THE HEART OF THE MATTER
FINDING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS OF PORNOGRAHY ADDICTION

"Your heart will be opened and your faith elevated as you watch this documentary film with your family, church, and community."
— Jason S. Carroll, Ph.D, Professor of Marriage and Family Studies, Brigham Young University

"People who struggle with pornography have hope and, indeed, many of them are shining examples of changed lives."
— The Dove Foundation

BONUS DVD INCLUDES:

MAIN FEATURE (ages 12+)
The Heart of the Matter (1:16:02)
(English/Spanish/Portuguese/Romanian subtitles)

SPECIAL FEATURES
Understanding Addiction (7:45)
Parents Guide (23:48)
Help for Young Women (14:53)
Wives of Addicts (13:33)

GUIDE TO RECOVERY
Models of Addiction (6:43)
Addiction Recovery (2:30)
Spouse Recovery (4:46)
Recovering a Marriage (4:20)

PRESENTATION
Safeguarding Teens and Young Adults from Pornography, presented by Jason S. Carroll PhD (49:24)

The Heart of the Matter is a film by Jessica Mockett & Jordan Harker, Friday Feature Productions, in association with Nathan D. Lee & Girl with a Curl Films.
Understanding

PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION & BETRAYAL TRAUMA

Second Edition

A Resource for LDS Leaders and Parents

Prepared by

S.A. LIFELINE FOUNDATION

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Proceeds from the distribution of this manual will be used to support the work of S.A. Lifeline Foundation, delivering information and a message of hope that recovery from pornography addiction is possible. We ask that you share this resource manual as widely as possible. In doing so, you will assist in the work of bringing key knowledge and understanding about pornography and sexual addiction to those who now suffer silently and those who can best help them.

Front Cover: Journey’s End, by Derek Hegsted, used with permission. This powerful image of a man being embraced by Christ is a depiction of the power of the Atonement and the joy and peace of repentance.

Note: Throughout this manual, masculine pronouns are often used when referring to those struggling with pornography. This was employed for the sake of simplicity and readability and is not intended to suggest that this is only a male problem. Women increasingly use and become addicted to pornography.

Acknowledgments
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Given the rampant spread of pornography, it is easy to feel helpless against apparently overwhelming odds. The children of Israel faced a similar sense of hopelessness in the Book of 2 Kings. A Syrian king had invaded Israel. When Elisha’s servant arose one morning and looked out over the city wall, he saw the multitudes of enemy soldiers surrounding the city and was overcome by fear. He felt certain that Elisha would be captured and killed once the city walls were breached. When Elisha saw the army and the servant’s fear, however, he spoke powerful words of faith and hope: “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”

Elisha knew that God was on their side and that the Almighty’s hosts were far more powerful than any earthly army. At Elisha’s request, the veil was taken from the servant’s eyes and he saw an angelic army—a multitude of horses and chariots of fire awaiting the Lord’s bidding. God granted the servant a gift to see “the more” “that be with us.”

The plague of pornography has become an intense worldwide war between good and evil. The very souls of God’s children are the prize. When we see the expansive scope of this plague, it is easy to feel that we are but few and that anything we do is too little, too late.

Because pornography has now entered even the homes of the very righteous, it is tempting to surrender to an overwhelming sense of despair. But the scriptures and the prophets have told us clearly who will win this war. In the face of seemingly unbounded adversity, we need to remember that the Lord’s armies are fighting beside us.

We are doing God’s will; we will prevail. As we take active measures to become educated, protect ourselves, strengthen our homes, and appropriately help others, we will receive the help we need. “They that be with us are more than they that be with them.”

1: 2 Kings 6
2: 2 Kings 6:16
The Game Has Changed

Even though airplanes had been used in World War I, the United States seriously underestimated the ability of air power in combat in the decades that followed. On December 7, 1941, at 7:02 a.m., at a small radar station on the northern side of the island of Oahu, Privates Joseph McDonald and George Elliott noticed a large group of planes approaching from the north. They told Lieutenant Kermit Tyler about the planes. When questioned by another soldier at headquarters, Lieutenant Tyler responded, “Well, don’t worry about it. It’s nothing.” At 7:55 a.m., the bombing of Pearl Harbor began. Air power thrust the United States into World War II at Pearl Harbor and effectively ended the war four years later when B-29s dropped the first atomic bombs on Japan. In this sense, air power was a game changer. Today, wars are fought differently, with jets, ballistic missiles, and remote-controlled drones playing key roles in military planning and execution.

Pornography, which is visual, aural, or written material intended to incite sexual desire, is today’s game changer. It was present in ancient Egypt and Rome. Several recent developments, however, have changed the acceptance, nature, and delivery of pornography. Internet pornography in particular has become a game changer. It has been marketed as an acceptable pastime frowned on only by religious prudes. Today, what once would have been shocking is commonly accepted.

In his book The Brain That Changes Itself, Dr. Norman Doidge, a neurologist at Columbia, describes how pornography causes a rewiring of the neural circuits. The brain center that controls impulsiveness becomes supercharged, and the brain center for willpower shrinks. Those who have struggled with drug or alcohol addictions, as well as pornography addiction report that pornography was the hardest addiction for them to overcome.

Bill Margold, a male pornography actor, said, “I’d like to really show what I believe the men want to see: violence against women. I firmly believe that we serve a purpose by showing that.” Given that young males ages twelve to seventeen are the main group viewing pornography, we as a society have allowed Margold and his co-conspirators to become the de facto sexuality instructors for the upcoming generations.

It is time we realize that we are blindly allowing another airstrike on our nation. The assault is hitting us on all fronts: cultural, moral, political, and biological. Internet pornography is a stealth attack on our homes and families through invisibly transmitted electrons. Education about the addictive, destructive nature of this attack is paramount, and hence the need for this manual. We must address prevention and recovery with the same tenacity the pornography industry has employed to invade our homes and our lives. Only then can we turn the tide and begin to win this war.


3: http://www.saferfamilies.org/sfStats.php

What is Pornography?
In simple terms, pornography is a representation of sexual images or sexual behaviors in books, pictures, statues, motion pictures and other media that is intended to cause arousal or sexual excitement. The word pornography comes from the Greek porni (“prostitute”) and graphein (“to write”), and was originally defined as any work of art or literature depicting the lives of prostitutes.

What is Pornography/Sexual Addiction?
Sexual addiction is best described as a progressive intimacy disorder characterized by compulsive sexual thoughts and actions. Over time, the user usually has to escalate his or her sexual acting out, as well as addict behavior, to achieve the same results or “high.” Like other addictions, its negative impact on the user and on their family increases as the disorder progresses.

The National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity has defined sexual addiction as “engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior...despite increasing negative consequences to self and others.” In other words, a person with sexual addiction will continue to engage in certain sexual behaviors despite potential health risks, financial problems, shattered relationships, or even arrest.

Lust is the force behind sexual addiction: our healthy sexual feelings or our normal human sex drive are taken over by lust. Lust has become an addiction.

What is Betrayal Trauma?
Many scholars have noted that those who have been betrayed by their spouse’s pornography use experience symptoms associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a condition that includes feelings of powerlessness, intrusive thoughts and memories, and efforts to avoid the triggers associated with the traumatic stressor. Like war-torn soldiers, such people live in near constant fear that something may remind them of the painful memories associated with the betrayal. So they often become hyper-vigilant, checking computer histories and cell phones, or obsessing over ways they can stop their spouse’s pornography use.

The stress associated with discovering a pornography addiction can also produce for the spouse sleepless nights, food issues (both overeating and under eating), traumatic flashbacks, crying spells, and feelings of hopelessness. And the physical exhaustion related to these stressors can cause a once perfectly healthy person to begin under-functioning in their many roles. (The Effect of Pornography on the Spouse of an Addict, Geoff Stuerer, MS, LMFT)

The choice to use pornography is more than a moral judgment:

“Pornography is neither harmless nor helpful. It is a mood-altering, belief-changing, relationship-damaging, addiction-forming, socially-harmful, spiritually-deadening, life-crippling practice, through which one practices the ways of the adversary.”

—JILL C. MANNING, Ph.D.
Understanding the Basics

Using pornography is a rampant problem in our society. Studies suggest that 70% of men ages 18 to 34 visit pornography web sites in a typical month, and 47% of families in the United States say pornography is a problem in their home. A survey conducted in 2008 found that nearly 87% of young men and 31% of young women reported using pornography. And the average age at which children first see online pornography is 11.

Traditionally, there has been an assumption that good LDS people do not struggle with pornography. Although statistics are not specifically available for the LDS population, it is estimated they are similar. Bishops and stake presidents who openly address this problem discover this to be so.

“Pornography is...addicting. It impairs decision-making capacities and it ‘hooks’ its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. Pornography impairs one’s ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior.”

—ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS

“Pornography,” Ensign, May 2005, p. 87

Although using pornography use is commonly associated with men, the number of women viewing it is rapidly increasing. Because pornography use is rampant, it is important to provide training and education for everyone.

5 Reasons Why We Use the Term “Pornography or Sexual Addiction”

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, Ph.D.:

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
Understanding the Basics

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, sexual addiction is remarkably similar to substance addictions when combined with its sought-after outcomes (escape or fantasy) and its devastating core consequences, including dependency and powerlessness. And pornography, as the powerful trigger to sexual arousal, is also highly addictive. (See Spiritual Exodus by Mark H. Butler, Ph.D., p.47)

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 Don Hilton 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 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 wilderness is to stop and say out loud, “I am lost.” This verbal acknowledgement shifts his panicked 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, Ph.D., p.47)

Summary:
These five reasons explain why the term *pornography* or *sexual addiction* should not be construed as a label to shame or demean, nor should it conjure up thoughts of deviant, predatory or illegal behaviors. It also acknowledges the growing scientific evidence behind such behavioral addictions and what is required to be in recovery.

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.

We do no favor by avoiding using the term *addiction* 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* may be 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.

**Pornography and the Brain: Understanding the Addiction**

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The human brain is programmed to incentivize behaviors that contribute to our survival. One system (the mesolimbic dopaminergic) rewards eating and sexuality with the release of powerful pleasure incentives. But cocaine, opioids, alcohol and other drugs hijack these pleasure systems and cause the brain to think that a drug “high” is also necessary for our survival. There is now strong evidence that natural rewards which come from eating and sex affect the brain’s reward systems in the same way taking drugs affect them, thus explaining the current interest in what is called “natural addiction.”

Addiction—whether to cocaine, food or sex—occurs when the drug use, eating, or sexual behavior ceases to contribute to a healthy state of homeostasis and instead causes detrimental consequences. For instance, when eating causes morbid obesity, few will argue that such a body is in healthy balance. Similarly, pornography causes harm when it impairs or destroys a person’s capacity to develop emotional intimacy.

Sex is a very powerful drive and ensures the survival of our species. Like all rewards, desire for sex is driven by the release of dopamine in the brain, an excitatory neurotransmitter. Once released, that signal touches several areas of the brain: the frontal executive control regions add perspective to the raw full-strength dopamine’s desire; other areas bring meaning and
context to the brain’s pleasure reward. Thus, when balanced, this desire—that leads to pleasure—motivates us to participate in behaviors that help us survive and thrive.

Addiction occurs when this natural drive for pleasure gets out of balance and instead of simply motivating us, it dominates and controls. Such a person realizes they can’t quit smoking the cigarette or joint, or they must have that shot of alcohol, or they must watch a pornographic video, or masturbate (sex with self). Because if they don’t, they sense a growing tension and obsession, a “brain itch” of sorts which initially whispers, then calls, then shouts, and finally commands that person to act out in their addiction of choice, which causes the dopamine to be released in their brains, thus temporarily relieving what has become an absolutely unbearable tension.

Once we understand how the brain actually changes with addiction, it shouldn’t be surprising that we can become addicted not only to substances but also to behaviors. But first, we need to have a basic understanding of how the brain changes with learning.

Only two decades ago we scientists thought the brain was “ceramic,” meaning the brain reached a point in adulthood where it ceased to change—even with learning. In 1995, however, that began to change with what were called the “Violin Studies.” We discovered that the part of the brain that controls a violin player’s string hand enlarges as the person practices—no matter their age.1 Since then, many studies have confirmed that virtually every learning activity changes the brain structurally, whether it’s juggling2 or taxi driving3 or studying for exams.4 As Zatorre explained, “The brain is the source of behavior, but in turn it is modified by the behaviors it produces; …learning sculpts brain structure.”

Another learning activity is addiction. In a study on how brain cells physically change with addiction learning, Kauer and Malenka explain, “addiction represents a pathological [disease-related], yet powerful, form of learning and memory.”6 Knowing what we now know about learning and how it physically changes the brain, we would expect that their learning model of addiction would also be associated with changes in the brain, and it is. Many studies of both drug addictions7,8,9 and behavioral addictions10,11,12 have demonstrated such changes. So in any type of addiction learning, the brain’s reward centers shrink, and the executive control regions are impaired. But would we ever find that pornography also causes physical changes in the brain?

Based on what we learned from a previous DNA study, we predicted in 2011 that scientists would eventually see evidence of physical and metabolic changes in the brain with pornography—similar to that caused by cocaine and other drugs.13 Our prediction was confirmed in a 2014 study out of the Max Planck Institute in Germany, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association—Psychiatry Edition. It found that those addicted to pornography have relatively shrunken reward areas of the brain, as well as impaired connection to the frontal control centers. And the more hours per week the subjects had viewed pornography, the more the change in the brain.14

Other studies, also in 2014, confirmed our prediction that the brain would also be altered metabolically. A study out of Cambridge University in England showed that the brain of those addicted to pornography responds in a similar way to those addicted to drugs, paralleling what is called The Incentive Motivation

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3: Maguire et al., Navigation-related structural change in the hippocampi of taxi drivers. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Vol 7: No. 8, 1999
7: Franklin et al., Biological Psychiatry, 2002
8: Thompson et al., Journal of Neuroscience, 2004
9: Lyoo et al., Psychopharmacology, 2005
10: Pannaccuilli et al, Neuroimage, 2011
Understanding the Basics

Model of Addiction. Dr. Norman Doidge, a neurologist at Columbia University, in his book The Brain That Changes Itself, describes how pornography causes an actual rewiring of the brain’s neural circuits. He notes a study on men as they viewed Internet pornography in which the men looked “uncannily” like the rats pushing levers to receive cocaine in the experimental “Skinner” boxes. These men were desperately seeking their own next fix by clicking their computer mouse—just like the rats pushing the lever.

This brings up an interesting difference between drug addiction and viewing pornography; drug addictions, while powerful, are rather passive in a “thinking” kind of way, whereas pornography viewing—especially on the Internet—is a much more active thinking process for the brain. The constant searching and mental evaluation of each image or video clip (which have been deliberately produced for potency and effect) is an exercise in brain learning and neuron re-wiring. And pornography addiction is frantic, desperate learning, so perhaps this is why many who have struggled with several kinds of addictions report that pornography addiction was the most difficult kind for them to overcome.

As mentioned on p. 2, the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) formally recognized that addiction is not limited to substances such as cocaine and opioids, but include behaviors involving food, sex and gambling.

In light of this emerging evidence, the pornography industry is desperately fighting the “addiction” label associated with its product, and has academic apologists who vigorously defend pornography. They claim that pornography is harmless fantasy; that restricting it is a violation of First Amendment rights; that it actually decreases sexual assault and is therefore socially useful; and that it can be used to enhance marital intimacy, and so on.

But scientific evidence shows that pornography is not fantasy to the brain, as the brain’s “mirror systems” powerfully merge fantasy with reality. Thus, individuals watching pornography “resonate with the same motivational state” of the actors in those films. And what is that motivational state? A recent study found that almost 9 out of 10 of the most popular pornography

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15: Voon et al., Neural Correlates of Sexual Cue Reactivity in Individuals with and Without Compulsive Sexual Behaviors. Plos One, July 2014
movies show aggression toward women,\textsuperscript{19} and one male actor acknowledged that that was his goal.\textsuperscript{20}  

Pornography is damaging to adult men and women, but it is particularly damaging to youth: 1) It often becomes their primary mode of sexual learning, and constructs their sexual templates at increasingly younger ages; 2) The immature brain’s of youth have an impressive reward system that is primed to learn, and pornography is a powerful and ready teacher; 3) A brain protein called DeltaFosB is important to the development of all addiction (drug and behavioral), and this protein is more potent in the immature brains of youth;\textsuperscript{21} 4) Growing brains go through complex “pruning” and “myelination” processes that are not completed until the mid-20s, which means that youth are more vulnerable than adults to “building” an addicted brain.

Even though few may acknowledge it, the near universal availability of hard-core porn may have already addicted a majority of our young men. The rewards released within the brain are so powerful that when young men (and an increasing number of young women) watch these carefully filmed sexual scenes—and especially when coupled with masturbation (sex with self), their brains can quickly become addicted.

Internet pornography has two characteristics that make it particularly addictive. First, it is immediately at hand and has almost infinite newness and novelty. The second characteristic is the remarkable potency of the material itself. Nikolaas Tinbergen won a Nobel Prize in the 1970s for his study of animal behavior and coined the term \textit{supranormal stimulus}. This describes the promise of a reward above that which the organism naturally encounters in nature.

For example, Tinbergen made plaster bird eggs bigger and painted them brighter than normal bird eggs, and found that birds would try to roost on his plaster eggs—and ignore their own real eggs. In a test more pertinent to us, he made artificial butterfly wings in a species where the male is attracted to the female based on the color of her wings. But he purposely made the fake wings on his butterflies look more appealing than the real ones. And what did he find? When exposed to both kinds, male butterflies would try to mate with the fake females instead of the real females.

Pornography is just such a \textit{supranormal stimulus}, and like the butterfly example, many male humans—and increasingly females—are choosing pornography’s larger-than-normal-life artificial rewards over real human sexuality.\textsuperscript{22} Virtual Reality (VR) pornography and human “dolls” is accelerating this incredible phenomenon.

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Understanding the Basics

Consider the following:

- Pornography’s potent rewards have fostered the “hook-up” culture prevalent on many college campuses.

- Despite strong denials from professional porn defenders, it is also fueling the rise in sexual assaults on campuses, in the military, and on children and in society at large.

- It is driving the majority of divorces today.

- Pornography is destroying the emotional integrity of the relationship.

Setting aside the impressive cultural and individual denials that seem to prevail on this issue, we would do well to address it using the following multi-faceted and historically successful approach:

1. **We need to understand the Nature of Addiction and never downplay the ominous power of the images.**

2. **We should call it what it is.** Curiously, because we don’t like to “label” people, we tend to downgrade what is actually an addiction into something we think less offensive—particularly with youth—as if a label can alter their status. We don’t mince “labels” with a 16-year-old heroin addict, and we do so with a 16-year-old pornography addict at their peril. When we sidestep addressing it for what it is, the effort and resources may never be mobilized for recovery, “for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14: 8) In such a case, the young man or young woman will likely continue to use it into young adulthood, and can’t help but bring it into their marriage. Sadly, such may be the case in the majority of newer marriages today.

3. Remarkably, some married couples think it is acceptable to watch pornography—as long as they do it together. This is nearly always male-driven. The wife should understand, though, that when they have intimate relations the “mirror systems” of the husband’s brain will project him into the movie with the actors; she may provide the proxy body, but he is having sexual relations with those in the movie—not with her.

4. Many think this is strictly a moral or religious matter, and as such, a full confession to an ecclesiastical agent clears up and heals everything. This opinion is dangerously naïve and painfully shortsighted. While a person may gain a measure of spiritual and emotional strength with ecclesiastical help, the problem—the brain addiction—requires a lifelong system of education and supports. History shows that therapy and support groups are also essential—even vital, for lifelong healing. Without this, those with pornography addiction may be destined for a lifetime of discouraging relapses and exhausting struggles. But, with such help, we consistently see healing and recovery.

[End of Dr. Hilton: “Pornography and the Brain.”]
What does a sexual addict look like?

As a person chooses to act out with pornography and sex with self, he or she will surely begin to feel disconnected from God, parents, spouse, friends—and even himself. Acting out behaviors often escalate into a life that not only includes pornography and sex with self, but may also include chat rooms, fornication, promiscuity, adultery or dependency relationships. And these acting out behaviors produce even deeper shame, self-hatred, anger, remorse and emotional pain. A person is ruthlessly driven ever inward and becomes more selfish, more resentful, and is usually living a duplicitous life. Relationships with others are dramatically impacted in negative ways and genuine intimacy becomes impossible.

Will a compulsion to view pornography disappear following marriage?

This is a common misconception. While marriage and regular sexual intimacy may temporarily slow the use of pornography by disrupting the pattern of the addiction, the reality is that the compulsion generally resurfaces and even escalates. Even in marriage, negative emotions and life’s problems still need to be dealt with, and similar to why alcohol or illicit drugs are used, pornography is often used to “better cope.” (For details on Recovery, see p. 15 of this manual.)
Understanding the Basics

Betrayal Trauma: 
The Effect of Pornography on the Spouse of an Addict
By Geoff Steurer, MS, LMFT

It is not uncommon for well-intentioned observers to inquire about the fuss being made over pornography. Many of them assume that pornography consumption is a victimless pastime. Their line of thinking generally supports the notion that a man who views pornography in isolation is not hurting anyone. They even debate whether this same man is even hurting himself, by viewing pornography.

I would like to challenge these assumptions by showing how pornography use damages not only the individuals who view it, but especially the wives of these same men. I will also include suggestions for how women who are affected by their partners’ pornography use can cope as they and their partners begin their journey toward wholeness.

In all my years of counseling individuals and couples, I have never seen any other behavior produce a pattern of pain and misery to an individual and his marriage as predictably as those that come from the use of pornography. Let me briefly outline the pattern as I see it.

First, long before his wife discovers his pornography use (either by his own disclosure or by her catching him), the husband will slowly become more self-centered, irritable, moody and impatient. He will spend less focused time with his family, seek out more distractions, begin to mentally and even verbally devalue his marriage, become critical of his wife’s body and character, feel more spiritually empty and experience more internal stress. He will become more restless, more dissatisfied with his work, and easily bored with things that used to interest him. He will also become more resentful and quick to blame when things don’t go his way.

This transformation may take years, depending on how often the individual views pornography. If he only seeks it out every few months, he may be able to fool himself into believing that the aforementioned changes in himself are just situational and will pass with time. But for the person who views pornography more frequently, each viewing produces a faster disconnection from the man he once was. This gradual erosion of loyalty and trust inevitably generates confusion and strife in the marriage. Most wives who knew nothing of their husband’s secret pornography consumption or other illicit sexual behaviors, have told me that they felt like something was “off” in their relationship with their husbands. But they usually second-guessed those feelings, with many even reflexively blaming themselves for the disconnection in the marriage.

If undisclosed pornography use has the power to generate confusion and pain in a marriage, one can only imagine the level of pain imposed on a wife once these secret behaviors are finally brought to light. Shock, denial, anger, rage, depression, self-loathing, isolation, and fear are some of the raw emotions a woman may experience when she first learns of her husband’s secret sexual behaviors. Virtually every woman I have worked with has also experienced deep shame, embarrassment and humiliation. Unfortunately, these innocent partners too often suffer privately and remain isolated from outside support systems. Even if they initially react with visible anger, most of their pain is “sorrow that the eye can’t see.”

Most men who reveal their secretive behaviors to their wives feel some relief of not having to carry their secret burden alone anymore. Ironically, the crushing load once carried by the addict is often transferred to the wife. Burdened by this new and unwelcome weight, she typically experiences profound fear,
anxiety and confusion. Pornography addicts often pressure their spouse to keep the issue private. But, isolation seriously compounds the problem.

Many women mistakenly believe they will automatically and fully recover from the trauma of their husband’s pornography use once he stops looking at it. It is easy to imagine how they might believe this: if the behavior that is causing the pain goes away, then the pain goes away with it, right? Yes and no. Yes, the pain may decrease somewhat as a husband commits to ending his pornography consumption and begins to live an authentic life that is free from the damaging effects of his addiction. On the other hand, if a woman who has been affected by her husband’s pornography use doesn’t consciously work to undo the cumulative effects his behavior has had on herself, she may continue to be burdened with unresolved fears, resentment, anger and grief.

A comparison may help to clarify this key point. If a woman is a passenger in a car driven by her out-of-control husband and he willfully steers the car into a tree and they’re both injured, it is unlikely she will get back into any other car with him without significant reassurances that he will drive more safely. Even if he takes driver safety classes and pays fines, she may still struggle and wonder if he is going to protect her. So she will need to work through her own emotional trauma and feelings of powerlessness that are associated with the injuries caused by her husband’s irresponsible driving. Similarly, she must first work through the impact of her husband’s pornography addiction on herself; later they can then begin to work on the impact his behavior has on their marriage.

I will outline some of the most helpful first steps women can take after they discover their husband’s behavior, then briefly explain what is involved in long-term recovery.

**Short-term First Aid for Betrayal Trauma**

1. *Physical self-care* is probably one of the most important—yet one of the most overlooked opportunities of early recovery for women. Trauma is acutely manifested in the body. If an individual experiences a serious threat to his or her safety (emotional or physical), the body will become tense, flood with adrenaline and have difficulty calming down. So, to ignore our body is to ignore one of the greatest resources for healing. I have found that women who make *physical self-care* a priority heal much faster from all other impacts of their husband’s secretive behaviors. Many women find that getting more sleep, eating healthy foods, exercising, stretching, soaking in warm water, and slowing down to nurture their physical bodies help them shift out of survival mode and think clearly.

2. *Spiritual grounding* provides feelings of peace, hope and reassurance in the face of so much uncertainty. Meditation, prayer, seeking comfort and counsel from the words of ancient and modern prophets, and counseling with Church leaders gives women power and strength beyond their own. Seeking a priesthood blessing is another powerful source of comfort and strength. Because some women feel forsaken by God when they have been betrayed by those closest to them, spiritual healing is essential even if it takes time. Some women may find it hard to attend church or spend time with others when they feel so low and vulnerable. If such is the case, remember that being around others can be healing even if you don’t reach out and share. It can also help to spend time visiting peaceful locations such as in nature, or listening to uplifting music where spiritual feelings are easy to access.

3. *Emotional expression* is critical in all stages of recovery but especially in the early stages. Many women find it helpful to write their feelings in a new journal they give themselves the option of throwing away at a later date. Emotions can be so strong early in this process that some worry about putting down such raw feelings in their regular journals. Yet, it is important to have an outlet to
express feelings in a safe, non-aggressive way. Feelings come and go like the waves of the sea, so it is important to give them all expression and movement. Holding on to strong emotion with the hope that it will eventually disappear may only keep it stuck. Talking with others may also help, which is explained in the next item.

