular updates. I'm in this for the long haul. 11/6: I have more energy, it's easier to get out of the house, and I get less frustrated with complicated tasks at work...”

Another participant stated,

“Effects this sub can have - I dunno if it's from not using anymore, but now whenever I go outside I notice how vibrant the sky is, each and every time. I never noticed this before. Cool feeling.”

One *PornFree* member reported feeling more at peace by saying,

“...Gonna be a quick one. Lots and lots of gratitude to hand out. Gratitude for all the people in my corner (this sub reddit, my karate instructor, my family, my friends, my girlfriend, my girlfriend's friends, my band, etc. etc.) And gratitude to God (using the term liberally here) for all the wonderful things that have been given to me. Feeling really peaceful and grateful today. Thanks folks.”

Another participant celebrated a milestone by deleting the pornography he kept on his computer. He stated,

“Well, I just performed my olympic event. I deleted the stash. 500gb! All gone and it feels great. By the way, the special occasion was that I talked with my wife about my struggles last night. This feels like a bit of a victory lap!”

Less desire to use pornography. Many participants claimed to have less desire to use pornography after abstaining. One posted,

“40 Days Clean: My Thoughts - Honestly don't remember the last time I reached this amount of days to be honest, I feel so clear headed yet everyday is an emotional roller coaster. There is still some attraction to porn but it's at an all time low. Amazingly

enough I only had one minor slip up this month, caught myself admiring a profile on fb but immediately came to my senses. Started school this year as well so that also is tremendously helping me stay pornfree. Hope everyone is doing well today!”

Another celebrated hitting three weeks without using pornography by posting, “Three weeks today! Well, I'm at 3 weeks today, and I feel great about it. To me, the first couple of days are always the most difficult. It becomes a bit easier every single day because it feels like caving now would be throwing away everything I've been working for in this battle. I can honestly say that I'm getting to the point where I don't even really think about it much anymore. It's like the temptation isn't even really there. The last couple of weeks have been really stressful for other reasons, and I haven't even really considered using porn as a way to cope. My past failures have taught me my likely triggers, so I try to stay clear of the things that caused me to fail before. There are no failures as long as you learn something from it! I'm in such a good place with this all right now and although I have a long ways to go, I'm starting to think that this may actually be the time where I finally win this war forever.”

Negative

The least common subcategory of *Catharsis* is fully negative updates. *Catharsis: Negative* accounts for 4.8% of the *Catharsis* thematic category (n=7, N=145), and only 1.0% of the entire data set (n=7, N=700). To be coded as *Negative*, the posting had to be a comment that is considered as a negative experience. One participant said, “Day 52 - still flatlining, depressed. Is this normal?” Another described his issues with sexuality after giving up pornography by posting,

“I hate Valentine's Day. I hate that it makes me feel even lonelier than usual. I hate that I fall for this made-up, corporate holiday that has no meaning. I hate that porn still seems like salvation, offering at least the illusion of human companionship and sexuality. I hate that I can't barely masturbate to my fantasy anymore because I have no reference anymore and my brain rejects it all as implausible. Masturbation is the only form of sexuality I can experience, I don't want to lose it.”

Other negative experiences reported in the data included “withdrawal symptoms,” lower sex drive, and shame of past pornography use.

Instillation of Hope

Instillation of Hope was the least common thematic category and required a specific request made in the posting to be coded as such. During the reassembling phase of coding, this thematic category was broadly titled ‘*Requesting*.’ The name of the thematic category was later changed to *Instillation of Hope*, as the nature of the postings within it align with Yalom’s curative factor of the same name (2005). *Instillation of Hope* is defined as a desire for feelings of hope about one’s concerns in group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005), and accurately represents the postings of members that are seeking ideas that will improve their hopelessness in regards to pornography use. Many postings in the entire data set included a request, but were coded into different thematic categories because requesting, or seeking *Instillation of Hope*, was not the main purpose. Those that were predominantly *Instillation of Hope* accounted for only 1.7% of the data set (n=12, N=700). The subcategories found within *Instillation of Hope* were *Seeking Advice*, *Seeking Support/Encouragement*, and *Seeking Insight*. *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice* was the most common in this thematic category at 66.7% (n=8, N=12), followed by *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Support/Encouragement* at 16.7% (n=2,

N=12), and *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Insight* at 16.7% (n=2, N=12). During the second round of coding, the researcher expected to find the subcategory of *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Resources*, but no postings specifically requested a resource. Table 6 provides the frequencies and percentages of these subcategories.

Table 6: Frequencies of Subcategories: ‘Instillation of Hope’

Thematic Category	<i>N</i>	Subcategory	<i>n</i>	%
Instillation of Hope	12	Seeking Advice	8	66.7%
		Seeking	2	16.7%
		Support/Encouragement		
		Seeking Insight	2	16.7%

Seeking Advice.

This subcategory was most popular in postings that were identified as *Instillation of Hope* at 66.7% (n=8, N=12). *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice* represented 1.1% of the entire data set (n=8, N=700). The postings that were placed in this subcategory were those that prompted a specific need for advice for the poster. Some common topics within the *Seeking Advice* subcategory were requesting advice about masturbation, relapse prevention, and general concerns.

Masturbation. One participant prompted the group for how to use masturbation in a healthy manner. He asked,

“Does anyone have a recommendation for a good balance of masturbation that gives you some of the benefits of occasional abstinence but also keeps your sexual energy in check?”

Relapse prevention. Sometimes, members of *PornFree* reached out to other members for advice on how to avoid relapsing. One member asked,

“Tips to prevent a slip up from turning into a full blown binge? After periods of brief sobriety, my relapses almost never constitute just a slip up , which I might categorize as a short, perhaps low intensity, encounter with porn. Rather, my relapses usually become three or four day affairs where I look at porn multiple time a day, with increasingly intense videos. Usually, my relapse begins as a slip up, and there seems to be a small window where I might be able to stave off a full blown binge, but it never happens. I suppose I just feel bad about myself for slipping up and sometimes will just say, ‘what's the point.’ Or, I will quickly see that the underlying stressor that contributed to the slip up hasn't gone away by looking at porn, which then causes me to feel worthless.

I would consider it great progress for myself if I could better control my relapses and limit the damage created by them. Anyone have tips and pointers for me so that I can stop having so many binges?”

Another member was concerned about how to get over a hangover, since his previous coping skill was to watch pornography. He prompted the group,

“So throughout this process the times I relapse are when I'm hungover. Probably 80% of my relapses are through this... Does anyone have any advice on how to handle hangovers? I know I need to make some strategies, and I've made so much progress I would hate to have it all for naught because I drank too much one night. How do you guys handle this? Thanks in advance for the advice. Much love.”

General concerns. New members occasionally had concerns about what they were experiencing in the abstinence process. One member in particular was concerned about what the group calls “rebooting,” which refers to the process of returning to a “normal” sex-drive, where sexual acts with another person is the main sexual desire, not pornography. He asked,

“Is this progress? Of most recent note I am unsure what to think about this. I wasn't aware to the amount of sexual focus and nudity in the Netflix exclusive show *Altered Carbon* but there is plenty of it. Surprisingly though I have found that I have reacted to it rather neutrally. I don't give it much thought during or afterwards and do not feel the drive to watch more of the show beyond wanting to know more about the story. Is this the stage people call rebooting? I ask because after I realized how unresponsive I have been to the sexual content of the show I realize that I haven't found anything sexually stimulating in over a week. In general I haven't found much of a desire to turn to porn or masturbation beyond fleeting thoughts.”

Seeking Support/Encouragement.

Only two postings requested support or encouragement from the group, representing 16.7% of the *Instillation of Hope* thematic category (n=2, N=12). One stated, “I'm typing in this box because I'm right about to lose it.” The other prompted a response of support or encouragement from the group regarding an old song that he relates to pornography use.

Seeking Insight.

The final subcategory within *Instillation of Hope* was *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Insight*. Two postings of the 12 in this thematic category specifically asked for just an opinion or example of an experience from the other group members. Because there are various ways to abstain from pornography, two members of *PornFree* questioned the group for opinions on abstinence from masturbation. One participant posted,

“Maybe masterbation is getting out of hand too... Hi people, just gonna throw my thoughts out there on this post. Lately I've been struggling a bit with some cravings and images flashing in my head, so I've recurred to masturbating more frequently this past

week (3 times overall). Since I've gone pornfree, I had reduced my frequency to around once a week, although before that I was doing it around once a day. I don't know if I should be worried to start compulsively masturbating, or if it's ok to have some periods of increased frequency. What are your thoughts on this?"

The other participant's question about masturbation stated,

"...Today marks 90 days since I last watched porn and/or masturbated, the 'standard' recommended reboot time. And now, I'm unsure what to do next. I had always intended to masturbate again and just go pornfree after my reboot was complete, however, I'm not sure if that is already the case. I don't feel any different at all, I never experience morning wood or spontaneous erections and keeping my hands off of my bits has been easy, I never had any urges at all. Someone suggested a few days ago that this might mean that I still need more time to reboot. I feel that masturbation might actually be beneficial at this point because I went through those 90 days by pretty much repressing any sexual thoughts at all and I suspect that might have caused my flatline. On the other hand, I don't want to ruin what healing progress I might have made so far."

Individual Differences of Participants' Postings

Saturation was met after the researcher collected all of the postings of 20 individuals from the forum *PornFree*. Along with the postings, the amount of time each participant was abstinent from pornography at the time of data collection was included in the data. All participants had been abstinent for at least 30 days at the time of data collection. To further understand the nature of the postings in relation to the length of abstinence, Table 7 shows each participants' days of abstinence at the time of data collection, number of posts, and frequency of each thematic category. Those that were abstinent longer did not always present with more

postings. The highest number of postings (n=158) was posted by the participant that had been abstinent the third longest (245 days). The participant that had been abstinent the longest (491 days) had the fifth highest number of postings (n=56).

Table 7: Frequencies of Thematic Categories Based on Abstinence Amount

Days Abstinent	Total Postings	Imparting Information	Catharsis	Instillation of Hope
37	27	24	3	0
38	1	0	1	0
39	69	48	19	2
40	12	1	9	2
41	10	7	3	0
49	5	2	2	1
49	59	47	11	1
51	1	0	1	0
58	6	5	1	0
60	8	7	1	0
65	50	40	10	0
66	3	1	2	0
70	5	1	4	0
82	6	4	2	0
142	29	21	8	0
150	43	39	4	0
194	1	0	1	0
245	158	137	20	1
263	151	118	32	1
491	56	41	11	4

Imparting Information

To expand on the individual differences in the thematic categories of postings, the following table, Table 8, presents the frequencies of *Imparting Information* subcategories based on participants' length of abstinence.

Table 8: Frequencies of Subcategories Based on Abstinence Amount: 'Imparting Information'

Days Abstinent	Total in Imparting Information	Insight	Advice	Support/Encouragement	Resources
37	24	10	10	4	0
38	0	0	0	0	0
39	48	11	20	10	7
40	1	0	0	1	0
41	7	4	0	3	0
49	2	0	0	1	1
49	47	18	11	16	2
51	0	0	0	0	0
58	5	2	0	3	0
60	7	2	3	2	0
65	40	28	5	7	0
66	1	1	0	0	0
70	1	0	1	0	0
82	4	0	0	2	2
142	21	16	3	1	1
150	39	10	16	13	0
194	0	0	0	0	0
245	137	40	50	35	12
263	118	98	11	6	3
491	41	34	4	1	2

Catharsis

The table below, Table 9, shows the frequencies of the *Catharsis* subcategories based on how long the participants were abstinent at the time of data collection.

Table 9: Frequencies of Subcategories Based on Abstinence Amount: ‘Catharsis’

Days Abstinent	Total in Catharsis	Positive	Negative	Neutral/General
37	3	2	0	1
38	1	1	0	0
39	19	8	0	11
40	9	2	0	7
41	3	2	0	1
49	2	0	0	2
49	11	5	0	6

51	1	0	1	0
58	1	0	0	1
60	1	1	0	0
65	10	2	0	8
66	2	1	0	1
70	4	2	0	2
82	2	0	0	2
142	8	5	1	2
150	4	1	1	2
194	1	0	0	1
245	20	9	0	11
263	32	14	0	18
491	11	0	4	7

Instillation of Hope

The frequencies of the *Instillation of Hope* subcategories are listed below in Table 10.

Table 10: Frequencies of Subcategories Based on Abstinence Amount: ‘Instillation of Hope’

Days Abstinent	Total in Instillation of Hope	Seeking Advice	Seeking Support/Encouragement	Seeking Insight
37	0	0	0	0
38	0	0	0	0
39	2	2	0	0
40	2	2	0	0
41	0	0	0	0
49	1	0	0	1
49	1	0	1	0
51	0	0	0	0
58	0	0	0	0
60	0	0	0	0
65	0	0	0	0
66	0	0	0	0

70	0	0	0	0
82	0	0	0	0
142	0	0	0	0
150	0	0	0	0
194	0	0	0	0
245	1	1	0	0
263	1	0	1	1
491	4	3	0	0

Unique Finding

PornFree has multiple moderators to maintain the forum. They delete abusive comments, prompt discussions, and create challenges for the members. At some point in time, a moderator conducted a quantitative study within *PornFree*. One posting from the collected data set revealed the results from that study, which provides some basic information from the entire *PornFree* community. Included in the study are topics such as why they chose to abstain from pornography, when they first began using porn, what causes relapses, and much more. Although the study is amateur, the results provide a unique perspective into the culture of *PornFree* and pornography use in general. The participant stated,

“...This post is a discussion and brief analysis of the second pornfree survey that was conducted between February 3 and February 6, 2018. This survey was designed for the benefit of the pornfree subreddit so that we can better understand our struggles with porn, and learn better strategies in our recovery. It is my hope that the response from the survey will drive a healthy discussion in this community. The full results of the second survey can be found here...Feel free to read through this analysis of the second survey and provide your comments below. Question 1 of the survey asks respondents at what age they started regularly viewing porn. The highest response, at 22%, was 13 years of age, and a whopping 77% of all respondents started regularly viewing porn between the ages

of 12 and 16. This clearly illustrates that a porn addiction strikes most individuals when they are in their youth. Question 2 asks respondents how frequently they viewed porn before deciding to live pornfree. The highest response, at 60%, was daily. Next, was multiple days per week, at 37%. Question 3 asks respondents which feelings they regularly experience before viewing pornography. The highest answer, at 85%, is boredom. Next are feelings of loneliness and stress, each at 70%. This is where the hard work should come in for each of us. If 85% of us feel bored just before we act out, then there are things we can do to right now to address these feelings. What are some ideas to address our boredom, loneliness, and stress? Question 4 asks which factor is the primary contributor to acting out. Tied at 28% are lack of a social life and lack of purpose in life. As to the latter, it appears many of us need to do some soul searching and discover who we are and what our place is in this world. Question 5 asks whether the respondent has had the realization that he is heading toward a relapse before acting out. If so, when does that realization occur? 45% of respondents said minutes before the relapse occurs. 31% said hours before the relapse, and 11% said one to two days before the relapse. These results are interesting. In my experience, a sign of progress in recovery is being able to recognize one's emotional needs and respond to them in a healthy way. Most people who have been successful in their recovery notice that they are slipping days in advance of a possible relapse. Having this realization means that they are able to respond to their emotions in a healthy way before they get too close to the point of no return. Question 6 asks how many days it takes to begin a new sobriety streak after a relapse. 35% of respondents say that it takes 2 to 3 days. A total of 70% of respondents say that it takes anywhere from 2 to 3 days to more than 2 weeks! This suggests that it is a big challenge

to secure one's footing after a relapse. This is also a reminder that when your brain says, "just do it this once, and that will be all," your brain is lying to you. If there is a positive result to this question, it's that 30% of respondents were able to return to a sobriety streak within one day of a relapse. Question 7 asks which activities helped the respondent return to sobriety after a relapse. The highest response, at 68%, was visiting the pornfree subreddit or a similar forum. This reaffirms the idea that sharing your struggles with others is a key component for overcoming your porn addiction. Questions 8 through 10 concern whether the respondents have personally shared their struggles with another person, as discussed at the beginning of this post. Question 11 asks whether the respondent regularly sets a weekly or monthly milestone while in recovery. 43% of respondents set milestones while 57% do not. For those who do set milestones, Question 12 asks whether the respondent creates a reward for achieving the milestone. 29% of respondents create a reward while 71% do not. [Note: I am a big believer of setting milestones and rewards] Question 13 asks what time the respondent goes to bed. A full 52% go to bed between 10:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. 35% go to bed after midnight. If you've heard the old phrase that nothing good ever happens after midnight, perhaps it's worth considering if your porn use increases after midnight. Question 14 asks the respondent whether he/she finds a correlation between playing video games and using porn. 25% say yes and 45% say no. 30% say they don't play video games. Therefore, of the individuals in the survey who play video games, 35% found a correlation between playing video games and their porn use. That is a sizeable number and one that should give gamers a momentary pause. The results to Question 15 are even more obvious. When asked whether respondents find a correlation between social media and their porn

use, 52% say yes and 33% say no. What are we doing to limit the impact that social media has on our porn use? Question 16 asks, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much emphasis the respondent places on willpower in his/her recovery. At the highest, 28% of respondent said 8, and a total of 67% respondents said between 7 and 10. Question 17 asks, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much emphasis the respondent places on personal change in his/her recovery. At the highest, 37% of respondent said 10, and a total of 77% respondents said between 7 and 10. Question 18 asks respondents whether they have forgiven themselves for their struggles with porn. 51% said yes and 49% said no. I think this is one area that we can really improve upon. As I recently mentioned, we need to forgive ourselves before we can truly heal. That's it folks. Please take some time to provide your thoughts about these results below or in a separate post. And a special thanks to all those who participated in the survey.”

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the steps taken in collecting, analyzing, and validating the postings from an online self-help group, and presented the results from the current study. It offered the discovered thematic categories, subcategories, trends throughout the data, along with a specific unique finding. For this research study, 700 postings made by 20 individuals on the online forum, *PornFree* were collected and analyzed. On March 1st, 2018, and March 3rd, 2018, the researcher selected participants that had abstained from pornography for 30 days or more and collected all of their postings to the thread *PornFree*. The data was analyzed by utilizing an Ethnographic Content Analysis. The three overarching thematic categories discovered aligned with those of online self-help groups (Jasper et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016) and Yalom's Therapeutic Factors in Group Counseling (2005) and were titled *Imparting Information*,

Catharsis, and *Instillation of Hope*. The thematic category code of *Imparting Information* was given to postings that provided some sort of information, typically in response to an unseen question or prompt, and it revealed four subcategories in ranked order: *Insight*, *Advice*, *Support/Encouragement*, and *Resources*. *Imparting Information* is a group counseling factor that is defined as instruction, advice, suggestions, or direct guidance from other group members (Yalom, 2005). The postings that were coded as part of the *Catharsis* thematic category were predominantly focused on updating the group on their progress. *Catharsis*, in group counseling, is the expression and sharing of feelings never shared before (Jacobs et al., 2009). The *Catharsis* thematic category included *Neutral/General*, *Positive*, and *Negative* subcategories, listed in rank order. Finally, the final thematic category discovered was *Instillation of Hope*. In group counseling, *Instillation of Hope* is the desire to feel hopeful about one's situation (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005), so postings that were coded as such sought help from other members and produced, in rank order, the subcategories of *Seeking Advice*, *Seeking Support/Encouragement*, and *Seeking Insight*.

The most common type of posting found after analysis of the data set of 700 postings was *Imparting Information*, which represented 77.6% of the entire set (n=543, N=700). Most of the *Imparting Information* posts at 50.5% were coded as *Insight*, which were the postings that provided the group with stories of individuals' experiences and opinions they have regarding the process of abstaining from pornography. A major part of being a member of *PornFree* is updating the group on one's current progress, so the second most common theme found was *Catharsis* at 20.7% of the entire data set (n=145, N=700). The most popular subcategory of *Catharsis* was *Neutral/General*, suggesting that most updates included both positive and negative experiences or were neutral in nature. The final and least common thematic category

was *Instillation of Hope*, which represented only 1.7% of the entire data set (n=12, N=700). Those that did fit into *Instillation of Hope* were most likely to request specific advice from other members (66.7%), and less likely to request support and insight. Amount of abstinent days at the point of data collection did not appear to greatly affect the amount or type of postings. Common trends throughout the entire data set also emerged, many of which support the negative effects of pornography use found in previous research studies (Fall & Howard, 2015; Sun et al., 2016). Those common trends, a deeper discussion of the findings, and implications to the counseling field are explored in the following chapter.

Discussion

Current literature suggests that excessive pornography use is correlated to negative effects (Baer et al., 2015; Kingston et al., 2008). Although there is no identification of what is considered “excessive,” the research states that as pornography use increases, so do the negative symptoms (Gola et al., 2016; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Burke, 2016). There is a lack of research on what happens when individuals that were using pornography choose to abstain from it (Park et al., 2016; Wilson, 2016; Kuhn & Gallinat, 2014). Therefore, to better understand the experiences of those abstaining from pornography use, this study explored the nature of postings made to an online group forum created to discuss such experiences. These unique experiences may increase counselors’ competencies in working with populations that are affected by pornography use.

By utilizing an Ethnographic Content Analysis, data was collected from an online group forum, *PornFree*, and then analyzed. Data was collected from 20 individuals’ postings to the group. Data collection occurred on two days – March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018. Each participant chosen had abstained from pornography for at least 30 days at the time of data

collection. All postings to *PornFree* the participants made during their current abstinence period were retroactively collected. After deleting postings that did not fit into the inclusionary criteria, the data set resulted in 700 postings. Three broad thematic categories emerged from the data and align with those of online self-help groups (Jasper et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016) and the therapeutic factors of group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005). Those thematic categories were titled *Imparting Information*, *Catharsis*, and *Instillation of Hope*. Ten subcategories were also discovered during exploration of the thematic categories, revealing deeper insights to the culture of the group.

Imparting Information had the highest frequency of the thematic categories with 77.6% of the entire data set. The thematic category code of *Imparting Information* was given to postings that provided some sort of information, typically in response to an unseen question or prompt, although some were original postings that addressed the entire group with information. Four subcategories occurred within *Imparting Information*, with the largest subcategory being *Insight* at 50.5%, then *Advice* at 24.7%, followed by *Support/Encouragement* at 19.3% and *Resources* at 5.5%.

The thematic theme of *Catharsis* was ranked as the second most common thematic category with 20.7% of the total postings. The postings that were coded as part of the *Catharsis* thematic category were predominantly centered on updating the group on their progress. Three subcategories surfaced from *Catharsis*, including positive, negative, and neutral/general updates. *Catharsis: Neutral/General* represented the majority of the thematic theme *Catharsis* at 57.2%, then the *Positive* subcategory at 37.9%, and *Negative* at only 4.8%.

Instillation of Hope was the least common thematic category by accounting for only 1.7% of the data set and required a specific request made in the posting to be coded as such. The

subcategories found within *Instillation of Hope* were *Seeking Advice*, *Seeking Support/Encouragement*, and *Seeking Insight*. *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Advice* was the most common in this thematic category at 66.7%, followed by *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Support/Encouragement* at 16.7%, and *Instillation of Hope: Seeking Insight* at 16.7%. The following discussion will examine the findings and implications this study presents for counselors and counselor educators. Also, limitations and suggestions for future research will be ascertained.

Thematic Categories and Therapeutic Factors

The three thematic categories were initially named with broad terms to represent the purpose of the postings. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the participants were presenting with benefits of using *PornFree* that are comparable to those found in online self-help groups and to those in group counseling (Kim et al., 2017; Yalom, 2005). For example, the thematic category of *Imparting Information* stems from the therapeutic factor in group counseling of the same name and refers to the process of providing the group with suggestions, advice, or direct guidance (Yalom, 2005). The second thematic category, *Catharsis*, reflects the expression or sharing of feelings that typically occurs in group counseling settings (Jacobs et al., 2009). *Instillation of Hope*, the final thematic category, is defined as a desire for feelings of hope about one's concerns in group counseling (Jacobs et al., 2009; Yalom, 2005), and accurately represents the postings of members that are seeking ideas that will improve their hopelessness in regards to pornography use.

Therapeutic factors are listed separately, but are actually quite interdependent (Yalom, 2005). Beyond the thematic categories from this study that exhibit three of Yalom's Therapeutic Factors of Group Counseling, the data set also illustrates some of the other factors such as

Universality, Group Cohesiveness, and Altruism (2005). Participants provide unique stories of their pornography use in an attempt to feel or give empathy with other group members, thus encouraging Universality, or the disconfirmation of isolation (Yalom, 2005). Group Cohesiveness is the closeness of members (Jacobs et al., 2009) and is imperative for a group's productivity (Yalom, 2005). This cohesiveness is evident in the current study. Negative comments to other members were rarely presented in the current data, which suggests an overall feeling of comradery within the group *PornFree*. Additionally, Altruism is demonstrated by participants discussing the benefits of both giving and receiving support and insight by utilizing the forum (Yalom, 2005).

Common Trends and Topics

This study was inductive, which allowed for the researcher to observe trends and topics that were repeated considerably in the data set. Throughout all three of the thematic categories discovered, a few common conversations occurred that could be of interest to counseling professionals. These discovered topics included addiction to pornography, changes that occur after abstinence, and relapse prevention techniques.

Addiction to Pornography

Although pornography addiction is not currently a diagnosable disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the concern is labeled as such in the common language used in *PornFree*. Many members identify as “pornography addicts” and treat their excessive use of pornography similarly to those with other known addictions. The 12-Step process is discussed and utilized often within the group, as well as the suggestion to attend Alcoholics Anonymous or Sex Addicts Anonymous meetings outside of the *PornFree* community. Withdrawal and detox

symptoms are also commonly discussed within the group, potentially suggesting a psychological dependence on pornography.

Changes After Abstinence

Members of *PornFree* often update the group on how they are doing in the abstinence process. The postings from this study usually included positive and negative changes they have noticed since abstaining. Some mentioned an increase in confidence and interpersonal skills after abstaining from pornography. Many saw a decrease in negative symptoms such as depression, social anxiety, and the need for pornography. Although countless participants mentioned their relationships and sex lives improving after abstinence, a frequent concern explored was “flat-lining.” In *PornFree*, “flat-lining” refers to the drop in sex drive that occurs when abstinence from pornography begins. Most often, members of the group reported that the “flat-lining” experience lasted somewhere between two and six weeks and that their sex drive returned and sometimes even improved after. This may suggest a physical response to pornography and its absence. Moreover, several participants that had maintained abstinence past the average “flat-lining” timeframe reported higher relationship satisfaction, or if they were single, increased confidence in speaking with individuals they were sexually attracted to.

Relapse Prevention

Much like other support groups, *PornFree* members spend a lot of time advising each other on how to best remain abstinent. A major topic was avoiding pornography or triggers that could lead to the use of pornography. Some tips given were to delete any pornography they had kept on their computers, utilize internet filters, and avoid sexual material in entertainment choices such as movies and television shows. Beyond avoiding pornography, members also provided each other with resources, such as websites, videos, and podcasts that were helpful in

recovery. They also shared what coping skills they utilized, which included techniques such as working out, journaling, meditating, finding new and creative hobbies, and many others.

Limitations

This study offers a limitation by being a single data source that was analyzed by only one researcher. Although an external auditor was utilized, it would have strengthened the results if more than one researcher coded the data. Also, analyzing more than one online group would have reinforced the findings. Another limitation of this study is the lack of interaction with the community. By collecting preexisting data, the researcher was unable to prompt participants about a meaning or further explanation of certain pieces of data. Having a conversation with the participants could have allowed for more thorough descriptions of their experiences, as well as providing the study with additional demographic information. Because of these limitations, especially in regards to the lack of demographic information, it is imperative that the results are not generalized to all individuals that use pornography.

Implications for Counseling Professionals

Currently, counselors report not feeling adequately prepared to address excessive pornography use with clients (Walters & Spengler, 2016; Bloom et. al, 2016). Because of this, and the anonymity desired for many individuals, those that seek help for their pornography use often utilize the online self-help option (Kim et al., 2017). This is apparent by the 52,150 members of *PornFree* as of May 4, 2018. The community conversations of *PornFree* read much the same as a group counseling session and present many of Yalom's Therapeutic Factors (2005). The request for advice and opportunities to share personal experiences are similar to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, although this particular data source is not affiliated with a professional organization. There is constant support from the other group members with

motivation, advice on how to maintain abstinence, when and how to discuss the topic with significant others, and exploration of many other topics related to abstaining from pornography. This study found countless instances of members' thankfulness for being a part of *PornFree*, and the desire to help other members is evident by the fact that 77.6% of the data set was in the *Imparting Information* thematic category.

Although participants in this study report positive changes due to the community, self-help groups such as *PornFree* present some restrictions to the treatment process (Jacobs et al., 2009). With no group therapist or leader, negative dynamics could arise in the group or productivity has the potential to decrease with no set structure (Jacobs et al., 2009). Nevertheless, knowing these groups exist may help counselors gain more knowledge on the issue and even use communities like *PornFree* as a supplement to treatment. For example, counselors can develop a concurrent individual and "group counseling" plan for clients that present with concerns related to pornography use (Yalom, 2005). The online group can be used as a group counseling substitute where the client obtains valuable information and support from the group members, while also working on the underlying individual concerns with the counselor.

Because individuals may identify as having a pornography addiction, regardless of a professional diagnosis, counselors should be aware of the implications that mindset could have on clients and the treatment process. Not all clients that excessively use pornography will be aware that it could be a problem, however. Counselors that have clients that present with negative symptoms should assess for pornography use, as it has been correlated with multiple concerns (Resch & Alderson, 2014; Willoughby et al., 2014; Szymanski et al., 2015). The findings from this study support that current research by presenting self-reported positive changes that occur once the variable of pornography is removed (Park et al., 2016; Wilson,

2016). By maintaining knowledge on common trends, counselors can better assess for concerns and treat their clients (Walters & Spengler, 2016). Likewise, counselor educators can use the results from this study when educating counselors-in-training on pornography use, its negative effects, and what experiences are reported when individuals abstain from it. Finally, because the online group used for this study supported group counseling's therapeutic factors (Yalom, 2005), counselor educators can also use the results to encourage students to utilize such groups in future treatment planning.

