

## Five Components of Porn Addiction

~ Dr. John Splinter

*"I used to do a little,  
But a little wouldn't do  
And so the little got more and more.*

"Mr. Brownstone"  
- by Guns N' Roses

In this booklet, rather than using the cumbersome he/she, him/her, man/woman, etc., we have used the male gender throughout. However, research is now demonstrating that increasing percentages of those addicted to sex, are female. So we encourage the reader to insert the gender of choice as you read.

We use the insertion of "Monday," "Tuesday," etc., as chapter breaks, so that the reader may read for eight to ten minutes, put the booklet down, and pick it up again later without losing a sense of the progression of the thoughts in the booklet.

### Monday

Small joke: A guy orders a pizza. The waiter asks, "Would you prefer the pizza to be cut into eight pieces or twelve pieces?" The guy replies, "Better make it eight – I'm not hungry enough for twelve." For a moment, hold in your mind the picture of a pizza cut into eight or twelve pieces ~ either number is OK. Now let's add a curve ball.

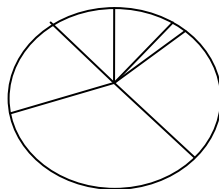
The waiter says, "The oven we use is really old ~ for some odd reason it drips a little arsenic onto the pizza now and then. But it's only a little arsenic, so not to worry."

Would you eat that pizza?

We began this chapter with the lyrics to the song, "Mr. Brownstone," by Guns N' Roses. That song was written about the band's use of heroin. As you read the lyrics, did you notice that they could be easily applied to any form of addiction ~ *"I used to do a little, but a little wouldn't do...."*

We then used two pizza metaphors. Now let's weave these three thoughts together into a single thread. Men (more than women) tend to think of their lives **compartmentally** ~ as if their life is

like a pizza. It could have eight pieces, twelve, or any other number. For sake of simplicity, here's a man's life with only six compartments.



The big compartments represent this man's family and his job. In some guys' lives the job piece is bigger ~ in other guys' lives the family piece is bigger. Other slices include sports, church, hunting/fishing, and his "secret."

Notice the tiny little slice at about one o'clock. That teeny little slice represents his hidden secret ~ the teeny piece that contains mental arsenic ~ it's his "porn place" ~ could be some magazines he keeps hidden away ~ or night-time TV on those "premium" channels ~ or more likely, a few juicy websites on his computer.

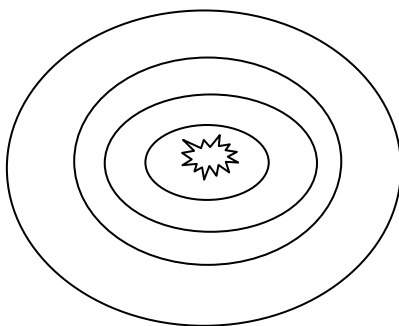
In his mind, the slice is very small and it really doesn't affect the rest of his pizza (his life). He still loves his wife ~ well, more or less, most of the time. He's a great dad, most of the time. He may be a deacon at church, and he's an outstanding hunter and fisherman. He's a man's man and in his way of thinking, all men do a little porn now and then, right? So what's the problem.... It's like a pizza with just a teeny slice sprinkled with arsenic. In his mind it's compartmentalized, and therefore "under control." Because it's small, he believes three things about it:

- 1) He's pretty sure it's hidden from everyone in the family.
- 2) He's quite certain it doesn't affect any other slices of his life's pizza pie.
- 3) He's sure he could quit any time.

That's how many men think ~ compartmentalization.

Unfortunately, this picture is not a realistic portrayal of life. A more realistic picture of life is found in another metaphor ~ throwing a stone into a pond. The ripples go out equally in all directions. Here's a more accurate picture of a man's life – everyman's life.

A pond with ripples  
after a stone is  
thrown into it.