4. **Connecting with others** who can help you may be difficult, but offers tremendous benefits. It is not recommended that a woman who learns about her husband’s behavior broadcast her pain to everyone who will listen. Instead, identify a few select individuals who: 1) will keep confidences, 2) can provide a safe place to talk, 3) won’t negatively judge you or your husband, and 4) can offer some wise support and direction. It can be beneficial for the long-term stability of their relationship for a woman to inform her husband (note, she’s not asking for his permission) that she will be speaking to specific individuals about her own struggles. Such individuals often include ecclesiastical leaders, therapists, parents or siblings, 12-Step support groups, therapy groups, and close friends.

5. **Simplifying life** is often a worthy goal for many people, and this is an excellent time to begin. This may be an ideal season to begin saying “no” to extra commitments, evaluating your schedule and looking for things to cut out. Truth is, dealing with the trauma of betrayal is so physically and emotionally exhausting that things that used to feel easy to do may suddenly feel almost impossible. It is important to keep a simplified structure in place so you have order and predictability in your life. A frenzied pace however, may only function as a distraction but eventually catches up in the form of even more hopeless feelings of failure and powerlessness. Helping others may create a welcome sense of purpose. It is better to slow down and give priority to those things that will bring you the greatest peace, joy and comfort.

6. **Education** is critical in the early stages of recovery. Many good resources are available to help women understand the scope of the problem. A readings list for partners is available in the Resources section on pp. 151-153. Education can help validate common feelings and clear up misconceptions about addiction and recovery.

**Long-term Healing**

Long-term healing from the effects of a husband’s pornography addiction may be best compared to healing from the grief, bereavement, and loss of a loved one. The discovery of a partner’s secret sexual behavior may cause a woman’s former life to flash before her eyes. Recovering from such a loss is a process of understanding her own shock and anger, processing the sadness of what she has lost, and moving toward acceptance of her new life—which may or may not include a husband who is committed to long-term recovery. Regardless, it is still critical for women to do their own long-term work of healing from the impact of secret pornography use.

Without appropriate help and counseling, the emotional, physical, and spiritual health of the spouse may deteriorate. Pornography use may eventually lead to divorce. Statistically, 55% of divorces are related to pornography. Follow these six important “First-aid” helps and you will be on the proven and oft-traveled path to healing and peace.

[End of Steurer Article: “Betrayal Trauma”]
**Model of Spouse Betrayal and Trauma**

**How does pornography use affect the spouse?**

A pornography or sexual addict is self-absorbed and thus has little or no emotional connection with others. Living with—or having lived with—such an addict brings feelings of confusion and fear into a spouse’s life. These women feel emotionally isolated and doubt their own personal worth. In fact, many characteristics of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are present in such spouses. This is called *betrayal trauma*. They often take extreme measures to outwardly appear perfectly in control—yet inside they really feel out of control, “crazy” and unloved.

Most of these women sensed that something was not right in their relationship. But when they questioned their husband they were assured with comments such as “Everything is OK,” or with anger and resentment for even asking.

For a time the betrayed spouse may have felt pacified, but soon became preoccupied with thoughts such as: *Why won’t he even talk to me? Maybe if I were more sexual or changed my body, then he would love me. I can fix this for him.* Conversely, they may have thought: *He’s ruining my life and our family. I feel bitter, angry and afraid.* Or they may have minimized it: *It’s not that important. That’s just the way men are.*

Eventually the betrayed spouse realized that it was all about the lies. In despair, they didn’t know whether they could trust any aspect of their relationship. Something had to change. Yet they may not have known where to go for support and wise guidance. (For details on how to heal from this, see p.22 in the Healing and Recovery section.)

**Model of the Distressed Marriage**

**How does pornography use affect the marriage?**

Pornography use often leads to sexual addiction, then betrayal trauma, and negatively impacts the marriage on several levels. Early on, a critical disconnection takes place between a husband and wife—even if both parties are not aware of the illicit sexual behaviors. Bitter seeds of dishonesty, disrespect and selfishness are sown and grow unchecked.

At the center if the distressed marital relationship we see the Drama Triangle. Ironically, both partners often take turns playing out the roles of *rescuer*, *persecutor* and *victim*. There may even be seasons of relative calm. Such calm, however, is usually based on apathy toward one another and projects a false sense of well-being.

But we know that fear, resentment and anger eventually return. For self-preservation and a measure of safety many couples resort to living parallel lives- a kind of virtual divorce. They can be disconnected in nearly every meaningful way: emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. Too many stop striving for a synergistic relationship and accept apathy and dysfunction as their new way of life. Divorce often seems to be the only way out.
The Recovery Puzzle

Achieving recovery and healing from pornography addiction and betrayal trauma is possible. It requires a firm commitment to healthy living:

- A WILLING HEART
- Complete HONESTY
- Persistent WORK
- The Passage of TIME
- Emotional and Physical SAFETY
- Working with a QUALIFIED THERAPIST
- Dedication to WORKING THE 12 STEPS on an Ongoing Basis
- SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE from God
- Continuing EDUCATION
ALL WHO DESIRE RECOVERY from pornography/sexual addiction and betrayal trauma will come to understand that God is the KEY essential component to true recovery and healing because ultimately, recovery is a spiritual process. Honesty, humility and a willing heart are requisite to accessing God’s power. Lasting recovery and healing comes through the grace of God and the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

What Begins Recovery?
Sir Isaac Newton’s first law of motion appears to apply not only to objects, but also to people. An object (or person) continues to do whatever it happens to be doing unless compelled by forces to change it.

Because of their own shame, and fear of devastating consequences if they are found out, most people who are struggling with pornography and other sexual addiction behaviors do their utmost to keep their behavior a secret. And they will continue to hide it unless there is what we will term an event or interruption, or as Newton might say, a force compelling them to change. For example, maybe they are caught, found out, and are compelled to own up to their secret. Or maybe when they are asked, they feel compelled to confess and admit the truth. Or maybe they are moved to choose on their own to come clean and divulge their secret.

However it may unfold, this is the event, a red-letter important event that interrupts the status quo. If they admit the truth, they are being honest. If they acknowledge they are helpless to change on their own, they are being humble. And if they truly want to do whatever it takes to heal and recover, they are showing a willing heart. Thus, honesty is first, then humility, then a willing heart. This begins recovery. The road to recovery may be derailed, however, at any of these three early crossroads. Progress continues when all three are present.

Directly asking a person about pornography viewing can open important discussions. Openness does not mean we are condoning the behavior or lessening its consequences; we are simply trying to eliminate the shroud of secrecy surrounding this subject.

Recovery from pornography addiction and betrayal trauma is difficult, but attainable. Those who are completely committed to doing what it takes to find and maintain recovery will be successful. Countless people can now attest to this fact.

What Does Recovery Involve?
- Honestly admitting to others the magnitude of the problem
- A desire to recover
- Becoming educated about the nature of sexual addiction and the recovery process
- Creating a safe environment where triggers and temptations are less likely to occur
- Continued participation in a 12-Step recovery program
- Seeking qualified professional counseling. This usually includes a mixture of individual counseling, couples therapy, and group counseling (18 months is recommended, to begin with)
- Seeking spiritual guidance. Both the recovering addict as well as his or her traumatized spouse should seek individual spiritual guidance in all aspects of their own recovery journey. Spiritual
guidance is guidance from the Holy Ghost, and is complemented by guidance from ecclesiastical authorities

- Accepting and experiencing God’s grace through the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ

*Abstinence* is not the same as *recovery*. Abstinence involves going a period of time without “acting out,” such as not viewing pornography or engaging in sex with self for a time. Recovery, however, requires not only abstinence, but also a lifestyle change, and involves relearning healthy sexuality, resetting unhealthy expectations, and establishing positive patterns of interaction with others. Recovering individuals must learn to better manage emotions, stress, relationships, and other factors that underlie their addictive behaviors. They must learn to differentiate between lust and healthy intimacy.

Every recovering addict can acknowledge that he’s learned to lust for the inflamed passion of carnal appetite. So even though it burns him badly, repeatedly, he doesn’t put it out, he just tries to figure out ways to keep it under control. Lusting for the flames, every addict first tries to contain the fire of carnal passion—hoping to construct a “managed burn.” But lust is a volatile fire, always spitting embers outside all your carefully placed containments and burning all who stand near it.

“Can a man take fire in his bosom and…not be burned? (Proverbs 6:27) The answer is “no”—“no” yesterday, “no” today, and “no” tomorrow. You cannot take the smallest coals of lust into your heart and not be burned. Lust is never a “managed burn.” You hope, first, lust will carry you no further than the peephole in the back fence of appetite, but you always end up climbing your fences. Your attempts at a managed burn is understandable—after all, lust couldn’t become an addiction if it didn’t possess siren enticement and an intensely arousing, pleasurable, intoxicating experience—but the attempt at a managed burn is futile. When you indulge first lusts, you turn recovery into a long-odds lottery ticket—and you lose.

The last lesson you learn…is that you can’t fuel the fire you want to put out!

—MARK H. BUTLER, PH.D.

**Spiritual Exodus**, p.426

Just as an alcoholic can never consider himself or herself to be cured, those who are addicted to pornography are always susceptible to relapse, and should take proactive measures to stay in recovery for the rest of their lives. With time and continuing the work of recovery, remaining in recovery becomes easier.
**When is One Safe? When is One Cured?**

Consider the following story:

Shortly after returning from my first mission, I heard our faithful stake patriarch bear his testimony…. He was just over 90 years of age; he said, “I pray every night that God will see me safely dead with my testimony burning brightly.” [Afterward,] seeking to comfort this righteous patriarch, I said to him, “Patriarch, I know of no one more prepared than you are.” [But] he responded, “My boy, no one is safe until he has endured to the very end of his life.”

—ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD  
Satellite Fireside, May 3, 1992
As you may notice in our “Recovery Puzzle,” four key categories are what constitute a recovering addict’s work: 1) Education; 2) Spiritual Guidance; 3) Qualified Therapy, and 4) Working the 12 Steps. We will address each of these four categories.

1. **Education**

Various educational books, DVDs, web sites and pamphlets can provide vital information to understand sexual addiction and betrayal trauma, and what is required for lasting recovery. See a recommended list of resources on pg. 154 of this manual.

> “It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.”
> —D & C 131:6

2. **Spiritual Guidance**

Spiritual guidance includes wise counsel from a bishop or stake president. It is complemented through activity in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ. Spiritual guidance is enlarged through the study of scripture, meditation, prayer and honestly seeking insights and direction directly from God. This takes time, but it’s fruits are priceless. A renewed faith in God will motivate us to act. This cumulative strengthening of our spirituality is the secret key to our recovery.

3. **Finding a Qualified Counselor**

Sex and pornography addictions require therapists with special training. So look for a therapist who has experience specifically treating sexual addiction. The following are general questions you might consider asking when seeking a qualified sexual addiction therapist:

- *What do you believe are the main adverse effects of the use of pornography?*
- *Do you believe the spouse can experience the symptoms of PTSD/Betrayal Trauma, and what makes you feel qualified to treat trauma?*
- *Do you believe that pornography use can be classified as an addiction?*
- *Do you believe that recovery is possible?*
- *What is sobriety and what is recovery?*
- *How does one find recovery in their lives?*

...A good therapist can be one of our greatest allies in recovery. In fact, I encourage most recovering addicts to work with a therapist who has a deep commitment to the 12 Steps, and an appreciation for the spirituality of recovery.

—PATRICK CARNES, Ph.D.

* A Gentle Path Through the Twelve Steps, p.13
4. Working the 12 Steps

The “12 Steps of Recovery” (see p. 58 of this manual) sets forth the steps individuals follow to make the spiritual and mental changes that enable them to find and maintain long-term recovery. The 12 Steps closely correlate to the LDS view of the repentance process. The steps were originally written and practiced by members of Alcoholics Anonymous. 12-Step programs are non-professional, non-profit groups.

Participating in a 12-Step program is a critical element of the recovery process for both sexual addiction and betrayal trauma. Productive participation initially requires attending at least one meeting per week, working the steps daily, and regularly communicating with a sponsor. A sponsor is someone who is working the 12-Steps himself or herself, is in recovery, and is willing to serve as a mentor. Their experience in working the steps for their own recovery uniquely qualifies them to help others suffering from sexual addiction or betrayal trauma. A sponsor promotes accountability, gives hope, and offers specific guidance in working the steps. In addition, sponsors provide encouragement and support in developing a willingness to surrender one’s will to God.

Many of the benefits obtained from a 12-Step meeting come directly from the associations and interactions of the people who attend. Accordingly, the quality of 12-Step meetings can vary greatly. So, it is important to find a meeting that works for the person seeking recovery and healing.

Are 12-Step Programs Effective?

Many well-known contemporary therapists strongly support 12-Step participation. Dr. Patrick Carnes who is a pioneer in the field of sexual addiction stated in his book *A Gentle Path*, “The Twelve Steps have been so useful and translatable because they tap into the essential human process of change and make that process more explicit, more understandable, and more sustainable.” Dr. Douglas Weiss who is executive director of the Heart to Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs, CO, also sees the 12 Steps as integral to addiction recovery. Dr. John Kelly who is with the Center for Addiction Medicine at Harvard Medical School stated that hundreds of published studies support the effectiveness of 12-Step programs for addiction recovery.

But the best endorsements for the effectiveness of 12-Step groups come from group participants themselves. Even group members with years and years of sobriety keep coming to meetings because of the strength and courage they receive there.

One participant in a 12-Step addiction recovery meeting stated that being in a meeting where he could talk safely and openly about his addiction struggles brought what were seemingly hopeless problems into the light, and gave him real hope as well as proven recovery tools.

How do 12-Step Programs Work?

Addiction may reduce self control and judgment so much that it may appear a person has lost all ability to choose. But that cannot be. There is always agency. Addictive behavior causes an actual change in brain chemistry that is nearly impossible to overcome through willpower alone. (See article by Dr. Donald L. Hilton, MD., pg. 4 of this manual.)
In 12-Step groups, participants learn to use their agency to surrender their lust, resentment, and other negative thoughts and emotions to God. Since addiction is fueled by fighting against or giving in to negative actions and emotions, by surrendering our will to God we can be released from the power these things may have over us.

This same process also works for recovery from betrayal trauma, which is the collateral damage that results from having a loved one who is addicted. Resentment, anger and fear are among the overpowering elements in a relationship with an addict. Such negative emotions eat away our self-worth, and we are unable to feel peace.

Each member of a 12-Step recovery group should choose a sponsor. It is not uncommon to phone a sponsor daily. A sponsor can become a lifeline; when one is spiraling into feelings of anger, fear, resentment or lust, it is effective to call a sponsor to get centered again. But a sponsor does not have all the answers; God is at the center of recovery, and a sponsor will, through their experience, direct one to the Source of all healing. As a person makes progress on recovery, he or she can step into a position of becoming a sponsor. Yet, it is still important to continue having their own sponsor.

What are the Principles of Effective 12-Step Meetings?

1. 12-Step meetings should have a spiritual foundation. God is recognized to be at the center of recovery and healing. Recovery is an individual spiritual journey regardless of one’s religious beliefs. Meetings begin and end with a prayer from the heart; James 5:16 is our guide: “Pray one for another, that [we] may be healed.”

2. Meetings must be a safe place for recovery. Sharing in meetings is based on personal experience, with an emphasis on recovery experiences and activities related to working the 12 Steps. We do not give advice; we share our strength, our hope and our experience. There is no cross talk during the sharing portion of the meeting. This is an anonymous program: “Who you see here, what is said here, let it stay here.”

3. 12-Step Addiction Recovery Meetings are gender specific, restricted to those who desire recovery from pornography or sexual addiction, and who are 18 or older. Betrayal Trauma Recovery Meetings are also gender specific, and restricted to those who desire healing from the effects of having a loved one (spouse, family member, friend) who is addicted.

4. Some nondenominational 12-Step groups, including SAL, use the White Book from Sexaholics Anonymous, Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Blue and Green Books of S-Anon, along with other effective study materials.

5. The emphasis in all meetings is on long-term healing and recovery. This is found through actively working the 12 Steps with the support of a sponsor. To maintain our recovery, we commit to helping others by eventually becoming a sponsor.

6. Each group is independent, guided by the Principles of 12-Step Recovery Meetings. Group members are accountable and responsible for their own recovery work.

7. 12-Step Addiction Recovery Meetings accept that sobriety means having no form of sex with self or others—other than your spouse, and working toward progressive victory over lust, which includes no viewing of pornography.

8. 12-Step Addiction Recovery Meetings are self-supporting; there are no dues or fees.

For more information about finding 12-Step meetings see pages 157-160
How Does One Recover?

One must freely choose for himself or herself to step onto the path of recovery from sexual addiction—and stay on it. That path is narrow and may seem steep at times, so a long-term commitment is vital. Without a firm resolve to “do whatever it takes,” discouragement may set in during setbacks, and sadly, a return to illicit sexual behaviors will likely follow.

To step on the path of recovery, the most basic requirements are a willingness to surrender our will to God’s will, and courage to be totally honest, accountable and humble.

To stay on the path of recovery, help from others is essential. This includes: 1) Seeking spiritual guidance; 2) Working with a qualified therapist; 3) Working the 12 Steps, and 4) Educating themselves. Long-term healing and recovery is possible and is not rare.

Faith + Grace + Action =
Recovery from Sexual Addiction

What Does Recovery from Betrayal Trauma Look Like?

With consistent effort, time and the grace of God, a spouse who suffers from betrayal trauma can heal! That is a miracle! They learn how to choose to live a healthy lifestyle, which includes self-care and honesty about their emotions and needs. They also learn how to set healthy boundaries based on safety, love, and respect for themselves and others. Such actions connect them more closely with God and they become more available for honest and loving relationships.

Spouse healing and recovery needs to include spiritual guidance, working with a qualified therapist, working the 12 Steps, and educating themselves. The sweet fruits of healing and recovery are not rare.

Faith + Grace + Action =
Recovery from Betrayal Trauma
Contrasting Healthy Sexuality and Pornographic Portrayals of Sexuality

Prepared by Jill Manning, Ph.D.

Many people erroneously think of pornography as a substitute or preparation for healthy sexual relations. Healthy sexuality and intimacy, however, stand in sharp contrast to pornographic portrayals of sexuality. If left unchecked, pornography use can even hinder a person’s ability to develop an intimate relationship and experience satisfying sexual relations in marriage. The following table is intended to help clarify some of the main differences between pornographic portrayals of sexuality and healthy sexuality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pornographic Portrayals of Sexuality</th>
<th>HEALTHY SEXUALITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lustful</td>
<td>Loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolating</td>
<td>Unifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceptive</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy-based</td>
<td>Anchored in reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body is treated as an object, toy, or weapon</td>
<td>Body is sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreases well-being</td>
<td>Enhances well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrading</td>
<td>Respectful and honorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves using or harming someone</td>
<td>Involves loving someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritually deadening</td>
<td>Spiritually meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially irresponsible and costly</td>
<td>Socially responsible and beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often involves violence and coercion</td>
<td>Involves mutual consent and volition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated with crime, abuse, infidelity, addiction, prostitution, and divorce</td>
<td>Associated with life and joy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Comparing Healthy and Toxic Relationships
Prepared by Jill Manning, Ph.D.

When seeking a partner to date or marry, it is helpful to understand the differences between healthy and toxic relationships. All relationships experience ups and downs, but ideally, the majority of interactions with your partner should be in the healthy realm. When you consider the qualities listed in each column below, evaluate which side of the spectrum the majority of interactions with your partner fall into.

Note: Keep in mind that people can have toxic or healthy relationships as it relates to a thing, place or behavior. For example, if a person is dependent upon a substance, he or she is engaged in a toxic relationship with a drug.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toxic Relationships</th>
<th>HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clouded with deceit</td>
<td>Rooted in honesty and truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrespect demonstrated by one or both</td>
<td>Mutual respect is apparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrustful</td>
<td>Trust and safety are present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopsided focus</td>
<td>Well-rounded focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama-based</td>
<td>Drama is limited and acute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels draining, confusing, depressing or shameful</td>
<td>Feels energizing, hopeful and empowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving problems is avoided, and differences are viewed as</td>
<td>Problems addressed openly, and differences respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of entrapment or being controlled and manipulated</td>
<td>Increased sense of freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism or hierarchy exists</td>
<td>Partners are equals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries are difficult to detect or are breached</td>
<td>Appropriate boundaries are respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeds selfishness</td>
<td>Encourages self-respect and selflessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreases well-being</td>
<td>Increases well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear- or lust-based</td>
<td>Love-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinders or stagnates growth</td>
<td>Fosters and encourages growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Recovery and Healing

## Am I Serious About Dealing with My Pornography Problem?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am not serious if:</th>
<th>I AM SERIOUS ABOUT CHANGING IF:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I lie, am evasive, or only disclose information when asked.</td>
<td>I am totally honest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was caught or reported by someone else rather than admitting to or confessing inappropriate behavior.</td>
<td>I am open and willing to talk about what I do, think, and feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pretend or try to convince others that there are no problems, that they are taken care of, or are no big deal.</td>
<td>I am trying to find out what caused my addictions, and how to prevent addictive behavior from happening again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am defensive, deny, minimize, rationalize and blame others in order to avoid dealing with my problems.</td>
<td>I take full responsibility for making personal changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to go back to the way things were before getting caught, rather than improving and growing.</td>
<td>I have made up my own rules for staying out of compulsive sexual behaviors and am following them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I refuse to attend 12-Step meetings or get a sponsor, and continue to “punish” myself.</td>
<td>I regularly attend 12-Step groups, report to my sponsor, and accept the Atonement of Jesus Christ in my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not willing to put in the time or effort to fix problems or work the 12-Steps.</td>
<td>I am working on the 12-Steps and my issues daily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I run away, hide, or won’t talk about my behaviors, feelings, thoughts and fantasies.</td>
<td>I meet regularly with my ecclesiastical leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not actively participate in counseling.</td>
<td>I decide to see a counselor on my own rather than being forced to or told to by someone else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use other addictions—like alcohol or drugs—to avoid dealing with my real problems.</td>
<td>I go to professional counseling sessions, work on issues underlying my behavior, and do all homework given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I act as if I am the victim, and seek sympathy or try to get others to take sides.</td>
<td>I am working more on what I need to change rather than on what I think my spouse needs to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my spouse to be okay with my addictions and I feel cheated if I can’t continue.</td>
<td>I give my spouse the space or closeness she needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I criticize and blame others more than I take personal responsibility.</td>
<td>I show that I understand the hurt which I have caused my spouse and loved ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am angry, moody, resentful, critical, or out of control, and only think about my own needs.</td>
<td>I work to earn others’ trust and forgiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to make a quick-fix deal and apologize—just to have the issue dropped.</td>
<td>I work to solve problems that were caused by my addiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am manipulative and use fear, guilt or threats to get what I want.</td>
<td>I speak and act with respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make impulsive decisions and have impulsive behaviors.</td>
<td>I am dependable in taking care of my family, occupation, and religious responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make promises rather than changes.</td>
<td>I am setting specific, measurable goals and achieving them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not living Church standards.</td>
<td>I am living the standards of the Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I continue to put myself in situations where I’ll be tempted.</td>
<td>I have made significant lifestyle changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Am I Making Effective Changes to Deal with My Spouse’s Addiction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am probably not making needed changes if:</th>
<th>I AM MAKING EFFECTIVE CHANGES IF:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that in some way my spouse’s addiction is my fault and blame myself for his behavior.</td>
<td>I recognize that pornography addiction is a serious problem and requires hard work to find recovery. However, I do not blame myself for my spouse’s addiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pretend there isn’t a problem, it is already taken care of, or it isn’t a big deal.</td>
<td>I require honesty and transparency from the addict and ask him directly when something is bothering me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe whatever the addict tells me, even if my gut tells me something is wrong.</td>
<td>I take responsibility for making positive changes in my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I refuse to take responsibility for changing what I can change, and taking care of myself.</td>
<td>I find help and support from others in dealing with the betrayal and trauma I am experiencing and its impact on me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to deal with my emotions on my own.</td>
<td>I openly share what I think, feel and am experiencing with appropriate trusted people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep the addiction a secret and fail to seek outside help.</td>
<td>I meet regularly with my ecclesiastical leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that only the addict needs counseling, not me; or, I fail to do homework and skip sessions.</td>
<td>I work with a therapist who is trained in sexual addiction—whether or not my spouse wants me to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make excuses for not attending 12-Step meetings for spouses or, quit going once I feel okay again.</td>
<td>I actively attend 12-Step meetings for spouses and work on my own recovery daily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rationalize that I don’t really need any guidance.</td>
<td>I find a sponsor and work with her regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I neglect or minimize my needs and wants.</td>
<td>I practice self-care daily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I bury my emotions, or utilize other addictions such as food or drugs to avoid them.</td>
<td>I allow myself to feel natural emotions, hurt, and anger, and then surrender them to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I persist in believing that God doesn’t care about me.</td>
<td>I seek to feel God’s love for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I deny, minimize, rationalize, or blame others to avoid making changes or letting go of resentment.</td>
<td>I work towards forgiving and letting go of the resentment for the hurt which the addicted spouse has caused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I criticize or blame the addict—rather than set boundaries or make changes to protect myself.</td>
<td>I set and follow boundaries to protect myself from my spouse’s addictive behavior and from obsessing about his addiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make a quick-fix deal: If the addict says he is sorry, I will just forget it and won’t talk about it anymore.</td>
<td>I refuse to accept or enable addict behavior; I look for positive changes—not just promises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I obsess about what the addict needs to do rather than work on my own recovery.</td>
<td>I focus on the changes that I can make rather than on what I think my spouse needs to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I choose how to act based on my fear of the addict’s reaction, or I respond explosively.</td>
<td>I appropriately share my needs and feelings with the addict instead of worrying about how he might respond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I set my level of affection based on what my spouse wants rather than on what I need.</td>
<td>I ask for the space, closeness, or help that I need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I go along with addictive behavior, or tell myself that it is okay—or that it is not really that bad.</td>
<td>I work towards extending trust if my spouse is showing behavior that is deserving of trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use demands, fear, guilt, manipulation or threats to get what I want or need.</td>
<td>I take care of my personal and family needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do it all myself—even if I’m overwhelmed, and constantly demand perfection from myself.</td>
<td>I set small measurable goals for myself and work for progress—not perfection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not put in the time and effort to deal with the problem, or fail to set realistic expectations.</td>
<td>I accept that healing from the effects of my spouse’s addiction is a long process that will take time and effort.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“O LORD, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ. Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee.” (Alma 31: 34-35)

Bishops and stake presidents are often the first to be approached for help and support by those who are suffering under the weight of sin and hypocrisy involving internet pornography and other illicit sexual behaviors. Priesthood leaders are thus uniquely positioned to make a dramatic positive impact in the battle with the adversary for the souls of those who are caught in the chains of sexual addiction and the trauma of betrayal.