Future Research

More research is necessary on pornography addiction as a whole. If it remains non-diagnosable, counselors need to know if treating the concern like other addictions that are in the DSM is appropriate or if other treatments are more effective. Although the current study explored the experiences of individuals that chose to abstain from pornography, it did not analyze the reasons why those individuals chose to do so. The amount of time participants were abstinent at the time of data collection did not appear to affect how often they posted to the group forum, so future research should examine other aspects that could play a role in the posting amount and nature of those postings. Because of the lack of demographic information organically discussed in the data, it could not be studied in relation to the experiences of the participants. Furthermore, masturbation was a highly debated topic within the *PornFree* community, posing the question of what changes occur in individuals that choose to abstain from it as well as pornography.

Conclusion

An inductive Ethnographic Content Analysis was utilized to examine 700 postings to the online self-help group forum, *PornFree*. All postings from 20 members of the group were

collected on two dates, March 1, 2018, and March 3, 2018. The aim of this study was to uncover the nature of postings to *PornFree* by individuals that were abstinent from pornography for 30 or more days. This study sought to uncover information in an area that is lacking in research so that counselors and counselor educators are better informed to competently treat individuals that experience negative effects from pornography use.

Three thematic categories were revealed in the data set. Those themes support Yalom's Therapeutic Factors in group counseling and were *Imparting Information*, *Catharsis*, and *Instillation of Hope*. The thematic categories indicated a total of 10 subcategories. Within the subcategories, trends and common topics were found and explored by using specific postings. Numerous conclusions were made by the researcher based on the findings that may be beneficial to counselors and counselor educators. Findings from this study underlined the experiences of individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography. Those experiences ranged from withdrawal and detox symptoms to positive life changes, and most importantly, a need for support or advice on how to maintain abstinence. The majority of postings were found to be of the *Imparting Information* theme, providing the group with their insight, advice, and encouragement, much like online self-help groups and in-person group counseling settings (Jasper et al., 2014; Jacobs et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2017; Yalom, 2005). Negative postings were uncommon, so the overall culture of the community was uplifting and helpful in nature.

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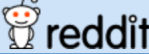
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APPENDIX A: APPROVAL FROM MODERATOR

MY SUBREDDITS ▾ HOME - POPULAR - ALL - RANDOM - USERS | MOVIES - AWW - CATS - NOFAP - TRAVEL - ADHD - PORNFREE - YOGA | ASKREDDIT - WORLDNEWS - VIDEOS - FUNNY - TODAY


 MESSAGE [send a private message](#) **inbox** sent

[all](#) | [unread](#) | [messages](#) | [comment replies](#) | [post replies](#) | [username mentions](#)

re: Question
from [foobarbazblarg](#) [M] via [/r/pornfree](#) sent 18 days ago

Sounds interesting, go for it. And if you are so inclined, feel free to share the results of your research here.

[permalink](#) [delete](#) [report](#) [block user](#) [mark unread](#) [reply](#)

 MESSAGE [send a private message](#) **inbox** **sent**

re: Question
to [foobarbazblarg](#) [M] via [/r/pornfree](#) sent 18 days ago

I will absolutely do that - thank you so much!

[permalink](#) [reply](#)

Question
to [/r/pornfree](#) sent 18 days ago

Hello Mods,

My name is Morgan Jenkins and I am a doctoral candidate at Auburn University and I am conducting an ethnographic content analysis on individuals that have chosen to abstain from pornography. I found your group and it would be a great place to obtain the data I need. Let me explain what my plan is, as it is not nearly as scary as it sounds!

I will be looking at posts made by members of PornFree that have abstained from pornography for more than 30 days. My goal is to report the experiences, both positive and negative, that occur during the abstinence process. All the information I gather will be completely anonymous. I will keep the screen names separate from the data so that anyone that reads my dissertation will not know anything about the poster(s). I will also delete any bit of identifying information in the posts to further ensure confidentiality. Also, I will not be interacting with anyone - I am just focused on the organic posts/responses of those that are a part of the group.

I am doing this because I am a counselor and I believe excessive pornography use is tied to many physical, psychological, and behavioral concerns. I, myself, have had clients that struggle with pornography use and I do not think counselors have been adequately prepared to treat this growing issue. My end goal is to be able to report the experiences of abstainers to counselors so that they can use this information, as well as other current literature, to better support their clients.

Although Reddit and this subreddit are publicly searchable, I would like to ask your permission to begin my research. Once again, no data will be tied to individuals. Everything will remain confidential. I will answer any questions you may have, so please let me know what you think.

Thank you for your time! Morgan Jenkins, MEd, LPC

[permalink](#) [reply](#)

APPENDIX B: IRB FORM

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

REQUEST FOR DETERMINATION OF NON-HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

For help, contact: **THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE (ORC)**, 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University
Phone: 334-844-5966 e-mail: IRBAdmin@auburn.edu Web Address: <http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs>

Revised 2/1/2014 Submit completed form to IRBsubmit@auburn.edu or 115 Ramsay Hall, Auburn University 36849.

Form must be populated using Adobe Acrobat / Pro 9 or greater standalone program (do not fill out in browser). Hand written forms will not be accepted.

All research involving human subjects at Auburn University must be reviewed by the IRB. If you are unsure whether your study is "research" or involves "human subjects", you may request a determination from the IRB. Determinations will be made after completion and submission of this form for IRB review.

Reference information:

1. [List of identifiers](#) that, if collected, would qualify the research as "human subject research"
2. Determination of "[Research](#)" or "[Human Subject](#)"

1. Project Personnel

Principal Investigator (PI):

Name _____ Title _____ Dept/School _____
Dept Head _____ Address _____
Campus phone _____ Alternate phone _____
AU E-mail _____ Alternate e-mail _____

Faculty Advisor Information (if applicable):

Name _____ Title _____ Dept/School _____
Address _____
Campus phone _____ Alternate phone _____
AU E-mail _____ Alternate e-mail _____

2. Study Information

Title

3. Project Summary Answer yes or no to each question below.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. Will data be collected via a systematic investigation? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Does the study develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge?
(Will the results be published or publicly presented?) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Is the subject population comprised of <u>living</u> individuals? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Will the investigator intervene through the use of physical procedures, manipulation of subjects, manipulation of subject's environment or interact via communication or interpersonal contact? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Will the investigator have access to personally identifiable, <u>private information</u> (including names, addresses, phone numbers, etc., or observing behavior during which the subject expects no observation or recording is taking place, or access to information that the subject expects is being kept confidential)? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you've checked "yes" to responses a, b, and c along with either d or e in #3 above, **STOP**. It is likely that your study involves human subject research. Please complete a Protocol Form or a Request for Exempt Determination. You may contact IRB Administration for more information (IRBAdmin@auburn.edu).

Thematic Codes and Subcategories Key

Thematic Category	Subcategory	Code Used
GIVING posts will be highlighted yellow	Advice	<u>GA</u>
	Opinions/Experiences	<u>GO</u>
	Resources	<u>GR</u>
	Support/Encouragement	<u>GS</u>
Updating posts will be highlighted pink	Positive	(+)
	Negative	(-)
	Neutral/General	(x)
Requesting posts will be highlighted in green	Advice	RA
	Opinions/Experiences	RO
	Support/Encouragement	RS

*Subcategory codes are listed on the left side of each post

1

[Redacted]

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I am not against fapping but after giving up from porn, I don't need to do it like I was. Maybe once a week. Maybe. Eliminate porn first. You will be free. You know you're getting progress when you forget the names of your favorite pornstars. It is true, trust me!

That's the spirit!

Since we are talking about religion, I also want to take the microphone and say a few things.

Sura No. 17, Al Isra (Isra'el), Ayat No. 32

And do not come near to adultery, it is a shameful deed and an evil, and opening the road to other evils. Allah doesn't say don't watch Porn. (This ayah is actually for adultery but I think it can be applicable on Porn too.) He says "don't come even near of it." Don't consider to do things that leads to the temptation. It sucks you like a black hole then once you get caught, it takes too much effort to get out.

Like you opened a porn site and zapping through the on video to another. You say I will stop after seeing a few more scenes but you don't. Then after a moment, you start opening your zip and you know the rest of the story. Yes you can close the video by clicking it but it is really exhausting.

I hope what I want to say is understood. Maybe the person reading my comment isn't a Muslim but that doesn't mean they aren't allowed to benefit from our beliefs. I hope we will be free one day, completely. I pray for all of us during this journey.

Not everybody have been gone through all of the things you listed but some people are just weak-willed, they are the slaves of their temptation/lust and they can't even feel the chains around their needs. They must acknowledge this fact first.

My parents weren't drug addicts nor smokers. They didn't beat me up every a single day. Yet I was just weak. I played games for years for countless hours. I watched porn for countless hours not because I had problems. Yes, like every human being, I had some problems but they were small and not important.

Even lives of others are worse than me, that doesn't mean they can justify their flaws and addictions. Everybody has to fight. No matter where you have started this race. We are all equal.

Do not fool yourself.

I have disturbing feelings because some people showed me porn."

You shouldn't watch porn even when you see it on the cinema screen. Your will should be a beacon of power

Don't say "I feel weak" man. Say "I am gonna be stronger."

You saved yourself!!! You are awesome buddy!!!

You must acknowledge why are you here during this journey my fellow friends. If you learn your cause, you will be extremely strong. You need to break these chains. •

Hey You. Wake up. You can do this shit. Say I am gonna beat you. Say it loudly! Because you will win this war.

Be proud of yourself. You are better than 99% women in the world. You are fighting with yourself. You are stronger than any other women. You are unique. I wish I had a woman like you. As a man, we need strong women like you. You deserve a man. Not pixels. I hope you find the man in your dreams. He is waiting for you but you need to be a better person.

-Don't look photos of girls. Plus avoid looking half-naked girls in the streets.

-Use Internet filters.

-Acknowledge why you shouldn't watch Porn every time you crave. •

-Never be unhappy and depressed, if you are depressed, be aware that you are vulnerable to Porn.

You are the final AND first challenge.

Just relax dude it is not the end of the world. Keep working on your life

You can't expect it to "work" in your first attempt. You defined "sex-porn" to your brain for so long time and now you are trying to unidentify this argument. It will take time to teach this fact to your brain.

I don't want to go to that far but we all have responsibility on her death. We created a demand on the porn industry. Then industry gave it to us.

Do not create a demand.

Do not be the reason of someone's death even if percentage is so close to like 0.000001%.

She could be one of your daughters, sisters or mothers.

Do not be the part of the system. Be the system.

One minute silence for this gentleman. You deserve an award

When I first started this journey, I allowed myself to watch it once a week. Then reduced it to monthly. It was baby steps but it worked. The important thing is when you create a rule by yourself, obey it.

Thank you BOTH for inspiring us. I will never forget this conversation

YOU! YES YOU! YOU HAVE BROKEN THE CHAINS OF EVIL.

You are one of the strongest people out there. Be happy and remember your achievement when you are sad and depressed. Good luck!

KEEP FIGHTING BRO WE ARE BEHIND YOUUUUUUUUUUU

I am glad I found this subreddit before it is too late. •

You must crawl before walk. You must walk before run.

Bro you are a king! Mark the moments where/when you use Porn and try to change your life habits according to these marks.

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Total for 1

G = 22 / 39

V = 1 / 4

Participant: 2
 Collection date: 3/1/2018
 Days abstinent: 39
 Posting dates: 3/1/2018

2

(x)

Posts

39 days I made the choice to go full no PMO. At one point I posted how my urges negated themselves because I felt like masturbation without porn was pointless. I was content with this in thinking it was part of the rebooting process or flattening. I feel mixed as what I have learned isn't all good or all bad.

Bad (personal view):
 - I do feel noticeably less motivated but it is not even close to as bad as it was with porn
 - I do feel a slight brain fog but again this is you nearly as bad as it was with porn
 - I do not like the idea of having acted on impulse. I was taught off guard for sure that I was that aroused without any trigger or porn.
 Good (personal view):
 - I realized I don't need porn to enjoy this part of my sexuality.
 - At this time I do feel more relaxed (I notice this mostly in my chest)
 - I do not feel guilty, which is something that I am just realizing now and is a feeling that would strongly follow me afterwards with porn.
 I do not even think I realize how good it was for me to have made this choice yet in looking over this list. So much of what I listed are areas I have struggled with for years; especially the guilt and thinking I needed porn to get off. I am glad I have learned this much but I do think I am going to continue with the abstinence of masturbation until around the 90 day marker to see how things go from there.

(x)
 GS
 GS

Day 36: Is this flattening? I don't really feel the urge to turn to porn and I don't exactly feel horny. Its this weird blend where I think the release would be beneficial but without porn there is this block. Partially saying its not worth it without porn and I'm single so no option there (not into one night stands). These thoughts coiled and leave me feeling neutral but I feel in control. I like your check ins. Takes me through the day to day in reflecting that there is much more to life than porn.

Awwsome job! I'll be right there with you soon.
 Many of us think or used to think that porn is the cause for X, Y, or Z issue. Maybe it does solely cause the issue, but porn is largely used as a coping mechanism, a way to escape. For me, it was feelings of loneliness and inadequacy. Porn offered that potent escape, but guess what changed? Absolutely nothing, my problems were still there but I was now learning how to avoid them them which created an even worse situation. You know this.
 Nobody here can pull you out. Motivate yes, but expecting someone to save you is the same mentality that brought you down this path to begin with (feeling helpless). You are much stronger than you think and I think you know that too. All you need to do is to prove that to yourself because it is there. Beak this down to its simplest components. What does porn mean to you and what comforts does it bring you? What are you numbing/running away from, why? Who do you want to be and what do you need to do to achieve it? Ask yourself the difficult questions to understand this.

GA

Next is the counter attack. Create an image of yourself and a goal(s) you want for yourself that is worth struggling to change for. Nobody can put this image together but you, all we can do is root you on and be here for you when times get tough. You know like we do that you have what it takes to make a beautiful life for yourself, take those steps towards it and do not look back.
 Edit: grammar

Read up on what this sub has to offer, be kind to yourself and you'll do just fine.
 Keeping busy but I have also noticed my steady routine of meditating and journaling is helping me to realize that while I do not have control over every thought that pops into my head, I have the choice whether or not to act on it. Also that every emotional state is temporary, urges are the same, they will pass.
 Try writing it out on a piece of paper and carry it around. You do not have to be specific, write in a way that makes sense to you. Also try looking up some CBT worksheets to help with the negative thought patterns. Here is a good one to get you started

GA
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 GA

[REDACTED]

I think that is an important point to discuss. MY take goes something like this.
 As the days get higher and higher we may feel like the pride of accomplishing another marker becomes less satisfying; this could be seen as problematic. At the same time this may happen because we grow to no longer need that number as a motivator. Us reaching a certain point may have simply provided enough space for us to rely on ourselves as we have developed a number of alternative changes as time has progressed.

GA

I hear you on this point. I am going through the same thing which is why I am cutting down on social media and retooling the sites I do visit (Reddit, Youtube, LinkedIn). /r/NoSurf has personally offered me some helpful insight and material to read to further encourage me to go this route and I have felt better for doing so.
 "Understand at last that you have something in you more powerful and divine than what causes the badly passions and pulls you like a mere puppet." —MARCUS ALPHEIUS

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That is a great goal to have man. Sounds like you have a realistic mindset in seeing that cutting out porn will not be the answer but will create more room for you to engage in other areas in your life that will bring better yields of growth.

GA

Being a better person to me means minimizing external factors that have the ability to influence me. It means being kind to others in viewing them as human beings and not objects that can do something for me. It means feeling calm with myself in not feeling the undercurrent sense that I am inferior or unworthy to others. It just means feeling connected with my life that can only have the meaning that I put on it, no one and nothing else can do it for me.

GA

Dude it's fantastic that you are reading this so early on. I wish I had that kind of insight when I was 15. I am 26 now and only now getting a handle on this ongoing issue. But if you want more info, check out the top posts on this subreddit.
 You are already on to a great start

GS

I agree with you completely. I would only add that I think it is important for us to handle being bored too. Took me a while to realize this but finding ways to always be "on" (finding stimulation through interests) is thing. Learning that it is okay to feel bored will help in not turning to potent distractions like porn. At least that is what I thinking; either way thank you for your post!

GA

9 = 11 U = 3

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I couldn't have read this at a better time. Was thinking the same thing this very moment. Things are continuously getting better but that whole, 'what is missing' feeling has been increasing and I don't know what that is since I typically attributed it as a moment to numb out to porn.
I didn't bother with the r/fap community and instead wanted to focus on cutting out internet porn. Now that I am 34 days in I have felt the urge to masturbate but without porn its like I get confused and decide its not worth it. Not sure what to make of it but maybe it is part of the reboring process?
My advice is to steadily cut it down. Gauge how much you masturbate with porn and steadily cut it down until you get to a comfortable once a week. From there I'd focus on cutting out porn completely and to just masturbate when you'd like (without resorting to thinking about the porn since it will affect you just the same as if you were watching it). Point here is to steadily distance yourself from using porn, where you can resort to see where you true interests lie without trying to do (as many here do) try to make this in one fell swoop only to be a stuck in a cycle of relapse which is exhausting. This link may also help in understanding why you are finding yourself seeking more novel content, The Four A's of Internet Pornography

Man I can relate to this.
To cut right to the message: engaging with porn only ends up being a momentary escape from what we are insecure about.
The solution? Take action You feel insecure about your looks? Hit the gym/eat healthy (eating healthier is more important of the two), feel bad about your lack of experience with women? Push your comfort zone in starting small by trying out small talk or even smaller like me and just practice saying hello. Am I oversimplifying it? Yes, but at some point we have to decide to take action over the repetition of a pattern we can identify clearly has being harmful for us in both the short term and long term.

Invest in yourself in replacing the potent escape with healthier solutions and little by little you will shock yourself by how much control you have over your life.
I have been periodically experiencing this too. Can't say I quite understand it fully yet but I do have a better understanding in what my meditation app (headspace) has touched base on; our thoughts and feelings are impermanent. These depressed feelings are also temporary and will guide you to potent self-discovery (at least that is what I am believing in my own process of the 'emptiness' feelings coming from cutting out PMO).

Meditating has been helping me loads, try out headspace. They offer a month free for beginners and if you do not want to pay for it they are a lot of free alternatives. Plenty of studies out there support the benefits of meditating.
You got this

It is a complicated question for a complicated topic. Based on my understanding of your past and that you are posting it here, it sounds like two categories:
1.) Your view of women
2.) Your fetishes

both sound to be problematic. Considering the nature of this particular subreddit my take would be for you to detach yourself from engaging with the online fetishes. Take pause to notice where your mind goes without this coping mechanism.
Which could give you handbook, moving forward but given the nature of this group, we all vary in terms of goals and what we experience moving forward.

I have found posting here to be helpful as a sort of online journal for this part of my life. That being said, I can relate to what you are saying, I can't say my experience has gone in the same order as you but the callistic (?) of emotions is something I am still working through but I know it is well worth it.
On the topic of willpower which can be applied to combat porn use I have been reading a mixed bag of messages on the topic of willpower. So often I see the pattern of relying solely on it only to eventually fizzle out and to repeat the cycle again and again. Here, there are those who claim either willpower is limited and it is only our perception that limits it or that willpower truly is limited and there is nothing we can do about it.

The following is a podcast I came across the other day that provides insight into this topic and offers alternatives to which we can apply in this community. We need more than one tool (willpower) in our toolbox if we are to succeed in a productive, permanent manner moving forward.
"We talk to David about his new (not-self-help) book, "Emotional Success," which argues that the emotions of gratitude, pride, and compassion can help us fulfill long-term goals and (as a special bonus) make us happier and better people"

You went 65/66 days without porn, A+ that is a 98%. Good on you!
I hear you though in that you are looking for motivation. Here are my tips:
-Write down why you are looking to quit and what you noticed which changed in your most current streak (Serves the purpose as a reminder when things get difficult)
-Watch the Terry Crews: Dirty Little Secret videos (I just started these myself and have found them incredibly helpful).
-Practice your self-care. Do things that benefit you during times you would normally spend with porn. (reinvest your time to be more pro-you)

I can relate to this because I would justify turning to porn for the same reasons; I was uncomfortable with negative emotions.
Take the time to peel away where these feelings are stemming from and take action to address it. You will save yourself trouble in the long term. In the meantime, divert that energy towards something else. Exercise was what I used for redirection.
Would you be willing to share what you have learned? It may help the rest of us here in getting different perspectives.

no longer in my mind
Just watched the Terry Crews video Episode 4 hit me especially hard. Terry Crews is on point with the belief system and cognitive dissonance.
My belief system deep down says that I am not worth anyone's time and I don't deserve to be happy. As you can imagine that would leave anyone to not feel so great and as a result to 'console' myself!

That is going to change.
Eh, u word
Link to the source Terry Crews: Dirty Little Secret 1

It is a good question to ask and I am glad you did. I do realize that a supporting factor in my own porn use was in part due to feelings of social isolation and a wanting of deep connection with others.
Cutting out porn as a way to cope with this is refocusing me to actually address that want rather than mask it.

Awesome job! What has helped me is to focus on cultivating new habits (i.e. exercise, journaling, meditating, or simple exploring options out there). Replace this habit with another one so it isn't all just cutting out one coping mechanism without replacing it with another.

$G = 10$
 $R = 1$
 $U = 4$

29

Hello

Visit the resources provided on this sub. The your brain on porn website is a great source for information (knowledge is power). To start I'd get organized. Journal/write down what your personal reasons are for quitting (serve the dual purpose of organizing yourself and is something to look on if/when the urges hit).

GA

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Develop new habits to help counteract porn use. (For myself and many here that has turned into exercising, meditating, or anything self-improvement related)

GA

29

And most importantly, practice self-compassion in being kind to yourself. Lasting change doesn't take root if we are beating ourselves up.

(+)

What I do to help with triggers changes a lot but mainly I found a train of thought has stuck with me. So lets say I have a day when the urges hit. I think "if I have enough energy to think about X I have enough energy to do X productive habit". I then take immediate action on it. Name of the game isn't just to cognitively distract ourselves but to physically get up and do something to remove ourselves from our privacy which decreases the likelihood of giving in. Here is a link to add more depth to my reasoning.

Self-compassion is difficult for sure. I am still on that one too but when you slowly experience the benefits of just being nice to yourself it becomes easier in weighing the differences between the two.

29

One step at a time, you can do this.

Memories of guilt. I am beginning to accept that my use of porn attributed to my three year relationship ending. While I am positive the relationship was going to end either way, I think I made the ending process much worse because of my over focus on our sex life (or lack there of).

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There was so much going wrong in our relationship and because I was too engrossed with porn and as a result overly focused on one facet of our relationship (sex) I missed a horse of other underlying issues. We had more potent problems going on, honesty with one another, open communication, mutual interests, future goals and basically our compatibility with one another. Porn didn't end my relationship but my choices to turn to it rather than facing my problems definitely allowed me to avoid the hard questions and emotions we were both experiencing.

(+)

Maybe if I wasn't so focused on that one part we could have ended things respectfully and mutually rather than as horribly as it actually did.

ADDED: I also think it is interesting to note that I had morning wood this morning and it just wouldn't go away. Didn't give in and have had the feeling of blue balls ever since but the second it began subsiding this is these are the thoughts and memories that came around.

What helps me is thinking how it takes time to develop a habit and time to dismantle one. There is something to learn from everything that we do; even when we fail we can either learn the shit out of ourselves or we can mold this situation into a learning experience (I.E what happened this time that was not prepared for? What can I do to counteract with this next time? What changes can I make? What new habits can I form? What triggered this to happen for me? etc etc)

29

Inspired from "I never lose. I either win or I learn." Nelson Mandela

GA

I think about my future in what I want for myself. Complete my masters, think about PhD, gain experience in my profession, obtain certifications, obtain more financial security etc. To achieve these goals I need a clear, focused, and disciplined mind. PMO at this point, leaves my mind in the exact opposite state.

I realize I didn't really answer your question on what I am doing right now. As of now, I just got back from socializing with friends and am reflecting on my day on what I can contribute here to help others in passing along what I have learned in my journey so far. Focusing on helping others through sharing my experiences is double rewarding, helping others and myself.

29

I want to challenge you on something, feel free to read no further if this isn't what you want but I figure some other perspective may help here.

GA

In what you wrote it seems to me that you hold the belief that viewing porn is bad for you individually. That there is a decrease in sensation and that the trigger to view porn is activated through boredom.

Do you think that instead choosing the option which is in the link you provided, that giving your body a break might be an option?

I know this may sound like more of a nolep option (which is not my intent) but from what you wrote it just seems like there is more there that might be missed in this equation. Loss of sensation is uncomfortable with boredom=sex toy?

Denying ourselves porn, which we learn through repeated use to correlated with sex (dopamine spike) it makes sense that anything but porn doesn't feel as good. But in time, through denying ourselves the self-taught porn=pleasure and instead opt for the real thing it makes sense that the real deal is again learned to be better than the artificial world.

Keep it going! The mind wants its fix and will learn to adapt in time. *

I can relate to this.

For starters it is fantastic that you are taking the time to be introspective and curious about this part of your life. In reading your story, I imagine feeling overwhelmed too in thinking about this as one big problem. This is part of the issue; when we view our porn use, and everything that comes with it as one GIANT issue it feels like an unconquerable problem. My advice? Break it down into manageable goals.

Some examples of this could be, cutting down your porn use down until you get used to it and keep moving from there. (I.E PMO 3 times a week? Focus on cutting it down to 2 times a week for a few weeks until you get to zero or without the use of porn).

Point being: when we try to tackle this habit which has taken, for many, years to develop we try to cut it out all at once. Not realizing that it cutting it down to manageable pieces will provide more realistic goals and success.

Dude that is a solid plan. Focus on yourself and the medium (internet/technology) that provides easy and quick access to the habit you wish to end. I'd only suggest coming up with counter measures for when the urges hit. It becomes more difficult to care when you have a set plan (I.E for me when the urges hit I think, "I have enough energy to think about this I have enough energy to go to the gym".

Going outside or for a walk works just as well in my experience). Also be kind to yourself: It is easy to fall into thinking of what I have lost from this, but be more motivating to think of what I am gaining from leaving on this path.

Not used to feeling calm. Maybe this is just me, but since giving up porn and masturbation these past few weeks I feel more calm and clear headed. I have not felt like this before for this long. The imagery that comes to my mind when thinking this over is a soldier poking his head above the trenches after a bombardment. Cautiously optimistic.

Fascinating question. One I have been thinking about more and more but I do not think there is a definitive answer. Through sources like Your Brain on Porn we do have numerous sources pointing to option 1 (addictive) being an evidenced option.

G = 8 U = 3

Option 2, as experienced by myself, along with many others here, also proves to be true. I coped with numerous life challenges through using porn because it provided a potent hardwired dopamine rush which is explained by option 1 sources. I guess you could say they build on each other rather than being mutually exclusive as being factors. Option 2 Personally, I find it problematic to rely it solely as being one or the other. Option 1 is problematic to use exclusively because it neglects personal choice and responsibility as being factors. Option 2 is also problematic because there is evidence that gives proof to WHY it is a choice that is hard to ignore, rather than it becoming a focus on a "just say no" way of thinking that simplifies the matter, which is far off the mark.

Simply giving up porn will not solve all our problems. In my experience, so far, it has improved things in my life but has also cleared the fog on a number of issues I have been avoiding to address. I think this may be why so many people become frustrated. Because there is an expectation that giving up porn will be the answer to their problems and while this is partially true, it will also uncover underlying problems as we become clearer in mind.

I think this question invites greater involvement on our end as a part of the community to admit that while porn may be a problem for us, there are may pillars that helped in propping up this habit to begin with. In chipping away at porn the supporting structures become clearer to see (it is for me, insecurity around relationships, inability to cope with negative emotions, lack of discipline in how I spend my time etc.) I guess you could say gaining control over the things that have been used to avoid the very issues we used porn to escape from.

26

GO

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In not turning to porn as a way to cope with unresolved issues I think adds to why I feel so low this morning. Went out with some friends last night and the topic of couples was talked about in length. Eventually I mentally raised out. I do not have a girlfriend anymore, I don't have much sexual experience in general, and I am not into the one night stand scene (partially because I do not like the idea of it but honestly because I don't think I have the ability to pull that off even if I were to try). The experience and options are no problems for my friends. Not typically something I think about but maybe it has been a belief that has always crept underneath the surface and that I've numbed out with porn: lack of sexual experience-no girlfriend-low self-esteem in the past turning to porn, and now trying convince myself to be okay with this current situation.

I don't know fellas

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You won't find me arguing the benefits from working out and general self improvement. Currently been going to the gym with a trainer for a few months now, eating healthier, meditating, focusing on my studies, and focusing more on myself and my social life. Those areas are covered and will continue to improve as I build up my own discipline.

When it comes to TRP, I remember looking into it about a year ago. Found some of the core ideas unarguable in relation to personal self improvement, but when it came to the views of dating and viewing women and the use of terms like 'alpha' and 'beta' the imagery that came to my mind were people who have been hurt and are looking to be overly-macho to compensate. Now of course, that is a generalization on my end. Either way, the language surrounding that community was not appealing to me.

Decided to revisit the page and my views are the same. My worth is not tied to how many women I have sex with or how well I play 'the game'. Life is much more layered than that. And lets for argue sake say the world is entirely the way TRP claims, that's okay, I'll happily opt out of participating if those are the stakes and the view people have of one another. But that is not the case, it is a wholly oversimplifying things.