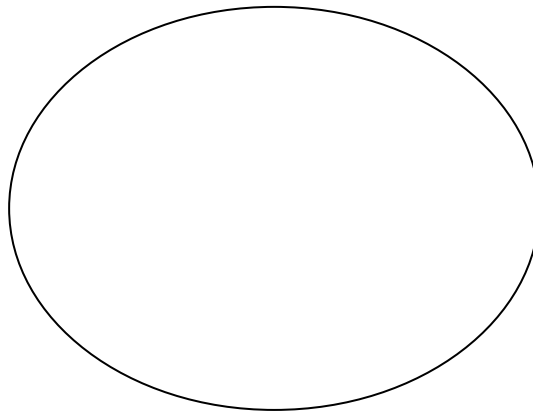
Everyman's life is like a pond. Whatever happens in the middle, radiates outward and touches the shoreline all the way around the pond. Stop for a minute and write a few thoughts about the "shoreline" of your life. A few yards of the waterfront may be owned by your family, so

somewhere around the outer edges of the pond, write “family.” Another few yards may be owned by your job, so write “job” somewhere on the shoreline. Whatever is important to you in your life (e.g., church, clubs, extended family, friends, sports, etc.) put it on the shoreline somewhere around the pond.

In any pond, *whatever* is thrown into it, will cause ripples and will in some way affect the shoreline. So while many *think* their porn use is like getting away with the teeny slice metaphor, what’s *really* happening is that porn’s ripples are reaching the entire shoreline ~ somehow, some way. The people standing on the shoreline may not understand *why* those ripples are happening, but they *experience* them. A wife may not understand why her husband is emotionally distant after being on the computer, but she feels the distance. A teenage daughter may not know why she feels creeped-out when her dad looks at her or gives her a hug, but she senses it. A young boy may not know why his dad looks at women like he does, but the boy sees it. Ripples.

### For Reflection:

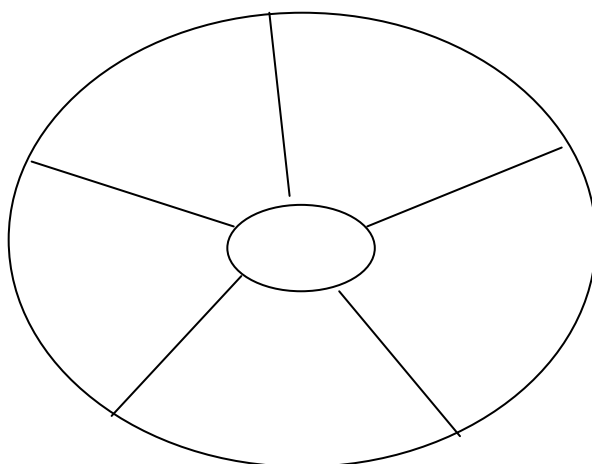
1. Using either the pizza metaphor, or the pond metaphor, in the space provided below, draw a picture that identifies the main components of your life (e.g., family, job, hobby, whatever).
2. If you use porn, somehow indicate its seepage into your life and relationships. (E.g., perhaps lightly shade the drawing in areas that you suspect it may be most influential.) If you don’t use porn, somehow indicate the manner that you would expect it to be influential if you did use porn.
3. What do you think about the idea that all items tossed into the pond, affect the entire shoreline of the pond, equally?



**Tuesday**

In the “Monday” section we explored two metaphors for understanding the various components and influences of our lives. Both metaphors utilized a circular motif. One metaphor painted a picture of a pizza, as we looked at the male tendency to believe in the idea of “compartmentalization.” The other metaphor painted a picture of a stone being thrown into a pond, as we looked at the reality of various influences as they affect all aspects of our lives.

Now let’s use another version of the circle metaphor. This time we’re going to draw it a little differently. In this new metaphor there are going to be five pieces in the pie, and one circle in the middle. The middle circle will have a word in it ~ we’ll tell you what the word is in just a minute. The middle circle is the rock that just hit the pond. The five pieces are cut into this pie only so that you can see what’s in the ripples. Here’s the new picture:



Now, in the middle circle write the word “sex.” This isn’t about *all* sex. It’s only about sex outside of God’s plan. Basically, His plan is for one man, one woman, for a lifetime. When we obey God’s plan, sex is not destructive. Rather, it’s positive, bonding, exciting, trust-building ~ it communicates attachment, love, yielding, being pursued, etc.

However, when we disobey God’s plan (adultery, homosexuality, pornography, etc.), it’s *always* destructive. You may want to argue that point, and if so you certainly may. We don’t have time to cover all of the possibilities here, so we’re incorporating the entire galaxy of sexual possibilities with this simple formula: If it’s within God’s plan, it’s generally positive and uplifting; if it’s outside of God’s plan, it’s always harmful and destructive.