When interviewing teens and adults, bishops and stake presidents who ask, “When was the last time you viewed pornography?” have discovered that many members under their stewardship are currently struggling with this problem. When someone is viewing pornography, knows pornography is wrong and has a sincere desire to quit—but still keeps going back to it, accept that you are dealing with a strong addiction. Their judgment has become clouded and their willpower weakened.

Yet agency, or free agency, or moral agency is always in play. It is the God-given right to choose. The epic war in the World of Spirits was waged to curtail this right. God won that war; Lucifer lost. Thus, we will always retain our right to choose. That is the law. But the right to choose is different from the capacity to choose. Addiction diminishes our capacity to choose, but it can never cause it to disappear.

For example, in chemistry it is physically impossible to reach 0° Kelvin, or absolute zero, where it is so cold that all atoms stop moving. Likewise, the Lord made it impossible for our capacity to choose to reach absolute zero. There will always remain in us enough power to do at least one thing: surrender our will to God.

Bishops and stake presidents should teach this key doctrine to members.

Pornography and sexual addiction feeds on secrecy and shame and can destroy a person, body and soul. It damages the individual’s ability to emotionally connect to those around him or her. Spiritual healing, as well as emotional, psychological, and neurological healing, must take place. Church leaders can play an important role in helping a person find recovery in each of these areas by pointing them to, and encouraging them to use certain key resources. To that end, bishops and stake presidents should read Section 1 and Section 2 of this manual.

Don’t Try to Fix It
A Former Bishop Shares His Experience
As a man, as a father, and as a bishop, I’ve had plenty of experience trying to solve problems. It’s almost ingrained in me: fix it. When something breaks something needs to be done. If someone is suffering I want to help. If you’re a Church leader, it’s likely been deeply instilled in you that you have a solemn responsibility to do everything within your power to assist those in need and bring peace to those who are hurting. But then you have someone who comes to you asking for help with an addiction—and you can’t fix it.

I’ve struggled together with members of my congregation who suffer from pornography addiction. They come in genuinely repentant, seeking help and guidance. I give my very best
How a Leader Can Help

As his spiritual leader, you will also have a wonderful opportunity to help him find the Savior, which will bring him healing. Offer him counsel and help him to be humble—but not humiliated. Share your own faith in the power of the Savior’s Atonement, and reaffirm your own dependence on God. Never be shy to acknowledge you have inadequacies, but don’t apologize that you are only doing what you can, for you are a spiritual leader doing all you can to point him to the principles of recovery and healing, and to the Healer Himself.

Don’t ever try to carry the burden alone; you must let each person perform his or her role; therapists, 12-Step programs, sponsors, family and friends all contribute in very important ways. The most important role is that of the Savior, and the addict’s relationship with the Savior is what will ultimately save him.

Betrayal Trauma

Pornography and sexual addiction have a devastating effect on the addict’s spouse and other loved ones. But rarely do spouses receive adequate and appropriate help, support or counseling. Bishops and stake presidents can be instrumental in making sure that the spouse, parents, or other loved ones of the addict receive the support they need for the trauma they have experienced. Listen to their concerns, validate their experience and offer words of comfort. Provide information about where additional help is available, including educational materials, qualified counseling and 12-Step recovery groups. Explain that they will need all of these resources to recover and fully heal themselves.
The Importance of Understanding the Impact of Pornography Addiction on the Spouse

By Dr. Adam Moore, Ph.D., LMFT

Dear Bishop,

You are likely going to have many married men in your office who are struggling with pornography and other illicit sexual behaviors. You no doubt have a great desire to help those men. May I share some insights gained from working for many years as a therapist with such men and their wives. I believe this may help you do much good as you seek to help people heal.

It will be easy to focus all of your energy on helping the husband because his needs are obvious. Sitting next to that man, however, is a woman who is also struggling immensely. She also has healing needs, and she also has a story to tell. In fact her story may tell you more about her husband’s addiction than his story. Following are seven keys to helping couples heal from the effects of pornography and sexual addiction:

1. **Listen to the wife’s story and trust what she is saying.**

   Addicts are unusually skilled at creating a beautiful and believable façade. He may come across in your office as stable, honest and accountable. Before you accept all he is telling you, listen to his wife’s experience. Unless she is afraid, she can tell you whether his story is accurate since she lives with him every day. In all the years I have been a therapist, I do not recall ever working with a wife whose story about her husband’s addiction was inaccurate. So trust her story and her instincts. If she feels something is off or wrong, in a majority of cases you can trust that it is.

   The husband may come in and confess to you that he has sinned. He may be contrite and want to change. However, almost universally, what he tells you early on is only a small portion of what he has actually done. If his wife shares with you that more than this is going on, or that she suspects more is going on, please trust her.

2. **Meet with the husband, and meet with the wife.**

   The couple may want you to meet with both of them at the same time. Or they may want to meet with you individually. Follow their lead in that respect, but still meet with each of them regularly if they are willing. Always have another priesthood holder in the proximity when meeting, as the Church counsels.

   The health of the marriage is influenced by the husband fully disclosing everything to his wife. If he keeps any secrets from her, the marriage will never fully heal. Such disclosure will unfold at their own pace, but you can encourage it.

3. **Allow the wife to forgive in her own way and in her own time.**

   Forgiveness is the right and responsibility of the person who has been hurt. I promise you that requiring—or even requesting that a wife forgive her husband so the couple can “move on,” can do more harm than good. Please let her decide whether and when to forgive.

4. **Become educated yourself about betrayal trauma.**

   Many wives of pornography and sex addicts are experiencing trauma. This is not only because she feels betrayed by his sexual behaviors, but also because of the lies he has told her. An addicted husband will often make his wife feel that his relapses into pornography are her fault. This type of behavior can make a wife feel “crazy,” like she is losing her mind. Learn about causes and symptoms of betrayal trauma, and understand what his wife is
How a Leader Can Help

really experiencing. She will be very grateful for your empathy and more-informed counsel.

5. Deal with the addiction first before trying to help the marriage.

Too many people believe that sexual addiction is an outgrowth of a struggling marriage. Understand that his addiction almost universally pre-dated his marriage. So, asking a wife to be emotionally, spiritually, or physically vulnerable with a man who has been lying to her and betraying her trust will cause further harm to her and to their marriage.

Before the couple can rebuild their relationship, he has to rebuild her trust in him. This is done little by little once he steps on and stays on the road to recovery. The wife needs to follow a similar, yet parallel path, for her own recovery. In due time, they may be ready to work on their marriage.

It is also very important that you know that I have never once seen a man heavily involved in pornography or illicit sexual behaviors who simply stopped doing it without serious work on his part. Just the passage of time and a sincere desire to stop are not substitutes for real work. A man who is addicted but is in recovery, will be able to explain to you in detail the great pain, challenges and labor of his recovery. If he cannot describe to you exactly what he has done to heal and change, he has not done the work and he is certainly not in recovery. If he has only desired to change and prayed for help, he has hardly begun to do his part.


Even as a therapist I have to remind myself that his addiction recovery is not my responsibility. If you feel that you have to solve his addiction and “save” the marriage, you will quickly be in over your head. And if you are the only person who knows what is really going on in the marriage, the couple will be isolated from other vital resources they need.

Your role is important in both the husband’s and wife’s spiritual development. But you are not their therapist, 12-Step sponsor, 12-Step support group or educator. A wise leader will strongly encourage each of them to attend a 12-Step recovery group, see qualified counselors, and study written materials of the Church and other qualified sources.

7. Expand accountability.

It’s easy to focus only on abstinence from pornography use or sexually acting-out behaviors. Expand your expectations with the husband. His wife’s feedback will be, by far, the best indicator of how well his recovery is going. Ask her as many questions as you ask him. Here are some suggestions.

Questions you might ask the husband:

- What are your daily recovery routines?
- Tell me about which of the 12 steps you are currently working on.
- Do you have a 12-Step sponsor? How often are you in contact?
- What changes have you made so far to protect yourself from relapse?
- What are you doing to earn your wife’s trust again?

Questions you might ask his wife:

- Do you notice any differences in your husband’s behavior that help you feel safer?
- How does your husband treat you on a daily basis?
- What is it about your husband’s addiction that makes you most afraid?
- What are you doing to heal from your betrayal trauma?
- What is your husband not telling me that I need to know?
How a Leader Can Help

Using these seven principles to help couples has improved people’s trust and confidence in me as a counselor, and has significantly improved my ability to provide lasting help. I hope you can benefit from what I have learned.

What are Specific Actions Some Church Leaders Have Taken to Combat this Problem?

- Jump-start your education by viewing the 75 minute documentary *The Heart of the Matter*, included in the front of this manual on a DVD.

- Avoid being a naïve or uninformed leader. Become educated yourself. Seriously consider reading *He Restoreth My Soul* by Donald L. Hilton, Jr., MD; *What's the Big Deal About Pornography?* by Jill C. Manning, Ph.D.; and *What Can I Do About You Me?*, by Rhyll Anne Croshaw.

- Compile a list you can share of trustworthy 12-Step groups, qualified therapists, and other local resources.

- Some young men returning from missions are quickly slipping back into viewing pornography and sex with self. We should be ready to help them, including with 12-Step support groups specific to pornography addiction.

- Regularly meet with those struggling with pornography addiction, and their spouses, to promote consistent accountability, provide encouragement, and help facilitate the repentance process and the healing process.

- Make available brochures, books and other educational resources relating to pornography addiction and recovery. (See Handout and Resource sections on pp. 154–156 of this manual.)

- Select one or more individuals to serve as specialists who educate others about pornography addiction and betrayal trauma. Such well-informed specialists, or sometimes a professional sexual addiction therapist, can make presentations in ward councils, leadership meetings, Relief Society, priesthood meeting, Young Women and Young Men groups.

Pornography addiction thrives where there is shame and secrecy and ignorance. Once we gain knowledge about the spiritual, physical, emotional and social destruction caused by pornography, we will be more motivated to lead effectively. And when we learn to recognize the signs of pornography addiction and betrayal trauma, and know the key steps to healing and recovery, we can win this war one soul, one couple, and one family at a time.
Dear Bishop,

The women who have been affected by the addiction of a spouse are most often faithful, covenant-keeping women. Because of the trauma associated with their situation, these women frequently question their own self-worth and even their testimonies. We cannot afford to lose these faithful sisters and mothers of the rising generation to the effects of this plague.

Please accept that my husband’s problem is not in any way associated with my appearance or behavior. I did not cause and cannot fix my husband’s addiction. My husband most likely developed this problem long before he knew me. Because of his agency he has chosen to act as he does. Please do not suggest that I just “need to love him more” so he will not act out. This only adds to the craziness that I already acutely feel.

Help me to understand that I have been traumatized, and with kindness and concern help me find resources to begin to heal. Having a qualified therapist to talk with who has experience in these matters, a 12-Step group, and learning about what I am dealing with will be a good start. I need someone who appreciates the magnitude of this problem, and is able to hold my husband accountable for his actions. As our bishop, you can firmly and lovingly do so because of your concern for his spiritual welfare—and mine also.

Please help me to feel safe. My confidence in priesthood leadership has been shaken because I believed all along that my husband was being true to his covenants, only to discover that he has been untrue to them—and me. I need a kind and informed priesthood leader whom I can trust. Encourage me to slow down my life and my emotions. Help me to have a glimmer of hope that the dream I have held so dear of a loving, eternal marriage can be realized with time and effort by both my husband and me.

In the meantime, help me to set and keep appropriate boundaries. These boundaries will help me to feel safe while I re-confirm that I truly am a beloved daughter of God. And with that knowledge, I will find strength to make hard choices, and find more happiness by being true to Him and to myself.

Your Sister
Dear Bishop,

I am writing this letter to sincerely thank you for your tireless efforts in helping me in my repentance process. You may recall our paths crossed in a decisive season of my life when I was totally without hope. We knew one another, but hardly a soul knew my heart and my desperate plight.

It was during this time I found a scripture that powerfully spoke to me personally, so I memorized it; it was fulfilled in my life when I finally chose to hold nothing back and be perfectly honest—in spite of the fear and real possibility of losing my marriage, my family and my Church membership.

That scripture is Alma 34, verse 31: *Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you."

The word *immediately* is not an overstatement; I actually experienced *immediate* help from God when I committed in my heart of hearts to get honest and to meet with you with the intent of offering a total and unconditional confession—everything. And I was strengthened in that resolve when I softened my heart. One might argue I had been compelled because I was afraid of being found out, but I have an assurance that God knew my heart; He was right there in my most crucial moment of need, and I say He *immediately* blessed me with courage and a feeling of hope. I felt an unmistakable and powerful witness that God knew me, still dearly loved me, and was keenly willing to help me whenever I was willing to receive Him.

So we met soon thereafter. I came to you as a truly broken man with heart in hand. I was at a loss to know where to even start in the whole process of repentance and recovery. Nevertheless, I knew enough that I needed to begin by meeting with you, my loving and trustworthy bishop who shouldered the mantle of being my common judge in Israel. I will forever be in your debt for your informed and inspired counsel, and gentle yet firm encouragement.

The first time I met with you in your office I felt my eternal salvation was in absolute jeopardy because of my willful choices to break commandments and dishonor my covenants.

(continued on next page)
My choices to regularly use pornography since my youth had led me down incredibly dark paths I never imagined I would travel. I never did stop to consider the possibility that the chains of addiction were forming link by link as I turned to illicit sexual behavior for pleasure and to escape the stressful challenges of life. My situation was dire and life had literally become unmanageable. I found myself questioning many facets of my testimony as I fell deeper and deeper into illicit sexual behaviors.

I told you that I had tried many times in the past—sincerely tried—to stop my offensive behavior. Of course I knew what I was doing was wrong. Even though I had honestly confessed several times in past years, sadly none were followed by embarking on the actions of recovery. Frankly, you were the first bishop who helped me understand that I needed additional help, that following a certain program of recovery was essential to fully repent and progress and heal. I took that counsel to heart, for there was nothing else I could do.

In that fateful first meeting you may recall that you shared a scripture with me, and I distinctly recall feeling a surge of testimony flow through me when you read it; it was Alma 15:6-10:

“And it came to pass that Alma said unto him, taking him by the hand: Believest thou in the power of Christ unto salvation?

And he answered and said: Yea, I believe all the words that thou hast taught.

And Alma said: If thou believest in the redemption of Christ thou canst be healed.

And he said: Yea, I believe according to thy words.

And then Alma cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord our God, have mercy on this man, and heal him according to his faith which is in Christ.”

I knew what you had just read was true. It affected me. And I was powerfully lifted by my not-yet-extinguished testimony that I believed in the Savior Jesus Christ, and that the power of His Atonement really could heal me.

I was very grateful that when I shared my sinful behaviors and double life, you didn’t condemn or shame me. Instead, you listened with an understanding heart and assured me

(continued on next page)
of your love and God’s love, renewed my confidence in the healing power of the Savior’s
Atonement, and encouraged me not to be afraid but to choose to be completely honest going
forward. Your compassion and encouragement and wise counsel after my honest confession
bolstered my nascent hope.

You explained the important role you were called to play as my bishop and common judge
in my repentance process. I want to tell you now that you have filled that role in marvelous
and inspired ways.

Thank you also for helping me understand that a humble heart was vital as I worked to
recover from a powerful addiction, and that I needed to be willing to do all it would take to go
through the sometimes arduous repentance process. As I look back, I appreciated the way you
explained all this to me; you didn’t label me an addict, but you did say *continuing in a
behavior—in spite of negative consequences—is a key indicator of addiction*, and that I should
seriously consider that possibility.

You were candid in telling me I was responsible to take full advantage of the help of others.
When you suggested finding a 12-Step group and working the 12-Steps, I felt a tinge of pride
well up inside me; I really didn’t want to do that. But with your encouragement I found a 12-
Step meeting and started to regularly attend. What I found there was much different than I had
expected. I can honestly say that I have learned a lot about myself and about the nature of
sexual addiction as it relates to lust. I had never considered that sexual addiction is best
described as a toxicity to lust. I also learned in the 12-Step meetings that lust is the driver of
my acting out behavior, and that I must surrender all lust to God as I strive to live in recovery.
Yet I didn’t know how to submit my will to God. In time, working the steps with my sponsor
has helped me learn how to do this.

I was amazed to discover that the men I met in these powerful spiritual meetings have
stories very similar to mine, that I am not unique or alone in my journey of recovery. And
members of the group have willingly helped me by sharing their personal experiences and
guiding my work of the 12 Steps. I have come to believe the 12 steps are inspired. I am
grateful, humbly grateful, to report that I am continuing in my work of the 12-Steps and
attending meetings weekly. Your consistent encouragement really made a difference in
keeping me going back.

(continued on next page)
You then explained the importance of finding a qualified counselor as part of my recovery program, since in the past I had mostly tried to stop my entrenched sinful behavior on my own—without any success. I now realize that that counsel was indispensable. There was simply no way I could pull myself up by the bootstraps and repent and recover on my own.

My prayers to find a qualified counselor were abundantly answered, and my therapist has given me priceless insights into how I had been trying to meet my emotional needs using a counterfeit solution. I have learned how addiction actually feeds itself, and I have learned to recognize the cycles of addiction. So I am now much better prepared to recognize and deal with my triggers in healthy ways. I also learned about addict behavior and the drama cycle, something I had played my role in for years, ignorant to the fact that what I was doing was to selfishly protect myself.

Most significantly, my therapist taught me much about the trauma—serious trauma—I have caused my wife, and her need to recover and heal from the wounds I have inflicted over the years. My therapist reinforced your counsel to actively work the 12 steps, and that both my wife and I would benefit in working the steps as we progressed toward healing our marriage.

You opened my eyes and helped me understand how important it was that I become educated about sexual addiction and the work of recovery. So I embraced that. I just had to. The books, DVD’s and websites you helped me find have been incredibly helpful. I was surprised to discover how much is known about sexual addiction, and the spiritual, physical and psychological challenges I was experiencing firsthand. These resources were readily available, but I had been too ashamed to look for them before for fear someone might discover I was hiding from a duplicitous life. Thank you for encouraging me to pray and study the scriptures with real intent every day.

I must admit all of this was rather overwhelming and scary. But because I was fully committed to being honest with God and my wife and my family, I worked through those concerns and pledged that I was willing to do whatever it would take to heal my spirit and body through the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

In subsequent visits, you reminded me to continue to carefully consider the deep pain I had caused my wife, and the significant damage I had done to our marriage and to the spiritual

(continued on next page)
Letter from an Addict (continued)

well-being of our family. You counseled me to seek to help my wife who was innocently suffering because of my poor choices; this has been very necessary in her recovery and mine. She was profoundly wounded by years of lies and deceit. I was to consistently consider her needs and encourage her to meet with you as well. This has been essential to her dealing with the trauma she has experienced because of my choices. I am very sorry to admit that I had not been at all sensitive to her pain since I was so selfishly wrapped up in myself.

In all this, you made it clear that you would do what only you could do for me as the Lord’s authorized representative, and you would let others do what they could do best. That was wise. Happily, I want to report that I can now look others square in the eye knowing I am the same on the inside as I appear on the outside.

My dear bishop, you have been and always will be to me a true shepherd. May God bless you and prosper you in every way.

With all my love and appreciation,

Your Brother
I am the daughter of a recovering sex addict. My story isn’t all that dramatic. I might even venture that in a peculiar way this challenge has been among one of the greatest blessings of my life. Given the option, I don’t think I would have chosen to pass over this mountain. However, the lessons I have learned as a result of this experience are proving to bless me and my family in immeasurable ways.

Growing up, I didn’t feel differently than other children. In fact, I counted myself uniquely blessed. I was loved, well provided for, and had an abundance of opportunities to develop my interests and talents. I seemed to have a wellspring of confidence at my core. As a result I fared well in my pursuits academically and socially.

I recall feeling close to my mom through my formative years. She was my primary confidant and mentor. In contrast, I occasionally talked with my dad but on a very superficial level, and rarely sought him out for emotional support. This was mostly due to the fact that he was often working long hours or away on business. But when he was home he felt distant—rarely speaking of himself or engaging me in conversation about my activities and interests. In spite of this, I did believe he loved me, and thought that my relationship with my dad was normal, even healthy.

As a young child I have only vague recollections of challenges in my parents’ marriage. Any issues they had were discussed behind closed doors. It wasn’t until high school that I really began to see something amiss in my parents’ relationship. I recall occasionally worrying about the prospect of my parents separating, but the feeling didn’t linger. Full of grit, my mom was generally upbeat and positive. In my opinion she did a tremendous job of maintaining the household and keeping everything and everyone in order. Yet as I grew older and became more perceptive I noticed something weighed heavily on her. Finances were a constant concern during this period, but I felt there was something deeper causing her anxiety.

As I entered my older teen years and began interacting more with my friends’ fathers, I noticed the level of warmth and emotional closeness some of them shared with their dads. It was then that I started to recognize how much was missing in my own father/daughter relationship. I didn’t realize it at the time, but for many years I didn’t know my father. In his shame-based Jekyll and Hyde life, he was limited in his ability to love and be loved.

(continued on next page)
In my concern, I began soliciting my mom for information so I could provide her some emotional support. She would never go into detail about my father’s behavior, but it soon became clear to me that Dad had a problem—the extent of which I didn’t learn til later. The hardest thing for me at the time was seeing my mom suffer. She was clearly in pain and there was little I could do for her.

I soon graduated from high school and moved away from home. Preoccupied with college and other activities, I was home only occasionally, and for a time was oblivious to the trouble brewing between my parents.

It all came to a head years later, only months after I was married. It was a pleasant Sunday afternoon, and just after we arrived at my parents’ home, my dad ushered my husband and I outside, sat us down, and proceeded to tell us that he had just been ex-communicated from the LDS Church. He went into some detail about the actions that led up to him losing his membership. I was devastated. I felt anger, sadness, and a deep sense of betrayal.

And here is also where the blessings began.

Despite my deep anger and sadness, I was able to put my arms around my dad, tell him I loved him, and forgive him. I credit myself very little for this frank forgiveness. First, my father had demonstrated forgiveness and patience for me on previous occasions, softening my heart toward him. Second, the way my mom was choosing to deal with the situation diffused much of my own anger. She wasn’t bitter and dramatic. She calmly sat next to him, and through glossy eyes said that she was going to try and support my dad as he worked toward recovery of his addiction. So I decided that if she could forgive him—one who had suffered so directly and deeply as a result of his choices—I could do as much also. She did, however, make it very clear that she wouldn’t support him in his addiction if he continued to act out. I recall her saying that “she would see how things went,” as my dad behaved in a way that could start rebuilding her trust. Finally and most importantly, I felt the power of the Atonement wash over me, enabling me to rise above the bitterness and shame that could have easily taken hold of my heart.

(continued on next page)
Watching My Father’s Transformation (continued)

I won’t pretend that all the anger and sadness was gone that first day. As the days and weeks passed, there were times when those feelings would resurface and I would vent to my husband or petition my Heavenly Father for help as I waded through my grief and fear. Even though my dad was doing well in his recovery, I knew there weren’t any guarantees for him—or my parents’ marriage. But on the whole, I marvel at how easily I was able to forgive and move forward. Doing so freed me from the debilitating effects of resentment, shame, and bitterness that have overcome some individuals in similar situations.

Now over five years later, I look back and am grateful for the lessons I have learned through this experience. I have learned not to be so afraid of this issue. As a mother I know I will deal with this in some form with my own children. Yet I feel like I can face this problem with courage because I have the education, tools, and a testimony of the Atonement to help me through. I know recovery from pornography and sex addiction is possible. I have witnessed it! In watching my father’s transformation, I have seen the Atonement’s power reach further and deeper than I ever thought possible. I used to be so black and white in my thinking, certain that if I or others messed up, that was it; there was no going back. But I have since realized that such thinking denies the redemptive power of the Atonement and its supreme power to heal hearts and change the repentant—no matter how many times we may slip. Understanding this truth helps me to be more patient and forgiving of my own weaknesses as well as others’ weaknesses because I know the Atonement works if only we will accept its power.

My father has worked tirelessly over the past several years to stay on the road of recovery. He is doing remarkably well, and in the process is helping many others with this issue. Recovery is a daily effort for anyone battling through this difficulty. To be honest, it is, at times, a challenge for both of my parents as they continue to work toward recovery as individuals and as a couple. But through their faith and steady efforts, they are growing together each day, and I think they are happier in their marriage and healthier as individuals than I have ever seen them.

A Loving Daughter
HELP
Questions & Answers

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ANSWERS

General Information

Q 1 What is pornography?
A 1 Pornography is “material that is sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal.” Whether by words or images, it may depict nudity or sexual behavior, and can be found in virtually every media, including romance novels, movies, video games, Internet chat rooms, erotic phone conversations, musical lyrics, and so on.

Q 2 What is the difference between “softcore” and “hardcore” pornography?
A 2 So-called “softcore” pornography generally consists of words or images that depict people who are partially or fully nude. So-called “hardcore” pornography involves words or images of people engaging in sexual acts or poses, including deviant behaviors such as those found in strip clubs, prostitution, the using of child pornography, sexual abuse of self or others, and sex in the context of violence.

Q 3 Why is pornography so dangerous?
A 3 Even though some people think there is nothing wrong with pornography, evidence shows there can be very real and dangerous effects on both individuals and society as a whole. Consider the following:

- Research indicates that pornography can be extremely addictive
- Pornography conditions a person to respond emotionally and sexually to a self-centered, artificial world
- Online chatrooms and romantic role playing, as well as pornography, are not based in reality; what individuals “read and see about people, relationships, and sex is distorted.”

Research demonstrates that repeated exposure to pornography results in:

- Doubts about the value of marriage
- Decreased desire to have children
- Devaluation of monogamy
- Decreased satisfaction with a spouse’s sexual performance, affection and physical appearance
- Perceiving non-monogamous relations as normal and natural behavior
- Porn-induced erectile dysfunction
- Clouded perception of self worth, and intrinsic value of people
- Shrunken grey matter in parts of the brain that oversee cognitive function. (even moderate use correlates to this)
- Greater desire for sex without emotional involvement
- Increased negative attitude toward women, and decreased empathy for victims of sexual violence

2: Jill C. Manning, Ph.D., What’s the Big Deal About Pornography?, p 2–4.
3: http://www.surgicalneurologyint.com/browse.asp?sabs=n
5: Ibid.
A meta-analysis of 33 studies found that exposure to either nonviolent or violent pornography increased behavioral aggression, including both violent fantasies and actual violent assaults.

(See learn.ftnd.org)

Another false philosophy that appeals to the Mr. Hyde side of our natures is that peeking into pornography is harmless. This is a terrible deception. Pornography is as addictive as cocaine or any illegal drug.