Found these additional links helpful and note I took both sides into account:

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GO

Change my view: supporting TRP
 I even read through a few current articles on the TRP page and my view is still the same. Again, thank you for the suggestion, but that page is not for me. I am not where I am want to be yet, but I know the steps I have taken and will continue to make are catered by me for me from collecting an assortment of knowledge/sources and experiences on how to improve oneself in the direction I want.

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GO

You are pretty inspirational, you know that right? haha you are so right though. Time to start investing on these changes in perspective and emotion through action.

Day 25: Vital Realization - Earlier this week I posed a worry of mine titled, Flooding Memories in talking with all those that replied, it made me realize something vital.

Now that I am on a 25 day streak without any PNO I have been struggling in many ways, but through that struggle I realize an underlying pattern. Through the memories I would avoid in the Flooding Memories post, I would be in this cycle of:

- 1.) Seeking the dopamine high
- 2.) Crash shortly afterwards and feel like shit
- 3.) Build up emotional stability
- 4.) Once achieved, seek high
- 5.) Repeat

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Now, its more oh I don't feel like shit, I actually feel good, and I am not using porn.....so more porn? Not quite there but I am happy to realize how this pattern makes no sense. There is something to this process. When things get roughest that is exactly when not to let up because once it passes something new presents itself; not always, immediately but still, I think this is how mindfulness is subconsciously helping me here in reminding me that all thoughts and feelings are impermanent.

Arm yourself with knowledge to back up your personal reasons: *

Your Brain On Porn

Why Porn Changes the Brain

25

GF

U=3 G=4

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GR

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(x)

24

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Negative visualization: The Stoics were onto something when they developed the idea of Negative Visualization. Give it a shot and read the article for yourself but I think it is applicable to this pager; at least I found it applicable to myself in this process.

Reason being, I've turned to porn because I was uncomfortable with a variety of emotions/thoughts and porn would numb those out. Negative visualization on the other hand, is intentionally thinking about those emotions/fears rather than running away from them. In the practice of doing this activity, you are less likely to be disturbed by what you could lose in your life because you teach yourself to accept that not everything is permanent; which adds to valuing what truly matters to you beyond chasing illusions (porn).

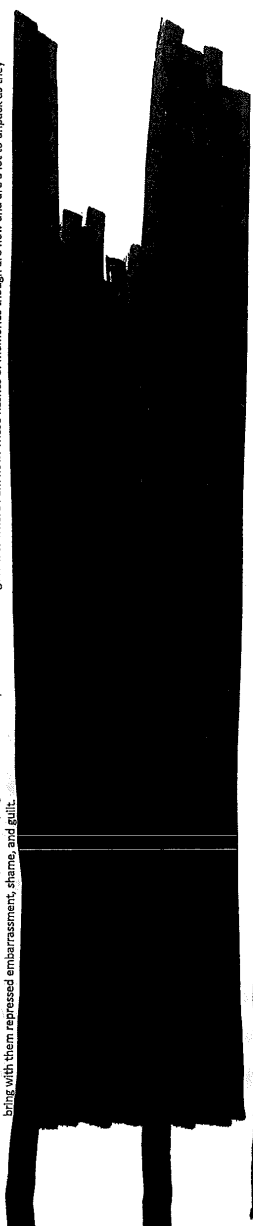
Thank you for taking the time to reply.
You are right. I have a historic tendency to want to understand situations or emotions right away and when I don't it gets anxious and then boom turn to porn. The thought rarely crosses my mind that my behavior and I don't like it. Granted, a lot of it could easily fall under the typical 'briny teenager' but a lot of it also falls into just being an ass. As much as it naws at me now I do know, as you also said, that feeling this is better than numbing out.

Learning further patience and kindness towards myself will help me in moving forward. For now I live to experience these growing pains.
First off, thank you for replying.

Through reading your comment I am realizing now, which is funny, how far I have already come. I went from viewing porn everyday, and like you, committed to steadily cutting it down to 2-3 times a week and for a while held steady at once a week; with rare binges when I tried to move to zero days. Now I am at 23 days without any PMO. In comparison to where I was before I do know that the strong urges to go back are nothing and not at all as frequent as it was when I first started this process about two years ago.

As for meditation, I am with you on that and I am actually on a current 30 day streak of 15 minutes every morning with Headspace. Combining meditation, exercise and cutting down on FB and Netflix alone have proven to be great pillars in helping me move forward.

I am feeling pretty good right now haha thank you for helping me remember the past and how I have gotten to where I am now. These flashes of memories though are new and are a lot to unpack as they bring with them repressed embarrassment, shame, and guilt.



24

GS

24

GS

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23

(x)

Ahhhh washhhh keep it going, you got this!

Addiction facilitates plan on clients to relapse, it is no different here. Not to negate or minimize your frustrations as they are mine too. In terms of upward mobility you are right on track, keep moving forward.

Self reflection-check

Obtaining knowledge on the topic-check

Developing a realistic plan-check

Rationale to back up plan-check

All systems go, you are cleared to kick this habit's ass.

26 here. I could look back on it in regret and to focus on what I lost in the process of this habit. It is undeniable of course that I could have used my time better and may have been in a better spot in life if I never took part. Same time though, it did happen and I personally would rather not have a part of my life be deemed, 'wholly a waste'. Regretful? Yes. But not a total waste as it brought me here and has forced me to learn more about myself and the topic of addiction in general to the point where I may actually be able to help others with this issue and to bring attention to it. Use that negative energy and use it for something good, or don't.

Edit: grammar Edit: Nah I am not done yet. Shit everyone, if we knew what we do now about this area do you think we would have started? Probably not, so that leaves the rationale to be that we turned to porn to help us get through some tough times. This is not to say it was a good or healthy choice, but a choice made nonetheless which may have not been made if we had better options, skills or knowledge available to us at the time. Now, we do have that awareness, and knowledge to develop the skills to let go of this in order to obtain healthier options. Regrets yes but not ones that cannot be rectified.

This is a problem I found myself looping around for a while. Besides what others have already advised, the one area that truly helped me was to come up with counter habits. Replace this habit with one or multiple other productive ones. For me, this has equated to meditation, exercise, journaling, and others. Find your outlet and engage with it to counter this one. I could tell you about my experience so far in how it's helped me. But from personal experience in being in the position of looking for others to motivate me like this I can tell you, the motivation would be short lived.

Ask yourself, what brings you here? What makes YOU want to stay motivated to quit? Focus on that and experience the benefits for yourself. It'll be worth more than me or anyone here sounding off what they have felt in quitting so far.

Arm yourself with the knowledge provided from the resources provided here, reflect on your own drives in wanting to quit, commit to the change you set for yourself, and experience the benefits in how you manifest for you first hand.

You are right, thank you for this.
Keep up the awesome work on your end too, your message is for us and you.

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The four As of internet pornography (source) - This has been driving me mad as I vaguely remember coming across this article years ago. Finally remembered the title and I apologize in advance if this is common knowledge.

The Four As
Out of the blue strong urge to break my 21 day streak - ... so I am going to the gym to work out, bye-bye.

You are taking some seriously strong moves towards addressing and eliminating this habit, good on you! Be kind to yourself too in this process, it isn't easy but as I said before you are already well on your way.

Keep this mentality.
I read far too many people on here and on /r/hotep taking this all or nothing approach and for most it just doesn't work that way, which ends up being even more discouraging for the individual. Changing habits that took years to develop will take time to chip away at and you decrease the likelihood of burn out by taking this mindset.

This is thoroughly well thought out.
This is exactly how I see this page, as a source of information as a guide to help others mold a system to break away from porn as they see fit and of which works best for them. Not one size fits all and it is up to us in deciding what to do with the testimonials and current studies that exist on this topic, you clearly did this.

Thank you for posting this.
Whenever a newer post doesn't have comments I try to make it a point to read and add what I can, even if it is just to compliment the person on their hard work.

Keep it up!!
Takes time but adding new habits to replace this one definitely helps. I think of it this way, in seeking to cut porn out completely without finding replacement habits was like holding my breathe. Sure, it may last a while, but eventually I break and feel even more emotionally drained for holding my breathe for so long.

Now, in adding something else to offset porn (i.e. meditation, exercise, journaling, learning new things, socializing, studying etc.) I notice it is not at all like holding my breathe, but rather like learning. I can find much greater relief and joy in other productive activities.

Do whatever works for you but try to find new habits or else you'll be like me for the past two years; holding my breathe and watching the clock, falling time time again wondering what I was doing wrong.

edit:grammar

There are variety of counter-questions that come up in order to come up with a clearer picture:

How old are you?
How long have you viewed internet pornography?

How often have you viewed it?
The list goes on. My point is, there isn't a singular result even if you are to answer these questions, but it could help in narrowing down some possible answers. From what I recall on reading through the Your Brain On Porn book and website is that it is shown to take those who are younger longer to recover from PIED or any other side effects compared to older individuals.

I would suggest checking out that website along with the other resources /r/porn offers to obtain further information.
Giving into porn due to boredom often left me feeling like I was in a state of static (difficulty thinking) sometimes days afterwards. Give it time and your state of mind will readjust to the change.

I do not like the idea of any person, substance, ways of thinking (addiction) having any power over me. In response, I do not have an ultimate goal in mind but rather want to see who I am when this longlasting potent addiction is no longer an issue. So far, I am liking what I am experiencing. Of note:

- find it easier to concentrate on areas I want to learn more about
- have more energy
- have more stable emotional energy
- am applying this new energy to more productive outlets

In essence, I am piecing together what I want to get out of this as time goes on.
Edit: I am also learning that I have placed far too much importance on sex which has left me much to reflect on as to why that is, how that idea took hold, and what I can do to replace new motivators.

Is this progress? Of most recent note I am unsure what to think about this. I wasn't aware to the amount of sexual focus and nudity in the Netflix exclusive show Altered Carbon but there is plenty of it. Surprisingly though I have found that I have reacted to it rather neutrally. I don't give it much thought during or afterwards and do not feel the drive to watch more of the show beyond wanting to know more about the story.

Is this the stage people call rebounding? I ask because after I realized how unresponsive I have been to the sexual content of the show I realize that I haven't found anything sexually stimulating in over a week. In general I haven't found much of a desire to turn to porn or masturbation beyond fleeting thoughts.

Learn relate to this. It is fantastic that you are looking to take a step towards addressing the underlying tide of what is promoting this behavior that you look to change.
My two cents on this is also look to add habits you want to implement in your life. These can be used to offset the desire to turn to porn when life gets tough or when your mental state is influenced by something like alcohol.

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$R = 1/2$ Total for 2
 $G = 9/48$ Total for 2
 $U = 2/19$ Total for 2

Participant	Collection date	Days abstinence	Posting dates	Posts
3	3/4/2018	70	3/4/2018	70 days in...69 days since I told my girlfriend about my addiction. For anyone questioning whether or not to talk to their SO, I have nothing but positive things to say about it. Last night I asked my girlfriend to be my wife. She said yes! So glad we are battling this addiction together! Can't post a pic here, but I will probably throw something on r/happy. Thank you to this community!
(3)		70		Two months down and 70 days in! Looking ahead to March!
(+)				[REDACTED]
		62		Can't repost on every subreddit, but in my experience...do it. Whether you like it or not, overcoming this addiction and all of its struggles are part of your life now. If you're confident your SO loves you and you're determined to fixing this part of your life, they should be willing to help you overcome this. Beating this addiction is a daily, lifetime battle. Don't fall into the trap of thinking "I can beat this on my own, and will never have to tell them."
GA				I told my girlfriend about 60 days ago. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done, but in so doing I found she also struggled with an addiction, and we've been able to support each other these past couple months. It's been amazing!
(X)		58		Side note: We've talked about marriage, but yesterday she told me she was actually ready to be engaged. She doesn't know that I bought the ring two days ago. :)
(X)		0		Good luck with whatever you decide to do. Checking in for the second half of February! My girlfriend and I are tackling this together! Released. Will reset my counter when I get home today.

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Total for 3

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Total for 3

Participant	Collection date	Days absent	Posting dates	Posts
4	3/7/2018	245	3/7/2018	This is more about changing your life than it is about simply stop looking at porn. Become self-aware. Learn to recognize the stressors and triggers in your life that lead you to act out. Learn how to respond to these stressors and triggers in a healthy way so that porn is not your coping mechanism. Replace bad habits with good habits. Above all, take this journey one day at a time. Good luck!
	GA	245		
	GA	246		Why do you "surrender" etc. etc.? If you want to commit to living pornfree, you need to be completely honest with yourself about the effects porn has on you. If you don't do this, you won't get very far. Listen to this episode of Pornfree Radio about finding your "why" in your life. I highly recommend that episode. My wife and I have been doing FAST checks pretty regularly for over six months. We even listened to that episode together. It's been great because it puts a lot of the focus on addressing underlying emotional needs that lead to porn use instead of focusing just on porn. It's also brief and well organized. Not only has it been helpful to me in my recovery, but it has brought us both closer together. One recommendation I would make: if you give it a try and have a good experience, schedule the next one. Good luck!
	GA	243		Welcome! Your story is one that many of us share. Admitting that you've got a problem and committing to respond to it in a healthy way are some of the best decisions you can make in life. Turn the page on the shame you feel, today is a new day. Choose to live pornfree today and you will find joy in your life. It could be recommended a resource to you, it would be Pornfree Radio. It has made a huge difference in my recovery. Look for episodes that interest you, or start with the back to basics episodes. This community is here to support you, so become an active participant. Good luck!
	GA	243		Living life. Ups, downs, good, and bad. Happy, sad, tired, and energized. It's all just life. But, man, it's so much more real and meaningful when you're living pornfree.
	(+)	242		honesty, accountability, and humility are three attributes that go a long way in living pornfree. I commend you. You and I both know that a relapse isn't in the cards today. Why? Because you've made the choice to live pornfree. You've committed to this goal. Let these negative feelings wash over you like a wave coming into the shore. Go back through your history on this sub and read your favorite posts and comments from the last year. That's a good way to gain some perspective and remember why you're on this journey and how you've changed. We all believe in you. Be at peace and keep this pornfree train chugging along.
	GS	242		It's so encouraging to see everyone trying to drop your shame's by sharing your struggles with someone else. The seemingly never-ending cycle of shame and self-loathing is broken. You've come to the right place. I've watched porn for 17 years. I'm married and I have two kids. This can be done. Get a badge in the sidebar and become an active member of the community. Look at the concrete tips in the sidebar, too. I personally recommend that you look through the episodes at Pornfree Radio and listen to a few that really strike you. The back to basics episodes also might be a good starting place. Begin replacing bad habits with good ones. Above all else, take this one day at a time. Welcome!
	GA	240		Sadly, his prediction has come true for many, many millions of people. Porn is our modern day opium den, and its presence reaches every corner of the world. I do have faith, however, that as the influence of porn continues to spread, an entire generation will rise up and call it out for the deceit that it is. It begins in communities like this one.
	GA	240		The resource that has made the biggest difference in my recovery is Pornfree Radio. Give it a try. The back to basics episodes might be a good starting place. Good luck!
	GA	240		Good luck! I hope you find an episode that resonates with you. It also took me years to admit that to myself, but once I admitted it, I finally started to make real progress in recovering from my addiction. You mentioned a number of the slides you've used and I'm glad to hear that. It's a journey, but you don't want to lie in anymore. Now, turn the page. Today is a new day. You have a purpose, and self-worth in the person that you are. You have new goals and new intentions, even if this journey will be challenging (and it will be at times). There's no need to start yourself up anymore. Be kind to yourself. Find meaning.
	GA	240		Now, don't just implement porn avoidance strategies in your recovery. Those will only get you so far. The key to recovery is becoming the person you've always wanted to be. It means to make changes to replace bad habits with good habits. Above all else, take things one day at a time, and choose each day to live pornfree.
	GA	239		All the best to you. If you stay committed to the process of changing and becoming, you will find joy in this journey and surpass your goals.
	GS	239		Tonight will be a great night for you, and an opportunity to show yourself that you can remain clean. Enjoy it!
	GA	238		are you? I'm so happy you're responding to these emotions in a healthy and positive way. If they're negative emotions, don't let them bottle up. Keep up your self-care and recharge your batteries. These emotions are normal.
	GA	238		I highly recommend F.A.S.T.T. checks. My wife and I have done them together and they've been a great benefit to both of us.
	GA	238		Wonderful post. Congrats on 30 days, and keep it going!
	GA	238		It's impossible to appreciate the beautiful parts of life if we don't tudge through a rough patch now and then. Glad to hear you're doing well.
	GA	237		In our recent survey, 98% of individuals who shared their struggle with a 3D recommended that others do this same. I know the number is exceptionally high, but that's exactly how this community responded. Seems like it should be worth doing. Keep us posted!
	GA	237		There is an episode of Pornfree Radio concerning F.A.S.T.T. check us. You should listen to it. Matt goes through a good method to hold regular, brief, but meaningful check ins with a spouse. If your spouse is struggling to help out, this might be a good plan for both of you. There is little discussion about porn. Mostly, it's a discussion about how you're experiencing, and looking ahead to healthy relationships. I hope you can find a small way to celebrate. You deserve it. You've made great progress, and you should be commended for confronting this problem early in your life. Many bright days are ahead for you. Keep it going!
	GS	237		Congratulations! I hope you were going through and commit to them that you will make it to your goal. This is not something we can overcome by ourselves. When we share with others, our ability to live pornfree goes way up.
	GS	237		Congratulations! I knew you were going to make it to this milestone. You've made tremendous progress. Keep it going!
	GA	236		If you say you've become addicted "again," I guess I would ask, when did you stop being an addict? Surely not during a 3 month plus period of sobriety, as admirable as that period was. As addicts, we will always be susceptible to a relapse even though over time that possibility can dissipate greatly. Were you still in the process of changing and improving your life when the relapse occurred, or had you been on a downward trajectory for a while?
	GA	233		Share with someone what you're going through and commit to them that you will make it to your goal. This is not something we can overcome by ourselves. When we share with others, our ability to live pornfree goes way up.
	GS	233		Good job. 30 days in another week. That's nothing to sneeze at.
	GS	233		Good work. You should give yourself a small reward to celebrate. Seriously, you deserve it.
	GA	232		Good work!
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I understand where you're coming from. On the other hand, perhaps a paradigm shift is in order to change your perspective on how you view yourself and what you are looking for in life. Unfortunately, there's no easy solution. All the best to you, though. If you can live painfree for as long as you have, you can solve this problem too.
 Baby steps, my friend. Rome wasn't built in a day, and overcoming fears, anxiety, and loneliness won't go away tomorrow. But coming out of our shells and leaving our comfort zones, even if it's done ever so slowly, can lead to life-changing results.
 The more you read and will be back in this life and think, "I wish I had spent more time looking at porn." Not a chance.
 Interesting. I hope he takes the time to read and understand the situation. I hope he takes the time to read and understand the situation. I hope he takes the time to read and understand the situation.
 If you're feeling weak, what makes you feel good, strong, and confident? Identify those things and make them a part of your daily routine. When you do this, you will live painfree. Good luck!
 No need to hope. You'll make it!
 If you don't think it ruins lives, you should read the stories of how it has broken up marriages, caused people to lose jobs, and led to isolation, shame, and loss of self-control.
 I'm a big believer in rewards, but they should be tied to a specific milestone (e.g., one week or one month), and you should set them at the same time you set your milestones. Good luck!
 Merely reading, or only implementing porn avoidance strategies, will only get you so far. If you want to achieve long-term recovery you need to enact meaningful personal change. You need to address the underlying issues that cause you to look at porn. You need to learn how to better respond to your emotional needs, and develop solid coping skills. None of this happens overnight, but it is a rewarding journey that can be done by day. Planning and commitment are the key to attaining many of these results. Here is the plan that I followed for the first six months of my current sobriety period. I found it helpful and effective.
 Day 6 of the rest of your life. There's no need to stop at 30!
 Forget what any study says or doesn't say. If there were 500 studies that all said there was no such thing as a porn addiction, it wouldn't change the fact that porn is harmful to me and I will do whatever it takes to get it out of my life. As you go down this road, day by day, and build off the changes you are making in yourself, you will find life to be a much better place.
 Self-care and careful planning are the keys to combat workplace stress. Hang in there and good luck.
 It is harmful to me and it is harmful to my relationship with my wife. The end.
 Welcome! Grab a badge in the sidebar and become an active member in the community. The best advice I can give is that porn avoidance strategies, while important, will never lead to long-term sobriety. You need to address the underlying issues that cause you to look at porn. You need to learn how to better respond to your emotional needs, and develop solid coping skills. None of this happens overnight, but it is a rewarding journey that can be done by day. Planning and commitment are the key to attaining many of these results. Here is the plan that I followed for the first six months of my current sobriety period. I found it helpful and effective.
 This is excellent. Congrats. It reminds me how I've played almost no video games over the last nine months, which covers my current pornfree streak. I don't consider myself addicted to gaming, but I've learned that it's not compatible with the life I want to live.
 Where porn avoidance strategies will never lead to long-term sobriety. For that, you need to change. But you realized it, and that's what matters. The process of changing and becoming can have its ups and downs too, but it is also the most rewarding part of this journey.
 Yes. It's true that 98% of individuals who shared their struggles with another person recommended that other individuals do likewise. When I put together this survey, I thought this question would get a high affirmative response based on anecdotal comments on the subreddit, but I never expected a 99% affirmative rate.
 In our recent survey, 56% of respondents said that they had shared their struggles with someone else, while 44% had not. And why haven't people shared their struggles with someone else? There are many reasons, but the biggest reason, at 84%, is that respondents were afraid of feeling embarrassed. The second biggest reason, at 66%, was respondents feeling concerned that others might think less of them after sharing. But 19% of those who have shared their struggles with another person would recommend that others do likewise, is it time for those who have not shared this burden with others to rethink if they should do so? If you've shared your struggles with someone else before, what can you tell others about your experience?
 This post is a discussion and brief analysis of the second pornfree survey that was conducted between February 3 and February 6, 2018. This survey was designed for the benefit of the pornfree subreddit so that we can better understand our struggles with porn, and learn better strategies in our recovery. It is my hope that the responses from the survey will drive a healthy discussion in the community. The full results of the second survey can be found here. In case you missed them, the results of the first pornfree survey, conducted in January 2018, can be found here. Feel free to read through this analysis of the second survey and provide your comments below.
 Question 1 of the survey asks respondents at what age they started regularly viewing porn. The highest response, at 22%, was 13 years of age, and a whopping 77% of all respondents started regularly viewing porn between the ages of 12 and 16. This clearly illustrates that a porn addiction strikes most individuals when they are in their youth.
 Question 2 asks respondents how frequently they viewed porn before deciding to live pornfree. The highest response, at 65%, was daily. Next, was multiple days per week, at 37%.
 Question 3 asks respondents which feelings they regularly experience before viewing pornography. The highest answer, at 85%, is boredom. Next are feelings of loneliness and stress, each at 70%. This is where the hard work should come in for each of us. If 85% of us feel bored just before we act out, then there are things we can do to fight now to address those feelings. What are some ideas to address our boredom, loneliness, and stress?
 Question 4 asks which factor is the primary contributor to acting out. Tied at 28% are lack of a social life and lack of purpose in life. As to the latter, it appears many of us need to do some soul searching and discover who we are and what our place is in this world.
 Question 5 asks whether the respondent had had the realization that he is heading toward a relapse before acting out. If so, when does that realization occur? 45% of respondents said minutes before the relapse occurs. 33% said hours before the relapse, and 11% said one to two days before the relapse. These results are interesting. In my experience, a sign of progress in recovery is being able to recognize one's emotional needs and respond to them in a healthy way. Most people who have been successful in their recovery realize that they are slipping days in advance of a possible relapse. Having this realization means that they are able to respond to their emotions in a healthy way before they get too close to the point of no return.
 Question 6 asks how many days it takes to begin a new sobriety streak after a relapse. 35% of respondents say that it takes 2 to 3 days. A total of 70% of respondents say that it takes anywhere from 2 to 3 days to begin a new streak. This suggests that it is a big challenge to secure and footing after a relapse. This is also a reminder that when your brain says, "Just do it this once, and that will be all," your brain is lying to you. If there is a positive result to this question, it's that 30% of respondents were able to return to a sobriety streak within one day of a relapse.
 Question 7 asks which activities helped the respondent return to sobriety after a relapse. The highest response, at 68%, was viewing the pornfree subreddit or a similar forum. This reaffirms the idea that sharing your struggles with others is a key component for overcoming your porn addiction.
 Questions 8 through 10 concern whether the respondents have personally shared their struggles with another person, as discussed at the beginning of this post.
 Question 11 asks whether the respondent regularly sets a weekly or monthly milestone while in recovery. 45% of respondents set milestones while 57% do not.
 Question 12 asks whether the respondent creates a reward for achieving the milestone. 29% of respondents create a reward while 71% do not. [Note: I am a big believer of setting milestones and rewards]



G = 16 U = 2

4

Question 13 asks what time the respondent goes to bed... A full 52% go to bed between 10:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. 35% go to bed after midnight. If you've heard the old phrase that nothing good ever happens after midnight, perhaps it's worth considering if your porn use increases after midnight.

Question 14 asks the respondent whether he/she finds it acceptable to have someone else play video games and using porn. 25% say yes and 45% say no. 30% say they don't play video games. Therefore, of the individuals in the survey who play video games, 35% found a correlation between playing video games and their porn use. That is a sizable number and one that should give games a momentary pause.

The results to Question 15 are even more obvious. When asked whether respondents find a correlation between social media and their porn use, 52% say yes and 33% say no. What are we doing to limit the impact that social media has on our porn use?

Question 16 asks, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much emphasis the respondent places on willpower in his/her recovery. At the highest, 28% of respondent said 8, and a total of 67% respondents said between 7 and 10.

Question 17 asks, on a scale of 1 to 10, how much emphasis the respondent places on personal change in his/her recovery. At the highest, 37% of respondent said 10, and a total of 77% respondents said between 7 and 10.

Question 18 asks respondents whether they have forgiven themselves for their struggles with porn. 51% said yes and 49% said no. I think this is one area that we can really improve upon. As I recently mentioned, we need to forgive ourselves before we can truly heal.

Going to bed at a decent hour, calmly reading before a sleep, and getting sound seven hours of sleep a night had been very beneficial for me.

When I last checked the survey, 59% of people who told someone about their porn struggles would recommend that fellow strugglers do the same. That's rather optimistic. Hopefully, this will cause some members of the community to consider opening up about their addiction.

The number one reason was the biggest emotion people experienced right before a relapse. That, in and of itself, is rather telling and should drive some discussion here. What's funny about your comment is that you're missing what the biggest emotion people experienced right before a relapse. Remembering that pinning feeling still gives me the chills. That's when I was numb and at my lowest point. It was like I didn't even care if there was a reason to look at porn, because "who cares?" This is the point where you're not at to experience ever again.

But I've also had the experience you had when you hit some milestone and feel on top of the world, and their relapse.

I look forward to getting the rest of the results. The last question about forgiveness was interesting to me. I went year without even considering forgiving myself. It wasn't until I did so that I really began to heal. At the moment, about 45% of the community has not forgiven themselves.

I like the 20 day milestone you're setting. You should come up with a reward for yourself when you make it. It's a helpful motivator and a way to appreciate successes on this journey. And when you get to 20, set a new milestone and reward. Good luck!

One of the above: "once bought a book really wanted to read and kept it displayed on my dresser until I made it to my milestone and pulled it down to finally read. It was a constant reminder to me of my goal."

Relapse seldom occurs in a single moment. It occurs gradually. Look back for a great explanation of what you might be going through.

Yes, talking about it will be of immense help to you. No need to feel embarrassed. Sharing is one of the best ways to learn, grow, and cast off the shame that we feel. Good luck!

You don't have to feel those urges if you don't want to. Figure out exactly what it is about Mondays that causes you to feel those urges. What emotional challenges do you feel, and what needs are not being met? Come up with a list of ways to respond to those challenges and needs in a direct and healthy way. Then, act. Planning, commitment, and action can help us overcome our urges. Just remember, being proactive is the same of the game.

The next step is to figure out what you like to do to enjoy your life. It's important to live the life to the fullest again. This doesn't happen overnight, but day by day you get to start building new habits, trying new things and being the person you want to be. Good luck on this!

Just remember to take this day by day and improve your life little by little. Getting married is a wonderful thing, but that wedding day, as special as it is, comes and goes. The ups and downs of life will return. So while I think your ensuing marriage is a wonderful motivator, just remember that there is life, and more recovery, after your wedding day. Congrats and good luck!

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

This is a good post. You've made lots of positive changes in your life that have obviously helped your recovery. And it looks like you've got some good plans for additional changes. I know the relapse hurt. But good job forgiving yourself and turning the page. I think things are looking up for you. Good luck!

As you mentioned, the relapse is a challenge. But it can be done, and it can be a positive experience. You pointed out some of the issues that have led to your porn use (e.g., lack of social life and always on the computer). The article is going to go up and what are you willing to change to live porn-free? I ask this because some of the solutions are right in front of you, but you may need to muster the strength to take the necessary steps forward.

Okay, here's the snags. You've been struggling. It happens, even if you've maintained a long period of sobriety, and you're going to pull through this. Why? Because you've accomplished so much. You've changed so much. And you know that you want to and you will continue living porn-free. It's who you are now. If you're feeling guilty for any reason, stop doing so now. If you're doubting yourself, put an end to it. Do something nice for yourself. You deserve it. Treat yourself kindly. Find something to recharge your batteries. Recommit to an old habit that you may have let go of. And if you're still struggling, commit to a solid seven day plan until you feel more in control. Try this one. We're all rooting for you.

Sure, I was just making this point that another benefit of living porn-free is that you don't have to worry about some porn company or government agency collecting data about your viewing habits. But I know that's a little creepy what this law entails. Constitutional protections in the U.S. would prevent this law from coming into place, but I don't know what the courts would say in the UK or other European countries.