Now we get to real meat, and for sake of simplicity we’re going to focus on the issue of pornography leading to sexual compulsion, or addiction. **There are five aspects of understanding what goes on in a person’s life when they get hooked on porn.** These five aspects are not crisp, clear and equally balanced as in a hanging mobile with five separate weights each representing 20% of the total weight. Rather, they are like five dark clouds that drift and bleed into each other, and then separate and drift again. Here are the five.

### 1. Physical

Recent research on the human brain is finding that when a person becomes addicted to just about anything, it changes blood flow patterns in the brain. Because sexual addiction is so powerful (based upon neurochemistry produced within the brain itself), a person's brain actually becomes *rewired*. It's called, "neuroplasticity." That's the term medical doctors use. It's not rewired as in using 14 gauge copper wire ~ but it is, actually, physically and neuro-chemically rewired because of the profound and relatively permanent changes in brain functioning that occur.

We're literally talking about brain chemicals causing physical addiction, so that the addicted person's brain begins to crave a "hit" in literally the same manner that a cocaine or heroin addict craves a "hit." The heroin addict may use a needle to inject the drug, and after injection he enjoys a time of feeling "high" as the drug does its work in the brain. The person's mood is dramatically altered ~ they generally feel relaxed and cool during and immediately after this experience.

Sexual addiction follows the same protocol. A person may use a photograph (like a pinup), or a DVD, or images on a computer, or memories of sexual events, or fantasized sexual events. Whatever their process, they become sexually aroused. Most often they stimulate their own genitals until they have an orgasm ~ called masturbation. During the stimulation and orgasm phase, neuro-chemicals are released. Immediately afterward, different neuro-chemicals are released. All of these neuro-chemicals combine to alter the person's mood in the direction of emotional release and relaxation.

If repeated frequently, this physical activity plus mental imagery has the power to literally re-configure the individual's brain functioning in a host of ways not least of which involves dramatic changes in blood flow patterns in the brain. For more information on this subject go to the Internet and type in the words *S.P.E.C.T. brain research, sex addiction*.

Therapists now say that it is more difficult to overcome sex addiction than it is to overcome cocaine or heroin addiction. Part of the reason is that the body creates its own chemicals. One doesn't have to go out and buy them ~ they're in the brain just waiting to be released. And whenever one is feeling (angry, sad, lonely, betrayed, isolated, frustrated, frightened, bored, or just about whatever), feeling better is just a few mental or physical images, plus hand-strokes away.

### **For Reflection:**

- 1. Does this information about the brain surprise you? Had you ever heard the term, "neuro-plasticity" before? What thoughts came to your mind as you read this section?**
- 2. If you are interested in reading more about the subject of addiction and the brain, we refer you to work done by Dr. Daniel G. Amen, using a medical research protocol called "S.P.E.C.T." which stands for Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography.**
- 3. The good news in brain research is that as a person conforms their behavior to obedience to God, the brain rewires itself again in the direction of full functioning and health. How does that information affect you?**

## Wednesday

In the “Tuesday” section we explained that we’d be looking at five aspects of life that are deeply affected by porn use. We reviewed the first of these five aspects: Physical. We discussed how the brain in particular is profoundly influenced by pornography ~ how it actually becomes rewired via a process called “neuro-plasticity.” In the “Wednesday” section we’ll now look at two further aspects of life that are affected via porn use.

### 2. Relational

Porn addiction is commonly referred to by therapists as an “intimacy disorder.” It is called that because it features a person being sexually “intimate” with a picture or a mental image rather than with another human being to which they are emotionally and cognitively bonded through marriage. Imagine a man or woman looking at pictures, or mentally recalling or creating pictures, images or fantasied activities, then masturbating. Whether the image is a Playboy pinup, sex with another person on computer, or the observed rape of a 7-month-old on the Internet, it’s still sex with an image rather than a loving and personally intimate exchange with an adult opposite-sex partner to whom one is married. So it’s called an “intimacy disorder.”