—PRESIDENT JAMES E. FAUST, 
“The Enemy Within,” Ensign, Nov. 2000

Is pornography addictive?

Many people wonder why those using pornography do not just stop using it when they have a sincere desire to do so, especially as they experience serious negative consequences associated with their behavior. This is classic behavior of one who has an addiction.

Those involved in the pornography industry, as well as their apologists (defenders) and some professionals, disagree with current research and purport that pornography may become a compulsion—but not an addiction. Rather than consider what is a growing and substantial body of scientific research supporting the existence of natural addictions, they tend to attack, ignore or minimize any such research or researcher. They only concede that pornography can be a “problem” for some.

Pornography is addictive.

(Ensign, March 1984)

What may begin as a curious exploration can become a controlling habit. Studies show that those who allow themselves to become drawn to pornography soon begin to crave even coarser content. Continued exposure desensitizes the spirit and can erode the conscience of unwary people. A victim becomes a slave to carnal thoughts and actions. As the thought is father to the deed, exposure can lead to acting out what is nurtured in the mind.

—ELDER DAVID B. HAIGHT, 
“Personal Morality,” Ensign, Nov. 1984

What is the progressively addictive nature of pornography?

Dr. Victor Cline has explained the addictive process as follows:

“In my experience as a sexual therapist, any individual who regularly masturbates [sex with self] while using pornography is at risk of becoming, in time, a sexual addict, as well as conditioning himself [or herself] into developing a sexual deviancy, and/or disturbing a bonded relationship with a spouse or girlfriend [or boyfriend].

“A frequent side effect is that it also dramatically reduces their capacity to love, and results in a marked disassociation of sex from friendship, affection, caring, and other healthy emotions and traits which help marriages. Their sexual side becomes, in a sense, dehumanized. Many of them develop an “alien ego state,” or “dark side,” whose core is antisocial lust devoid of most values. In time, the “high” obtained from using pornography and sex with self becomes more important than real life relationships. It makes little difference if one is an eminent physician, attorney, minister, athlete, corporate executive, college
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president, unskilled laborer, or an average 15-year-old boy. All can be conditioned into such deviancy. "The process of masturbatory conditioning is inexorable, and does not spontaneously remiss. The course of this illness may be slow; it is nearly always a secret part of the man’s [or woman’s] life, and like a cancer, keeps growing and spreading. It rarely ever reverses itself, and is very difficult to treat and heal. Denial on the part of the male [or female] addict, and refusal to confront the problem are typical and predictable, and this almost always leads to marital or couple disharmony, sometimes divorce, and sometimes the breaking up of other intimate relationships." 7

Dr. Cline summarizes the progression as follows:

1. **Addiction.** The person finds he compulsively views pornography.

2. **Escalation.** The addicted person seeks out progressively harder core pornography to get the same “high.”

3. **Desensitization.** Tolerance increases for progressively explicit material.

4. **Acting Out Sexually.** The person seeks to act out the fantasies viewed in the pornography (prostitution, adultery, etc.). 8

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6 **What is sexual addiction?**

**A 6** Sexual addiction is best described as a progressive intimacy disorder characterized by compulsive sexual thoughts and actions. Over time, the user usually has to escalate his or her sexual acting out, as well as addict behavior, to achieve the same results or “high.” Like other addictions, its negative impact on the user and on their family increases as the disorder progresses.

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For some who suffer from a sexual addiction, their behavior does not go beyond compulsive masturbation (sex with self), and the regular use of pornography, or phone or computer sex services. For others, acting out behavior can involve strip clubs, soliciting prostitutes, or illegal activities such as exhibitionism, voyeurism, obscene phone calls, child pornography, child molestation or rape.

The National Council on Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity has defined sexual addiction as “engaging in persistent and escalating patterns of sexual behavior . . . despite increasing negative consequences to self and others.” In other words, a person with sexual addiction will continue to engage in certain sexual behaviors despite potential health risks, financial problems, shattered relationships, or even arrest.

Lust is the force behind sexual addiction: our healthy sexual feelings or our normal human sex drive are taken over by lust. Lust has become an addiction. Lust is the opposite of human intimacy; it’s a self-indulgent fantasy which separates the sex from any emotional connection. It is insatiably “hungry,” and the one with the addiction will risk family, job, and church to indulge in this hunger. As one addict stated, “Lust is the most important thing in my life; it takes priority over me.” (White Book, Sexaholics Anonymous, p 42).
Love says,  
“This is my body, given up for you.”  
Lust says,  
“This is your body, taken by me.”  
—Matt Fradd

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.  
—Matthew 5:28

**Q 7 How common is pornography use among women?**

*A 7* While pornography use is currently not as common among women as it is for men, the percentage of women who use pornography is rapidly increasing. Nearly 70% of new pornography websites are geared towards women. While men tend to respond more to visual images, women initially tend to be more drawn to verbal and written forms of pornography, such as those found in graphic romance novels, explicit chat rooms, or online romantic role playing. Both women and men can use pornographic material and develop a sexual addiction.

Some women are drawn into relationships via social media that can lead to the production of self-pornography, which they send to those they meet online. Some wives may agree to watch pornography with their husbands in a misguided attempt to “spice up” the relationship, or to keep their husbands from watching such material alone. Remarkably, some married couples argue it is acceptable to watch pornography—as long as they do it together. This is nearly always male driven. The wife should understand, though, that when they have intimate relations the “mirror systems” of the husband’s brain will project him into the movie with the actors; she may provide the proxy body, but he is having sexual relations with those in the movie—not with her. Read more about the consequences of such behavior, and the brain’s “mirror systems,” on pp. 6–8.

**Q 8 If pornography use is such a big problem, why am I not more aware of it?**

*A 8* Traditionally, the topic of pornography and sexual addiction has been taboo, so it was rarely discussed openly. And there has been a stigma associated with the using of pornography, coupled with an assumption that so-called “good” people do not use it. This created a culture that has strongly resisted acknowledging that pornography is a problem.

Today, however, pornography is often marketed as a healthy pastime or a natural form of sexual expression, and that only religious prudes or those with over-active guilt complexes disapprove of it. Much of society does not see pornography as a serious social concern. Unlike other addictions, pornography and sexual addictions are comparatively easy to hide, and this perpetuates the perception that pornography really is not a widespread problem. In actuality, it is a very widespread problem that needs to be addressed openly and boldly.

We hope that our parents and leaders will not tolerate pornography. It is really garbage, but today is peddled as normal and satisfactory food…. It is ridiculous to imply that pornography has no effect.  
—PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL,  
“God Will Not Be Mocked,” Ensign, Nov. 1974

**Q 9 Will discussing pornography openly make the problem worse, or raise curiosity?**

*A 9* Many children are exposed to pornography very early—even as early as 5 to 12 years of age. Virtually all children will be exposed to pornography in their teen years. Because of that, wise parents will
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start earlier discussing pornography openly with their children; they should make them aware of its addictive nature, and that regularly using pornography can destroy their capacity to develop and enjoy healthy and empathetic relationships. Without such open and ongoing discussions, children may be left with the impression that pornography is rather harmless. But with such discussions, especially when parents connect basic principles of the Plan of Salvation, children will then have a context of why this topic is so important, and feel empowered to make wiser choices when faced with tempting circumstances.

Learn more about the positive outcomes from having such regular discussions, and ideas to get those conversations started, on pp. 104, 107, 111, 127. (Also see the Tools for Parents & Conversation and Lesson Ideas sections)

Q 10 In what ways is pornography used as a “drug” or coping mechanism for other kinds of problems and stress?

A 10 Every person finds ways to deal with their own feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, resentment, stress, frustration, boredom, loneliness and insecurity. Some ways are constructive, others more destructive. While many individuals may use pornography out of a desire for so-called “excitement” or “pleasure,” pornography—and its effect on the user’s brain—is also widely used as a way to escape from or cope with feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, resentment and so on. In this way, pornography becomes their “drug” of choice that is used to cope with challenges and disappointments—just as alcohol or illicit drugs might be used. Such use can easily escalate into an addiction.

Stay completely away from pornography. Do not allow yourself to view it, ever. It has been proven to be an addiction which is more than difficult to overcome.

—PRESIDENT THOMAS S. MONSON
Priesthood Power, Ensign, May 2011

Q 11 How can I tell if someone I love may be using pornography?

A 11 If you are concerned that your loved one might be using pornography, the best course of action may be to ask him or her directly. The following questions may also help identify if there is a problem. It is important to note that some of these behaviors are common, and may not necessarily be caused by pornography use but by other circumstances.

Physical Behaviors to Consider:

♦ Have you caught him or her using inappropriate material, or found pornographic material for which they deny responsibility?

♦ Does he or she tend to spend time on their electronic devices after everyone else is in bed, or stay up late for unexplained reasons?

♦ Does he or she tend to quickly change their cell phone or computer screens, or turn them off, when you walk by?

♦ Does he or she frequently clear the Internet history on their devices?

♦ Does he or she have substantial amounts of unaccounted-for time, and avoid disclosing their activities?

♦ Is he or she working longer hours at the office, over prolonged periods of time, for unexplained reasons?
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Does he or she seem more tired or worn out than usual? When questioned, do their answers seem odd or unsatisfactory?

Is he or she missing appointments and deadlines without satisfactory explanations?

How does he or she respond when you address the topic of pornography? Do they initially seem uncomfortable, hostile or non-responsive?

Does he or she seem to be watching increasingly graphic and sexually explicit videos or TV content?

Relational Behaviors to Consider:

Does he or she seem withdrawn, “checked out,” or emotionally disconnected for long periods of time?

Does he or she spend less time with the family, or just wants to be alone more than usual?

Does he or she seem more irritable and on edge than usual?

Have you experienced a “gut feeling” that something is wrong?

Is he or she less able to see their part in relationship conflicts, and instead tend to blame others when discussing such conflicts?

Does he or she seem to be getting angry over even little things?

Is he or she more critical of others than usual?

Has he or she become more focused on, or critical of, physical appearances?

Does he or she seem to be sending conflicting messages regarding their feelings and desires for your relationship?

Financial Behaviors to Consider:

Are there charges on your credit card statements to unfamiliar companies?

Are there phone charges to unknown numbers on your phone bill?

Are there unaccounted-for expenditures?

Sexual Behaviors to Consider:

Does he or she seem to go unusually longer periods of time between sexual intimacy?

Does he or she tend to pressure you for sex—even when you make it clear that it is not something you want to do at that time?

Is he or she wanting to experiment with sexual behaviors you find uncomfortable or unacceptable?

Is he or she asking you to watch or read sexually explicit material—with or without them—to improve or “spice up” your sex life?

How should I respond if I discover my child is using pornography?

First and foremost, stay calm and do not overreact. A child’s openness is influenced by his or her ability to trust and confide in their parents. If a parent overreacts, the child may feel shamed and become even more secretive in the future. But if he or she senses that their parents understand them, and still love them, they will be much more likely to keep an open dialogue with them as their hidden story unfolds. Do not be afraid to be honest and open in your discussions. Learn how you can balance this on p. 110, “Creating a Safe Place to Talk About Dangerous Things” by therapist Jeffery J. Ford, MS, LMFT.

It is important that children understand what pornography is, and why using it is so dangerous and damaging. If a child is regularly using pornography, this may be a sign of addiction, and it is time to seek appropriate help.
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They need to know the dangers of pornography and how it overtakes lives, causing loss of the Spirit, distorted feelings, deceit, damaged relationships, loss of self-control, and nearly total consumption of time, thought, and energy.

Pornography is more vile, evil, and graphic than ever before. As we counsel with our children, together we can create a family plan with standards and boundaries, being proactive to protect our homes with filters on electronic devices. Parents, are we aware that mobile devices with Internet capacity, not computers, are the biggest culprit?9

13 What does sobriety mean?

Terms such as “sexual sobriety” or “sexual purity” are often misunderstood as a state of abstinence from all sexual thoughts, feelings and actions. But such terms may not always refer to abstinence from physical intimacy. As the True to the Faith manual explains,

“Physical intimacy between husband and wife is beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love within marriage.”

One should not feel shameful or guilty for having experienced natural sexual feelings. Understanding the difference between sexual purity and lust can lessen or eliminate such feelings of shame. For example, the Lord helps us understand what appropriate sexual relations are, within marriage, by setting clear boundaries: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Exodus 20:14). Regarding unmarried persons, the apostle Paul taught that it is “the will of God” that we “abstain from fornication,” which is sexual relations between an unmarried person and anyone else. (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

True “sexual sobriety” does not mean merely refraining from crossing these lines (meaning adultery and fornication), but rather a constant effort of living a life of sexual purity—free from lust. Lust is the driving force behind all sexual immorality—whether one is married or not. Love is at one end of the spectrum, and includes unselfish motives and sexual purity; lust is the focus of the opposite end, and includes selfish behaviors such as viewing pornography, sex with self (masturbation), fantasy, adultery and fornication.

Note: When considering 12-Step recovery groups, professional therapy, or other recovery programs, be sure these programs define “sexual sobriety” as not merely refraining from adultery or fornication, but define it as a progressive victory over lust; a continual effort to strive towards the Lord’s standard of personal purity.

*For more information go to lds.org and search “sexual purity.”

14 What does recovery mean and look like?

Living in recovery from pornography or sexual addiction requires more than just abstaining from the behavior. Abstinence is important, of course, but true recovery requires a lifestyle change that is founded on a change of heart. Recovery is both observed and felt. Besides being free from sexual “acting out” behaviors, it is characterized by honesty, humility and accountability, and a willingness to serve God and others. Consider these factors that can indicate a person’s progress in recovery and willingness to live in recovery:

- How long has he or she gone without using pornography? (Research has shown that it takes at least 7 to 12 months before an addicted individual is on their way to establishing true and lasting sobriety; living in a state of recovery requires continuing work, and additional time for healing the physical body and spiritual heart.)
- Does he or she have hope: hope for healing; hope for recovery; and hope in Christ?

9: Protection From Pornography: A Christ Centered Home, Linda S. Reeves, April 2014
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- Is he or she willing to work on recovery daily?
- Does he or she continue regular participation in a 12-Step program?
- Does he or she regularly work with a sponsor?
- Is he or she getting appropriate counseling?
- Is he or she completely honest, open, and transparent in discussing their pornography use—past and present, to their spouse or significant other, parents, therapist, and religious leaders?
- Does he or she recognize and admit to having an addiction?
- Is he or she working on understanding and resolving the issues underlying their pornography addiction?
- Is he or she working to change their attitudes and behaviors regarding healthy sexuality?
- Is he or she setting and keeping appropriate boundaries to protect against future relapse?
- Is he or she more concerned about helping others who might also be struggling with pornography addiction rather than keeping their own experience with pornography a secret?
- Is he or she striving to have empathy for their betrayed and traumatized spouse?

We say there is no “finish line” in the work of addiction recovery as we endure well the remainder of our lives. Nevertheless, upon conditions of true repentance, accepting the healing powers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and through God’s grace, we say we can joyfully live in a state of recovery and experience tremendous happiness in mortality—free from the chains of addiction.

And now, my brethren, I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance;

But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering;

Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest.

And may the Lord grant unto you repentance, that ye may not bring down his wrath upon you, that ye may not be bound down by the chains of hell, that ye may not suffer the second death.

—Alma 13:27-30

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

—D&C 121:45-46
Questions & Answers

Q 15 How are friends of pornography users affected?

A 15 Using pornography can cause the individual to be emotionally unavailable, thus creating a distance in relationships. Discovering that a person uses pornography may be especially devastating to friends, who may initially experience feelings of disbelief, fear, disgust, betrayal, distrust, denial, sadness and anger. Such friends may wonder if they can trust the user; if he or she poses a danger; and they may wonder why they would continue such behavior.

Some friends may deal with such emotions by withdrawing from the relationship. Some may try to maintain an air of normalcy by avoiding the issue and pretending nothing has changed. And some may inappropriately step in and attempt to fix the problem—without having the skills necessary to help the user truly recover. Friends of those who use pornography may experience a grieving process similar to what the spouse of a user experiences. It is important for friends to identify and learn how to work through these poignant emotions.

Q 16 How can I best support a person who is compulsively using pornography?

A 16 One of the most painful aspects of supporting a person who is compulsively using pornography is accepting your own lack of control over whether the user chooses to change and pursue recovery. You may have some measure of influence, but you have no control over their choices. Recovery is the user’s personal responsibility; they have to be willing to find recovery for themselves. It is often a high challenge for a spouse or a friend to strike the right balance between being patient, encouraging and accepting, versus enabling destructive behaviors. Even well-intentioned attempts at micromanaging the compulsive user’s recovery run contrary to true support and encouragement. To help sort through these vexing issues, consider the following suggestions:

- Take responsibility for your own peace and emotional well-being
- Get help for yourself. Many find counseling and a 12-Step program to be invaluable in this process. Learn about how your relationship with the pornography user may likely affect you
- Do not take responsibility for the pornography user’s problems or his or her recovery
- Recognize and accept that being a “policeman” is not helpful to the user; he or she must ultimately choose their own course of action
- Set boundaries and commit to stick to them. The person with the addiction makes his or her own choices, but they cannot dictate the choices of others, nor avoid the consequences of violating the boundaries of others
- Try to discern how the user is reaching out for help and recovery. Find ways to connect that are emotionally supportive, safe, and uplifting. Reaching out using these sound principles can be a powerful source of encouragement and support

Q 17 How can I best support someone who is experiencing betrayal trauma?

A 17 Those who are in a relationship with a person who is a pornography user often feel isolated, alone and helpless. This is the real trauma of betrayal. We can best help such loved ones by being available to support them. Listen, and allow them to share their feelings in a safe, confidential setting. Do not tell them
you know what it is like. Do not try to solve their problems, or tell them what they ought to do. Instead, you are wise to encourage them to seek appropriate professional and religious counseling, to attend meetings of special 12-Step recovery groups, and to find a sponsor.

Let these individuals suffering from betrayal trauma know they are loved, accepted, and supported as they make very difficult and important decisions. You can personally learn about pornography addiction and betrayal trauma, and encourage them to do the same.

18 **What if those with the addiction do not want recovery?**

**A 18** Ultimately, the person struggling with the pornography addiction must be the one to decide if he or she wants to do the work and make the lifestyle changes necessary for recovery. Continue to be understanding and supportive, but make sure you understand and avoid the temptation of becoming codependent, or enabling the user’s behavior. Encourage them to get help.

Regardless of whether he or she wants to recover, it is important to provide support to their spouse and other loved ones. The betrayal trauma the spouse is experiencing needs to be addressed no matter what; encourage the spouse to get their own appropriate help, and to set boundaries for protection in the relationship.

19 **What if my friend or loved one says they want to recover, but continues to have relapses?**

**A 19** Although a relapse can be a setback, what matters most is the actions the user takes after a relapse. Do they excuse or minimize their return to using pornography, or is the individual contrite and shows a broken heart? Help them understand that suffering a lapse does not mean they are a lost cause. This crossroad is a prime time for Satan to plant feelings of shame, failure and worthlessness—which may compound addictive behavior. Assure them of God’s love, and that God will help them gain recovery.

The crux of the issue is to not give up, or stop trying. At the same time, do not minimize or dismiss their inappropriate behavior. Help them realize that the relapse is serious. If appropriate, ask questions about what may have triggered it. Encourage them to be regularly accountable to someone (such as a bishop and/or sponsor) about their behavior choices; to continue to attend 12-Step meetings; and to work with a sponsor and a therapist. Users can learn—and even grow—from their mistakes as they continue working recovery and honestly seek guidance from the Spirit.

But what of those who find themselves in the grip of addiction? Please know, first of all, that there is hope. Seek help from loved ones, Church leaders, and trained counselors.

Always remember, with the Savior’s help, you can break free from addiction. It may be a long, difficult path, but the Lord will not give up on you. He loves you. Jesus Christ suffered the Atonement to help you change, to free you from the captivity of sin.

The most important thing is to keep trying—sometimes it takes several attempts before people find success. So don’t give up. Don’t lose faith. Keep your heart close to the Lord, and He will give you the power of deliverance. He will make you free.

—PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF, *Ensign*, May 2014

Recovery is hard work and requires serious lifestyle changes. There is no short cut. But by encouraging the individual to identify specific steps to avoid future slips, and by expressing your love and support, you can help them find renewed hope and determination, and the courage to continue in their work of recovery.
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The 12-Step Program

Q 20  What are 12-Step programs?
A 20  The counterintuitive idea that help from a user in recovery could be a great asset to another user began in 1935 with the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The endurance of AA, and the adaptation of their 12-Step program to many other addictions, is the strongest endorsement of effectiveness a program could have.

12-Step programs have been highly successful in helping those struggling with addiction find lasting recovery. There are over 100 variations of 12-Step recovery programs that address virtually every type of addiction, including alcoholism, drug addiction, food addiction, gambling addiction, trauma and codependency, and over-spending. Nearly all of them are based on the original 12-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the AA Big Book, which was first published in 1939.

12-Step programs are non-professional and non-profit. They are effective in promoting recovery from addiction, but they are not intended to replace individual therapy led by trained professionals.

12-Step programs share a number of elements that aid in the recovery process:

Openness: Breaking the shame and secrecy surrounding an addiction is one of the first key steps in overcoming it. 12-Step group meetings provide a safe and supportive environment to share feelings and experiences with others who understand what you are going through—because they have experienced the same thing.

Specific Boundaries and Recovery Plan: 12-Step programs can provide specific definitions of sobriety that are used to measure progress and recovery. Programs also offer literature and instructions specific to the addiction that can be used daily to help individuals overcome addiction.

Accountability: Recovering users check in frequently with a sponsor, and also report their progress at meetings. These interactions promote regular accountability and transparency. They also help dissipate the shame a user feels so that he can focus on the actions needed to achieve recovery.

Support: New members who are just starting the recovery process hear from recovering individuals in recovery; all find support and encouragement by attending 12-Step meetings, talking with other group members, making outreach calls, reading literature, working with a sponsor, and in time serving as a sponsor.

The 12 Steps: Experience shows that working the steps daily is critical to addressing the emotional and spiritual issues behind the addiction. Daily effort is necessary to achieving long-term success.

Higher Power: Most 12-Step programs are non-denominational, and focus on turning to a Higher Power, or the God of our understanding, for intervention and healing. Latter-day Saints who participate in 12-Step groups understand this Higher Power to be our Heavenly Father, and recognize that healing and recovery of both those with the addiction and traumatized loved ones comes through Jesus Christ and the power of His Atonement.

Consider watching the short video by Dr. Patrick Carnes, “Why Are 12-Steps So Effective?” This can be viewed for free on the SA Lifeline Foundation website at SALifeline.org.

Q 21  What information is available about various 12-Step programs?
A 21  Refer to p.157 in the Resource Section of this manual for a brief history of the origin of 12-Step, and 12-Step programs that are specific to recovery from sexual addiction and betrayal trauma.
How can attending 12-Step meetings benefit recovery?

For compulsive pornography users who are seeking recovery, committing to participate in a 12-Step program is an important step in their recovery. Many have tried to stop using pornography on their own, only to eventually fail. For virtually all users, lasting recovery begins only when they break the secrecy surrounding their addiction, admit they are not able to change on their own, and join a 12-Step fellowship. The White Book of Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) states:

We sexaholics do not presume to be authorities on addiction of any kind, much less sex addiction.... Some researchers even confess to being baffled by what addiction really is.... We speak from our own experience as seen through recovery.

We have a solution. We don’t claim that it’s for everybody, but for us, it works. There is an unwritten step underlying all twelve. Call it Step Zero: “We participated in the fellowship of the program.” No one seems able to stay sober and progress in recovery without it, though some try. For most of us, without associating in some way with other recovering individuals, there is no lasting sobriety and none of the fringe benefits of recovery, growth, freedom, and joy… We don’t try to explain this; it is simply a fact.” (SA White Book)

For those closely affected by another’s addiction, attending a 12-Step program for themselves is also important. One of the least understood components of sexual addiction may be the devastating effect it usually has on a spouse or loved one. In the process of trying to cope with the collateral problems of living with a pornography user, a spouse or loved one may experience betrayal trauma, and suffer from symptoms that parallel Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

They may even develop their own set of negative behaviors.

Regardless of whether the user chooses to follow a recovery program, the betrayed spouse or loved one should work their own recovery. Attending special 12-Step meetings for those suffering betrayal trauma is a vital part of such recovery. Yet it is important to note that support groups or 12-Step programs are not substitutes for therapeutic treatment; users and traumatized spouses should also seek appropriate professional counseling as key parts of their own recovery.

What are elements of an effective 12-Step program?

Much of the benefit obtained from attending 12-Step meetings is derived from the other members who are present. Accordingly, at least part of the effectiveness of 12-Step meetings is as varied as the people who attend them. So it is important to find a meeting that works for the individual seeking help. Depending on the availability in your area, LDS members in recovery have found both LDS-sponsored and nondenominational meetings to be extremely helpful. Effective groups will have:
Meetings attended regularly by a reasonable number of people who have found healing and recovery, and who share their experience, strength and hope.

Available sponsors who are experienced and qualified to guide and encourage newcomers through the recovery process.

Recommended literature specific to the addiction, and a methodology for working the 12 steps.

A definition of sobriety consistent with the value system of the individual seeking recovery.

Regular meetings, available several times each week, conducted by someone who has gained recovery from the specific addiction.

If, after attending several meetings of a particular 12-Step group, the individual seeking recovery does not have a positive experience, they should look for a different group that can better meet their needs and matches the above criteria. It is important to not give up until a group is found that works for the individual.

Refer to p.157 in the Resource Section of this manual for a brief history of the origin of 12-Step, and 12-Step programs that are specific to recovery from sexual addiction and betrayal trauma.

24 What are the 12 Steps of recovery?

The 12 Steps of recovery set forth the process by which individuals make spiritual, emotional and mental changes which enable them to recover from addictive behavior and maintain long-term sobriety. The steps were originally written and published by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and closely correlate to the process of repentance and applying the power that comes from Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

The original wording of the 12 Steps of Recovery, as written by Alcoholics Anonymous, follows. Two words (in parentheses) are changed for use by Sexaholics Anonymous (SA).

Sexaholics Anonymous (SA)

The 12 Steps of Recovery

STEP 1
We admitted we were powerless over alcohol (lust)—that our lives had become unmanageable.

STEP 2
Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

STEP 3
Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

STEP 4
Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

STEP 5
Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

STEP 6
Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

STEP 7
Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

STEP 8
Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

STEP 9
Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

STEP 10
Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
STEP 11
Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out.

STEP 12
Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sexaholics (sexaholics) and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The 12 Steps of Recovery for Spouse, Family and Friends

STEP 1
We admitted we were powerless over sexaholism—that our lives had become unmanageable.