I would be very careful about this and consider alternative forms of self-care and self-improvement. Used to do lots of gaming, and found my gaming habits inextricably linked to my porn habits. When I put down gaming, attending my porn addiction became much easier. Every time I picked up gaming again, however, edging and relapse resulted. So, about 7 or 8 months ago I made the decision to stop gaming and stop porn altogether because they walked hand in hand for me. It's not necessary that gaming is bad, but it can be for those of us dealing with certain compulsive behaviors. And this is especially true when gaming becomes a coping mechanism and a compulsive habit, rather than a mild form of entertainment. The only way we ever break free of the porn trap is by changing ourselves for the better, day by day. We address head on those underlying issues in our life that lead us to view porn. We develop healthy ways to respond to our stressors. We utilize healthy self-care that will recharge give us a lift, and it was highly beneficial. Good luck on your journey.

Well done. Set a new milestone and reward yourself when you get there.

Not today, but if you feel yourself slipping and you're under a lot of stress, make sure you're recharging your batteries by doing some good self-care that responds to your needs. Keep it going!

I told my wife when we were dating, it was hard to get up the nerve to tell her, but I'm happy I did. Let me be clear, it obviously wasn't something she expected to hear, but it was the right thing to do. It brought us together because there was no longer a secret between us. Plus, she became a wonderful support for me. It was amazing how my shame fell away when I told her, and I became more confident when I was honest. It's the best policy. Good luck!

Make sure you're not just recharging your batteries, but you're also means to protect their addiction. Don't be too hard on yourself. The decision is yours.

Progress is the key. Like streaks and numbers, but they're not the be-all-end-all. You could consistently be at 350 days clean and be in a more difficult spot than someone who is at 35 days. One day at a time, as you know, and you'll reach your goals.

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Work on living pornfree one day at a time and you'll be on your way! I might also suggest you listen to some Pornfree Radio episodes. There's some great advice there that might address where you're at and where you want to go. Good luck!

Our recent survey indicates that 51% of the members of our community have shared their struggles with pornography with someone else before. That means that 49% of our members have never shared their struggles with anyone. And of those who have shared their problem before, it has likely been some time since they have shared it with someone else. AA has a saying that "you're only as sick as your secret." Talk to someone who can help you get the shame you feel to go away. It can remove the emotional and psychological burdens of keeping a painful secret. You will remember your self-worth, you will gain confidence, and you will walk the path that does not come from you. So, if you're ready to muster up the courage, join us in the **NO MORE SECRETS CHALLENGE!**

When? The Challenge starts as soon as you sign-up below, and it remains in effect through Friday at midnight.

Recommendations: Think about one person in your life with whom you can share that you struggle with pornography, and then find the time to talk with that individual about your struggles this week. Who should you tell? It can be anyone, but it might include a significant other, a close friend, a family member, a therapist, a support group, a teacher, a coach, a church leader, or anyone else who you trust. You don't need to tell anyone all the details of your struggles.

Let us know how it goes: Tell us about your experience and then encourage others in their efforts. Good luck!

I had a nice long conversation with my wife last night. We've spoken before about my struggles with porn, but it had been a while. Even though I've been clean for a while, it was good to talk with my wife about the stressors I face that pose a risk to my sobriety. She was very encouraging and happy that we talked. All in all, it was a great experience. That's fantastic. It's never too late to have these kind of moments. I just talked to an old high school buddy last week. He asked if I listened to any podcasts and I told him I listen to Pornfree Radio. He then mentioned that he had not been listening to the podcast. We had a very positive conversation about working to overcome porn. When we share our porn struggles with others, it's amazing how helpful it is.

Might I suggest you ask your wife whether or not she would like to know if you relapse. I don't believe you need to tell her every little detail of your addiction, but I also don't believe you should censor things from her or act dishonestly. Hence, communicate with her and set boundaries together. Make sure her needs are also being met. If you're interested, consider doing F.A.S.T.T. check ins with her. If you don't know what those are, I highly recommend you listen to this episode of Pornfree Radio. These check-ins have been a big help to me in my recovery and have helped to reestablish trust between my wife and I. Good luck!

Good job. That's not an easy thing to do, but restoring trust in your marriage and bringing your addiction from darkness into light is important in your personal recovery. Keep it going! A number of people have been through this, myself included. Curiosity, I see it happen the most between 100 and 150 days. You might be complacent or experiencing recovery fatigue. To get out of this funk, reassess your current situation. Set a new milestone and reward to make sure you're striving for continued success. Help some other people on this sub who are really struggling early on in their recovery so that you remember why you're doing this. Lastly, think about going on a strict 7 day recovery plan to make sure you're on solid ground again. Check out Pornfree Radio for a good 7 day plan. Stay the course. You'll be fine.

Put together a written plan, if you don't already have one. Set a milestone you'd like to reach and a corresponding reward for when you make it there. In that past, I've even displayed the reward on my dresser as a reminder to what's coming my way if I follow through. In your plan, write down the active commitments that you intend to keep and then revisit your plan regularly to revise as needed. Check out Pornfree Radio episode 96 for some great ideas on this. Good luck!

First, consider changing your perspective. No one is perfect in this life. We all make mistakes and we all have something we're working on. For us, it's working to live pornfree. And that's not a bad thing if we can't completely reach that goal. The shame we feel when we look at porn is debilitating. But we must remember that we're good people, with self-worth, on the road to recovery. We can't worry about what others might think about our choices. Second, if you haven't done so, consider talking to someone about your addiction. Sharing your struggles will cause some of the shame you feel to fall away. You will also realize that people still love you and think highly of you even though you're fighting porn.

Third, as you continue to replace bad habits with good habits to change your life, you'll gain confidence, be happier and have a healthier outlook. You've shown great dedication and had wonderful success. We are often too hard on ourselves and expect perfection right away. But I don't think God has that same expectation. He wants our best effort, but he recognizes that we are only human and we make mistakes. We should be focused on progress over perfection. And we should take things one day at a time. One resource you might be interested in trying is Pornfree Radio. Good luck!

I suggest that as you set a milestone right now, you should also set a reward for yourself. It doesn't have to be big, but it should be a recognition that you accomplished your goal. It's important to understand that you are not alone in your journey to pornfree. You can reach out to me in private to get help through your first week. And when you make it through your first week, reassess your situation and set a new milestone and reward. But most importantly, take things one day at a time. You need to take care of yourself during your recovery. If you write yourself down, you'll eventually fall down. You need regular self-care that responds to the stressors and challenges in life. If you do this, you will be coping with life in a healthy way and you will recharge your batteries. The most effective self-care, by the way, is the self-care that you plan proactively, sometimes even days in advance, rather than just on the fly.

Overcoming porn begins by changing our unhealthy habits. You already identified one unhealthy habit related to porn: staying up way too late. For one week, try unplugging from your electronic devices much earlier at night, and likewise go to bed at a predetermined, earlier hour. I bet you will begin to see real progress right away. Check out Dr. Meltem's brief video about how relapse occurs so that you are better prepared to combat it in the future. Hang in there. You can begin living pornfree once again right now. It's not easy to accept that you've relapsed, but that's okay. The important thing is that you've recognized the relapse, and you've taken steps to prevent it from happening again. You can't do it alone. It's one of the most important things an addict can learn. You need to fall away and reminds us that we have self-worth. We discover that when we set our sights on a goal, we can't let go of it. We can't let go of it because we know that we have self-worth. We really hope this conversation continues and that more people take the challenge to talk to someone about their porn addiction. Maybe one of us should even post a challenge on this sub and ask people to complete it within a certain number of days. Hmmm.

I know how you feel. I've been there. Be sure to take care of yourself. There is some need in your life that is not currently being met. You may not be able to meet that need today, tomorrow, this week, or this month, but you should be able to find a way to respond to that need in a healthy way right now. Make sure you recharge your batteries. Lastly, take a step back and gain some perspective. Look at all the things you've accomplished. You've done great work so far, and deep down you want to keep it going. So let's make it happen. We all believe in you. I'm not sure whether or not you're keeping track of your days, but you can't let go of it. Don't believe they walk on water, but I also pay extra close attention to their advice. Your streak ended. That's all. Those 14 days didn't go down the drain. They were 14 days pornfree. Time to start a new streak and live pornfree again. As for help, try listening to Pornfree Radio. There are some exceptional tips, plans, and advice there. Totally agree. Group meetings, accountability partners, coaching, and therapy are all options people should consider. Make active commitments, keep them, learn from your mistakes, and make progress. This is a marathon, not a sprint. Celebrate your little victories along the way.

G = 19
U = 2

Setting milestones is important during recovery. It shows that we are engaged in planning our recovery, it marks our progress, and it signifies a fulfillment of a goal. It should be a motivator for each of us. Milestones will be different for each of us. For some, a milestone may be one week or one month. Maybe it's shorter or maybe it's longer. I'm presently at 35 days. My next milestone is 60 days. When you achieve a milestone, remind your plan, think about your progress, and set a new milestone to reach. Also, don't forget to set up a reward for each milestone reached. You worked hard for it. Give yourself a reward. Just a period of great challenge and difficulty. It takes a time to live life and celebrate your successes. Rewards will be different for each of us. I bought a new book when I hit 30 days. When I hit 60 I bought a new thing in the *Aspen* mountains. My setting your reward at the same time you set your milestone so that you have something to aim for. So, what's your milestone and what will your reward be?

I saw an stress on tv tonight. Nothing inappropriate, but it caused my mind to start an automatic recall into past porn binges from months and even years ago. I immediately went to *Bible Mood*, took some deep breaths, and listened to the thunder strike and the rain pour. After a couple of minutes, everything subsided. For added effect, you can play any song from *Thomas Newman over Rainy Mood*. Yes, it's an amazing little piece of heaven. Anyway, this may not work for anyone else, but it worked for me so I thought I'd pass it along. Stay strong everyone!

"Either you run the day, or the day runs you." [Quote from Jim Rohn]. So, who does it work for me so I thought I'd pass it along. Stay strong everyone!

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now." Chinese proverb. Stop holding onto the past. Stop holding onto regret, shame, and a basket full of "what ifs." Close the book. You're ready. Today is the focus and today is the future.

When you're feeling overwhelmed or discouraged, which is it? And are you really sure about your answer? What are you going to do from your life this upcoming week to make it a done? Richard Dawkins had said, being around someone who has a negative influence on you, something else? As for me, I'm cutting out staying up late, chain on heading to bed each night by 12:00 am sharp with my cell phone in the other room. Then I'll read a little and get a good night's sleep so I'm feeling energized the next day. It's never to late to plan ahead, and to plan to change!

"It isn't enough to put your best foot forward; you have to follow through with your other foot, too." [Quote from Jacob M. Braude] I see lots of people saying they're sick and tired of porn, and that they're about to display the necessary willpower to stay this monster. But that's really just putting your best foot forward. And taking one step, while important, won't get you very far. No, you need to take a second step. And then another. And then a whole lot more. Create a recovery plan. Obtain an accountability partner. Give helpful advice to others. Change everyday routines. Educate yourself. I know you'll have taken so many steps that you will be quite a ways down the road to recovery.

86: <https://www.recovery.com/page/86/> - Video where Matt Dolbister outlines the eight steps to a successful recovery plan. Take a listen if you like. He provides some great information (episode One of his steps includes setting up a consequence for relapse. It can be something like giving up tv or video games for a certain period of time, or doing the dishes in your house every day for a week, or whatever else. At first, I was skeptical about this idea, but then he explained that one reason he likes a consequence is so that the individual does not allow in shame for a few days for a relapse. Rather, he immediately starts doing something that causes him to actively participate in his recovery again, and feel like he's accomplishing something, even if it also acts as an accountability mechanism.

I'm considering adding a consequence section to my recovery plan. If anyone else has tried this, but it helped you? If you don't want temptation to follow you, don't act as if you're interested. - Richard Dawkins So often, relapse begins with looking at something that many people would characterize as not pornographic, or at least not as bad as porn. I've been thinking about this. What are we going down? What are we really chasing after? I like a good pun. Twice last night and then this morning I had a relapse. I was reminded of how I can often make it to two weeks without much of an issue, only to then experience the sudden return of my brain crying out in starvation for anything I can get its hands on to satiate its appetite. So often, that's when I have given in.

Here is a quote I read last night and again this morning which helped calm my nerves and helped me focus back on my goal to stay this beast:

"Across the plain of time bleached the bones of countless thousands, who, while upon the threshold of victory, set down to rest. And resting, they died." - Paul Dunn

No more resting for me.

"One today is worth two tomorrows." - Francis Quarles - Focus on today!

"The road today is worth two tomorrows." - Francis Quarles - Focus on today!

Most success [and trust] depiction of addiction recovery I've ever read. Autobiography in the chapters by Fortia Nelson

- I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost... I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It isn't my fault. I get out immediately.
- I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there. I still fall in. It's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.
- I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there. I still fall in. I can't believe I am in the same place. But, it isn't my fault. It still takes me a long time to get out.
- I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it there. I still fall in. It's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.
- I walk down another street.

Total for 4

U = 3/20

Total for 4

G = 12/137

Total for 4

R = 1/1



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Participant	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates
5	3/1/2018	49	3/2/2018

Check out this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmjJdWdOlc>
 What you describe is something that happened recently to me, and it's explained in the video. The thing that helped me is talking to a friend about how much I was struggling, just getting it out there was enough for me.
 Just keep at it, if it gets really hard use the Urge Surfing MP3 on the sidebar. I'm counting on you! Remember it's a process, starting to figure it out is better than being stuck in an endless loop. I know that after this time, you'll start to recognize the signs and resign it in before it's too late. Keep at it, dude! *

5

GP

48

~~My experience in the first 21 days - So I've had a few strong urges today, and I guess I just need to put this out there... The post will be just me rambling about I went pornfree 21 days ago, I'll admit it wasn't as hard as some of you may be having it except for the first week or so. Sometimes I get really really horny so I MO, I've only done it 3 times and I had to fantasize at first but it's getting easier (and it feels better each time). It's not the first time I went pornfree, some years ago I tried nofap and only got to 12 days, then gave up. Two years ago, I went for a streak of nofap for over a month without even trying. I was getting infatuated with a girl, and didn't feel the need to PMO for some reason. I felt great, was getting fit by going to the gym regularly, felt socially awesome, was having the time of my life... Then I went on vacation, broke the streak, and it slowly all dissipated. I moved on, for about a year and a half I was using porn regularly but not compulsively, but as we all know, it got worse and worse each time. It got to the point where last year I fapped three times in one day, and was having a hard time going even one day without PMO. So, the other day I stumbled upon "BOP.com again, and connected the dots on my older "involuntary" nofap streak, then decided to go for it again.~~

39

RO

Maybe masturbation is getting out of hand too... H people, just gonna throw my thoughts out there on this post. Lately I've been struggling a bit with some cravings and images flashing in my head, so I've resorted to masturbating more frequently this past week (3 times overall). Since I've gone pornfree, I had reduced my frequency to around once a week, although before that I was doing it around once a day. I don't know if I should be worried to start compulsively masturbating, or if it's ok to have some periods of increased frequency.

22

(X)

What are your thoughts on this?
 My experience in the first 21 days - So I've had a few strong urges today, and I guess I just need to put this out there... The post will be just me rambling about I went pornfree 21 days ago, I'll admit it wasn't as hard as some of you may be having it except for the first week or so. Sometimes I get really really horny so I MO, I've only done it 3 times and I had to fantasize at first but it's getting easier (and it feels better each time). It's not the first time I went pornfree, some years ago I tried nofap and only got to 12 days, then gave up. Two years ago, I went for a streak of nofap for over a month without even trying. I was getting infatuated with a girl, and didn't feel the need to PMO for some reason. I felt great, was getting fit by going to the gym regularly, felt socially awesome, was having the time of my life... Then I went on vacation, broke the streak, and it slowly all dissipated. I moved on, for about a year and a half I was using porn regularly but not compulsively, but as we all know, it got worse and worse each time. It got to the point where last year I fapped three times in one day, and was having a hard time going even one day without PMO. So, the other day I stumbled upon "BOP.com again, and connected the dots on my older "involuntary" nofap streak, then decided to go for it again.

The real problem I'm having, is that I'm 20yo and I'm still a virgin. The closest I've come to having sex was with that girl I mentioned earlier, but I wasted that chance, and after that I've had a harder time talking to girls and stuff. Obviously, with my streak now I really really want to get it over with, but perhaps I'm giving it too much importance. Ah well, I just wanted to tell someone about this. I actually talked about all of this with some of my friends recently, but I feel like I get annoying bringing it up again and again. Thanks for reading.

22

(X)

EDIT: I'll add some more info about the trouble I've had today. Last night, I was hanging out with some friends that aren't that close, so I haven't told them about this problem, and they showed me some bikini pictures from Instagram. I looked at some, then couldn't stop thinking about it, even today when I woke up. Thankfully, I haven't looked again today, and I won't, but you guys all know how deep it can burrow in your mind heh. Here's to another day. Yeah, I actually was on "personal growth" mode last time, I think that's why I was hitting it off with that girl... Anyways, I'm trying to do that now too. I'm trying to exercise more, go out more, etc.

Thanks for the encouragement.

$$R = 1/1 \quad G = 2/2 \quad U = 2/2$$

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates	Posts
6	3/1/2018	41	3/1/2018	40 Days Clean: My Thoughts - Honestly don't remember the last time I reached this amount of days to be honest, I feel so clear headed yet everyday is an emotional roller coaster. There is still some attraction to porn but it's at an all time low. Amazingly enough I only had one minor slip up this month, caught myself admiring a profile on fb but immediately came to my senses. Started school this year as well so that also is tremendously helping me stay pornfree. Hope everyone is doing well today!
		41		Glad to help! Been at this for over a year now. Got about 3 or 4 30 day streaks under my belt along with a 45 day one (my longest streak) Feel free to pm me for reassurance!
		41		It helps somewhat but lowering anxiety more so comes from life choices: better diet, supplements, and generally getting out of your comfort zone.
		32		Being someone who's struggled with this kind of P. I completely understand. I feel like erotic role plays are more addictive due to the user being more immersed.
		30		Knowing why I do is a major stepping stone in my recovery. I can now use that as a tool to further live healthy and build new pathways.
		30		Keep going, the flatline can be an absolute nightmare and feel impossible but in the long run it'll all be worth it.
		11		I'm not entirely sure if I can call this an MO, I was just casually scrolling through my Instagram feed and caught sight of a rather beautiful woman. Seeing this got me in the mood and I proceeded to fap, however while fapping my eyes were shut the entire time and this allowed me to focus more so on the sensation. It's a little confusing because usually I'm left unsatisfied and wanting more but this time I'm more content and quite at ease. Could this be considered improvement? (Usually I'd resort to a chatroom)
		9		Already 9 Days clean! That's all, no long paragraphs or any noise as such. Just wanted to say I'm grateful to have found this sub reddit. Last year was definitely a challenge but a needed wake up call. Hope you're all having a wonderful day!
		9		Thanks! Hey maybe we'll both make it to 90 this year!
		0		Then you're just jeopardizing yourself by playing w fire. It might not be a complete relapse but why tempt yourself?

6

Total for 6

$$G = 7/7$$

Total for 6

$$U = 3/3$$

Participant #	Collection date	Days absent	Posting dates	Posts
7	3/1/2018	40	3/1/2018	<p>Day 39, and going strong. A quick thank you to this sub, because having a community is so important in all this, even if its just through reddit usernames. So I'm 39 days in. My longest streak in forever. Last weekend I go home, meet up with some friends, and go out. We meet, I meet this girl, and at the end of the night we go back to my place. We have sex and it's... well its weird. The pleasure aspect is just not there. And not in a I didn't enjoy it way. It was great, we had fun, and I could get hard, but it was almost like I didn't feel pleasure. It was hard to finish. Alcohol? For sure, but there was more to it than that. We went twice totalling almost an hour and a half, and I didn't finish.</p> <p>So I'm thinking about it for the next few days and I come to the realization that Jesus Christ, porn has fucked me up way more than I thought. I would rather watch porn than have sex right now. Straight up. And that's not okay. But I'm just at the beginning of this journey, and this experience has given me more motivation to go forward and become sexually healthy. There have been times where I have had sex, and known what it is meant to feel like. And that numb disinterest in it is not what it is.</p> <p>Anyways, that was my experience I wanted to share. The scariest part about all of this is the implications this will have in 10-20 years from now. We are a small growing community, but there are so many people out there who watch porn regularly without thinking about how it affects them. The realizations I've had over just the past 39 days have been enough for me to entirely reconsider how I handle women and sex, and the thought that that could have carried into the future even further if I hadn't stopped is terrifying. We're doing a good thing. But to end on a less depressing and more motivational note, here's a gif of Shia LaBeouf telling you to just do it.</p> <p>https://giphy.com/gifs/instead-87xh8tU1D6KA</p> <p>Much love.</p> <p>So I'm 35 days in. The longest I've ever gone. But what that means is that I'm hitting what I hope to be withdrawal symptoms that I've never hit before. So I'm gonna write out this whole experience so far, and then keep pushing, to 2 months, 6 months, and forever. Here we go.</p> <p>The first week I was so tired ALL THE TIME. It wasn't even a depression, it was just a weight and exhaustion. I slept all the time and couldn't stop.</p> <p>The second week I was angry and irritable. I would sit at my cube at work and just get annoyed at people for things that had never even happened. It was mad weird, and I felt super guilty about it. This went on into week 3 as well.</p> <p>Week 3 was mostly anxiety. But the kind of anxiety that doesn't make any sense, and I learned that I had to just let it be there because there was nothing I could do about it.</p> <p>And week 4 was an absolute burst of emotion. I mean it was insane. I felt like my chest was about to burst at any given moment.</p> <p>Now we're at week 5, and the depression has hit, hard. A lot of stuff happened over the past 2 weeks, and I think that also triggered it, but I'm emotionally numb, can't feel a connection with anyone, and am just generally frustrated with my mind set. I've struggled with depression for years, and I'm hoping that this helps pull me out of it, along with therapy and hard work.</p> <p>Anyways that's the journey so far. Would love to hear any similar experiences, or answer questions you might have. Stay strong guys, and much love.</p> <p>Hey guys,</p> <p>So 33 days in and still experiencing very intense emotions. I mean I can feel them in my chest. Has anyone else experienced this and do they diminish? Or is this just part of who I am?</p> <p>Appreciate the input. Much love.</p> <p>Day 31 -- Extremely intense emotions. Whats up guys.</p> <p>So the past week I've felt very intense emotions, ranging from sadness to happiness to frustration to joy. Because of certain things that have happened in the past week with a girl, these emotions are particularly noticeable.</p> <p>I'm wondering if the intensity of these emotions is just another withdrawal symptom and if they even out, because although I'm extremely grateful to have started feeling again the amount of emotion there is absolutely exhausting. I sit at work and am just processing emotion and am dead by the end of the day.</p> <p>Does anyone have experience with this? Would love to hear your input. Much love.</p> <p>Day 29 -- Another push, another victory. Day 28. Drank again last night, and made the point to only get to a point where I was blasted. Woke up today not hungover. A success.</p> <p>BUT were out last night and there's this girl that I've been into for a long time. I may be in love with this girl. I've had chances to make things happen (we've hooked up a few times) but I told myself that I would work on myself, and quitting porn is a big part of that.</p> <p>So we're out dancing, and she's hitting on my roommate. And it SUCKS. That's what made last night and this morning so difficult. Seeing the girl that you want to be with hitting on someone else, let alone someone you're close with, and let alone because you made the conscious decision to work on yourself instead of going after her, sucks ass. I wanted to numb this pain by watching, and I realized that. But that's what made this time different. I REALIZED it. Instead of just jumping into porn and numbing the pain. I understood why I wanted to and used that to not. And that is a victory.</p> <p>I know I'm only 29 days in, and probably have a long way to go. But if you're new to this and read this, I'm telling you to stick with it. 29 days ago I was lifeless, and for the first 3 weeks after that I was still lifeless. The past week is the first time in a very long time that I can feel again, and it is life changing.</p> <p>Whatever your motivation is, I have mad respect for each and every one of you. This shit is hard. And it takes balls to even start. Give yourself credit for your victories. Stay strong and fight the good fight. Much love.</p> <p>How to handle hangovers - So throughout this process the times I relapse are when I'm hungover. Probably 80% of my relapses are through this. I was mad hungover today and almost relapsed (gotta admit I pecked for all but a second) but I did not do PIVO, although I did end up jerking off.</p> <p>Does anyone have any advice on how to handle hangovers? I know I need to make some strategies, and I've made so much progress I would hate to have it all for naught because I drank too much one night. How do you guys handle this?</p> <p>Thanks in advance for the advice. Much love.</p> <p>Day 28 -- Some thoughts. This is officially the longest I have gone without watching porn for the past 10 years. I went 27 days in October and caved, and I almost caved today because I'm mad hungover and I always forget how hard it is to not watch when you're hungover. But I didn't and now I'm at the longest streak I've had.</p> <p>Just wanted to post and share. Much love to you all and stay strong.</p>

7 (x)

(x)

(x)

(x)

(+)

RA

(+)

R = 1
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23

(x)
7

Day 23 - First off a shoutout to all of you. The past week has been especially rough not just because of porn and having this community has been huge. This is more just so I can get this out in writing, because I'm too emotionally drained to get into detail. The past 24 hours has been especially rough, but I'm still going and that's what's important. We can all do this.

I admire all of you deeply, and that has helped keep me going. It takes a lot of balls to look a problem in the eye and say I'm going to fix this. The balls that many people in this world think they have when in reality, they don't.

That's all I got. Stay strong and much love.*

Congrats dude, that's a huge first step

Day 22 - Lots of thoughts (triggers). Whats up guys

So it's day 22 and I woke up today with some SERIOUS temptation. Pretty sure I also had a dream about porn last night which doesn't help, but I realize that getting this down in writing would be beneficial.

The past 24 hours have been mad rough because I was sitting at home yesterday about to go pick up this girl (we're friends right now, although I think she's mad cool, but I want to prove to myself that I can do this before I pursue anything with anyone) and I get a text from a random number. No idea who it is, none of my friends have the number, and its this mad attractive girl sending me a topless selfie.

At first I legitimately thought that I must know this girl because why in the hell would she send me this picture otherwise. But after initially staring at it to see if I could recognize her (it had one of those snapchat filters on it) and realizing I didn't I realized it there was more to it than that because I wanted to look at it SO badly. This brought on harsh feelings of shame and anxiety. Long story short is I ended up deleting it because 1) it was someone just messing around with my number and 2) it definitely triggered me. But I deleted it, and that's what's important.

The second thing is that I'm lying in bed this morning with this serious temptation, scrolling through snapchat stories, and Misa Khalifa's shows up where all the random ones you can watch are. Immediately deleted it, but goddamn the temptation right now is real. I'm bouta get out of bed and get moving, because I want to sit here just to know that it's a few key strokes away, but I won't give in to that. I've come too far.

Thank you for reading. This community is amazing and this is the first time in a long time I feel like I can actually do this. I keep going because even though I don't quite know how quitting porn will help me. I know it will. Much love.

But need some advice from people who know. 20 days in. That's solid. Putting myself on the back for that.

Just need some advice from people who know. 20 days in. That's solid. Putting myself on the back for that.

I guess I'm asking for some perspective. I find it hard to believe that withdrawal can be THIS bad. But at the same time I keep going because A) I know it'll help me and B) that's rationalizing.

Has anyone been here and gotten through it only to see the green on the other side? I would love to hear your stories. Much love.

Edit: I appreciate your responses so much. Today has been worse than yesterday but I'm staying strong and reading your replies give me hope

Just some thoughts on day 7. First No, I'm not at 125 days. I just haven't been here in awhile. I at day 7.

What makes porn different from other addictions is there's a very natural aspect to it, which makes it so easy to rationalize. "I feel like watching porn, why should I be ashamed of that?" would usually be mine. And I'm not saying that shame is a good way to handle it either, but I am saying that because having libido and wanting to look at naked woman is more natural than, say, injecting heroine, makes it so easy to trick yourself into saying stuff like that and then falling right back into it. But when you tell yourself "I shouldn't be ashamed," and then go look at porn, you are actually looking for short term relief to the shame you feel.

Logically, we shouldn't be ashamed of looking at porn. It is a natural thing to want to do. But the reality is we feel that shame, and that's what matters. The way you feel doesn't always make sense, but listening to your negative emotions in this journey can be much more useful than listening to your logic. Your brain is going to rationalize the hell out of watching porn.

There's a post somewhere on here that comes to mind that says that a craving for porn isn't your libido talking. First off, hats off to the guy that posted that, and secondly, it's so true. When you feel an urge to watch porn, you're not horny. You just want to jerk off and orgasm. Being horny is a completely different feeling altogether. I've been trying to quit for the better part of a year now, and I went almost an entire month once. Ever since then its been week-40 day spurts, and I said I had it under control. In reality, that was just another rationalization to watch - I was always looking forward to getting to that 7 day mark so I could watch again. But when I hit that 28 day mark and watched, something was different. I felt better. It felt more NATURAL. Its difficult to describe, but there was so much less anxiety and shame under the surface. I felt that libido again. Even my hand on felt different.

That was back in October. So now, I'm back at square one. But I believe that this time will be different. that this time I understand more about what it's caused in my life and that quitting will make things better. It's been a journey and a half, but all of us can do this, and it will make our lives so much better. Much love.

