

Thank you for your interest in this topic. If you have any questions about this, or any issue, please contact our office at 214-642-8737

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## History Of A Man's

**Vulnerability.** Vulnerability to pornography occurs when an adolescent is unconsciously programmed to interpret smiles, looks, statements, interactions, or events as sexual. Although one's past is never an excuse for present behavior, each man has an emotional file-folder that catalogues possible influences for what may shape his present struggle. Consequently, if we are to understand why someone is addicted we need to take into account how he came to struggle with pornography. Let it be noted that while every man's past contains its own unique reasons, I find there are some common themes in men who struggle with this problem.

### 1. *Early Doses of Pornography.*

Some of the men I have talked to claim that they were introduced to pornography as young boys or teenagers. In some cases it was openly displayed in their homes through videos or cable TV, whether by neighborhood friends, relatives, or a parent. Sadly, others have mentioned they found it stashed underneath their father's mattress or hidden in a closet. One man recalling how he never forgot what he saw or how it made him feel, had a craving for more. And knowing that his Christian father looked at porn gave him an excuse to feed his burning desires.

### 2. *Repeated Exposure To Pornography.*

Men are sometimes introduced to sexually explicit material at a young age with regular doses of it through family and friends. With the advent of cable and satellite television the level of exposure intensified as movies, sitcoms, and reality shows brought into homes sexually explicit scenes.

Recently, many of the men I counsel with report how the internet and the abundance of pornographic sites make viewing not only easily accessible but unobtrusively private.

### 3. *Childhood Sexual Abuse.*

Sadly, there are many cases, where those who regularly view pornography today were at one time sexualized as a result of childhood sexual abuse. Dr. Patrick Carnes, the psychologist whose book Out of the Shadows (now published by Hazelden Educational Materials) found sexual abuse in 81 percent of sex addicts. This seems counterintuitive, until you remember that an abused child's unfolding sexuality is wrinkled by terror and shame- all subsequent relationships colored by insecurity and ambivalence. By adulthood, the individual may have repressed or minimized what happened, convincing himself that it did no harm. Or, because he consented, he has no right to complain. Or, he must be bad, because he felt physical pleasure. Or, because he loved the person who abused him, it left no impact. Sexual abuse, especially when the abuser is a male, can cause a young male victim to question his own sense of honor and masculinity. The mixed feelings swirling around the abuse leave him confused and ashamed. Young victims don't know how to make sense out of feelings of shame, powerlessness, unworthiness, and vulnerability.<sup>1</sup> Boys abused by older males may even begin to doubt their own heterosexuality. And the toxic effects is the all-too-common reality and horror that some victims may turn to

pornography as a way of proving they can be sexually aroused by a woman. Other men use pornography to desensitize the

sexually traumatic events in their past. This is why some explore pornography for a specific kind of woman or scene that reminds them of the abuse. Their distorted view of reality becomes a sexual script they later enact within the context of a sexual fantasy in which they can relive. For example, one man who was sexually abused and then mocked by an older female cousin, searched porn for women who reminded him of his abuser. Whenever he found a suitable imitation, he would drift off into a fantasy where he would rewrite the course of those events to his liking. Instead of being humiliated and rejected, he imagined his abuser liking and praising him. Despite the entrapment and vulnerability, many men would state that they never want to be around pornography. Indeed it is a battle that spirals many men downward to the brink of despair. Yet even with all the problems that pornography causes, men continue to seek out opportunities to look.

### ▣ **Pornography's Allusion**

With a steady diet of pornography eventually a man's behavior is affected. He begins to plan and look forward to more of the same sexual stimulus and release, much like a drug addict's body craves cocaine. This behavioral conditioning does *not* remove a man's responsibility, but it helps explain why many men find sexually graphic images so hard to resist. Many men addicted from pornography have told me how they experience

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<sup>1</sup> Bass, E. & Davis, L. *The Courage To Heal*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, p.378.

withdrawal symptoms. They feel a physical urge that in some instances is more prolonged and more painful than the withdrawal from drugs or alcohol in wanting to restore a sense of balance. One man recalled a time when after losing his job and short on money that after a week of not being able to watch "adult" videos, he could hardly stand it. He felt agitated and had trouble sleeping. He tried to busy himself with other things, but it didn't help. Finally, he became so desperate that he went to the local library and logged onto the internet to view pornographic sites. The repetition of regular viewing trains a man's body to crave more. Knowing the allurements, what are the larger issues in a man's soul that can help us understand what he gets from his habit?

### Pornography's Payoff

Viewing pornography stems from something much deeper than the surface level of one's repetitious behavior. The fantasy that it creates is a reflection of a much deeper issue otherwise they would quit looking. So what is it that they are getting? The most startlingly consistent characteristic is the sense of living with a false self. In other words, they live with a daunting delirious double life of someone that is not the true person that God has created them to be. That's the pathognomonic feature of it- the central characteristic of the symptom. Looking at pornography for this reason is not immediately obvious to a man, until it's pointed out (Prov. 20:5). In fact, most think that pornography simply provides the opportunity for sexual release. But this limited perspective prevents them from seeing the

larger payoffs of pornography that keep them coming back for more and more. **1. Male Affirmation.** Men often feel insecure as males. Many of their insecurities are tied to their past-whether from poor self-esteem during childhood or some traumatic event like abuse. Consequently, when jobs and material possessions become the perceived affirmation and these things no longer meet their expectations, the fantasy world of pornography begins to take over. In the fantasy world of pornography, men can have women respond to them sexually, giving them an illusion of intimacy and adequacy that affirms their masculinity without the threat of failure or rejection.

