

## Pornography

**I have an addiction that I am ashamed of and I try so hard to just fight it, but for some reason I always give in. I became addicted to internet porn about a year ago and it seems to be getting worse. I feel like my life is out of control. I just wish I could pray and hear God, but when I pray I can't hear him answer. I feel like God doesn't want anything to do with me.**

You've already begun to overcome one of the biggest hurdles in fighting addictions and that is admitting there's a problem and allowing other people to help you. Because pornography is such a sensitive subject, many people are too ashamed to ask for help.

Often, those who are addicted struggle with self-condemnation and thoughts like, *"Why can't I stop? What's wrong with me? I'm a failure! I don't have enough will power. I'm all alone."* And on and on... But addiction goes beyond our ability to make it stop on our own. Reaching out for help is a huge step in the right direction. Secrecy and hiding only strengthen the bondage of addiction, and strengthen the feelings of shame, guilt and aloneness.

Sometimes it is hard to hear what God is trying to tell us. But I believe he did speak to you by giving you the little voice inside that said to contact us. And maybe he is speaking to someone else who may be reading this in the same way. God doesn't want you to deal with this on your own. Keep praying. God is really listening. Your shame and guilt are trying to convince you that God is turning his back on you. But he loves you no matter what, and he will help you overcome this.

Often, what we do on the outside is a result of the hurt, shame, anger, guilt, etc. that is on the inside. While it is important for you to deal with your addiction, the first step is to understand why you've turned to pornography. What is causing you to look to something else for comfort and affirmation? For many people, the addiction of porn results from a search to find purpose, fulfillment, self worth, and control. Often, relationships with people they love seem out of control and the computer screen is a "safe" relationship that seems harmless at first.

At first, porn is a way for you to feel in control without having to relate to anyone (no fights, no arguments, no one telling you something you don't want to hear, etc...) It's a one-sided relationship between you and the computer screen that on the surface seems to keep you "safe" from being hurt, let down or disappointed. The screen tells you things you want to hear, affirms you, and tries to convince you that it cares. But you're realizing that it isn't safe at all because it's now controlling you instead. Porn is not reality. The images on that computer are counterfeit. They don't know you. They don't love you. They don't care! But there are people who do love and care for you.

The hard part is that true relationships will disappoint us, and that's probably why you've turned to counterfeit ones. But don't give up. Keep reaching out to others. There is risk in reaching out, but the rewards far outweigh the risk. You need to learn how to deal with relational disappointments and know that your worth is not determined by what other people say or think of you. That's why it's so important to depend on God's perfect love. He cares. He loves. He's real. If you have a school counselor or youth pastor you trust, you may want to share your struggle with them and ask them if they have counselors who specifically deal with this. This is not something that will just go away on its own, and although we hope our response has encouraged you, please know that you will need further one on one help to overcome this addiction.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

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