And it’s not just an intimacy disorder because of what most people do with pornography. It’s an intimacy disorder because through pornography the individual becomes, to a lesser or greater extent, actually *incapable* of establishing and maintaining a normal, intimate, emotionally connected, lasting relationship. Many women today quip snidely about men’s fear of commitment ~ but it’s not just men who are commitment-challenged. It’s “broken” people in general, *lonely men and women who are at the same time starving for attachment and intimacy, and yet incapable of sustaining it.*

This is why the hotel industry is so insidious as they provide pornographic movies for their guests. Think about what’s happening here. A traveling person is alone in a bedroom. They are separated from their spouse. They’ve possibly had a challenging day because of flight schedules, or business presentations. Whether or not they struggle with intimacy issues with their spouse, they are alone and somewhat lonely. But there’s a quick and easy solution. They can make love, and afterward they’ll feel more relaxed. Of course, the person with whom they’ll be making love is not their spouse. It’s an image on a screen. A short time later, the hotel guest has had the sexual encounter that triggers the “relaxing” hormones in their brain, and they are now able to unwind and possibly even drift off to sleep.

If you travel and if you struggle with the porn that comes with most hotel rooms, we recommend you use Drury Hotels and Ritz Carlton Hotels. They make it a point of company policy to not sell porn in their hotels. (You might also check [Cleanhotels.com](http://Cleanhotels.com), which helps people find hotels across the USA, that do not offer pay-per-view porn.) It makes things so much easier if one doesn’t even have the possibility of surfing for porn, or renting pornographic movies.

Relational isolation is the order of the day in the lives of porn addicts. Porn use is an expression of a soul living in a glass box ~ everyone can see it, but nobody can touch it. The soul lives and breathes in isolation. Pornography feeds this isolation with a false sense of connection. So it is that some T-shirt vendors sell shirts bearing the message: “Looking for a deeply meaningful hook-up.”

Mick Jagger screamed the essence of this relational isolation: “I can’t get no.....satisfaction! Well I try, and I try, and I try, and I try, but can’t get no.....satisfaction.” Sex without commitment, trust and emotional intimacy is like living on cotton candy ~ it may taste sweet but a steady diet will kill you. It’s wretched when a man can no longer “see” a woman as a person, friend, relationship, or partner ~ all he can see is breasts, a buttocks, legs, and a crotch ~ *maybe* a face, depending on how early it is in the evening at the bar. “Can’t get no ~ satisfaction.”

Relationally, pornography is “faux intimacy.” It develops “faux relationships.” There is no bonding, belonging or caring in a relationship with a DVD or a photograph. There’s only a moment’s “rush” as the addicted person has an orgasm and then moves on to the next item of the day ~ unattached ~ unloved ~ unsupported ~ incapable of trust ~ incapable of commitment ~ incapable of attachment. Porn addiction doesn’t start out this way, but it always ends this way. And it is so addictive that some people will leave a real relationship in order to enjoy the faux relationships of porn.

### 3. Spiritual

The core issue of pornography ~ indeed, the core issue of human sexuality ~ is that of ***“taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*** That phrase comes from the Bible (2 Corinthians 10:5). It’s sort of crazy, actually, that the core issue of human sexuality is spiritual. But it is. There is no other core in this discussion. Generally speaking, 16-year-old kids don’t understand the depth of this thought. It takes a few years, maybe a few decades ~ a few times of running at top speed into the brick wall of “logical consequences” ~ the nasty wall that causes so much pain and yet gives so much wisdom ~ for a person to “get it.” Until the wisdom of God’s Word begins to make genuine sense to a person, one has to trust that God really does know what He’s talking about. Failing or refusing to trust God, usually results in pain.

I used to run a large ministry for single adults. In an average year we’d have 2,000 to 3,000 people involved. Many people came to my office during those years ~ could be a man or a woman ~ and would say something like, “I don’t know the answer to my sexuality. All I know is that I don’t want to hurt anymore.” Others would say something like, “I used to think I knew what love was all about ~ used to think I was pretty good at it. I’ve now concluded that I don’t know a darned thing about it.” So I’d try to teach them about how God defines love, and about why God’s plan for sexuality works.

In those conversations I didn’t talk about religion. “Taking thoughts captive to obedience to Christ” is *not* about religion. It’s about trusting that God loves us ~ trusting Him enough to obey what He says. It’s laughably simple to understand, but challenging to do. It means change, and all amateur psychologists know that nobody likes to change until “...the pain of not changing exceeds the pain of changing” (thank you Psych 101).