20

RA

7

(x)

Total for (x) = 1/1
Total for (x) = 3/9
Total for (x) = 1/2
G = 1/1 U = 3/9 R = 1/2

Participant # 8
 Collection date 3/7/2018
 Days abstinent 49

Posts

Posting date 3/7/2018
 Good thing you've realized it. I decided I had to do something about my habits when I came across PomFree by chance (not too long ago) and had a look at the many posts that described situations that started much like mine, but had progressed and were in the midst of serious, serious consequences. PIED, divorce, crazy kids, self loathing, brain fog and all the rest. I realized that all of that could easily be me in just a matter of time. I also realized that even though my habits were really tame and vanilla in comparison to "most peoples" porn habit, it was still a porn habit, and I was a real asshole for believing I had somehow sanitized it or made it okay. If you feel porn encroaching, you want it to stop, and you're looking for help, this is a good place for you. A few suggestions. 1. Have a look through the resources in the sidebar. As you take some real time to consider what they're saying, I'm sure at least one thing, (if not several things), will stand out as something easy to do, something you could implement right now. Have the humility to give it a go, even if it feels cheasy or outside of your comfort zone. Pay attention to the results. Have the patience to watch it over time, even if it feels like nothing is happening. 2. Keep reading and posting here. That was one of my "cheesy" things. 2 months or so ago, I would have laughed out loud at the idea of participating in an online forum for porn recovery. I've come to see, at least for me, that reading and posting is a tool (among several) that helps chip the legs out from under porn's influence. Framing and sharing your experience is part of actually claiming ownership of it. Claiming your experience is an important part of making real decisions and having the wherewithal to see them through, rather than just be strung about in the moment by your now-jacked-up ego. Everyone here can attest to the ill effects of being strung about in the moment by their now-jacked-up biology. There are real people here with real insight who aren't gonna judge or stonewall or anything as you figure out what's going on with you. They've got practical advice based in real experience. There's a good chance someone here will understand exactly where you're coming from. There are more than a few who have lived through hell and are still wading forward. Everyone here wants you to do well. Oh and set a badge Chesey, and somehow strangely magical. :) But no kidding. Set a badge. All the best man! edit: phrasing Posting here had to be tough. Way to do the tough thing. You're still in the game. All the best. Probably gonna wash me up some dishes when I get home! Stay strong, fellow adult! Yep, gotta second what was said about 17&virgin. Don't worry about that, man. In retrospect, worrying about that kind of thing caused unnecessary weirdness when I was a kid. I forget about comparing yourself to all the other dudes (who are probably mostly lying anyway) and just relax about getting with the ladies. The more genuine/authentic you are, (assuming you're putting effort towards being a decent human being), the easier/faster/better it will happen for you. Porn is a trap when it comes to knowing what to expect. Porn has a way of promoting the opposite of authenticity, genuineness, and decency. You totally get this. I want to second what everyone here has said about the resources on the sidebar. Take the time to look through them. I'll bet a few things stand out right away as not only possible but very doable. Maybe laughably simple. Have the humility to implement at least one of them right now, even if it feels petty or silly or outside what you normally do. If that ends up being too easy, commit to implementing another one.

GA

49

GA

48

GA

47

GA

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GA

47

GA

GA

G = 9

8

47

GS

47

(x)

I really like "There's nothing I'm giving up."

I also like "Do not moan. Do not doubt"

At the heart of things is a choice and a commitment to that choice.

Ugh, computer stuff-- Whats up everyone.

Nothing like being stuck in front of my computer as it crunches data for 10 mins at a time.

I keep finding myself heading towards things that are precursors to porn.

I already wandered my way to someones blog about their crazy swinging experiences. No pics or even much detail, just horrid fascination at their double life.

It was a link off of a sub about sexuality and religious people. I want to find resources to look through with my wife. She's religious and kind of skittish about "modesty". That has a way of

showing up in the bedroom.

I can't begrudge those as basic attributes or orientation, but I've got a feeling that they're masking something else, which gets in the way of intimacy. I keep getting this sense that she's afraid of

something about herself, like she doesn't want to let herself go, or something bad/objectable will happen. Maybe she feels like she's always performing in comparison to some ideal of softness or

beauty.

Her knowing that I have experience with porn certainly can't be helpful.

The truth is that she really is awesome. In so many ways. I wish I knew a way to help her feel more comfortable with herself, especially when it comes to intimacy.

My night from 30's out there?

Her going to the gym or some pushups or something.

Just trying to stay straight today

Nice!

Feels great, like being a husband and a dad, right?

46

GS



It's so funny when your number would matter in the way it does.

But like you, I find it matters a lot more than I expected.

I've been wondering though, as it gets higher and higher, will the effect be somehow diminished?

There's a huge difference between 1 day and 6 days. There's not that huge of a difference between 120 and 140 days, even though 20 is greater than 5.

I'm just trying to anticipate if/how that badge influence is gonna be as time goes by. I've found myself wishing for several counters, maybe one that starts over at the beginning of each week.

Right now its an index card that lives in my top drawer at work.

I think there's probably something to that idea!

Self talk is powerful. Might as well take control of part the inner monologue and use it to your benefit.

All the best!

Hey, well done getting to 60 days!

Man, nothing like planning your life around an addiction to convince you that.... it's actually an addiction.

Said things are going better for you. Congrats on 44 days!

Says me, I can totally respect your commitment to being honest.

That's me, I can't wait for the game, going pain no place to end in your life, no place to safely reside in the exceptions, caveats, gray areas etc.

All the best man.

Nice.

Yeah, social media. Everyone insists it can be a tool for good.

Sure, I don't doubt it.

Almost every time I use it I feel it snuffing away my lifeforce.

Stay strong, my friend.

Good day today.

Went and flew a kite with the kids today this afternoon.

Almost got into problems last night. I was on a fitness thread with pics posted of galls and losses. Nothing NSFW there, but next thing I knew I had a NSFW thread opened via a mildly suspicious link in

someones post.

Closed it right away and went back to my Netflix, but I was so close to just jumping right into something porny, all causal-like and nonchalant, as if no big deal.

I sat there for a while thinking "I knew that link was probably going nowhere good, but I hit it anyway."

It was doubtless gonna fit the criteria of my previous justifications- nothing crazy hardcore, probably no explicit sexual acts going on, but it would so easily lead to plenty of other things.

Part of me really wanted to click back to "see how close I had come".

Nice one. Freakin' pornbrain.

Stay strong everyone!

You're by far not the only one.

Just Chaitl Tridases, written about by notables since BC.

Wings should have an article.

Good day today.

Have a look at the PE in the sidebar. If you haven't yet.

The ED and the PE is doubtless frustrating. I think the sidebar resources might help connect the dots a little more clearly.

Also, browsing through peoples posts might give you an amplified perspective of the real impact of porn in real peoples lives, beyond just conflict with cultural norms, countless wasted hours, and

blurred cognitive abilities.

All the best!

Books are good!

Analog non-pixel brain exercise.

W/2- Go for a walk, after and figure out how you're gonna work what you read into a conversation.

45

GS

45

GS

45

GS

G = 11 u = 2

45
GA
B

Lulu- Have that conversation later in the day. Find a way to get them to talk/reflect more than you do.
All the best!
Hey man, I think you're in the right place.

Several months ago I would have laughed at the idea of me using an online forum to combat my porn use. I didn't see myself as a porn addict, and I didn't believe that I had any kind of problem. Tracking myself over the holidays convinced me that I needed to take some real steps to improve my life. I found PFree and reading peoples posts convinced me that I was on the brink of a real precipice and if I didn't take those steps now, I was marching right into disaster.

I've found that the PFree sidebar offers a ton of really useful resources, and also just reading other peoples posts somehow makes a difference. One thing that's really made a difference for me is making a point of posting as well, whether the days events were big, small, good or bad. I've said it a ton over the past 40 or so days, but I'll say it again- honest and frequent posting is a difference for me in making a point of posting as well, whether the days events were big, small, good or bad. I've said it a ton over the past 40 or so days, but I'll say it again- honest and frequent posting is a difference for me in making a point of posting as well, whether the days events were big, small, good or bad. I've said it a ton over the past 40 or so days, but I'll say it again-

I suspect it also can be part of convincing your brain that you're really committed to this change. The people here are real, their lives and struggles and insights are real. Everyone here wants you to succeed, but they're not surprised or disappointed or put off if you've got rough patches. You sound as if you've invested in your studies and career, so it seems you've got an idea of what you can contribute to this world. Your wife sounds like an amazing lady. You've got a lot to fight for. *

All the best, man.
Isn't it crazy the pornbrain will try to pull?
Someone on PFree made the comparison of porn's temptation to a determined, sly, whiny, ex-SO, and I think it's a powerful way to frame it.
Don't let her suck you back in. Don't do it. Keep that number blocked.

She keeps trying to convince you it's gonna be awesome, but remember how bad it got, how she ruled your life, made you feel like shit, stepped your motivation and ambition down, fucked up your interactions with other females, made the world around you feel gray. She wants to keep you dependent. Trapped. Groveling.
Don't let her back in. There are better things.
All the best.

Definitely have a look at the resources in the sidebar.
Browse peoples posts. You might be in for a huge wakeup, as if PIED with your girl wasn't enough.
Pay attention to your experience and keep posting about how things go for you, even if it seems trivial. There's a ton of value with writing. You track your own progress/challenges. You learn in detail about environmental/circumstantial stuff that's bigger than your porn use. You also convince your brain that everyone on this forum is a real person who really cares for your success, but isn't gonna see anything in you as you deal with the realities of your situation. People will also see stuff about your experience that resonates with theirs. They may gain insight about their own situation just by reading what you say from someone else's.

Anyhow. All the best.
Hey there!
Trading my use late last year convinced me that my "not-so-bad-habit-in-comparison-to-everyone-else's" was actually a Problem Which Was Going to Kick Me Up. For Serious.

I've found meaningful tactics and techniques that can be implemented right away. I've found a lot of real wisdom and inspiration here, reading about peoples experiences and seeing their perseverance despite all sorts of opposition. I think you'll find the same.
All the best!

I just tried to do a bunch of one line summaries, but gave up after the list just kept getting longer and longer.
I'm inspired by people who recognize that they're about to go through hell and commit to making a change.
By people who are in hell, but keep trying.

People who have been through hell and have developed a few tools to grapple their way out.
People who check in, whether the day's brought good, bad, big, or little things.
People who don't have all the answers, but believe they can find or create at least a few.
People who reach out to those around, no judgement, just encouragement and insight.

Take 30 mins and skim through top/recent posts.
You'll find great resources in the sidebar on PFree, too.
I can tell you that it does.

Take some time and read through peoples postings here. Pretty sobering stuff. Pretty motivating to see how people still keep trying after relapses, or even as their life is falling apart. Have a look at user posting histories. You'll see ups and downs, but you'll also see that people, over time, don't regret the efforts they're making.
Also have a look at the PF sidebar over there on the right. Lots of really important resources. Take a few minutes to really consider what's being said and I'm sure you'll have some ideas that you can easily implement right away.

All the best man!!!
edit: spelling
Great points.
Obviously you're here for you, rightfully so, but openly expressing your challenges and successes, or sorting out your thoughts and reactions in the midst of a group can make you stronger. More motivated. More focused.

Lots of really useful resources over there on the PF sidebar.
Yes, man, I get where this is coming from.
Keep posting about your experience, even if it seems trivial or disappointing in the moment.

Remember there are a lot of people with a lot of experience and wisdom here.
At the end of the day, you can count on the fact that everyone here wants you to succeed, and we derive motivation from seeing your determination play out.
All the best.

You got through, man.
Everybody's got a collection of competing interests, many of which are at cross-purposes to each other.
Isn't it crazy that difference between being driven by the pornbrain and then waking up back in your own brain in the next morning?

It's no wonder people can aptly describe the experience as possession, or being haunted. *



G = 9

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8

(use)

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(use)

42

GP

41

GS

41

GP

41

GP

41

GP

Well that happened a little faster than expected - just yesterday! I was responding to someone's post about telling SO about porn struggles, saying something to the effect of "long term, let them in, kinda. Short term, probably best not. I've got no help for you."

I mentioned that I was planning to talk to my wife in detail after I had about 6mo of PFree participation under my belt. I don't know, as a track record. Evidence of serious effort. Maybe even as a bargaining chip. I don't even know.

I posted in response, offering an episode of pornfree radio about F.A.S.T.T. check ins as a tool to consider. I listened to it, and I liked what I heard. Long story short, about 11:30 last night I ended up telling my wife in detail about my experience on PFree. I told her a lot of the things that I had learned from people here, mentioned a few resources from PF, and outlined a good deal about my vision going forward.

6 months. I didn't even make it 6 weeks and I ended up telling her. She was really, really supportive and happy. She gave me a big hug and let me know she was grateful for what I was doing, and had been doing, and she was really grateful for all the people on PF who are here looking for something better and reaching out to others too.

It feels pretty incredible. Excluding her from my journey, even for all good intentions, was a weight that I was carrying, and it's like I didn't even know it was there until I dropped it. I'm sure that I'll be even better off along the way for including her. Thanks, Pornfree. Thanks, PFree. Thanks, [redacted] thanks, other posters who's examples and courage have helped me immensely in too many ways to list right now.

But I really did think through a whole exercise video with my wife this morning, notwithstanding children waking up and going bananas again. Man, really doing good things accumulate to make large seriously good things. Damn, brother. You've been through the wringer.

I know what it's like to have a libido mismatch with an amazing, attractive, successful, articulate woman. If I dwell on that mismatch too much, its one of the things that freaks out my wife too. Gets me. Especially since I also know what its like to have total attention and enthusiasm from previous partners. I like to consider myself a pretty reasonable guy in most things, but this demon of anger, resentment, disgust, and pain rises up, this force that has nothing to do with rationality tries to swamp me. And that's before porn presents itself as a solution.

After that demon has a few rounds with me, porn justifies itself so easily, since the game is no longer played on a rational court. Justifies as coping, as research, entertainment, retaliation. It even justifies itself as a right. And then it creates this self reinforcing negative feedback loop in my own head. Well do you know, I'm sure.

Stupid. One thing I'm trying to do right now is be straight about what is fact and what is my interpretation of fact. Is a little bit of a headgame, but I'm finding that my demon is largely couched in my interpretations, rather than the facts. Stay strong man. You've got plenty to fight for. Things will get better, even if there is plenty of evidence that your pornbrain wants to interpret to your disadvantage.

Wow, man, seriously. That's a really big deal. I've found PornFree to be a really good place to sort things out, to listen, to pose questions and ask advice. I've said it before, but about 8 weeks ago, I might have laughed at the idea of checking in with my internet friends to keep my head right.

Keep posting. Keep reading. Keep commenting. That's what's made a huge difference for me. I want to hear about how you wrangle this thing. I'm sure plenty of other people here do too. All the best.

I'm in a similar dilemma. I've talked about porn very generally with my wife. She's known that it's something that has recurred for various reasons. She says she is open to talking more, hearing more in detail about my struggles and challenges, and I really, really appreciate where that's coming from. My goal is that I anticipate that despite her openness and acceptance of me along with my struggle, I believe that as I share in more detail she'll become really anxious and body image issues will re-emerge in her mind. I don't know how to avoid that.

One of my biggest fears is that I'll have a libido mismatch between me and her. I believe that, in part, is influenced by her poor (very whacked) body image, (thanks, repressive mother/religion). So you see the potential negative feedback loop that could occur. I don't know how to avoid that. That being said, I intend to get more specific with her when I hit PornFree. I'm really happy about what it can represent over time. Relapses or no, its a record of sustained effort. Seems important to bring that to the table if I want to really be accountable. Seems important as a record showing my struggle really isn't about her, it's about me overcoming my insecurities, laziness, bad habits.

Right now, she asks me very generally, really low key, how I'm doing, or how I'm feeling. Maybe once every 4-5 months. It felt great 3 days ago to let her know things were going very well, knowing I was at 30 something days totally clean. Not kinda clean, not some pretty-okay-compared-to-most-duddes clean. Totally clean.

But that's my experience. I'm certain that each partnership/marriage has its peculiarities and communication style. In the short run, I've got nothing specific for you. But long run, it seems like increasing transparency is good. * Hey man.

My habits and experience are different than yours, but there is enough similar that I can get where you're coming from. I think you're in the right place, posting on this sub. Lots of real folks in the process of making real changes. I gain motivation and knowledge by reading and commenting here every day. It's a goal I've made (that I would have laughed at 2 months ago) and it seems to be helping me in a number of areas in my life that are important to me.

The YBOP video series and the concrete tips on quitting porn are helpful. My gut tells me that as you continue posting, reading, and responding here that you'll be practicing honesty and transparency in a way that you presently don't. That could afford relief, not only in the moment but also long term. Seems like anytime we persist in practicing honesty and integrity in one area of your life, if we're sincere, it has a way of wanting to spread into other areas. Just a few thoughts.

All the best. Keep posting, reading, and commenting on your experience here on PF. My guess is that if you persist in that, not only will you pick up a lot of good info that you can incorporate into your strategies, but your brain will start to get the message that you're committed to this course of action.

The influence of group dynamic over the individual paradigm and behavior is so small thing. And I don't think it's just psychology or interpretation, it think it has roots that go down into biology. Even though you can't actually see or hear any of the PF community, I think your brain will start to really get that all of the posters here on PF are real people, with a lot of really right thinking and action. Their values, their thoughts, their triumphs could start to blend with yours. And I think that should have a significant influence. Maybe in proportion with the time and thought is given.

U = I

G = S

39

I don't know, just a few thoughts.

All the best man.

Pretty freakin sobering to hear the experience of those who have passed through the worst, right?

This freakin inspiring to see them slugging it out, making real changes for themselves and their families.

This sounds pretty desperate, man. I'm not being dismissive or diminutive. Sounds bad, brother.

And it sounds like this is what you're destined for if you let things continue as they have been. My guess is that it could easily get worse quicker than we could imagine.

I've been really surprised at the power of PFree as a place to sort through things, find accountability, and derive strength, but it's been one of several tools for me.

I don't think there is one silver bullet that will put this beast down forever. Your drastic times may be calling for a combination of drastic measures.

None of these are directives or suggestions, just thoughts.

Would you willing to get rid of your smartphone or laptop?

Would you be willing to enroll in an intensive rehab program?

Would you be willing to change your work or career?

Would you be willing to talk openly with family, loved ones, or mentors?

Have you been willing/would you be willing to ~~take~~ some raw reflection on the biggest fears in your life and what you allow them to prevent you from doing or being?

This might sound cheesy, but have you accounted for your basic values, to the best of your ability? Have you imagined any way to live out those values by taking specific, challenging, action in your work?

To be honest, a few moments, see what you can come up with. I'll be within 5 minutes, a few things will occur to you.

And don't mind the fact that you've already thought through it, or that you can't think of anything. Or that it's too complicated. Of course its too complicated. But start somewhere.

Just my first thoughts off the cuff.

Edie-phrasing

GA

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Yes! Nice!

I remember thinking that posting on PamiFree was gonna be a challenge, given that reddit has plenty of other places completely to the opposite.

I've found that the more that I use PFree, the influence of the porny part of reddit decreases for me.

One tool among many.

Great that you're here.

My experience has been that making a point of reading posts and commenting on them makes pomfree a stronger and stronger tool (among many) for me.

Its so weird that a collection of internet strangers can have such a positive effect, more so than loved ones and mentors. I believe that one reason for that is that here we can be totally open about our experiences without the risk of surprising, scaring, or offending anyone. Being honest in that way permits us sort through things, reflect, lament, exit, wonder and discuss, which in turn can make us stronger, wiser, steadier, happier.

48 hrs is no small thing. Congrats.

Keep posting on how things go for you. You'll benefit yourself as well as others.

Ha, yeah, "learning technique" is one of the hooks that wants to reach out and grab me. I've made my share of resets and releases under that justification.

I know the feeling of biqued curiosity about ethnicities.

Also the variety of human sexual response to different (more or less normal) stimuli. As if I was some kind of scientist.

"Am I a scientist? No, I am not a scientist."

As this research going minutely improve anyone's life? No, it will neither save nor improve anyone's life."

"Why this research towards creativity and expression? No, this will channel towards dissipation of time and energy."

These the hook that is tempting the impulses when it makes as curiosity.

Hopefully this isn't TV, but I've found that being a girl in some has helped satisfy my penchant for novelty. I've found a brand that actually aren't awful for either of us. Its something minor, token perhaps, but it does give additional variables when it comes to the decision making.

Thirst for knowledge, point it to a degree, or refining a trade, or just something (other than porn) that interests me. I'm not sure if it seems petty or far-fetched. My recent thing has been story-telling. Hooks back into psychology, philosophy, religion, spirituality, the classes. Spreads out into movies, TV, the news, bedtime stories I tell my kids, my conversations with other people. I've become more and more enthralled by stories driven by illustration. I've developed a few, and have an objective of eventually publishing.

Yeah, there are a lot of ways that foregoing that "curiosity" (as it presents itself) results in a much richer life, in my experience.

All the best, man.

Check in, calling it out - Feeling pretty good right now- well rested, about to have some food, day stacked with meaningful work.

Just making this post as part of to staying vigilant.

I know the feeling of acclimatizing to a good day and having it all cave in because of some bored little inking that starts to dance around and inflate itself into "curiosity".

Then it poses as some kind of scientific inquiry. (I've heard about the ___ spot, but what about the ___ spot? Does it actually exist? Are there techniques for accessing it? Severn? Captured on video? Reproduced in the lab or found in the wild? Well, upon my word, what intriguing examples. There have to be variations of this.)

Next thing I know, it feigns a full blown existential crisis. (Oh dear God above. How am I ever to live, inasmuch as my body is inattentive, my wife is disinterested, and I lack both time and money. And the where-withal. To do anything. All is vanity! Why is the game rigged?)

Us.

GO

40

GA

39

GO

All lies, propping up silly, silly delusions.

Which I am calling out before they get close.

Today is good. There is so much good to be experienced in my family, in my work, in my friends in the course of the next 24 hours.

Thanks PFree.

Thanks everyone, things could have gone much differently, just got back home yesterday from two weeks working away from home.

I expressed some concerns at the beginning of the trip here on PFree about how that anonymity can lead to difficulty and temptation for me.

I'm glad to see that you're a great example of PFree in keeping my head straight and my mind right. It made a great difference to be able to talk about my struggles, ask questions, hear feedback, and encouragement. I've especially appreciated for the resources that users offered and the sense of accountability that can be found here.

When I got back yesterday, my kid came running out and grabbed them in a huge hug. It felt so great just to hug my wife and know that there was nothing about the trip that I was gonna have to mentally shove back.

I know that its not game over. I expect that there are more days and situations to come that will test me. But I am feeling really really good about staying well.

I thank you thank you everyone for your contribution to that.

I can relate to your experience.

I've had that come and go ever since I was a kid. I can't say I have any universal and permanent formula for dealing with it. Just different things at different times.

(+)

36

35

(+)

GO

34

G=6

U=2

9

When I was an adolescent I got to a place where I recognized what I was doing. It was some time later that I decided it probably wasn't beneficial. Probably after some embarrassing experience like getting caught staring at some girl's chest or something. I got pretty neurotic about trying to avoid staring and trying to shut thoughts down.

Neurotic is not good, but it might have been a better place for me than lecherous or pervy.

I remember being totally not helped by church people preaching about morality, as they called it. Their advice was "sing a hymn and it will chase the bad thoughts away. Darkness cannot exist where there is light." I went out and proved that idea wrong (for myself) right away.

So in both cases, external social pressure was either short lived or laughably ineffective. (Just a note, I do consider myself religious currently, after a number of life experiences and choices. I'm not trying to just diss on religion, or hymns, or peoples good intentions.)

I find that reading or listening to really interesting ideas has a way of helping. It might count as distraction, but it also might be my brain getting something worthwhile to chew on.

Just for me, I've really enjoyed listening to the archives of RadioLab and This American Life. I think hearing smart people think and wonder about things inspires my brain to try to stretch out of its little world. There are plenty of other podcasts filled with really niche content and commentary from experts in their field.

There is a ton of open courseware from top universities on just about any topic you might imagine. Search "free online course". More material that opens up the world. I like the idea of those things being applied to work or a hobby. I've done both and its been really gratifying.

You can also just go to any part of any university. Sometimes that makes a greater motivation to actually stick with the material and do something with it. Two that come to mind right away are MIT and Stanford. (For the record, I'm not a student at either.)

Bottom line for me is that though there is kind of a baseline (however necessary) for managing intrusive sexual thoughts, boredom or meaningless activities can quickly undercut me. Interesting or engaging systems of thought, or new ways of looking at the world seem to strengthen me and delegating those moments of boredom.

Hope something is all that helps.

I'm really interested to see what other people post on this.

*silly, abusive



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2 weeks is no small thing!

My guess is that as you use /pornfree to spill your thoughts and experience, you'll develop more and more tools to orient yourself towards things you've decided are worthwhile.

One of the things I find the best about this place is that people don't recoil in disgust or fear or anything. Everyone knows that we do that enough with ourselves. I really like how people here offer support and insight that connects with practical, day to day things.

All the best!

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Wow, man, in all sincerity, not just tossing out a phrase. I feel your pain.

There is a lot about what you said that I can identify with. About 6 weeks ago I came across pornfree, and about 4 weeks ago I made a post similar to yours.

I never would have imagined posting daily about my experience striving to live better or reading daily about someone else's experience as they strive to live better, but the truth is that I find myself more and more grateful for this place and the people here.

I can't say that I believe that its always appropriate to be 100% transparent with everyone, but this has been a great place for me to get stuff out and I know that people will see it and not get judgmental or scared. That somehow in some way makes me stronger and makes that demon weaker. I'm totally down with that.

I believe this is going to become an important tool for you, as it has for me.

Keep talking with people here.

All the best.

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Yeah man, as a teenager, I couldn't stop thinking about sex either. That was before highspeed internet, before I'd had regular access to porn magazines. Porn certainly makes it worse, but it would probably still happen even if you moved into a monastery. So you might want to count that impulse as a given for a while.

I do remember really feeling a difference when I joined the military. It meant a lot to me to have a lifestyle that could be totally focused on some pretty intense potential realities. My mindset was that I needed to always make myself faster/stronger/smarter so that when it was my life or the life of my buddies on the line, I stood half a chance at being useful.

Certainly the military is not the only place to get focus. But driving towards that ideal of being expert, part of a team, dominant in my sphere of influence, was a great way of living out something beyond being a slave to some raw hunger.

Getting a share in into people's lives and the pursuit of a shared goal, provides me with a sense of purpose that I probably felt in the military.

I discovered travel. I'd go get lost in some foreign city and make it my game to get back to post as best I could on foot. More provocation for the brain.

60

Philosophy/polituality. Brain provocation. I found a worn volume of Plato's Republic. Sucked me right in. If you could go back and have a chat with one of the genius minds who just so happened to shape a good portion of western paradigm, would you? Opened a ton of questions. Opened whole new worlds of inquiry, thought, conversation, contemplation, gave me a variety of tools to measure situations, decisions, interactions. Get into primary sources, foundational stuff that your highschool or professors might not have had the inclination or the wherewithal to explore.

I could go on.

Interest in sex didn't go away. There were times that it really tormented me, life-richness notwithstanding. But at least I had a growing arsenal of tools that kept me from being nothing more than the hominid version of an untrammeled biological impulse. Everyone here on /pornfree admits in their own way that being an untrammeled biological impulse sucks.

Individualization can get painful. Seriously smart people have said as much, throughout the ages and from a number of different angles. But it certainly seems a better option than being dragged everywhere by your gonads. Choose your pain.

One more note on this wall of text. I've had years free from porn in times past. I've had really good long stretches where I'm not burdened or bothered by hypersexualized thoughts or impulses. Its a real thing. I've lived it and I know it's a state of mind that can be attained. So it might seem ironic that I'm rhapsodizing on /pornfree about all of these really formative, empowering, enlightening experiences, with less than a month clean. If there was anything to those experiences, I'd probably not be here, right?

Wrong. Not trying to be all dramatic about it, but all the amazing, spiritual/philosophical, life-experience, brainplasticity stuff in the world won't ever take away anyone's ability to screw things up again.

We've got each day to choose between having society/biology string us along, or taking an active role in designing what our life experience will be.

Here's an idea. Take a while to think about what's important to you, like life-values, world-contribution type stuff. Talk with your folks, or someone you see as wise about how to work towards living out those values or bring those contributions into reality. Not that you have to go the Gandhi or Hulk or anything, but it should start to give you objectives and goals that seriously compete with your biology.

u=0
G=3

8

28

27

GS

(X)

26

GS

RS (A)

25

20

(X)

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GS

(X)

(X)

19

(X)

The more clearly I keep values/contributions in mind and work towards them in actual, real deed, the better I do. The further I move from them, the more I get strung along.

You're probably doing better at than than you know. 78 days free is no small thing.

*edit: broke it into paragraphs

Dude, you're right. Tomorrow is another day. I know the feeling of having what should be plenty of sex, and yet porn wants to jump back into the equation. And porn makes up all these low-key, casual, off hand excuses, which upon examination reveal as the silliest, most transparent, unoriginal, lame fibs. Pretty awesome of your girl to be there for you.

No guarantees with that or anything, but reading this made me think of an experience I had probably 15 years ago when I made a few unbelievably "high risk" confessions to a close friend. I still reflect on how taking that chance and feeling her acceptance and love in return was really, really pivotal in how I saw myself and people around me.

It could blow up. That would in large part be on her, assuming you've tried to be careful and straightforward in explaining yourself. On the other hand, it could be part of something really life-changing.

Either way, you're the one taking steps to become free, whether she's all about that or not.

All the best. Keep in touch with people here about how things go.

Busy days yesterday and today. Very good days. Glad to be working in the projects that I am, but I'm really missing my wife and kids. A few triggers reached out about midday yesterday. I mentioned them to my wife last night. I didn't really get into describing them as triggers, but I feel like saying something about it kind of deflated things a little.

Feeling hungry to get back home. Halfway there.

Nice, man. I really admit that you've got all this running at your age.

Not trying to sound wise or anything, and I'm sure you already anticipate this, but there is alot coming at you in the next 2, 3, 5, 10 years.

I imagine that your reflections here will prove themselves valid time and again in many different realms of experience.

*edit: phrasing

I'm typing in this box because I'm right about to lose it.

Good day today. Gets work late. Unplugging the internet.

Name it and it starts to lose power. I guess. I'm working out of town for a couple of weeks starting tomorrow.

The point of saying so is to just tell someone that it's easy for me to get complacent in surroundings where I'm suddenly a stranger to just about everyone.

I don't think I'll be white-knocking it. I find it easy enough just to stay busy and not be bothered by temptations of P.

But.