STEP 2
Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

STEP 3
Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

STEP 4
Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

STEP 5
Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

STEP 6
Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

STEP 7
Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

STEP 8
Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

STEP 9
Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

STEP 10
Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

STEP 11
Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of God’s will for us and the power to carry that out.

STEP 12
Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Q 25 What can I expect when I attend a 12-Step meeting?

A 25 A group leader will generally begin the meeting by reading verbatim a set script. This is followed by readings from selected program literature. Group members then have an opportunity to share with others their feelings about the readings, or their own specific recovery experiences.

As is tradition, speakers generally introduce themselves by first name only, after which the group responds, “Hi, [name].” Although the format of 12-Step meetings may feel awkward to newcomers, the pattern soon becomes familiar and comfortable as attendees learn about the importance of each concept.
There are no dues or fees for membership, although a basket may be passed around at non-LDS meetings where attendees can contribute a dollar or two to help defray space rental and operating costs.

**Q 26 What does involvement in a 12-Step program entail?**

**A 26** Initially, involvement in a 12-Step program usually entails attending a minimum of two meetings per week. Some programs encourage even more. Attending a 12-Step meeting that is specifically designed for your addiction is ideal. If such meetings are not readily available locally, a growing number of live telephone or online meetings can be found. See p.157 and p.159 for more information.

Working the 12 steps daily is the key to making the 12-Step program work. This includes studying prescribed literature, journaling, and reporting on commitments made to a sponsor. Having a sponsor is critical to the recovery process (See Question #29 on p.97 to learn more about sponsors).

As progress in recovery is achieved, those in recovery then have an opportunity to fill service positions within the program. This may include being a sponsor themselves, being responsible for the group’s literature library, acting as a moderator to the group, or serving as liaison to the 12-Step group’s regional body. Maintaining recovery requires that we “give back what [we] have so generously been given.”

Many recovering users report that one of the most effective ways they can safeguard their own sobriety is by working with other users who are also trying to recover.

**Q 27 What is a sponsor?**

**A 27** Sponsorship is a critical component of effective 12-Step programs. Sponsors are those who are working the 12 steps themselves, and are finding sobriety and recovery from a specific addiction. Because of their own positive experience, they are in a unique position to guide and encourage others who are suffering from the same addiction through the recovery process. Such sponsors provide hope, accountability and specific guidance on how to work the 12 steps. Newcomers are encouraged to “find a sponsor who has what you want, and ask how it was obtained.”

A sponsor may give assignments designed to help gain and maintain recovery. Assignments may include specific rules of conduct, attendance at meetings, reading certain kinds of literature, and reporting on a designated schedule.

Typically, those struggling with addiction call their sponsor at set intervals to report their progress and get support or practical feedback as they encounter daily issues. The recovering user may also call a sponsor—or any other program member for support—any time they feel tempted to act out.

The need for persons suffering from addiction to have a sponsor is generally recognized; but many people may not appreciate the vital role a sponsor can play in the recovery of a traumatized spouse or loved one. The spouse’s sponsor—who is never the same as the user’s sponsor—can offer support and validation, and affirm that the spouse is not responsible for the user’s behavior. The sponsor can also help them work the 12 steps, and set healthy boundaries for safety.

**Q 28 How can I find a good sponsor?**

**A 28** Sponsors are most often found at 12-Step meetings. It is important to find a sponsor who will work well with the individual seeking help. Consider also that each sponsor offers unique insights and perspectives.

At different points in their recovery, individuals may feel a need to change sponsors. Consider the following when choosing a sponsor:

- Sponsors should always be of the same gender as the person they are helping.
- Because sponsors need to provide an impartial perspective, ordinarily they should not be
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- Sponsors should be emotionally and spiritually stable in their own recovery. Unless they are working the 12 steps, and continue to do so, sponsors may not be able to provide the insight necessary to effectively help someone else.
- Sponsors should be readily available, and willing to accept phone calls; they should encourage those whom they sponsor to reach out to them whenever needed.
- Sponsors should be honest, keep confidences, and maintain the anonymity of the person they are helping.
- Sponsors should genuinely care about the individual, such that they may need to correct the person if he or she starts minimizing commitments, or slipping back into addictive or enabling behaviors.
- Effective sponsors will listen with empathy, act out of love, and help the one whom they sponsor succeed.
- Sponsors share their experience, strength and hope, and should not give advice.

Q 29   Which is more important: 12-Step support groups or professional therapy?
A 29   This is somewhat of a trick question: Attending 12-Step group meetings, as well as going to professional counseling, can be equally vital to lasting recovery. Most users who successfully recover often spend a substantial amount of time in both counseling and in 12-Step programs.

Even though 12-Step support can serve as the foundation for long-term recovery, professional treatment may be equally necessary for individual and relationship healing. For most people, a multi-faceted approach is most effective, similar to the construction of a rope where the real strength lies not in individual strands but in the collective strength of many strands woven together. This is why we strongly encourage a balanced recovery program that includes an open-ended period of 12-Step support, individual and couples counseling, group counseling, education, proper nutrition and exercise, spirituality and other lifestyle changes.

Weak strands, woven together, create a nearly invincible rope.
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Q 30  What if I can't find a 12-Step group in my area?
A 30  Refer to pp. 157-160 in the Resource Section for 12-Step programs that allow participation via online or by phone, and are specific to recovery from sexual addiction and betrayal trauma.

Q 31  What if the user is a youth who is too young to attend 12-Step meetings?
A 31  Many children and youth are addicted to using pornography. Without appropriate help, their addiction can inhibit their ability to form healthy, emotional relationships with anyone. Because of legal considerations for teens under the age of 18, there are no regular, public 12-Step meetings available. There are, however, therapists who specialize in this age group. Additionally, some therapists offer group sessions specifically for youth.

Parents still play a critical role in educating their children about healthy sexuality and the dangers of using pornography.

Learn more about educational resources for parents on pp. 154–156.

Protecting Against Pornography

Q 32  How can we avoid pornography?
A 32  Benjamin Franklin said, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Even though there have been dramatic changes in the way information is shared, and smart phones are being used by ever younger age groups; even though there is almost no way to completely avoid pornography—since uninvited exposure may occur even from “friends” or with robust software filters, there are, however, ways to decrease our exposure. One of the most effective methods—no matter the age—is to be personally committed to self-regulation. All individuals, including children and teens, must be taught to quickly turn away from provocative material, whether it enters into their minds from words or images, and why avoiding it in the first place is so vital.

Decreasing our overall exposure to media in our hyper-sexualized culture is a good start; this hampers its ability to desensitize our hearts and minds through regular exposure. It has been shown that much of today’s mainstream media contains sexualized content that would have been considered at least “soft-core” pornography only a few years ago.

So-called “adult material” is a clever, yet diabolical, turn of phrase. The Lord expects parents to hold themselves to the same standard they want their own children to follow. We can teach even young children to embrace high personal standards ahead of time; they can commit to follow the example of Joseph in Egypt, who, when faced with uninvited immoral advances, quickly “fled, and got him out.” (Genesis 39:12)

Not only is decreasing our exposure to certain media important, we should also be sensitive to the ongoing emotional and relational health of family members that might increase their vulnerability.

Q 33  How can we protect children from using pornography?
A 33  Education is key in helping children become aware of the dangers of using pornography. Most people do not appreciate that pornography has power to quickly turn into an addiction that can be extremely difficult to overcome. Teach children, then, what to look out for and how to respond when they encounter inappropriate words and images. Do your best to link these regular, natural, open conversations to the basic principles of the Plan of Salvation. Such safe
conversations with family members reinforces their commitment to follow core family values and rules.

Vigilance is still required—even after taking precautions. Parents should know that the vast majority of pornography is used in the home—either their own, or the home of a friend—so parents should establish rules regarding cell phone and Internet usage no matter where their children are. Although software filters may not prevent a child from viewing pornography if they are determined to do so, it will provide an initial delay, and block most easy or accidental access.

Consider the benefits of having discussions about media usage (whether cell phones or videos, in print or spoken), and agreeing on and posting guidelines for how they should be used, maybe even drafting a family pledge signed by each person.

Additionally, watch for negative changes in a child’s behavior. If any such changes are noticed, or a parent is concerned about possible pornography use, it is important to talk to the child and get help immediately if needed. If you have been fostering a safe environment for discussing these issues, that conversation will be natural, and more than likely the child may be relieved to have their use come out in the open where they can then get help. (See pp.101-118 in “Tools for Parents” for ideas.)

External and internal monitoring are both needed to protect children from pornography. External monitoring has to do with identifying possible ways your child could be exposed to pornography, and then finding ways to decrease this chance of exposure. Internal monitoring teaches a child to recognize what pornography is, how to respond to it, and helps them create a strong internal filter and value system. To build this internal filter, parents should have regular, even brief, talks with their children about human sexuality, exposure to pornography, how to respond to this exposure, and the value of chastity and sexual restraint.

Parents need to feel confident that when their child is accidentally exposed to pornography, the child will know how to respond, and will also tell their parents about it. Such internal monitoring is vital, and gives children the tools they need to courageously make the right choices. Again, vigilance is still required—even after taking precautions.

Q 34 What can I do to increase safety—on all devices?

A 34 We can do many things to safeguard our families from the harmful influences found on electronic devices. Because cell phones, laptops and tablets are mobile, they present a more pressing challenge. They can be used in a bedroom or other private place where what the user is watching is less likely to be seen by those passing by.

If parents allow minor children the privilege of using a digital device such as a cell phone or laptop or tablet, then certain rules ought to accompany that privilege. Who is paying the monthly charges for the device should be irrelevant.

While there is no foolproof system, parents can follow these steps to reduce the risk of family members encountering or using pornographic materials.

- Place home computers in high-traffic areas, and so the screen faces outward for public view.
- Continue to educate yourself about how computers and cell phones work. This may be an ongoing challenge, yet critical in helping protect children.
- Know the user name and password for each device, and its email account and other apps.
- Install Internet filters on all devices, and don’t share the password with children. Good filtering programs have an un-erasable history of websites (including chat rooms) that have been visited, and when they were visited. They can also provide an ongoing record of email traffic.
- Some filters allow you to completely password-protect any use of the Internet, or just certain types of websites; some allow...
you to set certain times when the Internet is accessible. (See the next Question, #35, for filtering software options.)

- You might consider making a family rule that all devices are to be deposited (in a certain public area) every night before bedtime, and that you may sometimes browse their texting habits and internet history. According to InternetFilterReview.com, nearly 25% of all daily searches on the Internet are for pornography; and that nearly 90% of 8 to 16 year-olds have viewed pornography online—mostly while doing their homework.12

“...information and images accessible on the Internet call for sharp focus and control to avoid accessing the pornography that is an increasing scourge in our society.”

—ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS,
Deseret News, April 2, 2001

- Teach family members to use the Internet for specific purposes only. Aimless surfing makes it more likely that children may accidentally encounter inappropriate content. In this sense, boredom may be children’s—and thus parents’—worst enemy.

- Teach family members to avoid public and private chat rooms, bulletin boards, forums and unfamiliar areas on the Internet, which may present substantial risks for children and adults.

- Teach children not to share any personal information online without parental knowledge and permission. Predators often pose as children to gain access to information that may put your children at risk.

- Be aware of the policies of your children’s school and public library regarding Internet use.

35 What are some effective Internet filtering and parental control programs?

Software:

Convenient Eyes – covenanteyes.com (paid plans for both individuals and families.)

Ever Accountable - everaccountable.com (monthly subscription; free trial available.)

iKeepSafe - ikeepsafe.org (multiple products, certifications, and resources for schools and admins.)

K9 - k9webprotection.com (free internet filter and parental control software)

KidzSafe - kidzsafe.org (education and resources for schools around bullying, child abuse, and abduction.)

NetAngel – netangel.com (free and paid plans.)

NetNanny – netnanny.com (paid plans for both individuals and families)

12: Internet Pornography Statistics, Internet Filter Review.
As a parent, should I be the one to teach my children about healthy sexuality?

Our culture is filled with misleading and destructive messages about sexuality. If parents do nothing, by default children’s attitudes will be shaped by the media and others, and children may not develop a gospel-based healthy concept of sexuality. However, if parents try to teach children from a young age to understand healthy principles of sexuality; if teaching is appropriate to their age and maturity; and if it is linked to basic principles of the Plan of Salvation, children will be much better prepared with the power of truth to counter unhealthy myths about sex. They will also understand why pornography is so destructive. Don’t forget the why.

Parents should create opportunities to teach children about gender roles, healthy sexuality and love. This should include the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of sexuality, including the God-ordained role of sexual intimacy within marriage. If parents are having regular, natural, brief discussions with their children on a broad range of topics, over several years, children will feel safer talking about concepts of healthy sexuality.

As a parent, when should I begin teaching my children about sexuality and pornography?

Sexuality and pornography should be discussed with children much earlier than most parents think. Parents can begin by teaching very young children about modesty, privacy and self-respect. Starting with such basic concepts when children are younger makes it easier to transition to discussing the danger of pornography more directly later on. By age eight, children are verbal, open, curious, less embarrassed, and old enough to understand many significant concepts. When a child can access the Internet, you should already be talking with them about the danger of using pornography. Always remember the why when teaching.

How do I talk to my child about healthy sexuality and pornography?

Effective teaching begins when parents answer questions asked by children of any age simply and without embarrassment. Teaching about healthy sexuality may include instruction about our mortal body, and helping children understand that certain parts of the body are kept private. This is more naturally done in context of God’s great Plan of Happiness, and how our bodies and sexuality are part of that Plan. Read more about effective questions parents can ask to create a teaching moment on pp. 101–118 of this manual.

Parents can begin teaching about the danger of pornography at the same time when teaching about the body. For example, if a child picks up a book that illustrates certain private parts of the human body, a parent could respond with a comment such as, “I see that picture caught your interest. Do you have any questions? Let’s talk about it.”

Similarly, when a child views something sexually provocative, acknowledging the material—without discomfort or surprise—is important. A parent might say, “I see that caught your attention. How does that make you feel inside? When we run across those kinds
of pictures, we should change the channel (or close the book, or turn off the computer, etc.), and then tell a parent.” Consider taking time, right then, to briefly explain why the material is inappropriate, and how it ties into basic principles of the Plan of Salvation.

When a child inadvertently views inappropriate or provocative material, they often instinctively hide it from their parents out of shame and embarrassment. Find ways to bring such experiences out in the open where they can be learned from. This can become a prime teaching opportunity when handled well. When a child courageously discloses such viewing to his parents, parents should acknowledge that courage; they should also express appreciation for trusting them enough to come forward. How parents handle this may strongly influence whether their child feels safe enough to bring it up if it happens again, or when their child may have become a user who can’t stop on their own and wants to reach out for help.

This type of communication sends a clear message to children of all ages that parents are a good resource when they have questions, and that parents won’t get after them for innocent curiosity. Questions from children should be music to the ears of involved parents. Responding to younger children openly and factually with simple statements and explanations is generally best. As children get older, more opportunities will naturally arise—or you should create them—to have more detailed discussions. For more ideas on the content of these discussions, read pp. 114–118 of this manual. For additional resources see pp. 154-155.

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**Do I Have a Problem?**

**Q 39** How can I tell if I have a pornography problem?

**A 39** Simply put, an individual has a problem when they tell themselves they are not going to use pornography anymore—and then find themselves using it anyway. Pornography users return to thinking about, planning for, and participating in secret behaviors that take priority over healthy and important activities. Carefully consider the following list to determine if you should reach out for help:

- Recurring patterns of “stop-start” behavior, with frequent, or at least consistent, relapses.
- Continued pornography use despite possible adverse consequences to your marriage, family
relationships, job, educational progress and loss of income.

- Escalation of behavior, including increased time or frequency spent using pornography; a craving for ever more stimulation; using harsher and more graphic forms of pornography.

- History of lies, deception and secretly living a double life in order to maintain the appearance of normality, all while using pornography and other illicit sexual behaviors.

- Feelings of guilt, shame, remorse of conscience and low self-worth because of one’s sexual behavior.13

If you are using pornography yet feel like you don’t have a problem like the examples listed above, consider that pornography always causes a problem simply because it is inherently a problem. For example, pornography is inherently mis-education; it is inherently sexual exploitation and obscenity, and so on. Reaching out for support—even to talk about inadvertent or accidental exposure, can be beneficial.

Q 40 Why is it important to disclose my pornography use to someone?

A 40 Pornography addiction thrives in secrecy, and often breeds feelings of shame and guilt which tend to escalate the problem. Disclosing pornography use, particularly to your spouse and your bishop or stake president, is one of the first steps on the path to stopping once and for all. This requires a willing heart and a measure of humility and courage. Once a user admits and talks about their behavior, feelings of shame and guilt may begin to dissipate as hope flows back in. Talking to trusted others can provide needed support, additional resources and accountability.

In contrast, keeping pornography use secret can actually create more emotional arousal, which may lead to additional acting out.14 “Asking for support is not easy, but living in recovery requires absolute honesty and the courage to ask for help. Denial, self-deception and isolation are hallmarks of addictive behavior. Such traits make it difficult to achieve lasting and stable progress in recovery without the support and perspective of others. It is important for a user to enlist the help of appropriate and effective support people as soon as possible.”15

Q 41 Is recovery possible, and what does it involve?

A 41 Recovery is definitely possible, though difficult. Those who are completely committed to doing what it takes to find and maintain recovery are successful. There is a long track record of successful recoveries. Keep in mind, however, that the individual must truly desire recovery. Here are some of the basic elements of healing and recovery:

- **Come Out of Hiding:** Coming out of hiding and honestly disclosing the problem to a spouse and ecclesiastical leader is an essential first step. Committing to continued honesty and transparency is fundamental to the recovery process.

- **Become Educated:** Gain education regarding pornography addiction and the recovery process.

- **Set Boundaries:** Set specific boundaries to avoid situations that will compromise your commitment to recovery.

- **Work a 12-Step Program:** Attend 12-Step group meetings several times a week; work the 12-Steps on a daily basis; find a sponsor.

- **Get Qualified Therapy:** Seek professional counseling from a qualified therapist who specializes in sexual addiction.

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13: www.combatingpornography.org
15: www.combatingpornography.org
Questions & Answers

Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

—Alma 34:31

Q 42 What recovery programs and resources are available for one who struggles?

A 42 For more information about 12-Step programs go to pp. 158–161.

For a list of suggested books, Internet sites, DVDs, audio CDs, and Internet filters, see the Resource Section on pp. 154–156.

Q 43 How do I find a qualified therapist?

A 43 Participating in professional counseling is essential to the recovery process. Most individuals and couples struggling with the impact of pornography will benefit from a combination of individual, couple, and group treatment. Support groups and 12-Step programs are not substitutes for therapeutic treatment. In selecting a qualified therapist, the following considerations may be helpful:

- What training has the therapist received in dealing with sexual behaviors and addictions? Because of the complex nature of pornography addiction, specialized training is highly desirable. Ask the therapist if he or she is a member of a national organization for treatment of sexual addiction, and if he or she has received specific certification or training.

- Does the therapist specialize in sexual addiction, and how many years of experience does he or she have treating these problems? Good therapists who specialize in other psychological problems may not necessarily be the best for treating sexual addiction.

- Are counseling services provided for the betrayed spouse? Does the therapist treat the spouse from a trauma perspective—and not a co-dependence or co-addiction perspective? Involvement of the betrayed spouse in their own therapy is paramount for the spouse’s personal well-being, and also for the health of the marriage.

- Does the therapist or clinic provide group therapy? Experience has shown that recovery is enhanced when individuals participate in group therapy.

- What does the therapist personally believe the side effects of using pornography are? Therapists often have varying opinions regarding whether using pornography and engaging in parallel sexual activities are problematic. Make certain the therapist you are seeing shares your beliefs and value system.

- Does the therapist believe that pornography use can be classified as an addiction? Therapists who do not believe pornography can be addictive will probably not be as effective in treatment.

- What steps do they consider are necessary for recovery? Some therapists do not exhibit a strong understanding of what recovery requires.

- How does the therapist define recovery and measure success in treating those who use pornography? Learning how a therapist defines recovery can also help gauge the effectiveness of treatment.

A good therapist can be one of our greatest allies in recovery. In fact, I encourage most recovering addicts to work with a therapist who has a deep commitment to the twelve steps, and an appreciation for the spirituality of recovery.

—Patrick Carnes Ph.D.,

_A Gentle Path Through the Twelve Steps_, p 13
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**Q 44  How do I “stay clean” or avoid lapses/relapses?**

**A 44  Those who avoid relapse are generally those who acknowledge they are still susceptible to relapse, and must remain vigilant in continuing to apply the tools of recovery. They learn to recognize negative emotions and thought patterns leading to compulsions to act out; they address their emotional needs by making necessary adjustments, reaching out to others for support long before those needs could turn into addictive behaviors again. Prompt and complete honesty in admitting any slips of behavior is critical.**

Maintaining recovery generally involves continuing to work the 12 steps, setting and keeping boundaries, and having some permanent form of accountability in place, such as continuing participation in a recovery program with a sponsor, a religious leader, or friend. This becomes a positive and productive lifestyle for them, and they recognize the good fruit it continues bearing. See p.151 for a definition of terms.

**Q 45  How does using pornography affect me and my relationships?**

**A 45  Using pornography will distort the true nature of healthy sexuality, lead to the objectification of men and women, and promote sexual gratification as a top emotional priority. Even though pornography may be used in secret, the inability to connect with a spouse and with others in a committed relationship and with loved ones is often felt by all. Insensitivity to a spouse’s personal needs and feelings are often a hallmark of relationships where pornography is involved.**

Because using pornography stimulates emotional, chemical and physical changes, it can reset the brain in such a way that normal, healthy sexual experiences become unsatisfying. Increasingly extreme or deviant sexual acts are then often required to bring sexual satisfaction. One can see why pornography addiction often destroys otherwise healthy marital relationships, and can escalate to sexual acting out with oneself and
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others, including other immoral behavior. Some statistics indicate that where pornography is used, the likelihood of infidelity is increased by 300%, and nearly 55% of divorces in the United States occur at least in part as a result of pornography use.16

Pornography use destroys trust and respect, and can make the user emotionally and physically unavailable to their partner.Pornography becomes a counterfeit surrogate. Additionally, those who turn to using pornography to satiate emotional needs, or to numb painful emotions, are very susceptible to addiction. This progressive behavior chokes the life out of healthy emotional, sexual, and spiritual intimacy between individuals.

Q 46 How does my using pornography affect my spouse or loved one?

A 46 Not only does using pornography damage relationships, it can also have a direct and destructive effect on the well-being of a spouse or loved one. Pornography use can destroy a spouse’s sense of being uniquely important to their partner.17 Many spouses report feeling a sense of betrayal, having low levels of self-esteem, having decreased trust in their partner’s commitment to the relationship, feeling a diminished sense of security, and experiencing reduced marital satisfaction.18

These negative emotions can manifest themselves in many ways. Husbands and wives may try to overcompensate in the hope of regaining their spouse’s attention or approval. Anorexia or other eating disorders are not uncommon among spouses of those who compulsively use pornography; they tend to have an unhealthy sense of responsibility for the success of the marriage and the user’s behavior. Like a pinball machine, spouses may jump between feelings of fear, anger, anxiety and unhealthy compulsions to protect their partner and save their marriage. Feelings of hopelessness may even escalate to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. Many characteristics of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are manifested in these individuals.

Once discovered, pornography users tend to exert pressure on their spouses to keep the issue secret. Many spouses feel trapped in such isolation, without a voice and unable to reach out for desperately needed support and help. Yet without appropriate help and counseling, the emotional, physical and spiritual health of the user’s spouse may be in as much danger as the user.

Q 47 How does my using pornography affect my children?

A 47 Pornography causes a change in the way the user relates to others—especially to their children and spouse. The pornography user develops a simple, one-sided, selfish response which quashes any kind of intimacy. The user actually loses the ability to emotionally connect with others. Instead of warmth, empathy and compassion, the user interacts with family members with an air of detachment and criticism; the user is simply emotionally unavailable. Children may not be able to label it, but they sense it just the same. This can be very damaging to developing children.

Try as they may, unhealthy parents cannot shield children from the collateral damage of addiction and betrayal trauma. Even though they may not know why, children in such families often grow up without a vital sense of belonging and safety. Without healthy family anchors, children tend to become confused or ambivalent about the line between right and wrong, and their relationship with God. Other important values and life skills remain underdeveloped, and their chances for happiness diminish.

16: See Jill C. Manning, Ph.D. Congress Report
17: Ibid.
As I work recovery from sexual addiction, what can I do to heal and strengthen our marriage?

Both the person working recovery from sexual addiction and the betrayed spouse must be settled in working their own recovery first before any significant progress can be made toward healing their relationship. This vital initial step for both parties may be difficult because pornography users often discourage their spouses from talking about the problem, getting their own counseling, or attending their own 12-Step program because of deeply held fear and shame. There is an instinct to keep the problem private in a misguided attempt to protect the marriage. Hiding the behavior somehow feels safer and more controllable, but in reality is very damaging to both of them.

As difficult as it may be, a person who truly wants to heal and strengthen the marriage should do everything they can to encourage their spouse to reach out and get help for themselves.

Once both partners are committed to consistently working their own recovery, trust generally will slowly return to the relationship; hope and optimism will take root and begin to grow. This does not mean, however, that the rest of the journey will be easy.

During this time, both qualified counseling and individual recovery programs are necessary for each of them. Understand that pornography use often causes significant emotional and relational trauma for the spouse. It is important that a person working recovery allows their spouse plenty of time and space to heal at their own pace.

A recovering user should be sympathetic to their spouse’s feelings of anger, frustration, ambivalence and hurt. In due time, as they make an effort to strengthen the relationship—while continuing to work their own recovery, the three recoveries (his, hers, and the marriage) begin to support and complement one another.

Specific actions one can make to help strengthen a marriage include:

- Fully commit to completing all the necessary elements of recovery.
- Disclose past behavior. By postponing disclosure, or confessing a little bit at a time out of fear the spouse “can’t handle everything,” the healing process is often impeded and the resulting hurt prolonged. It is wise to consult with a therapist and sponsor before making the full initial disclosure.
- Continue to promptly disclose any behavioral slips or lapses. Complete honesty and transparency are essential. Most spouses report that even though lapses may be difficult to deal with, relapses, secrecy, and lies are intolerable. Graphic details are not necessary, but the spouse should know the type of slip, the duration, severity and frequency of acting out.
- Set realistic expectations about the recovery process. Meaningful change takes time. Recognize that just like the marriage partners, the marriage itself also takes time to heal.
- Strive to show empathy, and other Christ-like traits.
- Acknowledge the trauma a spouse is experiencing.
- Reach out to them; when they allow it, try to alleviate their workload and spend time together doing simple and safe activities that can help rebuild the relationship (walking, gardening, cooking, etc.).
- Encourage the spouse to get their own counseling, and to find support through attending a 12-Step recovery group specifically for betrayal trauma.
- In due time, attending counseling as a couple is essential.
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What About Traumatized Spouses?