Here's an analogy. When I was a kid I was nuts about jumping off cliffs into lakes or rivers. Someone once said, "Falling is like flying, for a little while." A fifteen foot cliff was for beginners. A thirty footer was better. Forty-five was approaching the "rush" zone where you sort of wondered if you could die if you landed wrong. Sixty feet was fantastic ~ the rush was huge and hitting the water felt like someone broke a 2X4 across your feet. With the addition of each 10 or 15 feet, the thrill (and pain) increased. Everything was great until one day a friend of mine hit the water from 60 feet ~ his torso was slightly bent at the waist ~ his legs went into the water perpendicularly, but his upper body leaned slightly forward and his chest hit the water's surface with a thud. It stopped his heart. He died. I did his funeral.

Today I don't look for 60' cliffs. I stay at about the 15' level. Did this change happen because someone said, "Dude, there's a thing called gravity!" No, that's not why. Did I change because my adolescent brain caught up with my understanding of physics ~ that falling items double their speed at a rate of 60-feet-per-second-per-second? No, I'd already learned that formula in high school and it hadn't changed me ~ mainly because I thought I was invincible.

The change in my life was brought about by burying a friend. That was more sobering than I could stomach. By this time in my life I had three lovely little daughters. The idea of these precious little ones growing up without their daddy was more than I wanted to risk. So I changed.

Taking all thoughts captive to obedience to Christ requires change. It means you're going to do what He says rather than what you want. The reason I shared that story of cliff jumping is that your motivation has to honestly change. It's all about motivation. Death was not a motivation for me – for whatever reason I've never been afraid of death and have actually had a few personal experiences when I was fairly certain I might die. But *attachment* was motivation ~ my three girls still mean more to me than my own life a thousand times over.

So what's your motivation? What amps you up every morning? If your life is wrapped around sex, then given enough time you're going to become like Mick Jagger screaming about how you "can't get no satisfaction." You won't have his stage with tens of thousand screaming adolescents, but you will have his inability to attach. Human beings can't have attachment if we do sex in ways other than God prescribes. We can have fun ~ we can have thrills, like I did jumping off cliffs. We can gain in worldly sophistication ~ but this eventually proves to be like living on cotton candy.

But if a person wants love, bonding, attachment, trust, and all the good things that go with sex in God's plan, they need to do life according to the manufacturer's handbook ~ and that often means change. Again, the change is ridiculously simple to understand. It simply involves one's spiritual core becoming obedient to God. One learns to capture sexual thoughts, whatever they are, and make them obedient to Christ. Otherwise, sexual thoughts tend to function like kids getting thrills jumping off cliffs ~ always looking for the next higher cliff ~ and dying.

The reason human sexuality is spiritual, is because it is created and defined by God. The reason sexual addiction is primarily a spiritual issue is because it has to do with the basic, core,



obedience thing. Let's return to the cliff jumping example one more time before moving on. I eventually had to quit cliff jumping. I finally developed a higher priority in my life than just being self-centered and getting kicks. I had to accept that gravity could kill me, and I wanted to live for my wife and kids. My motivation had to change. That's how it is with obedience to God. It's a motivation thing. It's an obedience thing. Obedience confronts the rebel within each of us, but as we learn to obey, we also learn the joy that God wove into obedience. As a person walks the path of obedience, one finds it's a much better way all around.

### For Reflection

- 1. Do you think that the relational and spiritual components of life are linked in any way? If so, how would you describe the linkage?**
- 2. The analogy of cliff jumping was used to provide a mental picture in the “spiritual” section of this discussion. Can a person become “hooked” on the thrill of cliff jumping? How is that similar to becoming “hooked” on sex?**
- 3. What are two or three differences between full enjoyment of marital sexuality, as compared with other forms of non-marital sexual activity?**

## Thursday

In the “Tuesday” and “Wednesday” sections we've reviewed three aspects of life that are dramatically affected by porn use. These are one's Physical self (brain, body), one's Relationships, and one's Spiritual self. In the “Thursday” section we'll explore how porn use affects one's Personal life, and one's Behavioral life. As the reader contemplates these five aspects of life and how pornography affects them, a *total picture* of ownership, perhaps even called “slavery,” begins to emerge.

### 4. Personal

The fourth piece of the addict's pie involves his/her personal life. Addicts lose control over their personal lives ~ their lives become woven around sex, usually around orgasm.