**2. Subtle Relief.** When a man views pornography it inevitably leads to self-stimulation. But the relief experienced is not only physical. In actuality it is an easy escape from boredom, stress, loneliness, or emptiness. With very little effort, a man can look at sexual images and get a rush of adventure and excitement that temporarily lifts him out of the doldrums or pressures of life. This is most clearly seen in the story of David and Bathsheba. As the King of Judah he was to lead his troops into battle (II Sam. 11:1-2). Instead, one of the main reasons David was in a position to lust after a bathing Bathsheba was that he was not with his armies as he should have been- idle time and a lustful eye caused him to become vulnerable to temptation. For many married men, looking at pornography is about living in subtle cover-ups of denial and delusion. It can be a subtle yet powerful means of getting back at a wife they perceive as unresponsive, critical, unsupportive, or

unfaithful. Therefore, when a husband indulges in pornography, it may be his way to punish his wife in a vindictive manner saying in essence, "I'd rather have them than you." The problem is that Christian men with a habit of using pornography are also hurting their Heavenly Father. The most effective way to hurt God is for Satan to hurt a child of God. Every time they choose to look at pornography, they are in essence saying, "At this moment, I'm going to turn my back and forget You." Pornography becomes a means by which to suppress the truth of God (Rom. 1:18), and to subtly cover it up with pain and anger. Because, like King David, lust can become a powerful tool to cover up the feelings of shame and pain of the family one grew up in. Whether its the dysfunctionality of Absalom and Amnon in David's family, or the rejection and resentment from our own family, pornography can provide an illusion of power and domination so that the fantasy world of porn represses the deep hurt without having to face the pain. I have talked to many Christian men who have developed a "binge" type of response to the problem. They find themselves out of control for a day, week, or a few days/weeks, and then stay clean for a period of time. However, it's only a matter of time before the old behavior is back to haunt them again. The denial and delusion have become a malignant part of the way he looks at life.

**3. Personal Sabotage.** The payoffs of male affirmation and relief medicate some emotional realities in one's life. Pornography provides a desensitization or numbness in

being able to honestly relate to those closest to him and to God. In other words, sexual obsession sinks its hook deeper into a man's heart by sabotaging the honor and dignity God has placed within him. Every sexually addicted man I have counseled has expressed the overwhelming feelings of guilt and shame. He assumes that he could *never* again pray with his family, share Christ with his neighbor, talk seriously with his children about life and the Lord, confront a difficult situation, or be a good friend. Therefore, he assumes his addiction is helpless and hopeless beyond repair. Self-contempt actually reinforces the kind of self-obsession that causes a man to avoid the higher road he was called to walk. Rather than positively respond to the problem he sabotages himself in believing that he is never going to change and so he forgets for a moment his fears, loneliness, hurts, and anger by sexual acting out. The illusion of intimacy and adventure is seen as one of his greatest needs. It's his best friend. Thinking about it, planning for it, and looking forward to it helps him make it through the day. Looking at it no longer feels like a choice. It becomes a must. Indeed, he is in a crisis of faith and hope. He has lost a strong faith in God and he sees little hope of life improving. Consequently, the payoff of pornography is seen as both needed and deserved. Please remember that while most men don't consciously seek to sabotage their character, they *allow* it to happen. Sexual activity and fantasy produce a sense of pleasure that can alter the brain chemistry. And, for the addict, the sexual activity and fantasy become a way to get a "high." It's important for each

addicted man to ask himself: "Why am I going back to that which makes me feel so awful about myself? Why do I choose behavior that robs me of the honor and dignity of honest relationships? What am I trying to get from this course of action?" When dealing with sexual addiction it is important to point out that the sorrow they usually feel is not a productive godly sorrow. It doesn't lead to a greater sense of forgiveness and a growing desire to serve God and others (2 Cor. 7:10). The sorrow men typically feel is more of a defense mechanism that drives them further from meaningful relationships and endeavors and deeper into a self-absorbed, destructive way of life. Men who use pornography find self-imposed shame easier to live with rather than risk the rejection from others. Although deep inside they want to open up and be more involved with others, they feel inadequate or fearful that others won't be able to accept them as they are. Men hate failure as much as rejection. For some, using pornography is a way to avoid the threat of failure. The shame they feel takes them out of commission. It tells them they have nothing worthwhile to give. It renders them useless, and enables them to hide in the dark shadows of sexual addiction. Recognizing what men get out of pornography is vital. It opens the door for them to see *how* they use porn to deal with the difficulties of life apart from trusting in God. At the forefront of our efforts is that of helping men see the hope and vision for the kind of person they could be for God. As a result, they gain the purpose that comes from living for the sake of something greater than themselves. The situation may seem bleak, but the

Spirit of God can rebuild faith, renew hope, and awaken a purpose that can replace and put to death an idolatrous demand for pornography.



