



## 5 REASONS WHY WE USE THE TERM “PORNOGRAPHY OR SEXUAL ADDICT”

### Reason #1:

#### **New Classification of Compulsive Sexual Behavior as an Addiction:**

In August of 2011 the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) formally recognized destructive compulsive consumption of natural rewards, including food, sex and gambling, as *natural addictions*. This new definition makes two bold statements: the first is that addiction is a disease of the *brain*; and second, that addiction is not limited to *substances* such as cocaine and opioids, but includes *behaviors* involving food, sex and gambling.

#### **Consider their explanation of the new definition:**

Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Addiction affects neurotransmission and interactions within the reward structures of the brain such that motivational hierarchies are altered and addictive behaviors—which may or may not include alcohol and other drug use—supplant healthy, self-care related behaviors. Addiction also affects cortical and hippocampal structures of the brain such that the memory of previous exposures to rewards (such as food, sex, alcohol and other drugs) leads to a biological and behavioral response to external cues, which in turn triggers craving and/or engagement in addictive behaviors. (See <http://www.asam.org/DefinitionofAddiction-LongVersion.html>)

### Reason #2:

#### **Extensive research of Brigham Young University professor Mark H. Butler, PhD:**

*Sexual* addiction is not remarkably different from *substance* addictions with which we may be more familiar. In fact the addictive sexual experience mirrors the psychological intoxication of substance abuse. Most are aware that the human sexual response produces a powerful state of physiological (body) arousal that activates an intense

psychological (mind) intoxication; this includes a consuming preoccupation, a detour from conscious awareness, and a manipulation of perceived reality. Because of these dynamics, when combined with its sought-after outcomes (escape or fantasy) and its devastating core consequences (including dependency and powerlessness), sexual addiction is remarkably similar to substance addictions. And pornography, as the powerful trigger to sexual arousal, is also highly addictive. (See *Spiritual Exodus* by Mark H. Butler, PhD, pp. 47-48)

### Reason #3:

#### **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s recent statement:**

“Of all that we wish to say about this epidemic, it behooves us to say again—even against outrageous claims to the contrary, that pornography can be an addiction of the highest order. I realize that not every user is technically “addicted.” And I don’t want the use of that term to suggest getting out from under its influence is a hopeless dream. But continuing scientific research, including the work of my friend Dr. Donald L. Hilton, Jr and many others, along with the personal testimony of victims, confirms that even casual pornography viewing can lead to compulsive viewing—and entrapment, in what one psychologist labeled ‘a cycle of fantasy.’

“What Dr. Hilton and other physicians are documenting is that pornography (which electronically can offer sound and motion as well as visual images) can *rewire the neural circuits of the brain* in a way that the tendency toward impulsiveness becomes supercharged, and the center for willpower shrinks. All of this directly affects what are called the brain’s “reward pathways,” and as such can have an impact on the brain similar to what cocaine does for a person with a drug addiction, or alcohol does for an alcoholic. This person simply craves more and

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more, regularly seeking a higher number of or more extreme examples of visual images in order to get what was an earlier, easier 'high.'" (*The Plague of Pornography*, Utah Coalition Against Pornography Keynote Address, March 12, 2016)

### Reason #4:

#### The latent power of acknowledging, "I am lost:"

The most basic definition of sexual addiction as defined by those who experience it is "toxicity to lust," and "engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior despite increasing negative consequences to self and others." When these circumstances are present the behaviors need to be treated as an *addiction*.

For example, search and rescue training teaches that one of the most important things a person can do when he finds himself lost in the woods is to stop and say out loud, "I am lost." This verbal acknowledgement shifts his mind into a state where wiser choices can be made; he won't hide from search parties—he wants to be found. Likewise, those who honestly desire to experience a future state of being in recovery must first be willing to acknowledge that they are dealing with a real addiction and to frankly identify themselves as such: "I have an addiction."

Ironically, once this acceptance occurs, rather than increasing feelings of shame and hopelessness, one actually becomes empowered through this budding commitment to honesty and willingness to do whatever it takes to be in recovery and experience the positive growth that comes from working recovery.

### Reason #5:

#### Significant strides in identifying and understanding the roots of sexual addiction:

Dr. Mark Butler of BYU explains:

Now we know what it means to say that a person is addicted. Now we understand the core mechanisms and dimensions of addiction. Now we can see the

mighty allure of appetite which entices choices that lead to addiction... Psychological intoxication and dependency of pornography and sexual compulsivity is as real and addictive as it is for substance abuse. Sexual addiction is only one of many close cousins in the family of addictions. It leads to profound powerlessness, the scope of which can encompass one's entire life. (See *Spiritual Exodus* by Mark H. Butler, PhD, p.47)

### Summary:

These five reasons explain why the term *pornography or sexual addict* should not be construed as a label to shame or demean, nor should it conjure up thoughts of deviant, predatory or illegal behaviors. This term correctly identifies a chronic brain disease, one that is emotionally destructive, physically intoxicating, and involves compulsive physical, mental and emotional sexual "acting out" behaviors. When we use the term *sexual addiction* we also acknowledge the growing scientific evidence behind such behavioral addictions and what is required to be in recovery.

We do no favor by avoiding using the term *addict* when behaviors show otherwise. Well meaning efforts to be gentle or diminish shame and embarrassment, or thinking such a term "overstates the problem" underestimate the destructive power of this disease and enable those who suffer. Without properly identifying the problem, the "problem" of sexual addiction cannot be properly treated.

As with substance addictions, those who are sexually addicted, with few exceptions, will be unable to stop behavior merely by self-knowledge or gritty willpower. Applying the term *addict* is a blessing, and actuates the plan outlined in this manual of intervention for recovery and healing.

Every individual is a child of God and should be valued as such. God will help those who honestly seek Him in their personal efforts to be in recovery. True recovery and healing is possible and is not rare.