I hope just by saying something it will forestall any casual thoughts of just kinda, you know, allowing a harmless, passing, and very understandable pursuit.

There are tons of escorts of all classes where I'm going. I've never been with one, never really felt any compulsion to get into that. Usually my brain tells me I'm reading with sorrow, horror, pity at the thought. Sure, there's something to that. But it also can lead to curiosity about how accessible they make themselves online. One more trick to slide up sideways to P.

Sleep is way better for you anyway, right?

I know that out-of-body sensation. I've had it some times with relapses. I've also had it when I've been choosing things that are at odds with other values or goals that are important to me. Upon reflection, the really notable times were when I was making stupid decisions with women where there were complicated work/family/friend/self factors at play. Not trying to get too deep, but it's kind of like the imaginable future is radically restructuring itself and the meaning of the past is also re-configuring. Maybe it's the feeling of going into despicable react mode rather than powerful act mode. Your idea of asking what you've been restricting seems like a really practical way of working towards powerful act mode.

Coming home tonight - just spent the last few evenings working overnight. Found a place to work that has no internet.

Tonight I come home. My trigger is reacting to the fact that my wife doesn't experience any craving for me the way that I crave her. I'm gonna come home, grab all the kids in a hug, kiss my wife, eat dinner, read bedtime stories, talk about the week, and then feel the slow resistance from my wife set in.

Maybe I should go post to deadbeams instead, but the truth is my bedroom isn't dead, at least by the numbers. I just freaked less at the idea that physical intimacy is not particularly interesting for her. She doesn't really care to explore much, or spend a whole lot of time. She says I totally satisfy her, but I think she says that trying to not hurt her feelings as well as keep a damper on things. I think that she's disconnected with her sexuality (thanks, repressive parents/religion). She is a really beautiful woman but she's been conditioned to be ashamed of her body.

She is the tricky part. I've got this irrational idea that takes hold of me that if there's any experience that will offer her re-connection, it's gonna happen through me. Cause if I knew the Magic Trick or the sex magic, I'd just use that to get her back to P.

Pretty dishonest, but it's the P.

With my strength, everyone! I'm feeling pretty good right now, but I foresee some moments of temptation over the weekend.

Pushing through - At work. Just ate lunch. Trying to stay straight. My brain is saying "Quit the drama, its no big deal, oh, by the way you've really been lame with your creative output here at work."

Nice one, brain. What if I go tell everyone about your silly idea, brain?

Preventative measures - Hi everyone. I've been reading through pornfree for a few weeks now and I've decided I'm down to use it as a tool (among several) to get good and stay good.

I'm sitting here at work about 30 mins past an almost reset that could have easily become a relapse. I was feeling the beginning of the Fudit Fog. I got up and refilled the watercooler and then checked fluids on my vehicle. I'm 12 days, no P or M. By no means my longest run, but its the run that I'm in right now, so its important to me. I've never felt like I'm an addict. I get that most addicts say that at some point. I remember starting to be mesmerized by women at about 7yr old, but I didn't really see any P until I was about 13. Neighbor kid had a dirty mag. After that it was a few steamy novels that I found I somewhere, and, like, maybe 2 images when my family got dial-up. It was 1996. I was promptly discovered.

After moving out, I'd browse my roommates stash, but it didn't take long to get bored of it. I discovered high speed internet cafes about a year later and then spent about 3-4 weekends nonstop browsing. Got sick of it and didn't really have any super-troubling or persistent urges after that. I spent years totally out of contact with P. Then I met my wife. We wanted to be intimate until after we were married. That's when we discovered a significant mismatch in libido. I'm high, she's low. Enter P as "research". Good one, right? (I know I'm not the only one.)

I've been married 7 years. My wife and children are the best experience I have. Never could have imagined such richness in life. These 7 years have not been totally secretly smeared with mounds of degenerate filth, but I recognize that P in any form undermines realness and goodness in my life. Tracking myself over the past 12 weeks has convinced me I've got to do better. I want it gone.

Here's my situation though - My wife and I are libido mismatch, but we've taken meaningful steps in bridging the many things which come up as a result of that gap. (Reading other reddit threads about her's man, I've really got nothing to complain about.) But it seems that just being around my wife is a trigger for me. Even when she is really, really generous, it seems like the day after is when I get the urge to do a little more research. She knows (generally) that I'm tempted by P, but I cannot summon the will to tell her that she is my trigger. I'm in Don't Complain Don't Explain mode with her about this. So I'm complaining and explaining to all of you. Any insight? Advice? Similar experiences?

Total for 8

Total for 6

Total for 6

R = 1/1 G = 4/47 U = 6/11

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates	Posts
9	3/1/2018	58	#####	<p>Going into day 60 but urges are getting strong - My fault however by not talking about it. This was due to getting bored since I came off a graveyard shift (engineer and testing). Being bored is one of my triggers which lead to surfing Reddit. To make a long story short, came across a suggestive video. Even though I did leave, the image is planted in the memory. My problem would be the image gaining momentum. Any suggestions? These problems tends to happen at the late hours like after getting done with a long gaming session.</p> <p>Currently I am: Bowling, weight lifting (every other day and Friday with my lady), hanging out with friends, actually like where I work, meeting the lady's family and friends, ball room dancing and such. Hang in there man, I'm going through the urges right now. It seems like every 2-3 weeks with me it kicks into overdrive like a motherf****r. I don't MO but the PMO urge still hits hard. Stay vigilant and keep pushing.</p> <p>Short answer: Yes, the Imagery will be illustrated into the thought process and it is only a matter of time.</p> <p>Long Answer: From there is it all down hill. The thought process (using myself as an example) is used to seeing something extremely erotic. With enough time, the thoughts and illustrations made, the body is aroused. Enough to the point to bait off to it. From there it is only a matter of time before the body is ready to "blow". All do to just looking at some movie or picture that is erotic, even reading. Keep in mind it is different between people and gender.</p> <p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p> <p>PYI we made it 30 days man! Holy crap it was hard. Writing down the critical days and just about everyday. It will, you'll start to realize that somethings should take more precedence over the things that was destroying us/giving us brain fog</p>

(X)
65
65
65

60
65
60

$$u = 1/1 \quad G = S/S$$

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates
11	3/4/2018	142	3/4/2018

(11) (x)

Posts

The opposite of addiction is connection. I've been without it for so long, and it's killing me. Loneliness is tearing at me. I've been a recluse for so long- self imposed solitary confinement. Years without close friends. Months without a hug. Weeks without any human touch. I've had sex twice in my life. Now that I'm somewhat healthier, and my face looks a bit less depressed, I'm starting to get a lot of compliments, yet I'm never able to make any permanent connections with anyone. I have a few close friends, but they live far away. I'm trying. I've been getting out occasionally, which is more than my usual never. The only option is to keep giving myself a greater-than-zero percent chance, but goddamn it's so difficult to keep showing up to places alone. I now feel that a healthy social life is achievable for me. I just wish it would stop rolling off my fingertips. I wish the people I meet and click with wouldn't disappear. I wish I could meet someone I feel fuck yes about me. I wish it would work out for once. I think if someone were to put their arm around me right now at this very moment, I would break down crying.

I'm going to a club tonight for a hobby I really enjoy, so, once more, here goes. Show-out to anyone on here, male or female, who has been on their own for years. This is hard as fuck- I don't mean staying away from porn; that part is getting way easier. I mean living. It's taking everything I've got.

Checking in for February. I'm still 100% pornfree, but fuck it was a rough month.

Checking in. Still pornfree :)

Good on you for doing it in person.

Be grateful that you have a support system.

Welcome. Check out the TBOP videos linked in the sidebar to see how watching porn physically alters your brain. *

Living without shame is mind blowing. Terry Crews nailed it when he said "Guilt says you've done something bad. Shame says you are bad." If you haven't seen his videos where he discusses his addiction to porn, watch them right now. Here is the first one. Dude is now my hero.

For as long as I can remember, I've felt inferior to other people. I've felt like there was something wrong with me. This infected every aspect of my life. I've turned so many people away who were kind to me. I've rejected multiple women who were clearly not-even-beings-subtle-about-it attracted to me. I've been afraid to speak in social settings, or just totally lost in my own head-thinking. "Do these people really like me? Do they know that I'm fucking weird? Why are they putting up with me? Do they talk shit about me when I'm gone?"

Now that porn is no longer a part of my life, I no longer feel that shame. The sense of inferiority is lifting. I now feel like a person deserving of love. I thought that before, but I now see I was wrong. In actuality, I hated myself.

Quitting porn is becoming the best decision I've made in my adult life. Despite so many things still being wrong in my personal life, I wake up with a sense of optimism that I've never had before. I actually look forward to the future. For the first time in a long time, I actually believe that I have a future.

Maybe day 60? I'm feeling a lot of different things right now. Calmer and more confident now that I've quit porn. More hopeful. Lonely because I still have no friends close to where I live. Confused and lonely because my relationship with my parents is fucked up and I don't know if I'm the bad guy or not. Uncertain of the future.

I'm definitely noticing a huge difference. Porn definitely stunted my maturity in a big way. It's hard to believe cutting out this one thing has changed me so much. For me, it's getting out of my house. My confidence is higher than it's ever been, and I have a much easier time looking people in the eye and carrying on a conversation, but it's still very hard for me to put myself in social situations. I go to see live music every now and then, but that's about it. I've been trying to go to this bar that has bluegrass every week, but I've failed about 3 times in a row now. Pulled up one night, saw that the parking lot was jam packed, freaked out and left.

You should not feel guilty about masturbating. Not one bit. I realize that everyone has their own path to follow, but IMO that subreddit is so fucked up. They're throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

I was PM'ing every single day, sometimes multiple times a day. Sometimes I would waste entire weekends just PM'ing. Now that I've cut out porn, I have no urge to masturbate every single day. Now I just MO maybe once a week and it feels great. There's no shame, and I feel fine afterward.

I tried noFap once. For me, it got to the point where I would be so horny, it would actually be distracting. Couldn't even watch a movie I would be so horny. It was ridiculous. Talk about going from one extreme to the other.

If you haven't, you should absolutely check out the yourbrainporn website. None of the scientific studies cite natural masturbation as the destructive force. It's the porn that re-wires your brain and fucks you up.

You're welcome, man! I never lasted more than 2 weeks on noFap. Walking around with boners that last for hours is just downright silly.

When I masturbate, I focus almost entirely on the tactile sensation. I sort of fantasize about women I've been with, but it's more about the butterflies-in-my-stomach sensation they've given me rather than their appearance. In the beginning, I fantasized about porn a couple of times. Don't do that- super risky and you're still reinforcing those porn-related reward center pathways in your brain.

I know what you mean. I used to find myself suddenly in my computer stash folder without consciously having navigated there. I quit not long after that.

Of course it's worth it. Any one of the benefits on its own would be worth it. You don't have to take my word for it, just quit porn for at least 30 days. And if you can't do that, then ask yourself why.

Disclaimer: I felt much better after 30 days. It may take longer than that. The ups and downs of this are different for everyone.

Checking in. Still good. *

Interesting read, thank you for that. I've felt the "warm mourning" too. I think maybe it's finally realizing that we've turned a new chapter. It's a much better chapter, but for some reason, a part of us still has to mourn what we used to be. Entering new territory is both exciting and frightening.

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112

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112

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82

G = 11 U = 5

I think you and I have a similar mindset. I use new projects to distract myself from what I'm really missing. I'm in an incredibly lonely place right now, and I really need to be going out to meet new people. Instead, I'm putting pressure on myself to learn Spanish/Python/music/theory/etc. That stuff is hard, but it doesn't give me anxiety. It's so important to find time for relaxation (the healthy kind). You live in Spain? That's fucking cool. I've never been, but I know there are endless things to see there. You could probably spend a lifetime just touring that country. Check out some museums with your girlfriend. Look into El Camino del Santiago. I relax with music. I don't play anything well (yet) but I love going to shows and festivals. I recently bought tickets to a handful of shows over the next few months so that I have something to look forward to.

I'm terrified of wasting my youth. I'm 27. I feel like I only have a handful of those years left. I'm not as scared as I once was, but I have a long way to go in terms of self improvement. The desire to quit has to come from within. To quit porn, you have to admit that it's ruining your life. You have to have that moment of Puck. This. Sinc. Different things can bring on that moment. Rock bottom is different for everyone. It sounds like your boyfriend isn't there yet. If seeing his girlfriend cry doesn't do it, then I don't think there's anything you can say that will get him to quit. I'm truly sorry.

I'm seeing a few comments here telling you to dump your boyfriend. I'm not going to tell you to do that, because I know almost nothing about your relationship. But, his addiction is causing you great pain. Trying to get him to quit is only going to cause you more pain. Do what you have to do in order to remove all that pain.

I'm not religious at all, but I think the Serenity Prayer applies here: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, And wisdom to know the difference.

Checking in. Still pornfree.

11/6: I have more energy, it's easier to get out of the house, and I get less frustrated with complicated tasks at work. I think I'm still flatlined, but I'm ok with that right now. My social skills still need polishing, so it's probably a good thing I'm not horny as fuck.

11/27: Checking in. Still pornfree.

Just stop watching porn for awhile and see what happens. You have nothing to lose from that. Yeah its a major bonus. My voice hasn't cracked once since I quit, which is pretty cool because that shit is embarrassing when you're 27.

Welcome amigo! I know what you mean by "sizing up" everyone. Even when I started to recognize that I was doing that, I couldn't stop. I'm so thankful that that is starting to go away.

My nugget of advice- If you have a stash, delete it. That was the key for me. I tried to quit multiple times, but having porn downloaded to my computer made it way too easy to relapse. Last night I dreamed about kissing a girl I knew back in high school. Then it turned into a porn dream. I don't remember how the transition happened. One moment I'm having this great experience and it feels fantastic, and the next moment I'm masturbating to a vivid memory of a porn film I used to watch over and over. And while it was happening, I remember feeling a lot of shame for it, feeling like I really shouldn't be doing it. I was almost lucid. It turned into a wet dream, and now I feel especially shitty.

The only thing close to me is AA, and I would feel weird going there because I still drink/smoke weed/trip balls. I'm not too worried about my lack of a real-world support group, at least in regards to porn, due to the fact that I've finally admitted to myself the extent of my problem. I've realized that I have no control over porn and there's nothing beneficial to it. I really do feel that I'm quitting for good this time. What does bother me is the fact that I have no friends (where I live). But, for the first time, I have hope that that will change. Even after just 24 days, it's easier for me to get out of the house, look people in the eye, and talk to people.

Extremely. I have close friends that I share vulnerable things with, but not on the level of my porn addiction. Unfortunately, they live half way across the country. The only family member I'm close to is my cousin, who is also halfway across the country. I could probably talk about this problem with her, but I don't know if we're quite on that level yet. We only reconnected last year.

Clear those cookies. Seems like if I watch a video where the thumbnail is just a woman's ass in a bikini (GIRLS FAIL COMPILATION 2017!!!11111), then I'm inundated with tits and ass thumbnails thereon out.

You can do it. I had my stash for years and years. It was really hard for me but I knew I had to do it when it seemed like I was unconsciously opening the folder. Like, I would be reading a news article and then, boom, I'm browsing through a porn folder. I felt like a lab rat.

I just deleted my stash and I felt the EXACT same way. I had deleted it before, but I saved a few favorites and it just grew again. This time, I got rid of everything, and the backup. Feels like a heavy weight is gone, and I'm excited to see where this goes.

Food, weed, internet. I think porn is the one that fucks me up the most from a mental standpoint.

11

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GA
GO

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GA
GO

GA
GO

GA
GO

GA
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Total for 11

Total for 11

G = 10/21 U = 3/8

Participant	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates	Posts
12	3/4/2018	65	3/4/2018	<p>My PF 2018, week 9/52 - Forgetting about it. MONDAY-SUNDAY</p> <p>When I started this journal my ambition was to write something insightful every day. And that's not doable. And I got tired of just opening this file and writing „Everything is all right.“ or „Minor struggles today.“ In the beginning it helped because I needed to write something down to acknowledge it as a problem or a success. I don't feel to do it any longer, at least not every day. Right now most of the time I feel like just forgetting about it.</p> <p>This may change if I enter a rough path. But this week I again post this more for my own accountability than anything else.</p> <p>And no, this week wasn't perfect. I was tempted, but I still didn't indulge my addiction. I am surviving. Day by day.</p> <p>Two months, even with February being a shorter month.</p> <p>Checking in. How are you all doing?</p> <p>February is on and I am still here.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>I'm far from 1 year mark, but I've written some things about milestones in the ramblings that I post every week. Perhaps you will find my thoughts useful.</p> <p>What I imagine happens is that when you look to hard at that one date that marks some important moment, it starts to seem to much like „end date“, when you can stop trying and go back to your previous ways. And that is of course a wrong type of thinking. Milestones are only things that you pass on the way to the ideal, which is the life without porn. So you are not reaching them, but passing them and that, I believe, is an important distraction.</p> <p>Social media have their uses. But scrolling through whole facebook wall or having pointless discussion with people I don't care about on one of the big subreddits aren't one of them.</p>
		59		[REDACTED]
		59		[REDACTED]
		46		<p>Motivation is good for your first week of anything. After that, don't rely on it, because it fades.</p> <p>My PF 2018, week 9/52 - Too busy for urges. MONDAY, TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY</p> <p>I was busy these three days and too tired to think of something to write about. But I also had ZERO urges and porn thoughts. I am reaching that point in the streak when I'm calmer and calmer. I need to remember not to get too sure of myself.</p> <p>I also had a really good workout on Tuesday after recovering from my cold. That has to count for something.</p> <p>I guess today (Wednesday) was first day in months when I was running so late in the morning that I couldn't make my bed. And making my bed every day became that little habit that instantly makes me feel better about myself. It felt weird not to do it, since it became so engrained in my morning routine.</p> <p>THURSDAY</p> <p>Habits don't get built in a day. It takes weeks or months. And changing a habit is hard. People fail at change, because they try to change too much too quick. If you want to go from zero to hero in one day, you are going to explode and fail.</p> <p>Take a change of diet. People go on unsustainable crash diets to lose weight and are not able to keep them, because it's too big of a change. Even going from really unhealthy diet to reasonable one, but really different can be hard. When I lost weight, first I eliminated most of sweets I bought. Then I asked myself if I really need to eat so many sandwiches for breakfast. I gradually changed it until I went down 15-20 kilograms from my heaviest to where I am now.</p> <p>Nowadays I eat moderately healthy, but one thing was a my guilt pleasure and that thing, I kid you not, was putting too much mayonnaise on my sandwiches. It may not have been the worst thing in the world (as I said, my diet is largely healthy), but I needed to stop doing it. So 2 weeks ago, I decided to just stop and, I kid you now, I had a period when my sandwiches tasted bland and I had to go creative. But I moved past it. Small thing, but it makes me happy.</p> <p>One habit more, one change more on the neverending road to improvement.</p> <p>FRIDAY, SATURDAY & SUNDAY</p> <p>This was a busy week. I was too busy and too tired to have any serious thoughts about porn... And even to find much time to write in this journal.</p> <p>Getting distracted can be a good way of temporary getting away from urges, whether it's something serious (like getting immersed in work) or not so serious (like a hobby). But of course this has to be taken with a grain of salt, since when you are merely distracting yourself, you may not really deal with why you are having urges in the first place.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>But, as time went on, I found more and more difficulty ejaculating and enjoying the pleasure of sex with someone you love.</p>
		44		[REDACTED]
		41		[REDACTED]

G=4 U=4

I have a theory that the reason may be that at first the novelty helps, but then, because you are caught in the porn mindset, which tells you that you need a new partner every day, your brain wants new partner.

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If hellion is what makes you get up in the morning, then more power to you. But, no offence, if there was a magical spell that could cure addiction we wouldn't have addicts.

MONDAY

After a wet dream I had a cold shower and that made my morning better. I forgot how refreshing this experience can be. I stopped taking cold showers when the winter came and we have real winters here. But yesterday it was again 10C, so I thought: that why not?

TUESDAY

One thing that I've always had problem with is the feeling that I'm constantly being judged. Not only by people I know, but by strangers. I often imagine what random people that I see on train, streets, at the grocery store and everything, think of me. How do they judge my appearance, my clothes, my behaviour. I sometimes am very afraid that they are laughing at me in their minds. And I know where it comes from, it comes from times when I was bullied in school, which is a fact that even years later I have trouble even thinking about. But the truth is that people don't really have time to judge others, because they are too much caught up in their own stuff. And even if they do judge me, why should I care about opinions of strangers that I've never even had a conversation with? I may and maybe should care about opinions of people I know and care about, but people that I just see on the street? Why? What do they really know about me?

WEDNESDAY

Bad morning today. It wasn't only an urge. It was this feeling that today all I want to do is stay home, binge on some tv series and porn and by doing that, simply switch off from life. Really really strong desire to get back into the lifestyle that I totally left behind. But I conquered that desire and got up.

THURSDAY

Today is 1 February, so it's now fully official that the first month of my (and hopefully yours!) porn free year has finished. And it's great, but one thing that filled me with sadness today is looking at the page of yearly challenge and seeing that after the "purge", there is now only 50% of people still in contention. I don't hold people who dropped out in contempt (that was me not so long ago!), but I'm just asking myself a question — what do they need? What was missing? How could we all help them to stay clean? And I don't know, it's honestly hard to me to name the difference that now allows me to stay clean 1 month as opposed to relapsing every weekend.

FRIDAY

I came down with a bit of a cold. And that means being forced to stay at home. And that mean more occasions for temptation. And also less possibilities of using one of my ways to fight the addiction, which is anything fitness related. So I need to stay on guard and be mindful of my thoughts.

SATURDAY

Another day of cold, fortunately it's going away. And another day spent at home. I've been tempted to watch porn at some point, but I didn't do it and instead did something more productive. There is always a choice. Maybe I ate too many cookies today.

SUNDAY

I had a wet dream about watching porn this morning. Terrible feeling. But hey, it actually got me up on Sunday before 8, that has to count for something. There was a post yesterday that made me really think about how we should view porn after quitting it. Go read it if you haven't. And I don't think that (at least right now) I have this dangerous attitude that OP describes. Porn is something that I feel like I want to watch, but I am not angry at myself for denying myself it. I'm not sacrificing it. It's very unlike the other year of cleanliness I want to achieve, a year without alcohol, which is more about just seeing if I can do this. Not sure if I should compare them directly, since this challenge has a clear end date, but at least now my feeling are very different on the two.

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And I don't think I've ever seen anyone having really long streak obsess whether they should or should not masturbate anyway. That's not really what I said. You specifically talked about masturbation as a response to urge to view pornography. And that means that even if you don't specifically remember some video/photo when you do it, you are still rewarding your brain for having an urge. It's a simple reward chain — "Oh, you want P? Good boy! Have some O!" Thank you for sharing. This is very important post about having the right mindset during recovery.

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But monkey see, monkey do. If you watch too much porn, you start to imitate it. And many (most?) teenagers nowadays are introduced to sex by watching internet porn first, which, for example, is focused on positions that are not good for participants, but are "designed" to make the best view of important parts.

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Just checking in to remind myself that I made it a full month with only minor problems. Probably normal. I used to think that I had high libido, but it was just wanting porn.

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Thank you! It certainly helps me to put my thoughts somewhere and if someone else benefits from my silly random ramblings, then it's all the more worth it! (but I think I will soon write a lengthy piece on motivation)

G=6 U=2

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GO

To be free and happy. But while quitting porn makes me happier, also have to get happier first to stop watching porn. You know, to have a life that I don't feel the need to escape from all the time.

And not supporting the industry also comes to mind, although one person is like a drop in the ocean.

If you seek it to get excitement. Nudity on itself is not porn, it's in photographer's intent and in why you seek it. In fact, if you look at it for the reason of getting excited, even non nude media (let's say, bikini catalogue photos) may be considered porn, while something containing actual nudity may not, if you don't and if it haven't been made with this intent. You have to forgive yourself.

I'm not saying it's something easy (I'm not sure if I've already succeeded myself at this), but it's the only way. We are our worst critics and nobody will make you feel as bad as you can do it yourself. That's because you know exactly what hurts. And then you want to punish yourself for being "bad". But you are not bad, you shouldn't feel shame. I know he is a dude, so this may not be exactly reliable, but watch what Terry Crews has to say about shame.

The other thing, which may be unique for women is that you may be afraid of being considered a slut (or slut shamed, as it's known). And while I can't exactly relate to this feeling, because, well, I'm a man and male sexuality isn't considered as shameful, I can assure you that being openly sexual isn't something bad. It's okay and even if you watch porn, you are not "hated" in any way by it. You are just an addict and if you acknowledged it and are trying to get better, you are already on a better path.

Half a month clean is when I begin to feel much better, but also when I may start to play down and underestimate the influence that porn has on me. Congratulations. Keep the dream alive.

There is a difference between feeling rewarded from unhealthy sources (like porn viewing, obsessive gaming, gambling, drugs) and between getting this feeling in a healthy way (finishing a project, having a good workout, meeting a friend).

This is what people mean (or should mean) when they talk about replacing porn habit with something.

The potential idea of making a physical representation of your streak as a reminder is an interesting one.

Perhaps writing it every morning on your hand? Nobody has to know what it means.

When I think about it, for me the same role is fulfilled by wall calendar where I mark the days. I don't really have to carry it with me, because it's very unlikely I would relapse outside my home and it's always there on the wall. I've had tough moments when I stood up and just stared at this number until regaining my composure.

NY PF 2018, Week 3/52 - Dreaming and finding balance. MONDAY

I'm calm, I had a sexual dream today, so I had to be on guard (these dreams often made me relapse), but I didn't get any urges and I feel calmness. Very pleasant feeling.

Quick physical fitness advice — If you are looking for low maintenance yet effective activity, get yourself a skipping rope. My ankle seems to be healed and I really missed skipping rope. Just don't try to build the time too fast. And wear flat shoes. I'm pretty sure that I hurt myself by skipping barefoot without warm up and sufficient preparation.

TUESDAY

Sexual dreams still haunt my nights. And today I was eating breakfast and caught myself thinking that I would like to watch some porn, because the imagery from the dream was still fresh. And I admitted this to myself. Perhaps one has to admit and accept this as a fact instead of trying to deny and block it from one's mind? Maybe the secret is not at lying to myself that I don't want to watch porn, but rather at saying that yes, I do want to watch porn, but I choose not to? Right now I think that this may be true.

WEDNESDAY

Not a perfect day for me, but no urges, no porn thoughts. Again had to force myself to have a workout and again it was worth it. Eee... Nothing more to write about today.

THURSDAY

Porn is not only about porn. Porn is about certain lifestyle. It's about having something that you are hiding from everyone (even though "all guys watch porn"), because you are ashamed to talk about it. Essentially, you are a lame superhero with lame secret identity. And a superpower of knowing a lot about porn. All the knowledge you acquire and it's really useless, because it's not like you can even show it off in front of somebody

It's about coming home dead tired at 22 o'clock... and not going to sleep, because I just HAD to watch something and have my release. And it didn't matter that I would be even more tired in the morning.

It's about spending hours chasing that first feeling and searching for that perfect video.

That all I have already left behind. While I haven't eliminated yet porn from my life, I have left this part of it mostly behind me. And it's great.

FRIDAY

Mindful meditation may work in addiction recovery, because when you are trying to concentrate on your breath and put away other thoughts, you effectively are training your brain to stop thinking about triggers.

SATURDAY

How did you look at your worst? When I think about me with my addiction at my worst: I have an image of my average Saturday/Sunday alone. The absolute worst usually happened when I was home alone due to my parents being away. I would get up around 10, make some tea, breakfast and turn on the PC. Shortly after I would "just watch some porn, because why not?". Cue around 5-6 hours later. During that time I would slowly increase the pressure until I was finally ready (not that I would watch porn all the time, but it was always in the background). Then I would realize that I was still in my pjamas and bathrobe that are now really sweaty. I might have eaten and drunk something in the meantime, but I didn't dress, shave, took a No offence, but you had urges and got your fix. So OF COURSE you felt good after you scratched that itch. I would be lying if I said my last relapse felt bad. It felt amazing. Afterwards I felt really great, satisfied, powerful. As opposed to the day after when my brain started to want another session to keep feeling good. And if I gave in, I would start slowly but surely descending into states where I needed it every day.

Don't think about "streaks". Just try to quit.

Why wouldn't it be?

Don't really try to grade different kinds/genres as better/worse. I had been trying to do it for years and watch "only good porn", but a) it all ultimately fucks up your brain and b) it always escalated to the most hardcore stuff anyway.

So this question means that you are just negotiating with your addiction.

Porn detox is real.*

★

G = 10 U = 1

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Go

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If you determined that you don't have porn addiction, then just do whatever. I would still encourage you to stop watching porn to not support the industry and to stop porn's influence of your view of women, but ultimately it's up to you. I'm not going to overpreach it.

35

Go

Just be careful not to get addicted to this game instead. While it's great that it stopped you from watching, if you start neglecting your life, because of "just one more level", it should be a red light for you. If you are here, you have an addictive personality, it may happen.

35

Go

There is also a problem that the game is merely a distraction. If you only use distractions, you don't deal with the actual reasons for you to watch porn and you don't build copying skills/mechanisms. What happens when you finish the game, no matter how long might it be? What happens if your PC breaks? What happens if you won't have access to it when having an urge, but you will have your smartphone (aka 24/7 porn machine) with you? So congratulations on 17 days, but these are just some thoughts for you.

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Go

I am honestly not 100% sure about that. While viewing of porn is certainly more known ("Duh, all guys do it") and tolerated in the society. But some polls that I remember have shown that significant amount of women are also viewers and the fact that we got women here with our common problem shows that they can in fact get addicted. But just like pure usage, it's less talked in the context of women than men. It may even be more shameful for a woman to admit that she is addicted, because it's probably shameful to say that she even watches porn. So dumb, this is what I only suspect.

Edit: And since we are probably, in fact, dominantly male community, it may be even more shameful to openly admit it to a group of men, even anonymously. It's the internet and reddit after all. The few times I've seen threads about specific female problems there were no offenders aside for some usual troll that harass everyone equally, but how would they now.