# Newsletter of Stonebriar Counseling Associates

From the desk of....

**Bob Good**



**Sexual Addiction Group Meeting  
Tuesday Nights at 7:00 pm  
Location: SCA office**



Dear Educator and Ministry Leader:

Not to long ago, a friend of mine went to a doctor for an MRI-a neuroimaging device where protons are placed in a magnetic field and become capable of receiving and transmitting electromagnetic energy to help identify and clarify why her injured shoulder was experiencing a sharp-shooting pain. The machine looks like a round tunnel-like device with enough room for one person. As you lie on a table an assistant slides you inside. Then a brief pulse of radio waves disorients the atoms momentarily. When the atoms return to their normal spin, they release detectable signals, which become computer-generated images of their concentrations. The result is a detailed picture of my friend's shoulder tissues, muscles, and bones. The MRI interprets the magnitude of the problem. When sexual addiction becomes a malady in the heart we need to know *how* pornography destroys the lives of men and women. Without knowing the magnitude of the problem it becomes difficult to know how to communicate effectively. Like the pulse of radio waves making their way to the inner tissues and bones of the body we must position ourselves to learn and then construct for the person struggling with sexual addiction a clear picture of their own weaknesses, limitations or hurts with love and sensitivity.

Therefore like an MRI that takes a snapshot of a part of the body this month's article will endeavor to reveal how sexual addiction happens, how the person changes with its destructive influence, and what we can do to help as teachers, clinicians, and pastors. This month is part two of a three-part series on sexual addiction. It is my hope and prayer that the following material will open three (3) new windows to our thinking: 1) identify discovery points where God's power magnifies any ingrained patterns of thinking that can lead us astray; 2) understand the process of the addictive mind-set of guilt and shame; and 3) provide a context for sexual addicts to courageously pursue God's purpose in their lives. As we learn and face the challenges of helping those with sexual addiction may it push us out of our comfort zone. And, like Magellan who in the struggles of his journey exploring the seas, may we too discover new insights over what may be uncharted waters so as to provide a place of hope and healing.

Sincerely,  
Bob



## Announcing A New Member To SCA

**Carol Reger, M.S.C., MABC, LPC**



**Carol specializes in children and adolescent problems**

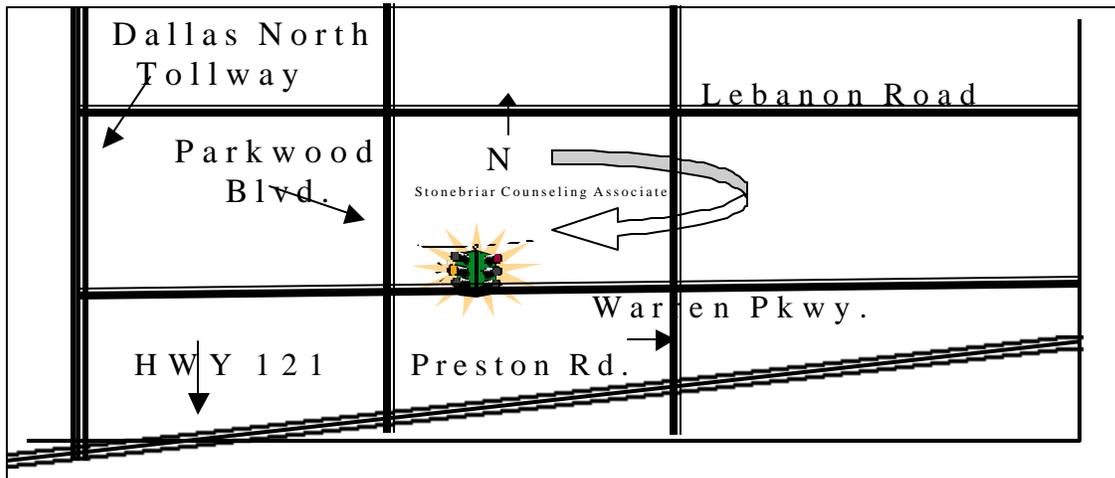
**We are so proud to have her on board and look forward to God's blessing in her work**

**Call if you or someone you know is in need of child or adolescent therapy**

Call SCA office at 214-642-8737 for an appointment



**New Location!!**



### Mission Statement

Stonebriar Counseling Associates (SCA) is purposefully passionate in providing quality psychotherapy from a Christian perspective that influences the treatment of psychological, emotional, and mental health issues.

To this end, SCA is committed to glorify God by:

- Believing that each person has the innate ability for personal growth and wholeness.
- Seeking a variety of approaches to help you learn new skills and find more choices so as to manage life's changes with a broader range of solutions for recognizing your strengths.
- Accepting all people with respect and love regardless of age, sex, race, religion, ethnicity or socio-economic status.
- Thoughtfully affirming and carefully following the morals of the Christian faith and the ethics of the professional governing boards.
- Providing research and development for new and innovative programs, seminars, and workshops in order to further the well-being and self-sufficiency of each client.