Q 49 What is Betrayal Trauma?
A 49 For most people affected by serial sexual or romantic infidelity of a spouse, the viewing of pornography, sex with self, extramarital sex, or emotional affairs causes deep pain. Yet what hurts a committed spouse the most is that their trust in this person—this person closest to them—has been shattered. For a healthy, attached spouse, experiencing profound and/or unexpected betrayal can be incredibly traumatic.

One 2006 study of women who had unexpectedly learned of a loved one’s infidelity reported that these women experienced acute stress symptoms that paralleled Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Sadly, there was a time when the collateral damage of intimate partner and marital betrayal was not considered a legitimate area of study. More recently, family counselors and psychotherapists are gaining more insight into the long-term traumatic effects of betrayal of a closely attached partner such as a spouse.

As part of this professional enlightening, professionals who deal daily with marital infidelity and relationship betrayal are more open to spotting and treating the often fragile, rollercoaster emotional state of cheated-on spouses—both men and women. For betrayed spouses who choose to remain in the relationship, as most do, it still takes quite some time before they are able to reestablish real trust and comfort with their spouse. That said, if the cheating partner is committed to behavioral change, honesty, and regaining personal integrity, then the redevelopment of trust becomes much more likely.19

Those of us who have lived with or are living with a pornography/sexual addict have discovered that we are often anxious, confused, fearful and lonely. We may have felt that we were victims to our loved one’s behavior. Those we loved the most have betrayed us the most. Research shows that we indeed have experienced effects that parallel PTSD.

We may have tried every method to try to control our loved one’s behavior and the circumstances swirling around us—but to no avail. We have discovered that it truly is about the lies, and we don’t know who or what to believe anymore. Our shame and our fears can paralyze us or keep us in a state of constant anxiety.

—Rhyll Anne Croshaw, Author

What Can I Do About Him? Me?

Q 50 Why can’t my spouse just stop using pornography?
A 50 Using pornography is addictive. The deeper the addiction is established the more difficult it is to stop, and for many—if not most, it is nearly impossible to stop without outside help.

Q 51 How is the pornography addiction of a spouse or loved one likely to affect me personally?
A 51 Spouses of those struggling with an addiction may feel a sense of betrayal, fear, anger, trauma, isolation, and abandonment after discovering the

immoral and addictive behaviors. It is common for such spouses to avoid telling others about the behaviors or addiction; they tend to carefully mask their feelings or pretend nothing is wrong. They may feel pressure to withdraw, to protect their spouse and preserve an image of normalcy. As the traumatized spouse withdraws, they may feel increasingly lonely and hopeless; depression and even thoughts of suicide may result.

Discovering a pornography/sexual addiction can start a chain of devastating emotional responses. Some spouses of users may experience intense anger, while others may respond by feeling numb and listless. Thoughts such as How could this happen to me? or What did I do to deserve this? are common.

Many have misplaced feelings of guilt or a sense of personal responsibility for causing the addiction. And they may experience a sense of low self-worth and fall into thinking, This wouldn’t have happened if I had just been a better wife; or, if I were just more [fill in the blank: attractive, sexy, etc.], this wouldn’t be a problem. This line of personal blame is often followed by a drive to fix the problem, convincing themselves that some action they have control over—such as working harder to be pleasant, or losing weight—will make the user stop.

When such sincere but misguided efforts do not work, however, feelings of anxiety and despair increase. Fear and uncertainty about the future become overwhelming: What is going to happen now? What about our marriage? If I were to leave the marriage, what would I do? What about our children?

As emotional wellness deteriorates, spouses may fall into counter-productive behaviors, or try dangerous coping mechanisms. They may become the policeman who is constantly monitoring the user, or trying to helicopter manage their recovery. They may become obsessed with looking for “evidence” of illicit behavior by checking their spouse’s email, reading their journal, looking for unusual charges on credit card statements, or checking calls on their spouse’s cell phone. Some may develop eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, over eating or under eating.

The user’s spouse may wonder what’s wrong with themselves, and why they feel “crazy” and out of control. Depression is common. Hopeful feelings such as, We have finally gotten to the bottom of this, and we can get the help we need, may alternate with hopeless feelings such as, We are never getting out of this impossible downward spiral.

**Q 52 How is my spouse’s use of pornography likely to affect our relationship?**

**A 52** Discovering that your spouse is using pornography can turn your world upside down. Spouses may feel deeply betrayed, angry, ashamed, numb, depressed or helpless. They may worry that they will never be able to trust their spouse again. They often feel great uncertainty and fear for the future.

The cycle of feelings they experience is very similar to the grieving process over the death of a loved one, and may include these symptoms: (1) shock, (2) disbelief or denial, (3) anger, (4) bargaining, (5) depression, and then finally, (6) acceptance of the reality of the problem. It is well to acknowledge and allow such feelings to take their course.

Users tend to withdraw and disconnect from relationships. And if the user doesn’t want to change, they may exert pressure on their spouse to protect their own secrecy. Regardless of whether the user approves, it is crucial for the spouse to muster courage and get help for themselves.

**Q 53 As the spouse of a pornography user, how do I find hope and healing for myself?**

**A 53** The spouse of a user can do specific things to more effectively handle difficult emotions and trauma. The following are some basic principles to healing:

- **Break the secrecy**: Develop a support system and find others to safely confide in. This may include a parent, a close friend, a religious leader and a therapist.
- **Practice self-care, and set boundaries**: Slow down and allow plenty of time before
making life-changing decisions. Prayerfully set boundaries defining unacceptable behavior in order to protect your emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. Make time for daily physical and spiritual care.

- **Get therapy:** Seek appropriate personal counseling, and in due time, marital counseling.
- **Find a 12-Step program:** Network with the spouses of other users. Work the 12 steps of recovery, and find a sponsor.
- **Become educated:** Learn about the nature of pornography addiction. While spouses of users can support recovery, it is very important to acknowledge that the user is responsible for their own addiction and that it cannot be fixed simply by trying to control the user.

For more information about finding 12-Step meetings see pages 157-160

For a list of suggested books, Internet sites, DVDs, audio CDs, and Internet filters, see the Resource Section on pp. 154-155.

**Q 54** As the spouse of a pornography user, what can I do to find healing for my damaged relationship?

**A 54** It is just as important for the betrayed spouse to reach out and get help for themselves as it is for the user. Actions such as developing a strong support network, getting appropriate counseling, participating in a 12-Step program, and having a sponsor are highly recommended. If both parties are willing to do their part in working toward their own recovery, often trust can be rebuilt over time, and the relationship can begin to heal. The initial focus, however, needs to be on individual recovery.

Some have a misguided urge to jump in and work on fixing the marriage relationship first. This strategy is ineffective, and may even be counterproductive as long as the addiction and its effects on the user’s spouse are still active and unresolved. It is like pumping air into a tire that has a hole in it; as long as the hole is still there, any air pumped into the tire will just leak out—and might even make the hole bigger. Similarly, the “hole” in each partner’s heart needs to be repaired first, and this is done by each individual getting help. Pumping air into the marriage relationship will come later. And when that time does come, couple counseling from a qualified therapist who specializes in sexual addiction and betrayal trauma is very beneficial.

Be aware that betrayed spouses of users may slip into behaviors that are counterproductive to the recovery process. For example, they may try to control or compel (covertly or blatantly) the user’s recovery. They may be impatient with a recovery process that requires patience. On the other extreme, they may be so afraid of “rocking the boat” that they will not protect themselves by setting appropriate boundaries, or make good on consequences if those boundaries are crossed. “Non-divorce” does not necessarily indicate healing.

Long experience has shown that relationships have the greatest chance of truly healing if the spouse focuses on their own individual recovery and well-being—rather than obsessing about the other party. This is not a selfish posture; they are concentrating on that which they have control over, and that is their own recovery. Trust that this pattern will bear the most good fruit for themselves, and in due time, for the marriage.

**Q 55** What programs and resources are available for me as the spouse of a pornography user?

**A 55** For a list of suggested books, Internet sites, DVDs, audio CDs, therapists, 12-Step programs and Internet filters, go to the Resource section on pp. 154-155.
**56 How do I balance my need for support and healing with a desire to maintain my spouse’s anonymity?**

For the spouse of a pornography user, getting the support and help needed may be particularly thorny because doing so involves disclosing the user’s behavior to someone else—thus breaking anonymity to some degree. One of the most serious side effects for the spouse of a user is that they can be manipulated—either consciously or subconsciously—into remaining quiet, and suffering in silence.

Betrayed spouses are empowered, however, when they understand that while the user has control over his or her own behavior, they have no right to control the betrayed spouse’s behavior. The betrayed spouse needs to feel free to build a safe support network for themselves, to attend their own recovery meetings, and to seek their own appropriate counseling.

Decisions about how much information to disclose, and to whom, should be made with sensitivity and discretion. Many individuals find it helpful to share what they are experiencing with a trusted friend, family member, ecclesiastical leader, sponsor or support group. Indiscriminate disclosure of pornography usage is not advisable, and can result in adverse consequences for children and others involved.

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**Dating and Pornography**

For more help, read related stories on pp 87-100, and see the Handout “Pornography and Dating” on p. 149.

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**57 Why should I discuss pornography with the person I am dating?**

In varying degrees, virtually everyone will have some exposure to pornography, which in turn influences their views of sexuality. This may range from casual exposure to serious addiction. Given the breadth of promiscuity in current society, it is important to discuss how each individual in a serious dating relationship views and will deal with pornography, regardless of whether the person has previously been a user. Openly discussing pornography can safeguard individuals and relationships.

A person can be (1) currently a user, (2) previously a user, but is now in recovery, or (3) never a user, with minimal exposure to pornography. Once you know which category the other person is in, you will know better how to proceed appropriately with the relationship. Even if there has been minimal exposure, it is important to openly discuss pornography and set boundaries to prevent future problems.

For those who have had or currently have a problem with pornography, it is important to bring this up with any person they seriously date. This is because pornography use is extremely addictive and frequently reoccurs unless significant preventive measures are taken. By talking about this problem early in a relationship, individuals can learn to develop open communication and set appropriate boundaries that will safeguard both parties, help guide relationship decisions, and create a safe and trusting environment.

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**58 When should I discuss pornography with the person I am dating?**

Here are a few questions that may help guide when the time is right:

- Are you dating exclusively?
- Is the relationship such that you can talk or have already talked about other significant personal issues?
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- Are you considering advancing your relationship by becoming engaged or married?
- Does your partner know and trust you enough to disclose and discuss personal challenges?

For those who cannot answer “yes” to any of these questions, it may be too soon. For those who can answer “yes” to one or more questions, now might be an appropriate time. For those who can answer “yes” to all questions, it is definitely time to discuss pornography. Discussing pornography before becoming engaged is important.

Q 59 How should I discuss pornography with the person I am dating?
A 59 There is no easy way to bring up this prickly topic. One thoughtful approach is simply to ask about their experience with pornography. Another is to share a personal experience, or talk about a related article—and then segway into the topic. Discussions might include when and where pornography was last viewed, and what was the response. Ask what is being done now to protect against pornography use.

If he or she has previously been using, ask what was done to stop using pornography: did the person see a counselor? Have they attended 12-Step meetings? Also ask about lapses; if there is still a problem, it is common to get vague, incomplete, deflective, or less-than-honest answers. For those who have any reason to think they are not getting a complete story, trust those instincts and bring the topic up again later to see if responses are more open and honest—or consider ending the relationship. A dating partner who has difficulty telling the truth about their pornography use has the potential to become a marriage partner who has difficulty telling the truth about it.

Q 60 What should I do if I suspect someone I am dating is using pornography?
A 60 The answer is simple: discuss your concerns or suspicions with them. Consider using questions from Pornography & Dating found on pp. 149 and 150, and also see pp. 47–48 in the Resources section. Be careful about the speed in which you allow the relationship to progress if there are issues, and until recovery is solidly underway. Encourage anyone using pornography to fully disclose the problem to the appropriate people, and get the help needed to begin the work of recovery.

Q 61 How is dating someone who is using pornography likely to affect me?
A 61 Pornography changes the way the user relates to others. The user’s brain learns a one-sided sexual response which impairs feelings of closeness and intimacy. This escalates into a loss of the ability to emotionally connect with others. They can’t help but be emotionally unavailable. Instead of warmth, empathy and compassion, the user often interacts with an air of emotional detachment and criticism.

Q 62 What will likely happen if I choose to marry someone who is a pornography user who is not working on recovery?
A 62 It is a cunning myth that pornography use is a problem that can be fixed by marriage, and that marriage can make the problem easier to fix. Furthermore, a person who uses pornography has lost the capacity to build a healthy, emotionally intimate relationship. Their use has severely compromised their capability of being unselfish, compassionate and emotionally available. Without bravely getting on and following the path to recovery, their pornography use will escalate—whether they are single or married—as that is the nature of addiction.

Q 63 What factors should I consider when deciding whether to continue a relationship with a pornography user, or a user who is working recovery?
A 63 A key factor in deciding whether to continue in a relationship is whether the user is in recovery, or is actively seeking recovery. It is recommended there be at least 7 to 12 months of solid recovery before proceeding seriously forward. Individuals should be
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well informed about what true recovery looks like, and are able to identify whether their loved one is in the recovery process.

Those who have been addicted to pornography can truly change their lives—and their lifestyle—and recover, but never underestimate the power of pornography addiction. Love for the person requires exercising patience and setting appropriate boundaries at all stages of the relationship. This may require (1) waiting to move forward in a relationship, (2) deciding to end a relationship, or (3) setting and abiding by specific rules and guidelines regarding a relationship’s progression.

If the person is currently using pornography and is unwilling to seek recovery, proceed very slowly or give serious consideration to ending the relationship. Don’t let emotions cloud the best course of action. Encouraging the user to seek appropriate help is always worthwhile. Dating a person who is using pornography, however, can bring unintended emotional consequences, so carefully weigh the risks of continuing in such a relationship.

Carefully evaluate whether the other person acknowledges pornography is dangerously addictive and leads to sexual addiction, is willing to take the steps required to recover, and is actively working a program of recovery for addiction. It would be helpful to talk with trusted individuals, educate yourself regarding pornography addiction, and set appropriate boundaries. Attending counseling and 12-Step support groups may also be valuable.

Q 64  What should I do if I am dating (or have dated) someone with a pornography problem and I am currently struggling with negative thoughts about myself and my appearance?

A 64  It is not uncommon to experience some kind of trauma after being in a close relationship with a pornography user. Common collateral problems may include: obsession with personal appearance; feelings of low self-worth; decreased self-confidence; a sense of spiritual darkness or abandonment; a decreased ability to trust and form healthy relationships; and acceptance of unhealthy or abusive behaviors as normal.

If a person who is dating or has dated a pornography user struggles with any of these feelings, it is important to talk with someone. Consider seeing a counselor and attending a 12-Step program. Getting support from a professional counselor who understands the traumatic impact of pornography is beneficial. Talking with friends or family who can offer support and help put things in perspective is also helpful. Pray for spiritual guidance. Follow promptings from the Spirit.

Q 65  As a pornography user who is working recovery, what factors should I consider in dating?

A 65  Although graphic details are not necessary, it is important to tell the other person earlier in the relationship the nature and extent of behavior related to using pornography. Consider setting boundaries regarding the speed with which the relationship progresses based on recovery progress. It is often recommended that a person would be well along in the recovery process before entering into a serious relationship.

 Leaders

Q 66  As a leader, how can I educate those in my stewardship about the problem of pornography?

A 66  There are several obstacles to combating the influence of pornography, including 1) a lack of awareness about the nature and magnitude of the problem, 2) embarrassment discussing the topic of pornography openly, and 3) a lack of understanding about whom pornography affects. Leaders can use their influence to help overcome such obstacles. For example, they can educate themselves; they also can arrange appropriate and effective presentations.
on the topic. The goal of these presentations may include helping others understand the following:

- The addictive nature and magnitude of the pornography problem.
- The need to confront the problem directly and openly.
- The negative effects a user’s behavior can have on loved ones, including dating and potential marriage relationships.
- Warning signs of a potential problem with pornography.
- What steps must be taken by those struggling with addiction to find real recovery.
- The need to be sensitive to and supportive of both the person struggling with the addiction and their afflicted spouse.
- How to proactively teach children about healthy sexuality and the dangers of pornography; steps to keep the home safe; and how to deal with pornography issues as they arise.

**Q 67 As a leader, how can I best help someone who is struggling with a pornography addiction?**

**A 67** We emphasize that for a leader to be effective, they first need to be well-informed. We encourage you to begin by reading Section 1: “Understanding the Basics;” Section 2: “Recovery and Healing; and Section 3: “How a Leader Can Help.”

Most users are afraid to take the first step and voluntarily confess a pornography problem to a Church leader. A leader can help foster a discussion by asking specific, open-ended questions such as, When was the last time you viewed or were exposed to pornography? Can you tell me what happened? “Yes” or “no” questions, such as, Do you have a pornography problem? are less effective, and generally do not lead to further discussion. When questioned, some may respond they are not using pornography, but fail to disclose other “acting out” behaviors such as sex with self (masturbation).

A well-informed leader will have quiet confidence in effectively helping users during the very stressful first steps to recovery. They will encourage individuals to step onto the path of recovery in these four critical areas: (1) Working with a qualified therapist; (2) Attending a 12-Step group and committing to working recovery; (3) Spiritual guidance; and (4) Education.

Also encourage the individual to meet regularly with their bishop, since consistent accountability regarding the specific recovery actions being taken, and the length of their sobriety, are important. Provide encouragement as they work their recovery program.

**O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us that we may have success in bringing them again unto thee in Christ.**

—Alma 31:34

**Q 68 As a leader, how can I best help the traumatized spouse of a pornography user?**

**A 68** Leaders should understand that a pornography and sexual addiction often have a devastating effect on the user’s spouse and other loved ones. Yet rarely do traumatized spouses receive adequate and appropriate counseling and support. Watch for serious potential side effects such as depression, eating disorders or thoughts of suicide. Such betrayed spouses may start questioning their faith in God as they struggle to understand why this has happened.

Listen to the spouse’s concerns, validate their experience, and offer words of comfort. Encourage betrayed spouses to step onto the path of their own recovery in these four key areas: (1) Working with a qualified therapist; (2) Attending a 12-Step group for spouses, and working their own recovery; (3) Continue seeking support from trusted individuals; and (4) Becoming educated about the addiction and trauma.
They can also set appropriate boundaries, and practice self-care.

Learn more how a leader can help those suffering from betrayal trauma in these key areas, starting on p. 28.

**69 What is an enabler?**

**A 69** An enabler shields someone from the negative consequences of their own behavior. While the enabler is most often a spouse or relative, the enabler can potentially be a priesthood leader.

An enabler in the same home with the pornography user might be trying to protect the user, the family, or themselves from embarrassment. They might lie to others, or minimize or disregard clear evidence of addictive behavior in an attempt not to “rock the boat” or make things worse.

Often an enabler sincerely believes they are acting in the best interest of the one struggling with the addiction. Sadly, enablers usually don’t realize that their actions are actually harmful to themselves, the user, and others around them, and that they are making the situation worse rather than better.

It is essential to understand that betrayed spouses—whether they are enablers or not—are not responsible for, and cannot control, the user’s behavior. Nevertheless, their choices and actions may make it possible for the user to continue their acting out without experiencing the full consequences of the behavior. But once the user finally has to face the full brunt of their actions, they are much more likely to seek treatment for their addiction.

**70 How can priesthood leaders avoid becoming enablers?**

**A 70** Priesthood leaders should understand that when talking of pornography use and addiction, a spectrum exists that extends from inadvertent exposure on the one end, all the way to compulsive sexual addiction on the other. Thus, various levels of treatment—including professional treatment, may be necessary for the user (and spouse of the user) to experience true healing and lasting recovery.

What about those who are caught in more deeply embedded levels of compulsive use or addiction? The leader may be naïve or misinformed, not understanding that using pornography results in a “behavioral or natural addiction,” and causes not just spiritual and mental trauma but also structural changes in the brain. Such issues are rarely healed without the involvement of a qualified therapist and the support of a 12-Step fellowship. In such instances, a priesthood leader can become an enabler when he suggests a course of treatment for the pornography user’s “little problem” that primarily consists of daily prayer, scripture study and better time management.

The leader can mislead the struggling user, his spouse or parents into thinking that what the leader is suggesting is entirely sufficient for full recovery: This is just a bad habit that can be overcome through sincere personal effort. They may dismiss professional therapy and 12-Step groups as unnecessary, “overkill” for dealing with this otherwise valiant individual’s problem.

Time passes; the one struggling with the addiction tenaciously sticks with his or her resolve and remains sober for a few months, until they and their priesthood leader conclude that the “little problem” has been fixed, and further check-ins are unnecessary.

Yet any rust, mold or cancer must first be fully rooted out—and then vigilantly kept out—or it will almost assuredly return with a vengeance. Similarly, the history of countless individuals shows that without
comprehensive addiction recovery work, it is highly likely such an individual will eventually lose their sincere “white-knuckled” resolve—and return to using pornography, which often evolves into acting out sexually.

Priesthood leaders need to appreciate the fact that pornography is highly addictive—no matter the age and no matter the faithful history of an individual, and that it can diminish our capacity to choose. The damage it can cause to our physical bodies and spiritual hearts is far more serious than damage done by a Word of Wisdom infraction. Using pornography can cause a near severing of our ties to God, leaving the natural man feeling alone in the world—without peace and without hope. Using pornography is not a little problem.

Consider reading “Letter From an Addict to His Bishop” on p. 33.

Satan has become a master at using the addictive power of pornography to limit individual capacity to be led by the Spirit. The onslaught of pornography in all of its vicious, corroding, destructive forms has caused great grief, suffering, heartache, and destroyed marriages. It is one of the most damning influences on earth…(P)ornography is overpoweringly addictive and severely damaging…. For many, that addiction cannot be overcome without help.


71 What have Church leaders said about the plague of pornography?

A Tragic Evil Among Us
President Gordon B. Hinckley:

(T)he matter of which I speak…is a much more serious problem now. It grows increasingly worse. It is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. I speak of pornography in all of its manifestations.

I do so because of letters that come to me from broken-hearted wives. I should like to read portions of one received only a few days ago.

I quote now:

“Dear President Hinckley,

“My husband of 35 years died recently…. He had visited with our good bishop as quickly as he could after his most recent surgery. Then he came to me on that same evening to tell me he had been addicted to pornography. He needed me to forgive him [before he died]. He further said that he had grown tired of living a double life. [He had served in many important] Church callings while knowing [at the same time] that he was in the grips of this ‘other master.’

“I was stunned, hurt, felt betrayed and violated. I could not promise him forgiveness at that moment but pleaded for time…. I was able to review my married life [and how] pornography had…put a stranglehold on our marriage from early on. We had only been married a couple of months when he brought home a [pornographic] magazine. I locked him out of the car because I was so hurt and angry…. 
“For many years in our marriage…he was most cruel in many of his demands. I was never good enough for him…. I felt incredibly beaten down at that time to a point of deep depression…. I know now that I was being compared to the latest ‘porn queen.’…

“We went to counseling one time and…my husband proceeded to rip me apart with his criticism and disdain of me…. 

“I could not even get into the car with him after that but walked around the town…for hours, contemplating suicide. [I thought,] ‘Why go on if this is all that my “eternal companion” feels for me?’

“I did go on, but zipped a protective shield around myself. I existed for other reasons than my husband and found joy in my children, in projects and accomplishments that I could do totally on my own…. 

“After his ‘deathbed confession’ and [after taking time] to search through my life, I [said] to him, ‘Don’t you know what you have done?’… I told him I had brought a pure heart into our marriage, kept it pure during that marriage, and intended to keep it pure ever after. Why could he not do the same for me? All I ever wanted was to feel cherished and treated with the smallest of pleasantries…instead of being treated like some kind of chattel…. 

“I am now left to grieve not only for his being gone but also for a relationship that could have been [beautiful, but was not]…. 

“Please warn the brethren (and sisters). Pornography is not some titillating feast for the eyes that gives a momentary rush of excitement. [Rather] it has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships that should be sacred, hurting to the very core those you should love the most.”

And she signs the letter.

This is not the only letter I have received. There have been enough that I am convinced this is a very serious problem even among us. It arises from many sources and expresses itself in a variety of ways. Now it is compounded by the Internet. That Internet is available not only to adults but also to young people.

I might go on, but you, too, know enough of the seriousness of the problem. Suffice it to say that all who are involved become victims. Children are exploited, and their lives are severely damaged. The minds of youth become warped with false concepts. Continued exposure leads to addiction that is almost impossible to break. Men, so very many, find they cannot leave it alone…. 

The excuse is given that it is hard to avoid, that it is right at our fingertips and there is no escape…. 

(E)ven though the Internet is saturated with sleazy material, you do not have to watch it…. 

I know that I am speaking directly and plainly. I do so because the Internet has made pornography more widely accessible, adding to what is available on DVDs and videos, on television and magazine stands. It leads to fantasies that are destructive of self-respect. It leads to illicit relationships, often to disease, and to abusive criminal activity…. 

“If there be any within the sound of my voice who are doing so, then may you plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals. (Ensign, Nov. 2004)
For many years our Church leaders have warned against the dangers of images and words intended to arouse sexual desires. Now the corrupting influence of pornography, produced and disseminated for commercial gain, is sweeping over our society like an avalanche of evil.

Most of the bishops we meet in stake conferences now report major concerns with this problem.

I know that many of you are exposed to this and that many of you are being stained by it.

“Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions, bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories or pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval system we call a brain. The brain won’t vomit back filth. Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life.”

Here, brethren, I must tell you that our bishops and our professional counselors are seeing an increasing number of men involved with pornography, and many of those are active members. Some involved in pornography apparently minimize its seriousness and continue to exercise the priesthood of God because they think no one will know of their involvement. But the user knows, brethren, and so does the Lord.

Some have suggested that pornography should be a separate question in the temple recommend interview. It is already. At least five different questions should elicit a confession and discussion on this subject if the person being interviewed has the spiritual sensitivity and honesty we expect of those who worship in the house of the Lord.

One of the Savior’s most memorable teachings applies to men who are secretly viewing pornography:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matt. 23:25–26; see also Alma 60:23).

The Savior continues His denunciation of those who treat what is visible but neglect to cleanse the inner man:

“Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matt. 23:27–28).

The immediate spiritual consequences of such hypocrisy are devastating. Those who seek out and use pornography forfeit the power of their priesthood. The Lord declares: “When we undertake to cover our sins,…behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (D&C 121:37).