35

Go

Lots of helps from this community. The result is that my life is no longer centered around watching porn, even if I failed in removing it entirely from my life so far.

35

Go

You can do this, kid. I believe in you. Deep breaths. Think about your favourite childhood cartoon or something equally innocent.

35

Go

If anything else fails, the first thing you need to do when you are home is to have a cold shower. Cold showers are a tool that helps to kill any urges you might have. So I assume that you succeeded. That's great. Watch out not to slip next few days, it may be harder than usual.

35

Go

Checking in for now. All seems to be going well so far. I made it to 90 days last 2 years. It's going beyond that what was the problem.

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Go

Edit: I just realized it sounds like bragging. Didn't mean to make it sound that way, sorry. I'm gonna try to go all of 2018!

35

Go

That's the plan.

7

Go

My PF 2018, week 1/52. As a part of staying accountable to myself and this community, I've decided to write few sentences every day concerning recovery. I've kept recovery journal before and it always helped, but I always stopped at some point. By keeping it public, I intend to keep at it and perhaps reading my silly random ramblings will help somebody. It definitely helps myself.

MONDAY

Initially I wanted it post it daily, but I realized that this would be too much spam, so I will do it weekly. I hope once a week isn't spam.

TUESDAY

A decent day. I woke up pretty late, because of obvious reason of going to sleep very late. Although not as late as some years. I mostly spent the day listening to good music. One of the main radio stations in my country does this list with "best of all times" songs and for many people listening to it has become sort of 1 January ritual. Myself included. So I spent the day mostly idling, but in a good way. But I also took time to make pizza for dinner for my family, which was greatly rewarding. In the evening I meditated for a bit (it's pretty hard), which is a habit I am once again trying to introduce into my life and watched one episode of tv show. Sadly I couldn't really work out, but I did my rehab work. Porn didn't really enter my mind, aside for when I looked at this subreddit.

WEDNESDAY

Today I experienced weird sadness when porn entered my mind while walking. Now, my release on 29 Dec, which I of course intend to be my final, was the first time in a long time when I went all the way with full PMO. And I would be lying if I said that I felt terrible afterwards. For the rest of the day I felt absolutely fantastic, fulfilled, calm. Because I got my fix, right? And today I became sad when I remembered the face of a pornstar I watched and thought I won't see her again. I know I shouldn't, but I did. And I recognized that feeling as a thought of the addicted part of my brain. It's trying to make me watch something again by reliving the high. But right now I still remember how I felt the next morning when the high wore off and I can't forget it. This certainly helped me on 31 Dec when I already typed the address for "one last time", but then actually said loudly, "what the fuck am I doing?" and closed the browser before it loaded.

THURSDAY

The fact that I am taking part in "2018 challenge" means nothing. It's just a number and it doesn't matter when it starts. In fact, it can be even detrimental. I partially justified my last relapse by telling myself that it's still 2017 and I am starting for real on 1 January and I was also close to relapsing on the 31st following the same logic. So it's not all positive, but just as the counter next to my nickname it's just a way of staying accountable to somebody else, in this case the whole community. Now, I look at the list of people and the cynic in me tells me that 98% of them will fall by the end of the year and a dozen names will remain. I'm not trying to be better than somebody else, but part of me really wants to be on that list on 1 January 2019 as a proof to myself and everybody here that I can 98% failure rate (which I think is close to how people in general keep their NY's promises? At least that's how it went for me and that includes 2016 and 2017 PF challenges) shows that this is not an easy thing, but I want to do it.

FRIDAY

I am not satisfied with how my 2017 year went, but when it comes to being free of porn, I can find some progress, so yay for me. And it's not even in how many times I relapsed, although now, no offence, but you do realize that your experience may (and maybe should?) also be treated as anecdotal and not a fact?

SATURDAY

Now, no offence, but you do realize that your experience may (and maybe should?) also be treated as anecdotal and not a fact?

SUNDAY

Now, no offence, but you do realize that your experience may (and maybe should?) also be treated as anecdotal and not a fact?

MONDAY

Now, no offence, but you do realize that your experience may (and maybe should?) also be treated as anecdotal and not a fact?

G = 8

U = 3

12

At least from my experience it is not a fact. And that's okay. I find it problematic that some people may reward their brains for thinking about pornography. I don't try to force this on anyone, but if someone asks a question, I will share my experiences.

GS

5

Don't beat yourself over failing any of these goals and don't throw away the whole list because of failing one thing.

~~What's your main goal? ...~~

Seeing as you intend to leave the community for good, thank you for being a part of it for so long. I didn't always fully agree with what you posted... but it clearly worked for you, so who am I to talk?

GS

5

Thank you for being an example that leaving is possible. Have a nice one. I hope and wish you that you won't ever have to come back. Just be wary not to go from porn addiction to video games addiction. If you go from neglecting your life because you watch porn all day to neglecting your life because you are playing games all day, that's not what you would call an improvement, right?

GA

5

And I'm saying this, because there is a theory that habits can't really be removed, only replaced. My dad is sometimes half jokingly saying that in 1993 he replaced smoking with running, so what that means for addicts, it's better to try to replace a habit that is destroying you with something that's beneficial for you. And I'm not sure if video games are that thing.

So just be wary. Now, there is something that I've been thinking recently. If you are masturbating as a response to an urge, aren't you effectively rewarding your brain for thinking about/wanting to watch porn? Just a thought. Yeah, they are absolutely different. Eating is necessary to survive, masturbation is not. What I wanted to show you is that even the most necessary activity will be wrong when done too much.

GO

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And porn and masturbation come hand in hand for most of people, so it's obvious that people think whether they should do it and how often. Hence you asking this question, right? Oh, sorry, I thought you were OP.

GO

5

And I think that people should initially stop any sexual activity. I guess we have different views on this. And that's okay. Probably either works for some people.

GO

5

~~What was the situation? ...~~

If you were seeking to see it on purpose... Like, if you opened a porn video and watched only the part when they showed her face. Or if you were just looking for face shots of porn stars to get some excitement (and maybe comfort?) from that. Now, I'm not sure if it counts as a full-blown relapse. What do you feel? But if you were looking at photos of pornstars (even ones that are not technically porn), I wouldn't call that a behaviour that helps in recovery.

GO

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From my experience trying to quit gradually doesn't work. Never watched anything Austin Powers, but such cycle is the most known from "The Little Prince".

GO

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— Why are you drinking? — the little prince asked. — In order to forget — replied the drunkard.



— To forget what? — Inquired the little prince, who was already feeling sorry for him. — To forget that I am ashamed — the drunkard confessed, hanging his head.

— Ashamed of what? — asked the little prince who wanted to help him. — Ashamed of drinking! — concluded the drunkard, withdrawing into total silence.

And the little prince went away, puzzled. 'Grown-ups are really are very, very odd', he said to himself as he continued his journey. And thanks for this collection of links. It's a bit of a hard day for me. Reading them helped to reinforce me.

GS

5

There is this notion that addiction can never be completely eliminated, but can only be replaced by something else. So we need to just find a healthy "addiction". Example? In September 1993 my dad stopped smoking. A year later he run his first marathon and many times he said that he replaced smoking with running. Also, all that saying that porn is "empowering" for women that gets young women consider it as an option. Well, maybe big stars get to be in more control about what they do and only do things that "empower" them, but young newbies are mostly used and then let go when they stop being "fresh".

GO

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And as for practices, I read that even more established actresses are lied to and manipulated. Let's say they sign a contract where it says exactly what they will do and won't do. That seems to be correct, right? Well, the next day they show on set and everyone expects them to do something that they didn't agree to. And then the manipulation starts: "Baby, we have everything/everyone paid for, we need you to do this". Or threatening — "you don't do this, you will never work in the industry again/you won't get paid/we will charge you with costs".

And it's easy to say that they can just say no, but when they may be in the middle of rolling and you already shot much material (that you might not get paid for!) and you need that money to live... Really, the industry is about breaking their boundaries one after another.

GO

5

Total for 12
G = 12/40
U = 0/10
Total for 12

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates
13	3/4/2018	194	3/3/2018

13 (x)

Posts

Addiction is real, but so is self-control and discipline. As someone who has an addictive personality and could have rolled with the worst addict on here, I have some thoughts. You can lean on your impulses, that are real, and use the medical diagnoses or addiction to continue down a destructive, guilt-ridden path. OR You can use your higher level thinking to A) understand that you have these impulses and strong desires that you need to overcome AND B) That you can have the self-control to just say no. I went from a hardcore, drug-induced, junkie in my late teens to a sober person in one night. I had tried to quit many times and relapsed, but this one night I woke up and just decided that I could file like this or make a change. I wanted a change. A university degree, 12 years sobriety (from drugs) later, and never one relapse. I often wondered why that time was different. Why on that singular night and every night that followed was my ability to avoid drugs opened to me? Upon reflection, I found that it was because I truly wanted to stop. In my mind, my higher order of thoughts, I acknowledged the harm I was causing and took responsibility for it. I also took personal responsibility for my actions and made intention to never do it again. You can let the fact that you're a chemically impulsive person drive your inability to stop or to excuse your relapses. Or, you can use your intelligence to understand how you're wired, stop making excuses, and use self-control to allow you to drive your life again. At the end of the day, you have to really want it. Saying you want it doesn't mean shit. It's like an obese person who constantly means that they want to get in shape. No they don't. If they did, they wouldn't moan. They would buy healthy food and start working out. Instead of them talking about doing something, people would come to them and say, wow, you're losing weight. *

Total for 13
U = 1/1

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates	Posts
14	3/4/2018	38	3/3/2018	Effects this sub can have - I dunno if it's from not using anymore, but now whenever I go outside I notice how vibrant the sky is, each and every time. I never noticed this before. Cool feeling.

~~_____~~

(+)

(14)

Total for (14)

U = 1/1

Posts

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates	
15	3/4/2018	51	3/3/2018	Day 52 - still flatlining, depressed. Is this normal?

(-)

(15)

Total for 15
U = 1/1

Participant # 16
Collection date 3/4/2018
Days abstinent 491
Posting dates 3/3/2018

(16)
(x)

Posts

Today, I came closer to failing than ever before (possibly triggering). Today, I almost failed. To put a long story short, after over a year of pornfree, I feel like I have lost touch with the concept of sexuality. This evening, I wanted to remind myself of what I as a sexual being am capable of and decided to seek out an "orgasm face video" on my phone. Nothing explicit, no nudity, just faces of women experiencing orgasm, as a reminder that sexuality is a good thing. And then I saw a recommended video, explicit this time...and I felt that amazing rush of excitement and elation, only for a brief moment...and I knew I was on the verge of failure. I instantly turned off my phone, pushed it out of reach. Then I masturbated to my fantasy, imagining a cute girl I had seen today. Afterward, I felt pretty terrible and ashamed about basically violating it in my mind, someone who, in reality, would never do anything like this with me. But I guess it's still better than watching porn.

[REDACTED]

Hmm. Maybe there is an emotional need that you're not addressing? Well, I am pretty sure I have an emotional need for emotional and physical intimacy and I'm pretty sure it's stressing me. But I can't really address it aside from cuddling with our neighbors' cat when he comes to visit us. The bottom line, of course, is that you've had great success living pornfree. I have successfully been pornfree but I'm not entirely sure I've had great success thanks to it. I don't feel like that much has changed. But I can't realistically expect that anyway. If you ever want to talk with someone in greater detail, feel free to PM me. Thanks, I appreciate the offer.

[REDACTED]

I agree that this sub should not be about bashing other subs and circle-jerks. But I also can't blame people who come here from noFap and despise it. Actually, a lot of the stuff I was turned on by during my porn days I now find kinda weird and gross. But don't worry. Especially during the first weeks of abstinence, your brain does some weird shit. You're genuinely on withdrawal, there are bound to be some side effects.

[REDACTED]

I gave noFap an honest try. I did 90 days and then I gave it a benefit of a doubt and continued for another 100 days. It did diddly-squat for me. Not a single one of the "super powers" I was lured in with manifested even slightly. It's just a huge circle-jerk, ironically, which I wouldn't mind so much, that's how 99% of reddit works. But noFap is also hugely anti-sexual. I have tons of guilt and shame surrounding my sexuality already, I don't need an extra helping.

So yes, I agree that pornfree should be its own thing without any comparison to noFap. But when asked, I won't hesitate to shit on that dishonest pseudo-religion.

[REDACTED]

Any content censorship on the internet is bad and can easily lead to abuse. I know that feeling. The chance that I'll ever personally experience sex is practically zero. So I used porn, hoping it would at least give me a semblance of an idea. That's why I was so hooked on homemade porn, especially on Tumblr: I could project myself into those scenes and fantasize about what the experience would feel like. It has been a long time. Even those memories are fading now and I have basically lost all concept of sex. Makes it difficult to resist...

I hate Valentine's Day. I hate that it makes me feel even lonelier than usual. I hate that I fall for this made-up, corporate holiday that has no meaning. I hate that porn still seems like salvation, offering at least the illusion of human companionship and sexuality. I hate that I can't barely masturbate to my fantasy anymore because I have no reference anymore and my brain rejects it all as implausible. Masturbation is the only form of sexuality I can experience, I don't want to lose it. I hate it all. And most of all, myself for being what I am.

G=6 U=2

461 (16) Distracting sexual thoughts - I can't for the life of me remember if I've posted this before... sorry in advance if I have. I know this isn't an anti-masturbation sub and I have nothing against masturbation at all. However, I'm trying to reduce my frequency a bit, ideally to just two or three times on the weekends. An unwelcome side effect, however, is that my sex drive increases almost instantly if I don't masturbate for a few days. I have sexualized thoughts at the most inconvenient times and can't help to look at every girl I find attractive. Usually, that wouldn't be such a problem, most of the times, I can just distract myself or force my thoughts elsewhere. There are moments when it's impossible though, such as today, when I went to the gym. Too many cute girls in tight clothes... I literally had to force myself to not stare at them and I could barely rest my gaze anywhere because I always had line of sight with some girl or another. It was just generally stressful and unpleasant. Any advice on how to deal with distracting sexual thoughts and unwanted glimpses?

461 To be brutally honest, I originally joined because I had hoped it would improve my romantic success. I was reluctant to try noFap at first because masturbation was my only source of sexual pleasure. Later, I switched to pornfree. Meanwhile, I have realized that all those lofty promises of superpowers are bollocks but figured I might as well stay away from porn since it wasn't offering me any benefit either.

461 If I reset my counter every time I just saw porn, I'd never get past day 1. The only way to avoid ever seeing anything even remotely sexualized is to live in a cave on an uninhabited island.

461 My biggest benefit is that I don't get nervous anymore when I use my browser in front of someone or don't have to worry about other "accidents". (One time, when I had still set my laptop's browsers to "restore last session", I opened it at university and...yea...I don't think anyone saw but it probably shaved a few years off of my life expectancy). Also, masturbation and orgasm to imagination feel much better. All other alleged benefits and "Super Powers" people talk about are due to placebo effects. I contend. I would recommend using a web-blocker, like K9, if you're not using one already. Unlike most users, I would advise against using a password you don't know since it can also mess with innocuous sites and applications, such as VPNs. But having to fetch the password and unlocking it may give you an extra few seconds to think about what you're about to do. Also, while it is common advice to occupy yourself with something "worthwhile", from personal experience, I'd recommend doing something mindless, like playing an easy video game, or even taking a nap when the urges hit. For me, watching porn was often the activity of least resistance so having something that was equally mindless was good distraction.

431 Just having the tool for VR porn is scary - I got a VR headset for my phone today (basically a fancy version of Google Cardboard). While it certainly isn't a "proper" VR headset like the Vive, it still seems to be a neat toy. However, just the idea that I could potentially use it to look at 3D VR porn is super scary. The idea of watching other people on a 2D screen have sex lost a lot of appeal to me but the thought of finally looking at a girl doing sexual things to "me", even if it's not real, is incredibly enticing. I'm sure I will stay strong and resist but just knowing I could do it is unnerving.

431 I disagree. Or rather, it's different for me. I used porn and masturbation to suppress my sexuality. Whenever I looked at a real woman and felt sexually attracted to her, I felt bangs of shame and guilt. Part of my mental healing was accepting that I'm a sexual being and that the desire to have sex with someone you're attracted to isn't something to be ashamed of.

431 I wouldn't know. But generally speaking, you might be more willing and patient to experiment when you're alone. You might find something to like your partner simply never did and you didn't bother to ask because you didn't know you liked it to begin with.

431 Well, ideally, maybe. Personally, I've given up on finding someone. Either way, masturbation shouldn't be a replacement for real sexual contact or vice versa. Even if you're in a relationship, or looking for one, masturbation can be beneficial. You might learn new things about yourself and what you like, which you can then tell your partner. Or it can even be something to enjoy together with your partner.

431 It probably will. But at the same time, if you're not getting along with the therapist, don't be afraid to quit again. Took me four tries to find a good therapist. Yeah, it's not an uncommon problem. Maybe you should consider seeing a professional, if you're not already doing that. It certainly has helped me a whole lot. I think I'm starting to forget what the naked female body looks like - I noticed that yesterday while trying to fantasize while masturbating. It feels like the knowledge of what a female body looks like is fading from my memory and I'm not quite sure what to make of it. One the one hand, I find it rather encouraging. It feels like some remaining stains that porn has left on my brain are finally vanishing. On the other hand, I'm still human and even though I know it's possible to masturbate without fantasizing, I still enjoy imagining myself with a member of the opposite sex and have always found the female body to be aesthetically pleasing. It's like losing the memory of a vacation you enjoyed. Sure, you can live without it but you still feel a bit sad about it.

431 I never liked the idea of New Year's resolutions. If something is worth doing, it's worth starting right now. If not, then you won't go through with it, no matter when you start... I've been doing this for over 400 days and during that time, I also improved my lifestyle in other areas (I started going to the gym, for example). And yet, I'm still entirely invisible to women. Going pornfree will only improve your chances with women if it masks your naturally attractive personality. If you don't have that to begin with, not much will change.

431 I'm not saying pornfree isn't worth it. Hell, it may even improve some people's success with the opposite sex. But it's not a given. Yes, I can't argue with that, I think it's why I used porn so much. But I think once you're addicted, it doesn't really matter that much if you can get girls or not, it's always difficult. Thanks for the kind words though.

431 Short answer: In my case, depression is probably the cause, porn the symptom. Long answer: It's a bit muddy. I started using porn before I had serious mental problems but I don't think it would have escalated to the same degree over the years if I had been healthy and would have had romantic and sexual success. *

G = 14 U = 2

16

431

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Yes, since I quit porn, my mental health has improved but there are a lot of other factors I changed since then that seem far more likely to be responsible for improving my situation. I think quitting porn is generally advisable but it won't have massive health benefits (or any huge benefits in general) on its own.

Quitting masturbation is, to be blunt, idiotic. At best there's no reason for it, at worst it's harmful.

Doing nofap for a limited time may make sense, I did it to help me quit porn. But it should never be the goal to eliminate it from your life completely.

I can't really agree with him, no matter if we take it face-value or apply it to porn. It really, really irks me if people claim that lack of romantic/sexual success is a consequence of masturbation/porn-use when, in my experience, it's usually the other way around. If you don't show up on women's sexual radar, no amount of abstinence will change that.

The porn industry as a consequence of a culture of anti-intimacy - I just found this article. I don't agree with every aspect of it but it makes an interesting point that porn is a much easier and less risky outlet for sexuality in a time when the expression of sexual interest in another person (especially from male to female) is quite discouraged by society. Like I said, I don't agree with everything. Their view on masturbation I find too negative, they're equating pornography with masturbation too much (then again, who can blame them, most people don't really masturbate without the aid of porn). Also, while I agree with the basic idea, I also think that blaming the fear of intimacy on cultural forces alone is shifting blame and avoiding facing ones own personal fears. Still, the article offers a lot to discuss.

Meditation. I meditate every evening. It's not really something I do at the moment when I feel sad and am about the relapse. But it helps me recognize and control my emotions. I can be like "Okay, I'm feeling sad now. But I will feel even sadder if I relapse now."

Also, accepting it helps as well. For me, the general thought would be ("I'm simplifying massively"): "I'm feel sad and down but I need to function and be motivated and energetic. Better cheer myself up with porn!" I saw porn as a remedy for a pathological state.

By accepting it, you can go "I'm sad but being sad is okay right now. I'm just going to play video games and eat cookies instead of trying to "medicate" myself with porn." Congratulations on your progress. Getting rid of porn seems to have worked as intended for you!

For me, the increased sex drive and desire to be with real girls has actually been more of a side effect than a benefit. But I've learned to work around it. Man, how are you guys who are getting signals from girls doing it? I never get any sort of indication that a girl might be interested in me.

This aside, I can relate to you. Frustration over lack of romantic and/or sexual interaction in real life was and still is one of my biggest potential triggers. For situations like this, I'd recommend doing something that requires a lot of mental concentration. Very fast-paced video games usually do the trick for me. Or taking a nap. Or meditating.

When I was still watching porn, I had far less interest in real girls. That was a benefit for me and it actually still is. It's not worth the overall cost but I still consider it a lost benefit. I haven't been able to substitute yet.

It was like eating cotton wool when you're on a diet. It's not really healthy but at least you're not feeling hungry and aren't craving treats you can't have.

I might be cynical but I'm pretty sure ISPs won't touch porn sites. They know that if they throttled or blocked porn in any way, people would be outside their headquarters with pitchforks and torches before lunch break.

This gets asked quite often and opinions vary. If you base the assessment on the "science" behind pornfree, the answer is quite clearly "no". The problem with porn isn't the porn. It's the fact that thanks to fast internet connections and sites like Pornhub, you can almost instantly find dozens and dozens of new videos. Every time one stimulus gets boring, you just find something else.

If you have sex in real life and you fulfill your biological duty, your body is satisfied and cools down. If a new partner comes along, you need to get busy again to further spread your genetic material. But in the real world, that's fairly rare. But with porn, it becomes the norm. You "impregnate" one partner (or at least that's what your body thinks that's happening), then a new one comes along and you get aroused again...and again and again and again. Neither body nor brain are designed for this kind of over-stimulation. Sure, looking at pics of your spouse may lead to porn use but in itself, it shouldn't be considered porn.

Depends on your definition, really. Some guys on pornfree want to avoid porn altogether but that's only feasible if you pretty much stop using any form of visual technology. My personal goal is to not use "visual aids" while masturbating, so unless I masturbate while looking at it (or think of it later), I'm good. I stumble upon pornographic imagery almost constantly and just ignore it. Basically, if you decide to stop smoking but someone on the street is smoking and the smoke drifts in your direction, it's not really your fault.

Like I said, it depends on your goal and definitions. You'll have to adjust your technology usage and media consumption accordingly.

Well, yeah, I have the password saved because I need to be able to turn it off (short answer: because it does things like mess with my uni's VPN). But just having to log into my password manager and copy the password is usually enough pause for thought to stop me.

Here are the benefits I encountered from being pornfree and how long it took for them to set in:

No more anxiety when someone uses my browser or fear that I might accidentally open a wrong file in public or something. Sets in as soon as you clear your history the last time and/or delete your porn.

Masturbation to your imagination is a lot more fun. It's a lot more vivid and exciting. Don't know how long that takes. I didn't masturbate for six months when I quit porn. Probably a few weeks at least.

GO = || R = |

16

I now have a little bit more time to sit around idly and browse reddit, imgur etc. be productive. Basically sets in instantly. That's it, really. If you're waiting for those "super powers" that especially noFap promises you, I hate to disappoint you, but they're placebo effects. If you want to know how long it takes for pornfree becoming normal for you, I can't really answer that. I still have the urge to look at porn sometimes but I'd say a certain transition from pornfree being my "mission" to it being more in the background set in after about three or four months in my case.

401

GO

Even when I hadn't masturbated at all for over 180 days, I never seemed to get wet dreams.

Either way, don't blame yourself for them. You can't control your dreams (well, some people can but still) and you can't control your body's reaction to them. I abstained from masturbation as well for the first six months of becoming pornfree and I think abstinence helped me tremendously. But if you think that all that pent up energy and your body's reaction to it makes things more difficult for you, maybe try masturbating in moderation and without porn and see how that works for you.

401

Great that you're trying to quit at a young age. The younger a human brain, the easier it is to mold it, for worse but luckily also for better. Two things come to mind that might be useful to consider for someone as young as you.

I'm almost twice your age but even in my age group, porn is seen as something fairly normal. I assume it's even more normalized with your peers. Don't let others influence you. This is your journey and your decision. On that note though, also don't try to "evangelize" others. At a young age, we're often convinced of the righteousness of our own worldviews and actions to an almost religious degree and see it as our duty to let others "see the light". Don't do that. Don't lie if someone asks you about it but otherwise, this is your private project.

I started almost a year ago over at noFap and saw many users who got extremely anti-sexual. Younger people seemed especially vulnerable to this mindset. Don't let this happen to you. Your battle is against pornography, not against sexuality. Your sexuality is wonderful and something to be proud of. Don't waste it on porn!

Always puzzles me a lot to read success stories like this, be it here or on noFap. I did noFap for half a year and haven't watched porn in over a year and all that happened is that I haven't watched porn in over a year. Don't get me wrong, I'm not begrudging you, it is just fascinating how experiences can differ.

Could be the same in my case. I certainly watched/looked at porn a lot and never masturbated without it. But it didn't really influence my life in any way. I'm glad I am pornfree now but my life wouldn't really be much worse otherwise.

I tried limiting myself to watching porn on the weekends. Didn't work in the slightest. Only complete cold turkey worked.

Hell yes, this is exactly it. And it's what *still* gives me the biggest troubles, even more than a year later. I don't need porn for the visuals anymore. My imagination is more than enough for me these days.

But the thrill of browsing, that rush of excitement you feel when you find a new video or even a new website, I still miss that...and nothing else comes close to being nearly as rewarding as finding more and more new videos that arouse you. The content of those videos doesn't even matter that much.

401

GO

I still masturbate because it's fun. And because I have no other sexual outlet. Sexual thoughts can become intrusive and distracting after a while. And yes, I usually do fantasize. Sometimes I just focus on the sensation too. I don't really restrict myself but I find that I don't really want to jerk off every day anyway. So I usually limit it to the weekend.

371

I know this isn't r/NoFap but I figured there might be other users here who are also trying to limit their masturbation. Ever since I finished my noFap streak and started masturbating again, without porn, I tried, to varying levels of success, limiting how much I masturbated. The goal is to not masturbate during the week but only the weekends. I'm not super strict about it but I try my best. First of all, masturbation just feels better if you're not doing it constantly and as much as I hate noFap's snake oil promises, I can't deny that a little abstinence has some effect on me.

For example, last Friday, after I had last masturbated on Sunday, I felt pretty amazing. I felt confident, strong, happy, completely unusual for me. I wasn't afraid to look at other people, women in particular and I didn't feel "meh" all the time. All that vanished again during the weekend when I "released". So that doesn't sound bad. The problem is that I had way too much sexual energy. I was sexualizing almost every girl I encountered, noticing their body shapes, their outfits, feeling aroused and excited. I felt awfully perverted and even purely objectively, it was just very distracting. The worst incident was when I was thinking sexually about a person I really shouldn't have such thoughts about.

I can't deny that I felt good after some abstinence but at the same time, I don't want to constantly perv on girls and be distracted by the hot top the girl sitting in front of me is wearing...

Does anyone have a recommendation for a good balance of masturbation that gives you some of the benefits of occasional abstinence but also keeps your sexual energy in check? *

371

GO

I'm glad I got out before I came into contact with VR porn. I don't think I could ever stop once I tried it.

371

GO

Yes. I'm about a year in and whenever I stumble upon pornographic content somewhere, I'm mostly just kinda "meh". I've always been clear that I'm probably going against most male peers by not watching porn anymore. But the general narrative surrounding noFap and Pornfree gave me the impression that women might appreciate it or at least be indifferent about it. But recently, I've started to realize that most women not only don't mind if their partner consumes porn but also watch it themselves.

361

(X)

Now, I understand that I obviously shouldn't care what either men or women think about my decision. But by being a virgin at my age, I'm already enough of a sexual oddity that not everyone would be ready to put up with. Should I ever start dating a girl (not sure how but it *might* happen), I don't want to lower my chances further by seeming like a sexual prude because I don't watch porn. I guess I could just lie about it but I also hear that porn is part of some people's sex life.

361

(-)

I've been feeling a bit down and stressed yesterday (as mentioned in my previous post), so I wanted to masturbate before bed to release some tension, obviously only using my fantasy, as I have for a good four months now.

I imagined being together with a girl I knew from real life but...my brain wouldn't let me. The idea that a real girl could desire me sexually, it was just so implausible that my fantasy broke down.

2 = 1

G = 9

U = 2

To quote someone (potential trigger!) who described it much better than I ever could: You start to imagine her naked, constructing a fantasy in detail (...), and then you try to insert yourself into her presence and the fantasy crumbles to dust under the weight of its own absurdity. You know there's no chain of events, no course of actions, that could lead to that ill defined imaginary room where the two of you would meet in an act of carnal congress. There's no way to there where you are, it's not even an alternate universe, it's an inconceivable one. I switched to "constructed" girl, not based on anyone in particular instead and that worked.

I know it probably won't be a reoccurring problem and even if it was, I could just fantasize about "constructed" girls instead. Or I could do some weeks of noFap again to learn to masturbate for its own sake again. But nevertheless, the incident startled me because if my fantasies don't work anymore, porn could start to look all the more appealing. I've already been a bit mentally unstable recently. After having made progress in that regard over the past months, I felt pretty lonely, hope- and worthless over the past weeks.