Stories abound, of women waking in the night hours to find their husbands out of bed. As the women glide through the darkness of their homes, they find their husbands glued to a screen on which images of naked women abound. It is then they realize, many for the first time, that their husbands are sexually addicted. (Research finds that perhaps 35% of sexual addicts are female, so it's not only men, but it is perhaps two-to-one male.)

In the darkness of the home, as the woman watches her husband scroll from picture to picture, some terrible realities begin to emerge. She begins to understand why he's been so tired lately, and his sexual disinterest in her begins to make sense now ~ how can she possibly compete with an air-brushed model who's never born children and who works out six hours a day?

What she doesn't understand, is how he could even be thinking about having sex while looking at these women. She doesn't understand that the pony has left the barn, crashed the fence, and is now running wild. The Roman Catholic church, as well as many Protestant churches, teaches that for a man to look with sexual passion at a woman other than his wife, is the same as breaking his marital vows. This may sound a bit over the top, but it's completely in keeping with Christ's teaching in Matthew 5:28.

Here's the point: A person who is sexually addicted, increasingly organizes their live around sex. The focus of each day becomes, "How may I have my next orgasm? What pictures, memories, fantasies, or sexual activity, will I use to arouse myself so that I may have my next orgasm?" In the section above dealing with the brain, we saw how brain functioning becomes increasingly organized around sex in the sexually addicted person. Now we see that the focus of each day becomes increasingly organized around sex.

Sexually addicted people are often willing to take enormous risks, in order to feed their habit. So it is that people lose their marriages due to their sexual addiction. Many lose their jobs when they are caught looking at porn on company time or equipment. Many lose the respect of their children when the kids learn of the addiction.

By one way of defining it, sexual addiction is a form of chemical and emotional dependence around which one increasingly organizes their daily existence. Do they *intend* to hurt their wives? No. Do they *intend* to risk their marriages? No. Do they *intend* to risk their jobs? No. Do they *intend* to spend hundreds or thousands of dollars on sex? No. But their addiction is now in control. They may be a chemist, salesperson, financial analyst, mechanic ~ but their careers are now secondary to their addiction. They may be happily married with four lovely children ~ but their vows and their family are now incidental to their addiction.

Therefore, when working on healing, the issues involving one's personal life must be placed on the table.

### 5. Behavioral

One may think we've covered the behavioral spectrum above, but we have not. One of the most telling symptoms of a person who is addicted, is the deteriorating cycle, the sexual vortex of behavior that begins to emerge. It's like a tornado, with the least damage being done at the top and the most damage at the bottom. Notice how risk increases as one is pulled into the spin of this vortex.

Pornography	Pictures, still or moving
Voyeurism	Real people disrobing
Exposure	Sexual thrill to strangers
Online sex	Live sex with unknown persons, online
Affairs	Live sex with known persons
Prostitution	Paid sex with unknown persons
Rape	Forced sex; power over others

## Five Components of Porn Addiction

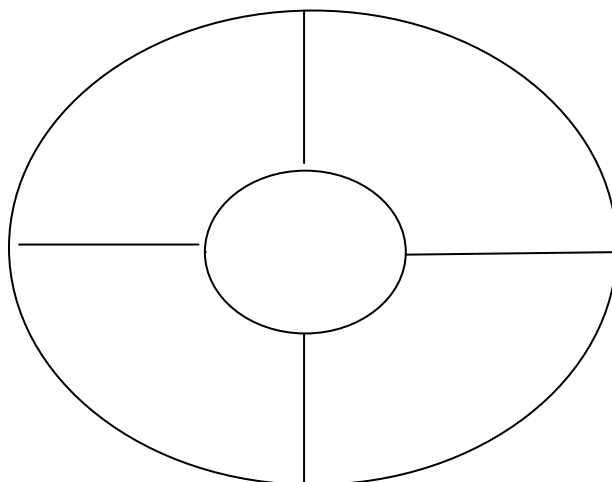
Child molestation  
Prison

Forced sex with weak, innocent participants  
95% of all prisoners of all types, used porn

This series of stages is not a lock-tight progression that occurs in every person's life. Nor does every addicted person land in each of these stages.<sup>1</sup> But it is a representation of the deteriorating sexual cycle that in almost every case, begins with pornography.

One definition of addiction, found within the clinical community, is that it is a “mood-altering substance or activity.” A person generally does not start at the bottom of this vortex ~ e.g., in prison for a sexual crime committed with absolutely no previous sexual knowledge or experience. Most start at the top, but then work their way downward as sexual addiction becomes the power source and focal point of their lives.