Patrons of pornography also lose the companionship of the Spirit. Pornography produces fantasies that destroy spirituality.

When we worthily partake of the sacrament, we are promised that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].” To qualify for that promise we covenant that we will “always remember him” (D&C 20:77). Those who seek out and use pornography for sexual
stimulation obviously violate that covenant. They also violate a sacred covenant to refrain from unholy and impure practices. They cannot have the Spirit of the Lord to be with them….

In his talk to men of the priesthood last October, President Hinckley quoted the letter of a woman who asked him to warn Church members that pornography “has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships” (*Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 60).

At a recent stake conference a woman handed me a similar letter. Her husband had also served in important Church callings for many years while addicted to pornography. She told of great difficulty in getting priesthood leaders to take this problem of pornography seriously: “I got all kinds of responses—like I was overreacting or it was my fault. The bishop we have now has been great. And now after 15 years my husband is trying to deal with his addiction, but now it is 15 years harder to quit for him and the loss has been incalculable.”

Pornography impairs one’s ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others.

Pornography is also addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it “hooks” its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. A man who had been addicted to pornography and to hard drugs wrote me this comparison: “In my eyes cocaine doesn’t hold a candle to this. I have done both…. Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to [trying to quit pornography]” (letter of Mar. 20, 2005).

Some seek to justify their indulgence by arguing that they are only viewing “soft,” not “hard,” porn. A wise bishop called this refusing to see evil as evil. He quoted men seeking to justify their viewing choices by comparisons such as “not as bad as” or “only one bad scene.” But the test of what is evil is not its degree but its effect. When persons entertain evil thoughts long enough for the Spirit to withdraw, they lose their spiritual protection and they are subject to the power and direction of the evil one. When they use Internet or other pornography for what this bishop described as “arousal on demand” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005), they are deeply soiled by sin….

But the good news is that no one needs to follow the evil, downward descent to torment. Everyone caught on that terrible escalator has the key to reverse his course. He can escape. Through repentance he can be clean…. (*Ensign*, May 2005, “Pornography”)
I can’t really tell you much you don’t already know about the evils of pornography—so I will tell you some things you do know: That there is steadily, inexorably, unendingly more of it, that it is easier than ever for everyone, including children, to access, and that it continues to rend the very moral fabric of our society.…

I note that a major study is coming next month from the Barna Group entitled “The Porn Phenomenon.”… The study finds that…only 1 in 20 young adults and 1 in 10 teens say they and their friends think viewing pornography is a bad thing….

While pornography has typically been a man’s domain issue, it is to me a very sad fact that its usage among young women is becoming more common, perhaps due to digital access. In the Barna study more than half of the women 25 and under who were interviewed seek out pornography “occasionally” and one-third seek it out at least monthly.

The Barna people note, not surprisingly, that pornography has gone almost completely digital. Magazines, videos, novels, and cable TV are now a very small part of the pornography market with 71% of adults and 85% of teens and young adults viewing their pornography online. In this digital age, unsolicited pornography has increased substantially as well. Nearly half of young adults interviewed said they come across pornography at least once a week even when they are not seeking it out…. [They] declared the exponential growth of the pornography industry to something bordering on a “public health crisis.”

That analogy struck home with me because it parallels my own view of this issue—namely, that no real headway can or will be made in this battle until there is a much deeper, much broader, and frankly much more fearful concern about the actual threat of pornography than we presently see in society in general…. Society must see this evil like the epidemic it is…. We do need to see this like avian flu, cholera, diphtheria or polio.

If this moral plague could catch our imagination the way a medical epidemic does, we would be calling out…every doctor and nurse and technician and orderly; we would have the attention of every father and mother, every grandparent and aunt and uncle asking what they could do; we would see educators and businessmen, lawyers and scientists, PTA organizations and welfare agencies lining up to send out flyers, to flood the airwaves, to give immunization shots at the local grocery store…. Yes, this ought to be seen like a public health crisis; like an infectious, fatal epidemic…. Frankly, until the sirens of a public-health war sound, I fear we will be wholly unsuccessful in this fight against the germ-invasion sweeping across our homeland…. It is the most inglorious, deceitful and destructive work known on such a wide basis in the society of our day, affecting young and old by the millions on a wholesale basis.…

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. Don Hilton 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 more, regularly seeking a higher number of or more extreme examples of visual images in order to get what was an earlier, easier “high.”

Even though pornography increasingly comes with the generosity of the three “A”s—accessibility, affordability and anonymity—nevertheless, as addiction grows (or insatiable habit if you prefer that language) a person frequently takes increased risks to view it, such as accessing it at work or at home with family members nearby. This, of course, can lead to embarrassment, guilt, marital destruction, social ostracism, termination of employment and so forth, but the viewer often feels out of control and unable to stop. Thank heaven there are an increasing number of clinics, support groups and recovery programs for both the viewer and their innocent family members. Nevertheless, near the top of any list of “unfinished business” is our recognizing of and remedying the damage done to spouses, children, and other innocent victims who are often nearly—or literally—destroyed by a loved one who is caught in the pornography habit.…. (W)e all need to help. We all need to teach. We all need to warn. We cannot simply wring our hands about this.…. Whether it be pride or embarrassment or fear of punishment, too many who struggle with this problem do not ask for help…. Above all I would have a person struggling with pornography ask God for help, pleading for the mercy and grace of the Almighty to aid him or her in this difficult task. I would ask and ask until my throat was hoarse. I would knock and knock until my knuckles were bloody…. Related to the tenacity of asking for help is striving constantly to win this battle once the help comes. Everyone in this room knows pornography is not a simple problem and it will not be overcome easily. It will take work—in Churchill’s famous words: “blood, toil, tears, and sweat.” But I believe virtually every problem in life will ultimately yield to persistent effort aided by divine assistance. It may take days, it may take years, it may take a lifetime, but I believe in the reward of persistent effort…with all one’s heart.…. I know people can win this war. I have seen them do it and so have you. I could name names and so could you. We have to believe. Surely there has never been any battle won in life in which the victor did not believe that victory was possible. Victims of one crisis or another can live without a lot of things—I have known people who have lived without love, lived without comfort, lived without money, even lived for a time without food. But no one can live very long without hope. They need to have and keep that hope always—to believe they can be victorious in this battle, that they can conquer this implacable foe. We are the ones to give these people that confidence…. Let me conclude by offering the basis for the hope I have; it is hope of the highest kind. I have deep, personal feelings for the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of his redemption. I declare that force, that pull, that saving grace to be infinite and eternal in its reach, a force and a grace that will save us from all kinds of bondage and lift all kinds of burdens if we but permit it, if we but seek it, and allow it into our lives. When hope is gone and lives are shattered in a hundred different ways for a thousand different reasons, the reality of Christ’s redemptive, lifting, exalting power is still there. Against all odds and in spite of so much sin in the world, His promise is permanent, peaceful and everlasting…. Friends, the task in this moral public health crisis seems overwhelming and the odds in the battle are sometimes not favorable to us. So as Tom Paine said of another battle, this is no time for summer soldiers and sunshine patriots. My thanks to the Utah Coalition for issuing the call to arms and for fighting the good fight, whatever the moral weather may be and whatever the personal cost involved. Thank you and God bless you in your efforts. (Utah Coalition Against Pornography, Keynote Address, March 12, 2016)
ONE. I Am a Sexual Addict Gratefully Living in Recovery

A Recovering Sexual Addict’s Story

Yes, I am a sexual addict gratefully living in recovery.

I am also a son of God; a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in full fellowship; a husband to an incredible wife (gratefully never divorced); a father of seven wonderful and talented children; a grandfather of 21 beautiful grandchildren; a successful businessman; and a musician, among other things. Nevertheless, and in spite of all these gifts, blessings and talents, I have learned by sad personal experience that I can never be truly happy or successful in any facet of my life if I am not being completely honest, strictly obeying God’s commandments, and humbly living in recovery.

My “drugs” of choice, or acting out behaviors, were: using pornography; sex with self; frequenting adult establishments such as strip clubs; and eventually escalating to acting out with prostitutes and getting arrested. I always knew these behaviors were very wrong and that I was breaking God’s commandments and sacred personal covenants. I always knew my actions would jeopardize my membership in the Church; damn my eternal progress and salvation; destroy my marriage of 33 years; put my wife in emotional, spiritual and physical danger; wipe out trust in our marriage; injure our children emotionally and spiritually; negatively impact our family’s financial security, and on and on. I was very aware that all of my relationships were being negatively affected because of my selfish choices, including my relationship with God and my inability to feel His love. With all of that, the worst of my sins was the fact that I was hiding my sins, and literally living a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde double life.

One of the most bitter aspects of my history is the heartbreaking pain and profound trauma I caused in the lives of those I was supposed to be committed to love and protect the most. My actions were polar opposite of what they should have been had I been a true man, husband and father. My dear wife has suffered the pain and trauma of betrayal over literally decades of our marriage. She has unfairly gone through her own Gethsemane—because of my choices, not hers. I have apologized countless times, but apologies alone are far too meager to even begin to make amends for my behaviors, my lies, my deceits and my betrayals. So I acknowledge that my actions must include not only working my own recovery, but also thoughtfully supporting my wife in her efforts of healing from the wounds I have caused.

For much of our life together, my wife said she did not feel there was much of an emotional connection between us. Of course, she was right; she could not feel such a connection because I was utterly emotionally unavailable. My emotional availability was smothered by immoral addictive behaviors, the
resulting shame and lies, and the hypocrisy of living a double life.

Sexual addiction is a disease. The behaviors associated with the disease are irrational and seem to have no logical explanation. I cannot excuse my behavior in any way because of addiction, nor explain it. Sexual addiction is self-centered, cunning, baffling and very powerful. It is unmanageable alone, and thrives in secrecy. I have personally experienced the grave consequences that come from practicing the ways of the adversary and living the lies associated with behaviors of sexual addiction. But now, now I am gratefully living in recovery, and experiencing the peace of conscience and true joy that comes through sincere repentance, and receiving the healing blessings offered by our Savior Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

My Innocent First Exposure to Pornography

I was raised in an active LDS home. My parents were good people and I felt they loved me and wanted the best for me. We prayed together as a family and always went to church. I was a good student, a good musician and athlete, and had many friends. I lived what I thought was a fairly normal childhood.

My very first experience with pornography was at age 6. I found a pornographic magazine in my brother’s chest of drawers; he was 15. This was an innocent exposure, but I can vividly recall the experience. The provocative cover piqued my curiosity, and so I took the “adult” magazine to my room and looked through the entire thing. I had never experienced such euphoric feelings as I curiously looked at the entire magazine. I instinctively knew, however, that what I was doing was wrong. In my innocence as a little boy I decided to give the magazine to my mother. That is all I can remember from that first experience. I have no recollection of my mother saying anything to me about it. Had she talked to me about the experience in any way I am certain I would have a memory of it. Alas, my parents never did
talk to me about the dangers of using pornography, or healthy sexuality, or how sexuality is a basic component of God’s great plan of happiness. Because of this brief first exposure, was I then addicted? Of course not. Yet this innocent encounter became a decisive turning point, one that would change my life forever. No longer was I innocent to the power of pornography. I made the choice to go back to it again and again because to me the experience was exciting, pleasurable, and even euphoric.

At the suggestion of a friend, at age 10 or so I discovered sex with self (masturbation); the pornography and sex with self was pleasurable and seemed to be rewarding. This was always done in careful secrecy. I don’t think I could pinpoint when I crossed the threshold of addiction, but looking back I feel it was around age 14. I can recall times at that age when I felt I really ought to stop looking at porn and masturbating. Occasionally, I tried stopping by using sheer grit—but it didn’t last. No one had ever talked to me about such behavior being dangerous and “addictive,” so I kept on with it—and kept it secret. By age 15 my behaviors had progressed to the point of sexually acting out with girls my age.

Nearly 59 years have passed since that first exposure to pornography. My lack of understanding, my naïveté of the dangers of using pornography, and hiding my escalating sexual acting out behaviors influenced and altered every season of my life: as a child, as a youth, as a young adult and as an adult. I have literally spent decades attempting to embrace the fact that lust is toxic for me, and that I suffer from sexual addiction. Gratefully, for me and others, there is a pathway to recovery.

There is a Well-lit Path to Recovery from Sexual Addiction

How does one recover from using pornography, whether it’s willing occasional use, intensive use, or compulsive and addictive use, as was my situation? The answer is one must freely choose for himself or herself to step onto the path of recovery—and stay on it. That is what I have done. The path is narrow and may seem steep at times, so a long-term commitment is vital. Without a firm resolve to “do whatever it takes,” discouragement may set in during setbacks, and sadly, a return to illicit sexual behaviors will likely follow. To step on the path of recovery, the most basic requirements are a willingness to surrender to God’s will, and courage to be totally honest, accountable and humble. To stay on the path of recovery, help from others is essential: 1) Seeking spiritual guidance; 2) Working with a qualified therapist; 3) Working the 12 Steps with a sponsor, and 4) Education.

There is Always Hope

Recovery is a spiritual, emotional and physical journey involving our body and our spirit—our whole soul. This process takes time; it is worked one day at a time. And my expectation is that it will continue for the rest of my natural life. As I am willing to be honest and turn my will over to God, I believe that the windows of heaven open and all of God’s blessings become available to me, to my wife, to our marriage, and to our family.
With honest repentance I am grateful to now enjoy full fellowship in the Church and the blessings of the temple. Because I suffer from the disease of sexual addiction, there are some specific things to which I must be forever vigilant: I must remember to keep my boundaries; I must be completely honest; and I must always remember to practice giving my will over to God. I am unequivocally committed to living my life within the boundaries the Lord has set, and to continue on the pathway of recovery—one day at a time. For me, this constitutes enduring to the end.

I am grateful to share a brief portion of my story, and especially to testify of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to heal me, one of the vilest of sinners. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and God’s grace I have experienced the joy of true repentance the scriptures promise. I am working recovery willingly—with my heart in it, and as of the date of this writing I am grateful to be sober and living in recovery one day at a time for more than 12 years.

I owe a debt of gratitude to all who have encouraged me and worked with me and prayed for me for so long: my dear wife; my parents; my children; my bishops; my stake presidents; my therapists; my wife’s parents; my 12-Step sponsors; my friends; my brothers in recovery, and others. This reminds me of a phrase from a poem by John Donne: “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main…..” As mortals, we necessarily depend on one another. I am where I am because of the willingness of others to strive with me for decades. God bless every one of them.

Most of all my gratitude is to my Savior Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice for me. In the words of the hymn: “I feel His love, the price He paid; How many drops of blood were spilled for me? With Saints of old in joyful cry, I too can testify: This is the Christ, the Healer of our souls.”

TWO.
Would We React Differently to Cancer?
A Woman’s Experience in Healing from Her Husband’s Pornography Addiction

My husband has been a pornography addict since he was thirteen, and he struggled with this addiction through high school. He was able to stay away from it for several years, but in our second year of marriage while I was pregnant with our first child, the problem returned and we have battled it ever since.

I have known about my husband’s addiction for nine years of our nearly eleven-year marriage. It has taken a terrible toll on our family. Both of us have experienced major losses because of this addiction: personally, professionally, emotionally and spiritually. For years we repeated an endless cycle: he would tell me it wasn’t a problem anymore, and I would believe him—or at least pretend I did—while wondering why something felt so wrong in our marriage and our home. When things would finally get so bad I could not ignore it any more, I would confront my husband and he would once again admit to viewing pornography. He would then work to conquer the addiction by “controlling his thoughts,” exercising self-discipline and increasing his spirituality. Despite his efforts he was never willing to discuss his pornography addiction with me or anyone else. He said that even just discussing it could trigger an “outbreak,” so I was afraid to bring it up.

We went to counseling for a while but it “didn’t help” or it “took too much time and money,” and so he eventually quit going. I read about 12-Step programs, so we bought some workbooks and tried working on those on our own. We even moved to a different state, hoping to get into a better situation where it wouldn’t be such a temptation. Yet none of these things were enough to bring lasting changes.

Meanwhile, I felt like I was going crazy. I would feel anxious and panicky. I never caught my husband looking at pornography, or had any other proof, so I eventually convinced myself that I was just being suspicious and paranoid. Whenever his problem...
surfaced again I blamed myself, feeling like it was my fault for not being attractive enough, or for just “letting myself go” after having children.

I tried going to counseling but my husband strongly discouraged it. I considered going to a 12-Step group, but I had kids and didn’t feel like I had time for that. For years I didn’t tell a single person about my husband’s addiction, and I felt like I needed my husband’s permission before doing anything. I was afraid of him—and yet also afraid of losing him. I was completely alone.

This fall, I battled severe depression and at one point almost became suicidal. I spoke to a woman who had been through a similar experience with her husband. I believe this was God's hand in my life. This woman told me that from her experience, it sounded like my husband was not in recovery from his addiction—and never had been. This was very hard to hear, but I recognized it as the truth. She offered to become my sponsor (a mentor who guides someone like me, who has been traumatized, through the process of recovery), and so I started working a 12-Step program through S-Anon, a 12-Step group for spouses or family members of sex addicts who have experienced betrayal trauma.

When I informed my husband, he was very unsupportive, even antagonistic, and resented my efforts at recovery. I started setting boundaries with him about what I was and wasn’t willing to live with. He eventually admitted that pornography had still been an issue for the past several years, and it was getting worse. He reluctantly agreed to go to 12-Step meetings, but was mostly trying to placate me.

After much prayer, I finally reached a crossroads. I told him he needed to be completely honest and transparent with me about his addiction, and to actively work on recovery by attending Sexaholics Anonymous, getting a sponsor, and seeing a counselor for at least a year. If not, I was unwilling to stay in our marriage. My husband finally reached rock bottom, and started working on his own recovery in earnest.

Since then we have seen miracles unfold, individually, and later on in our relationship. Although recovery is difficult and time consuming, for the first time ever I can see a clear path to healing. My husband is truly a different person; he is open and honest about his addiction with me and with others. He willingly attends his 12-Step meetings and works closely with a sponsor. He wants to help others who may be struggling. He is more concerned with maintaining sobriety and rebuilding our relationship than with saving face or protecting himself.

So what has God required? I feel he has required me to fundamentally change the way I live my life and
look at this issue. I have stopped focusing on my spouse and how I think he needs to recover. I recognize that his problem isn’t my fault; I didn’t cause it and I can’t fix it. I actively work on my own recovery from betrayal trauma every single day. Each week I attend two S-Anon meetings, group therapy, and a counseling appointment.

I also continue educating myself about pornography addiction and recovery. I practice self-care, taking time to slow down and meet my physical, emotional and spiritual needs. I set boundaries with my husband to protect myself from unacceptable behavior. I lovingly convey my support of his efforts toward recovery, but make it very clear that I will not live with addictive behavior. If all this seems like a big commitment, it is. It takes a significant amount of time and effort.

The problem is, I haven’t found anything else that works—and believe me, I have spent nine years trying to find some easier way. When it starts to seem like too much work I ask myself, “If one of us had been diagnosed with cancer, would we not do chemotherapy treatments because it was too time consuming?” The side effects of pornography in our lives has been just as devastating as cancer. Although recovery may be time consuming and sometimes painful, for us it has been every bit as necessary as chemotherapy for treating cancer. Recovery is a lifelong process—a lifestyle. Just like all healthy living, it is a commitment you work at every single day.

THREE.
Discovering Hope and Healing: Part I
A Young Man’s Experience Dealing with Pornography While Dating

I was introduced to pornography when I was around eleven years old. I loved it—and I hated it—from the very beginning. I think I soon became an addict. I grew up in what I call a “religid” family and culture; my mom cried when she found out I drank Dr. Pepper. So, there was no way I could tell my parents I was viewing pornography, though I desperately wanted help. I felt there was no one I could trust with this shameful secret.

When I got into my twenties it was still there and I had even more of a struggle. I confessed to and worked with at least nine different bishops. But nothing worked. The longer my addiction went, the worse it got: the pornography was more graphic; I started acting out with girls. I stayed away from girls I really liked, thinking once I got this under control I could date them. But it didn’t happen. I saw no hope. I couldn’t stop. Even if I could have stopped, what I heard in the culture I grew up in is that no girl would ever want to marry me because I had been involved in pornography. I was full of toxic shame and getting more and more depressed. If there was no hope of marrying someone in my faith, then why fight this anymore? Why not just run with it and live like many others do?

About this point in my life a miracle happened: a friend introduced me to my first 12-Step group. It was great, and I found my first glimmer of hope. By chance (or maybe not), within a month I met the woman I am married to today. We lived in different states and started dating long distance. We were quickly falling in love even though our only regular contact was hours of phone calls. But I had to tell her—so she could run away and not have to deal with me. I did, and it was very difficult for both of us.

She didn’t run away though. She talked to her bishop, for whom I am very grateful. He didn’t tell her to run away either. He said he had a friend who was a top therapist in treating sex addictions. When she told me about this therapist I couldn’t wait to get started. If there was something out there that would really help me get this out of my life, I wanted it.

I soon moved to Utah, started therapy, and found a 12-Step group. Recovery was hard, but it was great. I couldn’t believe what I was learning. I put my recovery in two categories, though they are completely intertwined: (1) my spiritual recovery, and (2) my functional recovery.

My spiritual recovery meant learning a new gospel of Jesus Christ. I had been raised with certain teachings of the Old Testament: a God of justice, vengeance, war, punishment and fear. There is no hope
for recovery in that. In recovery, however, I learned
the gospel of the New Testament. Jesus has come and
He loves me. He has paid for my sins. He is a God of
mercy, love, grace and forgiveness. He does not speak
to me with fear; He speaks to me with love.

I could speak for hours on the details of my
wonderful, amazing journey. I have been learning this
new gospel for over five years now, and I plan on
learning it the rest of my life.

My functional recovery has come through
professional therapy: I’m learning about family
systems and roles, shame, the drama triangle, the
limbic system and the prefrontal cortex,
codependence, fear, objectifying and boundaries. I
have learned to recognize, analyze and share my
feelings. I have a set of tools to deal with triggers,
whether sexual, mental or emotional.

I remember thinking in my first month of therapy,
while learning about these functional recovery items,
“Wow, people can actually communicate differently
than my family does?”

I am still very engaged in anything that will help me
therapeutically, such as books, therapists, recovery
groups and men’s groups. I love it, and I am so
grateful I can continue this journey with God.

I am not where I was five years ago. I don’t deal with
the same triggers; most of my triggers now are not
sexual in nature. Don’t get me wrong; I am powerless
over sex and lust; but now I know I can surrender that
to God and He has the power to handle it, if I am
humble enough to let Him handle it. I am in an amazing
place where there is mercy, grace and forgiveness. And
there is love, kindness and patience. These things are
not based on tasks or time. God loves you. Jesus Christ
loves you. Today. Right now. No matter where you are
in your life. You are a good person.

To start on this journey all you have to do is be like
Alma the younger. He thought of Jesus Christ, of
whom his father had taught, and then he prayed, “Oh,
Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy upon me.” After
repentance and healing, God and His Son Jesus Christ
gave Alma the strength that enabled him to go forward
and become a great man.

Believe God can heal you. Believe He will heal you.
Let the power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement work
in your life.
FOUR.
Discovering Hope and Healing: Part II
A Young Woman’s Experience Dating an Addict

I am sharing my story because I think it is important to offer a realistic picture of the peace and joy that is attainable in a marriage even when a pornography addiction exists. That peace and joy comes as we do the hard work of therapy, recovery, looking at ourselves, surrendering our weaknesses, being completely honest with each other, and forgiving ourselves and others. Too often, we hear of the outcomes of divorce, separation, and family breakups that come with addiction. While those are very painful, there are also many stories of hope and happiness.

I met a man over five years ago and soon realized I was falling in love. We talked so easily about everything and shared the same interests. Shortly after we met he disclosed that he had recently begun attending a 12-Step group for pornography addiction. I remember quickly thinking back to what I knew about addiction, what I knew about pornography, and what I even knew about sex — which wasn’t much.

Somehow, I didn’t feel the urge to run away; I still loved him. What this did was heavily put the brakes on any decisions I wanted to make regarding our relationship. We lived in different states, and I had considered moving to where he lived but that didn’t feel right anymore; neither did talking about marriage – but neither did breaking up. Through a respected leader I was introduced to a therapist who specialized in pornography addiction. I called him and wanted to know if people could change, and how long it could take.

It soon became clear that we needed to be near each other and begin therapy if we were going to continue dating. So my boyfriend quit his job, left his family and friends, and moved to Utah. I appreciated his honesty with me and his willingness to make some positive changes. We started therapy that month and were told it was probably wise not to make any major decisions regarding our relationship for a year or so. That took the pressure off of even thinking of marriage. We figured the we would both be better for going through this experience—even if we didn’t end up getting married.
We were one of very few dating couples in the therapy program; most were married. Most wives found out their husbands were addicts after they were married, either because he finally disclosed it or because he was caught. I felt like some of these women thought I was nuts for going through this without even a commitment of marriage. But my boyfriend and I had a very strong relationship of trust; I trusted that he would be truthful with me. This didn’t mean that he would be perfect and never have a slip up, but his willingness to be honest was important.

We set similar boundaries as the other couples. If he did have a slip up, he had 24 hours to tell me about it. It was hard for him to tell me, but he did each time. At first, I would get upset and take it personally. We were in therapy first as a couple for six weeks. Then I met with other women, and he met with other men, weekly, for a year and half.

In addition, I met individually with a therapist once a month. Through that whole process I realized I had a lot of my own problems to work on—whether my boyfriend was an addict or not. I learned of some family secrets through this process. I believe that through my own therapy and recovery—working on me without worrying about him—I was able to process and work through my own issues.

We got engaged about eight months after we began therapy, and married three months later. We continued in weekly therapy during our first year of marriage, and “graduated” from our therapy programs. Nevertheless, my husband still attends a weekly 12-Step group and we attend a monthly couples group. Recovery is a regular word in our home, as is addiction. Significantly, these words no longer bring fear or panic to my mind like they once did; they bring peace and hope.

At first, marriage and sex added an interesting dynamic to our relationship. Our “normal” newlywed struggles were often attributed to addiction rather than just to life, but we have since learned to put those into perspective.

I believe I am a better person for having gone through this, and for starting our marriage on a healthy, trusting foundation. We appreciate and love each other. We definitely still have our ups and downs. Some days we feel like we’re back where we started—but really we’re not even close to that. We are equals and both feel so lucky to have each other. We both feel that our therapy has given us new tools, not only in our marriage relationship, but also in parenting, in other relationships, and in meeting life’s challenges and joys.