Last semester, I met a girl at a lecture and even though we only talked once towards the end, we hit it off quite well. I didn't see her again afterwards but we ended up in a lecture together again. So today, after the first session, I figured I might as well try asking her out for a coffee date. And literally moments before I was about to ask her, she happens to mention her BF. Even though I terrifiedly narrowly dodged a bullet, it was still a bit of a blow. I'm just feeling more and more (again) that I'll always remain a lonely, unloved virgin who never knows the touch of a woman. Porn's siren call promises sexual excitement and the sight of naked female bodies. On top of that, it promises to numb the sad mind, distract from problems and release pent up stress...

I know they're all lies but sometimes, we don't mind being lied to. Resisting the sirens is hard right now... I'm suddenly missing the chase - in a few weeks, it will be an entire year since I stopped watching porn. And to be honest, I never really missed it THAT much. But recently, I've started longing for a very peculiar aspect of it: searching for new videos. Or more specifically, that rush of excitement you get when you find a video you've never seen before, which contains just the right topics you've been looking for. That excitement when you then find another video and another...

I know that the constant novelty is pretty much THE big problem. But it's also a source of excitement when your days are pretty much all the same. And on top of that, even masturbating to your own fantasies gets kinda boring if it's been months since you've seen a naked female body...

I'm not really at immediate risk of relapse, but I'm just wondering if it's all worth it. Porn really isn't appealing to me anymore, but...the female body still is. My pornfree goal is no longer masturbate to porn or binge on it. And I think I've achieved that, porn no longer appeals to me, it feels icky and weird. But I still enjoy amateur photographs of girls, not movies, not pics of sexual acts, not even necessarily fully naked. I just find the female body aesthetically pleasing and unlike watching porn, the arousal I get from those makes me feel good and "manly". And I find it considerably more difficult to come up with rational arguments against that kind of stimulation.

So, any advice how to overcome the mental urge to look at girls (online or in) because their bodies look nice? 190 days - mission accomplished. Time to move from NoFap to PornFree. Prologue I had heard of noFap long before I first tried it. Back then, I was mainly posting on /r/ForeverAlone and occasionally, people would make "helpful" posts about how all we lone losers needed was noFap. It was descending to say the least. Masturbation was the only sexual release I had and then someone tried to take that away from me. That concern was never addressed (and remains unaddressed to this day, btw). When I checked out the noFap sub, all I could see was outbush behaviour and bro-science. So we weren't off to a good start.

In September 2016, I finally confessed my feelings to my then-crush and, to my dismay, had to learn that she had met someone just a few weeks prior. Needless to say, I was devastated. But the event served as a sort of catalyst for me to reevaluate my life. Since then, I have started meditating twice a day, switched from electric razor to classical wet shaving with a safety razor, unsubscribed from ForeverAlone, started going to the gym twice a week and became more conscious about my diet. I also started seeing a psychiatrist a few months earlier. I'm mentioning all this mostly to give context and make clear that me trying noFap wasn't really a "clean experiment" since I introduced a lot of other variables around the same time.

I mainly became curious about noFap because of the promised benefits, especially increased confidence and attractiveness towards the opposite sex. That sounded like things I could do with. And Your Brain On Porn even delivered a concise explanation that wasn't based on bro-science. I didn't have anything to lose. If it worked, great. And if it didn't, I at least could stick it to those jerks who "invaded" ForeverAlone. First two weeks

The last time I masturbated and watched porn was on Friday, October 28th 2016. The beginning wasn't as difficult as I had imagined. January 26th 2017 seemed almost an eternity away but I kept myself motivated by reading the success stories on reddit, the forums and Y80P. People going from sad, depressed and lonely to happy and in a relationship with a beautiful girl in sometimes less than 90 days seemed too good to be true. And for the first two weeks or so, it seemed to work. I started feeling less gloomy and depressed and had a lot more energy to pursue projects outside of my university career. But exactly two weeks after I started, the apex seemed to be reached. It was pretty much the last day of my reboot that I felt that new energy and optimism. Coincidentally, it was also when I had the pinnacle of any interaction with a girl during my reboot: I shared an umbrella with a classmate for a brief walk from one building to another during a field trip. The Darkes Valley

Day 15-90 pretty much was a single flatline. I didn't feel worse, I just felt like I did before I started noFap. On the positive side, I didn't really have any strong urges either, so it wasn't really a battle. But that also meant that I didn't really feel like I had accomplished anything remarkable by the end of the first 90 days.

By the end of January, I had made it. I had finished the generally recommended duration for a reboot. But I didn't feel anything had changed that I could definitely attribute to noFap. I decided to double it, for good measure. 182 days (because 180 isn't even divisible by 7). For one, I felt like I should at least try as long as it took me to get out of the flatline valley. And second, by then I already knew that noFap is great at moving goal posts. So if I pointed out that I had tried it and it hadn't really done anything for me, at

(16)

361

(x)

311

(-)

221

PA

190

(x)

R = 1 U = 3

130

(x)

16

90

RO

90

GR

90

(x)

I think today my K9 saved me. I've been feeling horny, empty, lonely and ashamed of my sexual desires lately. No uni on Fridays this semester, so I'm at home. I wanted to look up some parts for a project and started typing in the URL, when an old porn tumblr from way back when showed up. For some reason, I clicked it but at the same time, I was repeating "please be blocked, please be blocked, please be blocked" in my head.

It was. K9 is a good boy.

I'm gonna delete my browser history and then take a nap, hoping those feelings will go away. 90 days of NoFap, now what? As the title implies, today marks 90 days since I last watched porn and/or masturbated, the "standard" recommended reboot time. And now, I'm unsure what to do next. I had always intended to masturbate again and just go pornfree after my reboot was complete, however, I'm not sure if that is already the case. I don't feel any different at all. I never experience morning wood or spontaneous erections and keeping my hands off of my bits has been easy, I never had any urges at all. Someone suggested a few days ago that this might mean that I still need more time to reboot. I feel that masturbation might actually be beneficial at this point because I went through those 90 days by pretty much repressing any sexual thoughts at all and I suspect that might have caused my flatline. On the other hand, I don't want to ruin what healing progress I might have made so far.

Any thoughts? Anyone have any experiences they could share on that issue?

"Porn isn't ruining your sex life." Link might be slightly triggering for some?

The most interesting point of the article, in my view, is that people often turn to porn because they're lacking proper sex ed. And porn doesn't really ruin real sex because it conveys a false image of it, instead porn is merely a symptom of not having any idea about sex to begin with.

Could it be that many people only start consuming porn, and then get hooked to it, out of natural curiosity that can't be satisfied any other way because we as a society refuse to discuss sex openly and without shame? Could positive sex ed solve the problem of porn addiction?

For the first two weeks of my first try, I could feel improvements to my mood and personality almost daily. Then, about a week ago, it just...stopped. I felt like crap again and started to doubt noFap because I was making no progress at all. But while meditating before bed just now, I noticed something: My mood is still crap and I feel like I'm horny *all the time* but...while I still want to fap, the urge for porn seems to be vanishing slowly. Before, it was just something I did. When I was bored and/or home alone, I'd almost definitely PMO. It was compulsive. Just something I HAD to do. Now, I don't really feel any desire.

It's not much but it's encouraging to see I'm at least making some progress...

Total for 16

R = 1/4

Total for 16

U = 2/11

Total for 16

G = 1/41

U=2
G=7

For me one of the most important things is having my reasons clear for quitting porn. I always relapsed because there was that lingering doubt - meh, just once won't hurt, or maybe it's not that bad, etc. Now that I'm pretty clear on why I don't want it in my life, it's easier to stay away...no matter what the weather outside.

230

50
17

It's not about my appearance. I've been told that I look like a porn star, and I know, me girls I wish I knew. Older girls, younger girls. Blonde and brunette, tall and short, fat. There's no average of them, or maybe I'm just lucky? I try to specifically recall porn scenes but they sometimes fade away from my mind. I try not to overthink it. Are you looking as porn? No. So everyone's different but that's what it's all about for me. It's not about perfectionism or flagellation, it's just about getting the unhealthy influence of porn out of my life, one day at a time. Agree that the streak is not the most important...if you're growing, you're growing, and that's enough. It's progress not perfection. That said, porn for me isn't really a take it or leave it thing... The end goal for me is to get porn out of my life completely, which will eventually result in a streak that goes up by 1, each day.

231

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(X)

All good for the hood, had a little bit of a "setback" when I caught myself looking at some Instagram photos, but I'll assure me that this was middle dirt and that I don't need to reset or anything. I learned from it and have been being more careful. TBH, no real urge to look at porn. Although I must say, when I look at my girlfriend sometimes I still compare her to other women and think, what? I've got it so good enough. On the one hand, I think it's a "setback" because I'm not as good as I used to be, but on the other it's also a reflection of not being grateful and possibly some porn-like fixation on appearance. But the good news is I realized that and I came to a very, very grateful point that night. Grateful with her, grateful with me, and grateful with my life. Grateful to be clean, sober, healthy and porn free. Feeling good, folks. Thanks.

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But the good news is I realized that and I came to a very, very grateful point that night. Grateful with her, grateful with me, and grateful with my life. Grateful to be clean, sober, healthy and porn free. Feeling good, folks. Thanks.

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But the good news is I realized that and I came to a very, very grateful point that night. Grateful with her, grateful with me, and grateful with my life. Grateful to be clean, sober, healthy and porn free. Feeling good, folks. Thanks.

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I hope to keep this in mind too.

Thank you for your kind words in the past and when I'm in a good enough place, I'm in a good place. It's usually pretty easy for me to stay away from porn. No paper or anything like that. It just feels right. So when I have an urge some up I know something is off. For whatever reason I have a hard time staying away from porn. I don't know why. I don't know why. I don't know why.

Anyway, I had to urge this marriage. So I'm not going to be responsible. I'm thinking about back home. I've been out of the year, and my family/home life is a bit of a hard environment. I'm happy to be spending time with them, but it's not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home.

So it's not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home. I'm not like I'm home.

Knowing that my main trigger for anxiety has made it easier to see the target for what it is. And I think staying accountable to myself and to others, like you guys, is important. I think that's important. I think that's important. I think that's important.

Porn is taking our sexuality and showing it into a dark corner and keeping it completely to ourselves. That's the opposite of connection. Porn is taking our sexuality and showing it into a dark corner and keeping it completely to ourselves. That's the opposite of connection.

There were literally 3 separate occasions where he made references to porn or masturbation. In the span of like, 1 hour. One, a girl was talking about going to the gym and didn't know why her right arm was stronger than her left. My friend mentioned masturbation (oh, two, I don't even remember why but he mentioned a pornographic genre IDK. It just seemed like a lot to me. And I had already suspected he might be a porn star just from his way of being and the other he did from the way he'd put his right hand

like I said, he's a good guy and if he's happy that way then great. I'm just glad that's not me anymore. I think when we initially got porn, or when we got back on the main after a bit of a break, we were so happy. We were so happy. We were so happy. We were so happy.

bit more energy, etc. But I've had several months since before and I can assure you quitting porn does not guarantee that you will not have anxiety, not have bad days, not have issues. Actually, I don't think there's really any solution to any of those things, it's part of life, but it does get better and quitting porn in my case has definitely brought

17

60
4

60
60

Totals for 17

G = 3/118

U = 2/32

R = 0/1

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinent	Posting dates
18	3/7/2018	66	3/7/2018
		61	
		56	

Blatant Dream Symbolism - Won't go into too much detail, but had a dream last night featuring a sexual partner literally being reduced to a masturbation aid. If that's not telling of my brain on porn I don't know what is.

Also, alien bat-people being accepted into society so entirely that they can go grocery shopping without fear. But that's probably my brain on Star Trek :p I want to thank you all - individually, and as a subreddit - for reminding me that my problem is real. Even now, after more than a year of struggling, one of the hardest things for me is accepting that porn addiction exists, that it is a real issue that really affects me and so many others. There's a part of me that feels stupid and weak every time I think about it or talk about it, but you all always remind me: you're not stupid, you're not weak, it's real, and you're gonna be okay.

Thank you all. Really, thank you. You're not stupid. You're not weak. This problem is real. And you're going to be okay.

There is way too much porn on pinterest - Just needing to vent a little bit, and maybe warn some fellow pornfree-ers. I use Pinterest as a way to find and organize pixel art examples and tutorials, along with art references, fashion references, that sort of thing. It's a great resource! But apparently, it is a very short hop from any one of those things to straight up pornography.

I'm so damn frustrated right now, because it seems like even attempting to work on a positive hobby isn't an escape. I resisted and overcame, but man was it close, especially when I was being blindsided like that.

18

Q

+

GO

Totals for **18**

U = 2 / 2

G = 1 / 1

Participant #	Collection date	Days abstinence	Posting dates	Posts
19	3/7/2018	82	3/7/2018	

19

CS

CS

GF

22

22

22

21

If you read my first post here, you will see that my married life was gonna be hell. But I realized that the problem was me! The problem was porn! I decided then leave of the side of addiction and until here God helped me! So be strong, be honest, be courageous and you will win this battle! That is not easy but is possible! Give yourself an applause. Here's why... "My good friend, dont be hard on yourself. For starters you are standing up to a difficult problem but you know youve got what it takes to beat it. And for second, you have to admire your courage trying to battle this. Hey, no one said it will be easy. We're all in this together! Don't give up. And its never too late! Btw, give yourself an applause!" by sub /r/nofapchistians

Yesterday I've posted the adapted 12 steps from AA for pornholics but a lot of participants didn't saw use for them for religious causes. Then, today I bring 12 non religious steps for everyone follow. I hope that it help us!

Please, complete this list with your tip!

1- Recognize that you have an addiction; 2- Know How Your Addiction Works; 3- Why do you access pornography and masturbate? 4- Take action against the triggers of your addiction; 5- Create small resistance goals; 6- Do not lower your guard in the face of a victory; 7- Be prepared for a possible fall; 8 - Learn from the falls; 9 - Share your fears, wins, and failures with someone; 10 - Beware of your eyes and thoughts; 11 - If you're not getting it yourself, get help; 12 - Never give up!

I adapted the famous 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). I hope that steps help you as well as help me:

We admitted we were powerless over porn - that our lives had become unmanageable. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to pornholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. God bless us!

I week PornFree!!! Yeahhhhhh BUT... First of all, I'd like to thank all in this sub because I found a place to have help to handle with my porn addiction! My sex life already is better! BUT.....

However, yesterday I went to the mall and it was very difficult to get rid of one of my most stubborn initiators: look at beautiful women on the street! How can I beat this too? How do you handle it?

Hello everyone! I found this subreddit when I was looking for porn on reddit. Then I realize that I need help to scape of this prison (porn)! Well, I'm male, 42 years old and married. My porn addiction begins on my teenagers season. The great problem is that I need fill my mind of porn to feel excited with my wife.

I find many excuses for that in my mind: "she isn't attractive enough", "she doesn't touch me", "she never doesn't take initiative", "she doesn't wear sexy underwear", etc... I know that it is a prison and I don't have peace in my mind with this addiction.

I need to be free! And I need to be satisfied just with my spouse! Please, fellows, help me!

Total for 19
U = 2/2 G = 4/4
Total for 19

Participant # 20
 Collection date 3/7/2018
 Posting dates 3/7/2018
 Days abstinent 37

GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA

Be careful to not treat the thing that you are trying to stop as a reward for having some success with stopping. It comes in waves. Just ride it out and it will pass. Just be extra careful to not inch toward it or you will surely get swept away.*

[REDACTED]

It sounds like you are at least owning your part of the problems. We don't get to pick what our spouses ultimately choose, but we do get to choose to be better people ourselves. In my case, I do think my marriage is going to be ok. This has all just hit pretty hard with our intimacy. Sometimes it is hard to be patient with that when it feels like I'm working so hard to be a better husband. I think it is going to take a while, but I'm hoping that it eventually leads to something better for us both. God bless you my friend. Stay strong. If you ever need an ear, feel free to reach out to me.

Well, the cool thing to do would be to replace your habit of adding to your stash each morning by deleting a bit of your stash every morning. It would feel like a similar, but opposite action. Like you were chipping away at the addiction one small step at a time, just as you stepped into it. Unfortunately that will NOT work. Just go delete the ENTIRE thing, then treat yourself to something you've been wanting as a way to celebrate. "Do you know why I laughed yesterday..."

That may be an even more effective way to do it because you are both now slightly removed from the situation that was happening. It can possibly seem as you addressing your problems on their own time instead of you trying to make that situation about your problems.

As a person that has struggles with porn addiction, this definitely sounds like the source to a lot of the problems.

First though, don't take him choosing porn over you as there being something wrong with you. There is something wrong with him. In a way, his brain is a bit broken by over-consumption of porn. Porn works on a guy's brain in a much different way than real sex. With porn, it is about the anticipation of the next video or scene. That anticipation of the next click is a super easy way for a guy to manipulate the reward circuit in his brain. It is easy and becomes sort of like a drug. Manipulating the reward circuit of your brain like that can actually cause physical changes to the wiring of your brain. One thing that can start to happen with over consumption of porn is that the you can train your brain to connect arousal with porn to the point where things don't work as well with a partner. Not because they aren't attracted or wanting to be with you, but because their brain has become overly adjusted to the porn. Then, one scare with not being able to perform with a partner leads to performance anxiety which can make a guy start avoiding intimacy in the future because he is afraid things won't work. Other consequences of too much porn (besides possible ED issues) can be not being able to orgasm with a partner. He could have loss of sensitivity. He will likely be really defensive about using it and may act angry toward you if you say anything about it. He may even try to blame you for it. It's tough and the only way he will ever quit is if he decides that it is a problem. Even then it is really hard to stop, but it is possible. And if he does stop, the good news is that the issues caused by it will fade away. It just takes time and hard work from him and lots of patience from you.

You should tell her that guys also don't marry for sex, but sex is a huge part of intimacy and that intimacy is an important part of marriage. Tell her that it is important to you and you feel it is important for your marriage. And, if women can just "turn in on" or "turn it off", that maybe she can simply just "turn it back on".

Honestly though, it sounds like she is just uncomfortable about it all. You need to be careful to not over-pressure or make it seem like you are obsessed with it, but also let her know that it is important to you and that you miss sharing that experience with her.

Also, I can almost guarantee that she does masturbate. She is probably just waaay too awkward to talk to you about it.

G = 7
 U = 0

28

20

(x)

I talked to my wife last night... Well, I did it. Well, sort of. The conversation actually probably started about a week ago. We were laying in bed and she said that she was having a hard time being intimate with me because she felt like crap because of me using porn (among some other things too). I was actually able to tell her that I'm in a good place with it now. I told her that I really wish that I could explain myself in a way that she would understand, but I just let it go at that because I didn't want it to seem like I was trying to explain away her feelings. Although it didn't feel like she was very happy with me at the time, I do think she took it as a positive. But, I also felt like I wanted to tell her more.

Last night we went for a drive and she started talking about how hard life can be, but she knows that we are going to be ok. That gave me some courage to tell her again that I'm in a good place with my struggles. It's been difficult, but I'm really trying hard to get past it all, and I've been trying for a long time. I finally feel like I'm in control of that part of my life. The way she responded made me think that she probably believed that I was into some pretty dark stuff or something. So, I wanted to give her a little more detail. I told her that I never got into any dark stuff or anything like that. I tried to explain that me watching porn was never because I wasn't attracted to her or anything like that. It is a totally different thing. She did take that as me trying to justify it in some way, which I wasn't intending to do. By that time we were already back to the house. She sort of angrily got out of the car and went inside. I sat in the car for a few more minutes. The last thing that I wanted to do was make her feel like I was trying to justify things. If anything, I am finally trying to own it all. That's actually why I wanted to talk to her more about it. It left me feeling pretty defeated. I put myself back together and went inside. Everything was magically fine again. She wasn't mad at all. In fact, I think she was happy that I did. I think she was just uncomfortable with talking about it so she found a way to end the conversation. In any case, I do feel like some of the weight and guilt has been lifted. It also gives me great ambition to carry on. I may never really be able to talk openly with her about it, but I guess that is ok if that is her choice. I can honestly say that I am, by far, in a much better place than I've ever been with this stuff. I don't ever want to go back. I still have some ups and downs, but overall it gets a bit easier every day.

28

Well, your only choice is to get it under control then. Because it is probably very likely that she already suspects things and hasn't said anything because she is also avoiding the fight and the truth. If you can't get things under control, then I would definitely suggest you being the one to tell her instead of her getting frustrated to the point where she is doing the asking. I think that would have definitely saved me (and her) some grief in all of this. And, while in the end the only way you will ever conquer porn is if you do it for yourself, having the extra motivation from someone that you really don't want to disappoint anymore is a huge help to not getting tripped-up. Good luck my friend!

24

GA

Yeah, in some cases there is something physically going on that needs to be checked by a doctor, but in most cases (especially at your age) it is all a head game. I do think there is a such thing as PIED, but I also think the bigger problem quickly becomes performance anxiety. As soon as you read about PIED and you start to worry if it will affect you, you are likely to get a bit of performance anxiety. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Your worry that you won't be able to becomes the reason that you won't be able to. Even in cases where someone does experience PIED, from then on I think the bigger issue becomes performance anxiety. I think you have to use this knowledge and do everything that you can do get out of your own head. If you are going to have sex with your partner and all you are thinking about is if you are going to be able to perform, you likely won't be able to. You are not allowing yourself to enjoy the intimacy of the moment because you are stuck in your own head. I think the best way to cure this is through actually having some victories. Stay away from the porn. If you know you are likely to be having sex within a few days, refrain from masturbating so your libido is higher. When the encounter is happening, just focus all of your energy on pleasing her and try to ignore what is happening with your own body. Just be in the moment and let things just happen as they will. Once you start stacking some victories together, you begin to worry less about being able to perform. That's all easier said than done, but I think that is really the best solution.

24

GS

Well my friend... there is no time like right now to take control of your life. You can use the new relationship and your love for this girl as motivation to quit, but if you really want to have success, the only person you can really do it for is YOU! It's not easy, but it is so worth it!

24

GS

Congrats! Use the momentum to keep carrying you forward. Deny the crash! Do you really want porn to be in control of you like that? Have the will to do what you know is best for you and don't look back.

23

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Well, I just performed my olympic event. I deleted the stash. 500gb! All gone and it feels great. By the way, the "special occasion was that I talked with my wife about my struggles last night. This feels like a bit of a victory lmao

23

GS

It is really difficult. In my case, my wife knows it is something that I've struggled with. A while back, she asked me if I look at porn, and I honestly answered that I do. I've tried (and failed) to quit many times since then and actually before that too. Unfortunately, she takes it as me not being satisfied with her. It really hurt her, hurt her self-esteem, and hurt our intimacy. It is so hard for me to explain why looking at porn doesn't mean that I'm not attracted to her or not satisfied with her. Most attempts come across as me trying to make excuses or trying to explain away her feelings about it. Last night the subject of me looking at porn came-up for the first time in probably a year or so. I was finally able to tell her that I'm currently in a very good place with it. She said that was good to hear, but I could also tell that it was really hurting her that I'm struggling with this in the first place. I'm super stressed out about feeling like I let her down again even though I'm fighting so hard to be free from this all (for myself and for her and us). I do feel like last night was a good step, but I also feel like I'm still facing this all on my own, which really sucks. The one thing that I can say is that despite all the stress that I'm currently under, I am honestly in the best mental position that I've ever been with porn. I have almost no temptation to look at it now because I've been able to target it as the cause of so many of my struggles. It is so awesome to see by badge counter increase every day I stop by here. I really do believe that this will finally be the time that I have victory!

22

GS

I am a Christian, and my beliefs are part of the reason I'm working so hard to stop using porn.... but that verse has little to do with "porn deliverance".

U = 2 G = 6

21 Any time I have quit using porn, I have a really difficult time for the first couple of days, then my libido just nose dives. I always get really nervous because it seems like things won't work anymore. At around 2 weeks things start improving for me. I think one of the biggest things is that you need to get out of your own head. It is easy to keep telling yourself things aren't going to work to the point where anxiety over it causes the failure. If you are in the moment with your girl, and all you can think about is not being able to get hard, guess what is probably going to happen? Just enjoy the moment and completely focus on pleasing her and let your body take over what happens. That is easier said than done, but it is what needs to happen. Congrats on your 1 week! It is not easy and a nice accomplishment!

21 Yeah... For me, I think using porn kept my libido falsely high. Most days I wasn't even in the mood to masturbate, but the habit/routine/addiction of looking at porn was just an automatic thing that I would begin to do. Once I started looking at porn, it would get me in the mood. When you unplug from the porn, it is like my libido over-corrects itself. It takes a bit of time for it to come back up to anything noticeable at all. My brain notices the libido crash and panics which brings on the anxiety. At that point, it is so easy to give-in to the temptation to jump start your system again. Now I have gotten better at riding that out and my libido starts coming back up again, but the performance anxiety remains. One thing I'm really trying to do now that my libido is somewhat normal is allow myself to occasionally masturbate (without porn) to release and sort of give my body a natural reward as a response to it naturally getting aroused. I am not allowing myself to fall into any routine though where I do it just because. It is actually good to deny myself sometimes and allow myself other times. I'm just trying to be mentally in control of myself. At this point, I think I just need to have real sex with my partner. I'm mostly positive everything will work ok, I'm more worried about how long I'm going to last at this point! Once that happens, I think I'll be over my performance anxiety completely! I don't think it is necessarily a bad thing. When I was looking at porn and masturbating daily, most days I wasn't even necessarily in the mood to masturbate until I jumped into my routine of looking at porn. Looking at porn would get things going, then I would masturbate. Any time I quit porn, the first few days it was like my body would throw a tantrum. I would have super high cravings for the porn and also feel the need to masturbate. After denying those needs for a few days, my libido would nose-dive and it would actually become pretty easy to not do either for a while. In fact, it would nose-dive so far that I would start to get worried that things would no longer properly work, so often I would give-in to the temptation to try things out again. After getting about 2 weeks away from the porn, I would get an urge for a release, but not even necessarily for the porn. I failed many times with this because porn had been so intertwined with masturbating, that I really felt the urge to masturbate was an urge to look at porn. Since I've now been able to mentally separate the two so much better, lately, it has been so much easier to just feel the urge for a release and go for it, without ever really being tempted to look at porn. I think that urge to masturbate is a much more natural thing that is now not being caused by my porn habit/routine. For me, I think that is not only ok, it is a bit of a sign of healing. Just don't let those urges rule you and don't form a new routine around some schedule. Just ask yourself, is my urge to masturbate coming from a desire to look at porn? Then, No. Is it because this is the time of day I normally do it and I'm actually not really even in the mood? Then, No. Is it because my body is naturally calling for it? Then, go for it!

21 Three weeks today! Well, I'm at 3 weeks today, and I feel great about it. To me, the first couple of days are always the most difficult. It becomes a bit easier every single day because it feels like caving now would be throwing away everything I've been working for in this battle. I can honestly say that I'm getting to the point where I don't even really think about it much anymore. It's like the temptation isn't even really there. The last couple of weeks have been really stressful for other reasons, and I haven't even really considered using porn as a way to cope. My past failures have taught me my likely triggers, so I try to stay clear of the things that caused me to fail before. There are no failures as long as you learn something from it! I'm in such a good place with this all right now and although I have a long ways to go, I'm starting to think that this may actually be the time where I finally win this war forever. *

18 If you want to have success, it really does have to be for you. You can use your girlfriend's wishes as some motivation, but you will never quit unless YOU want to. There are lots of good reasons to quit! Good luck my friend!

17 Embrace that! That journey is what life is all about! People are missing out on so much because they are too wrapped up in things like porn, social media and their phones in general. Those things do nothing but pass time and suck the life out of you. Life is way too short! It is time to start living it! That's one of my primary motivations for stopping the porn. It's just time to start doing things differently! Its time to be a much more active participant in my own life!

17 Thanks! Now if I could just do a better job of listening to my own advice. Haha! I'm working on it though and in a better place than I've been in a long time. Good luck to you my friend!

17 The sooner you set it behind you and start again, the smaller the setback it will be. You don't have to lose all your momentum, but you will if you don't things started again right now. I think it is hard to not feel like we are only as good as our last relapse, but the truth is that it is a long war we are fighting. You simply lost a couple of battles recently, if you give up from that, you will lose the war for sure. Pick yourself up and carry on my friend. Learn something from it to give you greater strength next time. If you think it is crazy with those cheap phone based VR devices, it is worlds more advanced in a Rift or Vive. It really is a game changer. You actually feel like you are in the scene. And with that, despite decades of porn consumption, I never had any issues with PIED until I started using VR porn. I started having some minor issues almost immediately. So, I got pretty scared to use it and pretty much went completely back to regular porn. The scare has also helped motivate me to quit using porn altogether. This may be the thing that actually makes the dangers of porn no longer disputable because I think it is just going to amplify everything.

16 Absolutely! It is really difficult for me to use the VR porn though, it basically takes an empty house, which doesn't happen very often for me. So, I don't have much danger at all of using it. My wife is going to be going away for a couple of days in a few weeks. I'm thinking of deleting it as soon as she leaves to help set the tone for myself while she is gone. It is going to be a nice mental boost when I do it, and I don't want to waste it!

16 Honestly, I think it is a good time to quit both. One thing that helps fight addiction is to get out of your old routines. Replace the time that you would have spent in the unhealthy activities with something positive. Go to a gym, or get involved in something. Change your life and be proud of yourself for doing it!

20

G = 10 U = 1

Looking at porn and masturbating are too intertwined to expect that fapping won't increase your temptation to also look at porn. There is nothing wrong with giving both a break for a while. One way I'm trying to approach it is that looking at porn was very habitual for me. Most of the times, I wasn't really even in the mood to do either, but out of habit I would start looking at porn which would get me aroused and then I would masturbate. Because the fapping usually comes from looking at porn, when you stop looking at porn, you will probably feel less need to masturbate. I made a rule for myself to not cause a new habit out of masturbating. I don't want it to be something that I just do out of some routine. Instead, if I get aroused naturally (such as waking up in the morning with an erection), then maybe I will take care of business. But, I'm not going to force myself to get hard just because I mentally feel like I need to do things on some schedule.

20

GoD

Total for 20

Total for 20

$$G = 1/24 \quad U = 0/3$$