Let's go back to the pie analogy for a moment. This time there are only four “compartments” around the center circle. Using your own pen, write the following names into each of the four compartments: Physical; relational; personal; behavioral.



What's missing? The “compartment” that's missing, is spiritual. This time, rather than writing “sex” in the smaller circle at the center, we're going to write, “spiritual.” Go ahead and do it.

Now you have an accurate picture of what it takes to heal from porn addiction. Each of the five compartments must be unpacked and cleaned up. But the controlling compartment is spiritual. This is why even nice religious people are wrong when they say, “Porn addiction is just a matter of will power.” For the true addict, there is no such thing as will power unless someone is holding a .45 caliber revolver to their head. Otherwise, porn addiction is a neuro-chemical addiction just as real as heroin or cocaine addiction. But the core issue ~ the location of greatest power ~ is in the center. It's spiritual.

### For Reflection

**1. The loss of personal and behavioral control is disturbing to many who have dabbled with sex only to find they have lost control of their lives. If you were going to describe this loss of control, what words would you use?**

**2. Dr. Patrick Carnes is probably the leading researcher and author in America today, dealing with sexual addiction and its attending issues. If you could ask Dr. Carnes any question regarding the broad sweep of sexual issues, what would your question be?**

## Friday

We have articulated five major components of sexual ownership in a person's life as they yield themselves to sexual activity outside God's plan. These observations are not in any way intended to hammer upon any person, but merely to turn lights on in these five areas of ownership.

We now turn to the subject of healing. This last section is intended to serve as a map and compass to a person who may find themselves lost in the maze of sexual ownership.

### The Pathway Toward Freedom and Healing

[For a more thorough study regarding the topic of this section, go to *"The Road To Wholeness,"* downloadable for free by contacting [splinter.john@gmail.com](mailto:splinter.john@gmail.com).]

**Developing the determination to practice obedience to God.** God is the Creator of both human beings, and sex. Better than anyone else, He knows what works and what doesn't. A commitment to obedience to God is a commitment to one's own mental health.

The operational words upon which to focus are a) commitment, and b) practice. Most hunters have had the experience of becoming lost in the woods. When one is lost, the best friends you can have is are a map and compass. The same thought applies to recovery after becoming lost in the woods of sexuality. The map and compass are articulated in #2 below. But they are useless tools until the lost person determines to use them. So healing begins with a determination to practice obedience to God.

**Feeding one's soul on scripture rather than on pornographic pictures or thoughts.** The Bible doesn't present a bullet-point or "a-b-c" approach to understanding God. Rather, it presents a story of God's relationship with human beings. Learning about God and His plan, requires reading the story found in the Bible.

As one becomes familiar with scripture, God is able to bring it to mind during those moments of temptation. He is able to begin opening the doors to secret, hidden compartments in one's life, and turning on lights in areas that were formerly dark. The main question at this point has to do with *what* one chooses to fill their minds. Healing requires a mind that is committed to being filled with the gentle knowledge of God. That commitment leads toward mental health.

**Learning the power and healing of prayer.** Prayer changes things. It's like morning dew providing water for a thirsty plant. It involves both talking and listening to God. And it's powerful. Start by spending 5 minutes a day on your knees, praying. Work up to 20 minutes in the morning, and 10 minutes at night.

Prayer isn't for weaklings. It takes determination and commitment. This is because the Enemy of God doesn't want people anywhere near the "Throne of Grace." So Satan puts up roadblocks (pace of life, use of time, inability to find a quiet place, skepticism about the validity of prayer, etc.). Prayer builds character strength and spiritual muscle. There's nothing like it in the healing process.

**Confession (to other men, or your pastor or priest).** I'm Protestant, but I believe one of the best things going for Catholics is their format of confessing their sins to a priest. The Bible says, "...confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Psychologists know that confession breaks the power of shame. People of faith have this fantastic gift of confession, to help clear their souls of the smell and power of porn.

It's one step to confess to a pastor or priest. It's another to confess to a same-sex friend, and ask for his prayer support and accountability. It's yet another step to confess to one's spouse. The point is that secrecy feeds addiction and shame. Confession breaks the back of addiction and shame. The more open a person chooses to be, the less they tend to hide dark secrets away for later use.

**Regular accountability to at least a couple other men.** Porn addiction is like black mold that thrives in an atmosphere of darkness and moisture. Secrecy is like black mold. It feeds the power of addiction and creates an ever greater sense of shame and hopelessness. Accountability turns the light on the black mold of porn, and causes it to die.

If you could do research on the support system of males that struggle with sexual addiction, you'd find that 95% of them are quite isolated from open, honest, in-close relationships with other men. Addiction feeds secrecy; secrecy feeds addiction. Both feed shame, powerlessness and hopelessness. Accountability and close-in relationships with same-sex buddies is like pouring liquid fertilizer onto starving plants.

Support groups are the best means of establishing accountability. Composed of same-sex peers who are committed to sexual godliness, and are open and honest with one another, support groups help break the cycle of secrecy and shame that Satan uses to keep people in bondage. If you struggle with sexual issues, you need a support group. Period. Do not fear the attachment and vulnerability inherent in these groups. You need both of these elements, and both are healing.

In some cases where a person is really "hooked" on porn, even if they're in a support group, Christian therapy is needed. While not every person who uses porn needs therapy, there is a very high correlation between sexual addiction and early childhood psychological damage of the kind that needs a well trained Christian counselor's help. Don't be afraid of therapy with a Christian

counselor ~ sometimes it can be difficult, but it's healing. If you want to know more about what gives sexual addiction its power in your life, read two other booklets by this author:

- The Spiritual Side of Sexual Struggle (Both of these are available at
- Emotional Triggers and Sexuality splinter.john@gmail.com)

As a 35-year veteran pastor with a Ph.D. in psychology, I can tell you that even though you may read these booklets and gain a great deal of understanding, if you are dealing with addiction then you still need the trained mind of a Christian therapist to lead you through the maze of childhood wounds and/or other clinical issues that lead to adult behaviors. You might wish to believe you're the exception to the rule, but if you've tried several times to stop using porn and masturbating, and you find yourself unable to do so, then at some level you're dealing with sexual addiction and it's appropriate to ask for help from a trained clinician. The straightest path toward healing is toward Christ, with the wise guidance of a well-trained Christian therapist.

The difficult news is that healing from porn addiction is often a 3 – 5 year process. Remember, your brain has been rewired, your relationships (especially with your spouse) need serious repair, your daily life is probably oriented around sex right now, and your behavior may reflect a lost of control that demonstrates being trapped at some level within the vortex of sexual deterioration.

The *good news* is that there is freedom and healing. The first five items highlighted in this chapter need not be oriented around secrecy, shame, sex, and increasing personal slavery. The road out of this slavery is itemized in the section we called, "The Pathway Toward Freedom and Healing."

You are worth the effort. Even if you've been using porn for decades there is freedom. Life can be sweet again. For more information on the road to wholeness, we encourage you to read our booklet titled, "The Road To Wholeness."

### **For Reflection:**

- 1. Which of the five steps in "The Pathway Toward Freedom and Healing" would you think may be the most difficult? Which would you think would be easiest, and why?**
- 2. Why is prayer so difficult? If you were going to identify three reasons, what would they be?**
- 3. There is a continuum from "Dabbling with sex".....to....."Sexually Addicted." What are three differences between the two polarities?**

### **References**

1. After a ten year research, (Dr. Patrick) Carnes estimated about 8% of the total population of men and 3% of women are sexually addicted. That adds up to 15 million people who suffer from this problem. Sexual addiction has many different forms: compulsive masturbation, sex with prostitutes, anonymous sex with multiple partners, multiple affairs

outside a committed relationship, habitual exhibitionism, habitual voyeurism, inappropriate sexual touching, repeated sexual abuse of children, and episodes of rape (Book, 1997). Of all forms of sexual addiction, none is more harmful to both the addict and the victim than childhood sexual abuse.

Source: <http://allpsych.com/journal/sexaddiction.html>, referring to Praeger (1997). *Sex and Love Addiction, Treatment and Recovery*. NY: Lucerne Publishing.

Other research places addiction at far higher levels – as high as 50% in males and between 20 -35% of females. The solution to this dilemma is very likely found within the criteria used by different sets of researchers. When the 50% or 35% figures are used, they generally refer to people who are somewhat compulsively hooked on sexual imagery and/or acting out, yet probably do not fit the sum criteria used by Carnes in his research.