FIVE. Finding the Power to Forgive

A Young Woman’s Experience after Dating a Pornography Addict

I had dated a lot prior to meeting John, but had never really met anyone I thought I could marry. When I met John, however, it was obvious things were different. Our relationship progressed quickly, and I was beginning to feel pretty confident that this was the guy I wanted to marry—until I discovered John had a pornography problem. John expressed a strong desire to overcome his addiction, and progress in our relationship. I still loved him, so instead of breaking up I decided to take things slowly, confident that he would find recovery and our relationship would work.

I wanted him to recover so badly that it made it very difficult for me to accept the fact that although he continually expressed a desire to recover, John was not exhibiting the type of actions necessary to actually find recovery. I finally realized that without substantial changes, John would not improve.
After breaking up, John and I continued to have some contact. I still loved him and was concerned about his well-being. After speaking with a therapist, I began to realize my need to set firm boundaries, not only in my interactions with John, but also in what I needed to tell our mutual friends who were still inviting us to parties and activities.

I also experienced some unexpected side effects: an obsession with losing weight; exercising and trying to look perfect. I struggled with my faith in God; God knew what would happen, so why didn’t he warn me sooner? I felt like I had been betrayed by someone I trusted, and began to develop a general distrust of men and relationships. Everything about my world had been shaken in ways I never could have anticipated.

Recognizing that I needed help, I attended 12-Step meetings. Working the steps and regularly reporting to a sponsor helped me to set boundaries and identify and overcome negative thought patterns and behaviors. It also helped me recognize that I needed to forgive John. I felt a number of things John had done were very wrong, and it was difficult not to feel some resentment. Forgiving John was a process, and it took time.

As I worked the 12 Steps, I realized that I not only needed to forgive John, but I also needed to apologize to him. That was really difficult. I finally met with John, and simply explained that I had felt resentful towards him, and I needed to apologize. The relief and peace I felt was overwhelming. Even though he didn’t apologize, or express any remorse for anything he had done, I knew I had taken an important step in my own recovery.

Time has passed and we remain friends; we interact comfortably in groups and have casual conversations. I am very careful to keep my boundaries in place. I still feel a sense of loss for what might have been, but I am comfortable and confident that my life is going the way God wants it to go, and that is enough for me.

SIX.

Finding Myself

The Recovery Story of a Man Struggling with Pornography Addiction

I was truly lost. I had allowed my addictions to turn me into a shell of my former self. I was cheating myself, my family, and most importantly the Lord from my best self. It had been years since I enjoyed the companionship of the Spirit. I was fighting a dual addiction of pornography and prescription pain medication. These addictions, coupled with my business travel, had spun me into a life of secrecy and duplicity. I lived a life of deception and half-truths. I remember hiding out in hotel rooms wishing for it to all end somehow. I felt I was teetering on the edge of a dark abyss from which there could be no return.

During that time, that there was only one prayer which I prayed with any real fervency: I prayed that the Lord would open the road to repentance for me before I left this life. It scared me, however, that the drive to come forward and confess was slowly fading. The longer I remained isolated, the more I justified my actions. The longer I delayed my repentance, the more numb I became to how all this was affecting me. I was absolutely certain that admitting guilt would result in the loss of everything of value in my life.

It was at that point the Lord reached out and provided an answer to my simple prayer. A miracle was received and confession followed. There were certainly moments of doubt and shame, but they were always followed by an outpouring of blessings. The
reemergence of feeling the Spirit in my life felt like the dawning of a new day and a new me. It was simply amazing to feel the lines of communication opening again with my Father in Heaven. In my addictions, I had convinced myself that the Lord wouldn’t listen to me anymore. I was certain that I wasn’t worthy to even talk with Him. It soon became clear, however, that Satan had persuaded me to overinflate my feelings of dread and worry. Ironically, those people whom I feared would condemn my actions the most were actually the most compassionate and forgiving.

I attribute much of my healing and learning to the 12-Step group meetings. Walking into my first meeting was one of the hardest things I’ve ever done. Now, however, I value the brotherhood I feel with others who are working through their own challenges. There is an undeniable spirit in these meetings. The openness and humility present during the meetings foster true healing. Each week, there are key steps discussed on how to cope spiritually and avoid common pitfalls. Action steps are outlined to create a clear plan of recovery. The sharing portion of the meetings help all in attendance learn from others’ victories and setbacks. Relationships of encouragement and trust are forged to help provide strength during moments of weakness.

I am happy to report that upon writing this account, I have enjoyed over fourteen months of sobriety from all my addictions. My relationship with my wife is stronger and more honest than at any time during our sixteen years of marriage. I have been blessed to enter again into the temple, worthily, and to partake of the sweet Spirit there. I now enjoy the blessings of full fellowship and service that once seemed so distant.

I still have challenging days, but I feel equipped with a spiritual arsenal to combat these challenges. I am extremely grateful that this blessing of healing is available to all who seek it. I am blessed to have been given another chance. Through the help of my Church leaders and the 12-Step program, I have a better understanding of the gifts of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I hope to share this message with many others as well.

**SEVEN. Discussing Pornography as a Family**

A Family Story

I once attended a Relief Society meeting where a lesson was presented on protecting children from pornography. I brought home a handout on how to talk to children about pornography, which I discussed with my husband. I was a stay-at-home mom and was very aware of what my children were doing, and felt I had excellent communication with them. I was sure our children had no exposure to pornography, but my husband and I decided to talk to them about this subject that evening anyway, even though I felt our children were probably a bit young for such a conversation.

We have two sons, ages twelve and ten, an eight-year-old daughter and a four-year-old son. We decided that we would meet with the three older children while our youngest watched his favorite video. I led the discussion, starting by briefly talking about what pornography is, then asked the children if they had ever seen pornography. Our twelve-year-old immediately told us of a time when a picture popped up on the computer screen, and how this image kept flashing in his memory but he didn’t know how to stop it. It was obvious this was something that deeply bothered him, and that he didn’t know what to do about it, or how to talk about it. So we then talked about ways to stop thinking about such a disturbing image.

I then asked our second son if he had ever seen pornography. He said no, but then his younger sister chimed in, “Well, what about that time I walked into the living room where you and your friend were on the computer looking for pictures of naked women?” We didn’t get after him, but took this opportunity to openly talk about the dangers of pornography, and why it’s important to avoid it.

Without our initiating this conversation, our children would have never shared their exposure to pornography with us. My husband and I now plan to meet with our children every few months as a
Seven Personal Stories

group, and individually, and talk about the question, “When was the last time you saw pornography?”

We also want to teach our children principles that will strengthen them to overcome temptations when no one may be watching, such as the importance of our bodies in God’s plan, and healthy sexuality. We know of trustworthy resources we can use in teaching these sensitive topics.
This Chapter Offers Parents Ideas On:

1. Why it is important to connect with children
2. How to connect with and teach children
3. What to talk about when connecting with children
4. “Talking to Youth and Children About Pornography”
5. “Creating a Safe Place to Talk About Dangerous Things”

1. Why is it Important to Connect With Children?

Connections are Potent Preventative Medicine.

Fostering good connections with our children is potent preventative medicine for a host of ills. Making connections is simple and easy. For example, when we check in at the end of the day with our children, consider asking questions that reflect interest and love:

- What was the best part of your day?
- Was there anything that worried you, or caused you to be afraid?
- What was the hardest thing about today?
- What one thing are you most grateful for today?

Teach them to look for Heavenly Father’s hand in their life daily.

Start making simple connections each day with children when they are very young; don’t wait until they are teenagers. You can make it a habit, a consistent part of your lifestyle. Connect about anything—there are unlimited ways and topics.

Pornography is one of a host of topics to regularly connect on.

Why are making such connections so important? Because the brief time of making a connection is also an opportunity to express emotions—even negative emotions. And once out in the open, parents can help children learn how to process those emotions and deal with them in healthy ways. This is a core principle, because nearly all addiction begins with someone’s inability to deal with negative emotions in a healthy way.

Teach children the principle that our feelings aren’t inherently good or bad, but rather how we deal with them can be labeled good or bad, meaning healthy or unhealthy. For example, don’t shame them for crying, saying “Real boys don’t cry;” don’t shame them for getting angry, saying “Real girls don’t get angry.” Seek to understand their hearts; help them to understand themselves; don’t avoid or smother the tough challenges; let those see the light of day, and deal with them together.

In the old advertisement for FRAM oil filters, drivers were encouraged to replace inexpensive oil filters now instead of waiting too long when major engine repairs would be needed: “You can pay me now, or pay me later!” Likewise, parents can choose to expend a modest amount of effort to teach children now how to express and deal with negative emotions in a healthy way, or if they delay too long, that “cost of repair” may, in fact, become quite high.

How we deal with our emotions—whether positive, negative or somewhere in between—is a central theme and ongoing challenge of mortal life. Negative emotions can include feeling humiliation, bossed around, discouragement, loneliness, being blamed, anger, disappointment, sorrow, fear, stress, grief, and dozens of others. When people don’t know how to deal with negative emotions in a healthy way, no
matter their age, they tend to look for ways to escape those feelings, or self-medicate the imbalance. But we know that this always backfires. They do something we call “acting out,” which are behaviors such as using drugs, alcohol, pornography and illicit sex, all of which causes dopamine to be released in the brain and giving themselves an immediate pleasure reward. The cycle of addiction quietly marches to the relentless beat of this drum.

A parent might appropriately share their own emotions and experiences, and talk through how they dealt with certain challenging situations or people. If parents never share such emotions, then children may not learn how to deal with the breadth of human emotions in a healthy way. So that is why we take time to make connections with our children. Then after such an exchange, sometimes praying for the child, next to them at the side of the bed, can be powerful in developing trust and testimony. Even when met with resistance, the parent should make it easy to be available to just listen.

It is important to understand that pornography is used to cope with or numb negative emotions. The user is using lust, causing dopamine to be released from the brain, as a way to escape from feelings they don’t know how to deal with in a healthy way.

One way to express this addictive cycle is with the following simple equation: $A$ leads to $B$; $B$ leads to $C$. $A = $ negative emotions, $B = $ lust; $C = $ acting out. The key to understanding and healing addiction is to focus on the “$A$” part of the equation: negative emotions. For some of us, it may be quite a leap to accept that we have negative emotions, because we may be so accustomed to “dealing” with them through our own “addictions” such as ultra busy-ness, food, compulsive exercise, sleep, prescription drugs, alcohol, or other unhealthy or obsessive behaviors.

Creating an atmosphere where negative emotions can be safely expressed and worked through without shame, is crucial to helping any type of user find real recovery. Without addressing the “$A$” part of the equation, we may just be relying on “white-knuckle sobriety,” where relapse tends to come all too soon.

Connection is the opposite of isolation. Isolation is a real enemy. Many things may cause isolation including feeling shame, anger, frustration and fear; being isolated often feeds unhealthy acting out behaviors; unhealthy acting out behaviors feeds addiction, and can become a vortex or downward spiral. But gladly, long experience has shown that working the 12 Steps is an effective path out of isolation—and thus the eventual path out of addiction.

2. HOW Do I Connect With and Teach Children?

As a parent, connecting with our children is very important, as the previous section has explained. We would like to share how to make regular connections in simple and natural ways.

Opportunities to connect with children, no matter their age, are almost endless. You might talk about one simple principle while taking your children to school; another while you are both in the kitchen fixing a meal, and another while weeding the garden together; how about during a car ride to piano lessons; taking a walk together, during a father’s interview, a date with mom or dad, or sitting on the edge of the bed at night and “checking in.”

These opportunities to connect are not necessarily to talk about pornography. In fact it is better that that not always be the purpose. Simple successes in this noble pursuit are measured by regular, simple connections with a child. The overarching goal is to guide, teach and model how to deal with the breadth of human emotions in healthy ways. This is one way couples can
be involved in what some term “intentional parenting,” meaning actively (not hyper-actively!) teaching and training, rather than passively allowing life to happen to you and your family.

“Most of the Savior’s teaching did not happen in a synagogue but in informal, everyday settings—while eating a meal with His disciples, drawing water from a well, or walking past a fig tree.” —Take Advantage of Spontaneous Teaching Moments, Teaching in the Savior’s Way, 2015.

12 Secrets to Help Parents Teach and Connect

1. Fill your own bucket first. Before bringing up a topic with a child, consider reading background material from trustworthy sources, including this guide.

2. Trust the Holy Ghost. When you ask specifically, the Holy Ghost will surely give you ideas and impressions.

3. Be flexible. Adapt topics for age, maturity and attention spans. Look for and take advantage of spontaneous, natural teaching opportunities.

4. Offer sips. Don’t offer a drink from your fire hose of knowledge in just one sitting. If there is a history of brief visits, children will likely keep coming back for more.

5. Be ahead of the curve. Sometimes you may have to react to a question your child brings home; but other times you can be proactive and discuss topics that prepare them for when they will surely face them later-alone.

6. Teach hearts and heads. Logic may be important for understanding in our minds, but feelings—yours and theirs—grow conviction in the heart (our spirit) to choose the better way when you’re not around.

7. Do a dry run. Listen to yourself, privately, talk out loud about the tougher subjects. It will make it easier when you have an audience.

8. Assume little or nothing. Re-visit basic principles and basic facts of life. Understanding is affected by maturity, distraction levels, memory, and so on.

9. Listen with love. If you are using your ears and heart (listening) most of the time, you are on the right track; if your mouth (talking), consider your ways. If you are too rushed, too busy, or too judgmental, again, consider your ways.

10. You don’t have to use the word “testify” to testify. But don’t be ambiguous about where you stand on a certain principle, either. Admit when you don’t know something, and then find the answer.

11. Ask “perfect” questions. Open-ended questions (those that don’t have a Yes or No answer) are often effective in opening hearts and inviting dialogue. It’s an invitation for children to talk, and for parents to listen.

12. Do as I do. For example, if so-called “adult” content is inappropriate for children, let them see you, as an adult, avoiding it also. “What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson

More ideas about how we can teach and make meaningful connections can be found at lds.org, and searching for “Take Advantage of Spontaneous Teaching Moments” Teaching in the Savior’s Way, 2015.

We have explained why making simple, regular connections with children is so important, how to make those connections, and in the next section we share ideas on what you can talk about.
3. WHAT Do I Talk About When Connecting With Children?

Discussing the topic of pornography with children can be challenging, and we may wonder when and how to do it. But when we take time to regularly connect with our children over myriad topics, it may surprise us how the Lord creates opportunities to talk about sensitive topics like this in natural ways and safe settings.

In the course of connecting over homework, dating, or jobs, make sure some of those visits include these key topics that touch on core aspects of pornography use. We want to encourage you to read through the material in the next section, Section 7, which addresses each of the following five topics in more detail. Doing so may spark some of your own ideas on how you can bring it up in conversations with your children.

1. Our Godly Potential
   (See “Conversation & Lesson Ideas – A”)
2. The Importance of a Body and Gender in God’s Plan
   (See “Conversation & Lesson Ideas – B”)
3. Healthy Sexuality
   (See “Conversation & Lesson Ideas – C”)
4. Pornography: What It Is and How to Avoid It
   (See “Conversation & Lesson Ideas – D”)
5. Sin, Repentance and Recovery
   (See “Conversation & Lesson Ideas – E”)

With children and pornography it is no more a matter of if but when they will be exposed. Be proactive by talking with and modeling for them aspects such as healthy expressions of love, which includes respect, safety, healthy communication and healthy touch; this can start as early as 2 or 3 years old, and continue throughout their lives.

Answer every question—even when they may make us feel uncomfortable. Even when we may have to respond with, “that’s a great question, I don’t really know the answer; let me find the answer and we can visit again,” teaches children we are a safe source with whom they can explore, and that we can be a safe and reliable source to talk about even sensitive questions.
The truth is, children are naturally curious and they want answers; we hope they will turn to parents for answers, but if not, it will be from some other source we have little or no control over such as friends or the internet; either way, we know they will get answers, but will they be what is best for them? Make it easy for them to come to you as parents with their tough questions and curiosity. Questions about pornography and sexuality may not seem to be “gospel” topics necessarily, but considering the broader reasons why we are here on earth, they are very much “gospel” topics!

“The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the Spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted.”

—PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.
(The Charted Course of the Church in Education, rev. ed. [1994], 3)

My “Magical” Boyhood Experience with Pornography

Nearly 28 years ago, my brother and I had gone as usual during our Christmas break to visit our grandparents in California. I was about six years old and my brother was close to eight years old. We had made friends with the neighbor kids and one day were at their house playing. We walked inside the detached garage behind their house and were looking at a collection of crushed bottle caps. As we were standing there near the wooden workbench, I looked up and saw on the wall pictures of naked women that probably had been taken out of a magazine. As I looked at them with curiosity, I felt a powerful soothing feeling, almost a comforting inner swelling. It felt very private, personal and arousing. My memory is that it was magical. And it was real. I felt drawn in. I knew that it was wrong, but the pull was so strong, enjoyable and even captivating. I remember wanting to look longer but was afraid my brother or our new friends might notice my staring at the pictures. So, as I recall being in that garage, I tried to look using only my eyes without raising my head, and after we left, I pretended I didn’t want to go back.

One of us told my mom about what we saw. I don’t remember whether it was my brother or me. She was upset, and in a loud voice declared from where she stood outside our grandparent’s house that our friend’s dad—and she called him out by name—was a jerk. He happened to be in his yard and overheard our mom’s declaration, so he yelled back “I’m not a jerk!” If my mom or dad later talked with my brother or me about what we had seen or what we had felt, I don’t recall that conversation; I just remember what I saw and felt, and that my mom was upset.

As this story shows, when a young person is first exposed to pornography the experience may not be repulsive at all, but may feel pleasurable or even euphoric or “magical.” This comes in part from the release of dopamine in the brain. Some adults have described their first experience seeing pornography as “magical and mystical.” Consequently, when we teach our children about the extreme danger of pornography we should acknowledge that the feelings they experienced may have been pleasurable. For a prepared parent, this situation would have presented a prime teaching opportunity.

Unless a child has some understanding and context of the importance of healthy sexuality, the sanctity of their bodies, and the extreme danger of using pornography, after they have been exposed they may be more likely to seek out pornography again—and the feelings it evokes. Parents should also accept that using pornography—especially when coupled with sex with self (masturbation), can quickly become habit forming and eventually addicting.

Pornography is a powerful counterfeit of God’s gift of sexuality. Children may be torn, knowing it is bad and that using it is not right; yet “using” is pleasurable. So at this crossroad our children have an important decision to make: will they choose to be
honest and open with us about their experience? Our goal as parents is to earn their trust and confidence so they feel they can safely talk about their experience without fear of being scolded, lectured or shamed. Being honest about very personal sexual experiences takes courage, and we should acknowledge that every time they voluntarily come to us to talk.

Parents can talk about some of the consequences of using pornography:

- Using pornography will inhibit a person’s ability to connect with God, parents, friends and loved ones.
-Pornography is a counterfeit of sexuality and true intimacy, and is in direct opposition to God’s commandments concerning sexual purity.
- Using pornography will distort our future opportunities to experience loving intimacy in marriage.
- Using pornography can lead to addiction which strangles our agency.
- Using pornography shrinks our opportunities to receive all the gifts and blessings that are part of God’s great plan of happiness.

Most importantly, parents should lovingly teach their children that God is aware of all this, and has prepared a way for them to meet and overcome the challenges they face with the onslaught of pornography and confusing messages of morality.

“Many experiences recorded in the scriptures make clear that God has confidence in the spiritual abilities of young people. Samuel was just a boy when he heard the Lord’s voice in the temple. Mormon was only 10 years old when he demonstrated the spiritual gifts that qualified him for his sacred mission. Joseph Smith was 14 when he was trusted with the revelation that initiated the Restoration. And the Savior Himself was 12 when He was found in the temple, teaching and engaging in His Father’s work. If you are a [parent]..., you have the opportunity to help them fulfill the great work that Heavenly Father has prepared them to do.”

—Take Advantage of Spontaneous Teaching Moments, Teaching in the Savior’s Way, 2015. (See lds.org)
Watch the DVD included with this manual “Heart of the Matter,” and see if it is the right time to watch it with your teenage children, and talk about it afterwards.

4. Talking to Youth and Children About Pornography

Dan Gray, LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker)

Today’s youth are bombarded by explicit images—most of them carnal and lustful. But because of the complexity and delicate nature of sexual issues, many parents are reluctant or embarrassed to discuss the subject with their children. Consequently, many youth are schooled by misguided friends or corrupt media and often develop inaccurate views about sexuality. Those views may lead to inappropriate behaviors.

We want to teach our youth the law of chastity and help them avoid the pain of immorality. So what can parents and priesthood leaders do? We need to discuss with our youth the sacred nature of human intimacy and help them understand and bridle the feelings associated with that intimacy.

But, if we teach only about misused sexuality, our youth might become insecure and uncertain. We may inadvertently convey this confusing message: “Sexual thoughts and feelings are bad, sinful, and wrong—save them for someone you love.” Youth who receive only negative messages about sexuality may conclude, “Since sexual feelings or urges are bad, and I feel them very strongly, I too must be bad.” This kind of thinking can result in feelings of low self-worth, unworthiness, and shame, leaving the young person feeling distant from the Spirit.

Open conversations can prevent much of this confusion. As we talk to our youth about the sacred nature of our bodies and procreation, we’ll be able to help them understand and avoid the spiritual, emotional, and physical dangers of pornography.

The Body Is Sacred

The media often portray an unrealistic view of how our bodies should look and what they represent. This view leads people to see the body as an object rather than an essential part of a person’s soul. Accepting this view can lead to near worship of the “perfect body” and, when one doesn’t match up, to self-loathing.

Rather than let the media teach our youth this destructive worldly view, we can teach them that our bodies, in all their varieties, are wonderful God-given gifts, created to provide joy and fulfillment. In 1913, Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated:

“We have been taught to look upon these bodies of ours as gifts from God. We Latter-day Saints do not regard the body as something to be condemned, something to be abhorred. We regard [the body] as the sign of our royal birthright. It is particular to the theology of the Latter-day Saints that we regard the body as an essential part of the soul.”

1: In Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 117

This understanding can help youth look on their own bodies and the bodies of others with deeper respect. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also articulated the sacred nature of our bodies:
“We simply must understand the revealed, restored Latter-day Saint doctrine of the soul, and the high and inextricable part the body plays in that doctrine.

“One of the 'plain and precious' truths restored to this dispensation is that 'the spirit and the body are the soul of man'.”¹

“Exploitation of the body (please include the word soul there) is, in the last analysis, an exploitation of Him who is the Light and the Life of the world.”²

¹: D&C 88:15

**Sexuality Is a Gift**

In addition to being blessed with physical bodies, we are also given the sacred power of procreation. Our Heavenly Father has sanctioned the act of sexual expression in marriage, and allows married couples to experience pleasure, love, and fulfillment in that expression. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) stated:

“In the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved. There is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love.”¹

¹: The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 311

**What are the Harmful Effects of Pornography?**

One of the things that can corrupt this sacred power is pornography. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that through its use, “the minds of youth become warped with false concepts. Continued exposure leads to addiction that is almost impossible to break.”¹

Many individuals—even some professional counselors, excuse or even condone viewing pornography as harmless behavior. They rationalize that it is “normal” and causes no harm when done in seclusion and privacy. This same rationale is used in excusing the often accompanying practice of masturbation (sex with self). So how do we respond when youth ask, “What is it about pornography and

Our physical body plus our spirit body comprise our soul. Pornography defiles souls—souls for which Jesus Christ atoned. Therefore, when we look upon the body of another person to satisfy our own lustful desires, we are disrespecting and defiling the very soul of that person—as well as our own. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland warned us of the consequences of rationalizing or taking these things lightly:

“In trivializing the soul of another (please include the word body there), we trivialize the Atonement, which saved that soul and guaranteed its continued existence. And when one toys with the Son of Righteousness, the Day Star Himself, one toys with white heat and a flame hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be burned.”


Pornography can become addictive. Repeatedly viewing pornography—especially when coupled with masturbation—can become habitual, even addictive. The addiction is established when a person becomes dependent on the “rush” of chemicals the brain releases when he or she views pornography. They may soon depend on this activity to escape from or cope with life’s challenges and emotional stressors such as hurt, anger, loneliness, fatigue or boredom. Boredom is one of the most common causes. This dependency becomes very difficult to break, and sometimes escalates to sexual encounters outside the bonds of marriage.

Pornography creates unhealthy expectations for marriage. When a person views pornography and becomes aroused, the body experiences the same arousal patterns as if it were in a real sexual encounter. When this behavior is repeated frequently, the body and the mind become conditioned to respond to certain sexual images and behaviors, which can create unrealistic and unhealthy expectations of what a sexual relationship should be. Such expectations carry over to marriage, creating pain, conflict, and betrayal of trust between spouses.

How Can We Have Unceasing Virtue?
The Lord offers tremendous blessings to those who have clean and virtuous thoughts coupled with charity:

“How Can We Have Unceasing Virtue?

The Lord offers tremendous blessings to those who have clean and virtuous thoughts coupled with charity:

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God;…and the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion.”

2: D&C 121:45–46

Those who succeed in overcoming inappropriate thoughts and behaviors are those who learn to engage in virtuous daily routines. Boredom and an idle mind have always been the “devil’s workshop.” So how does one maintain virtuous thoughts unceasingly?
Tools for Parents to “Connect”

- Listening to uplifting music
- Enjoying God’s creations in nature
- Keeping our physical bodies clean and healthy
- Honest toil
- Reading scriptures and good literature
- Delighting in laughter with good friends and family
- Participating in conversations that are not demeaning or lewd
- Giving thanks in prayer, and pleading for power to avoid and overcome temptations
- Surrounding ourselves—at home and work—with virtuous pictures, paintings, gifts from loved ones, things that make us laugh or help us recall fond memories

These things can keep our minds well occupied and less available to the cravings of the natural man. If youth implement these strategies, they will begin to experience the incredible blessings mentioned earlier in Doctrine and Covenants 121.

Our youth should understand we all have weaknesses to overcome, and that weakness does not make us unworthy of God’s love. In fact, overcoming our weaknesses is what the Lord expects us to do. When the Lord makes us aware of our weakness, and we follow His directive to be humble and submissive (not distressed and hopeless), wonderful things begin to happen. We can yield our hearts to the Lord in faith. Then, through His grace and power—not through our willpower alone—He will “make weak things become strong unto us.”

We are not told, however, that He will always take our weakness away from us. We may continue to be tempted and troubled by our weakness, but as we are humble and maintain faith, the Lord will strengthen us and help us avoid and resist temptations.

When young people have problems with pornography, they need to know that they are not lost, that we and the Lord still love them, and that there is a way out. Our youth should not feel ashamed of seeking parental, priesthood and professional help.

President Hinckley has said:

“May you plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals.”


5. Creating a Safe Place to Talk About Dangerous Things

Jeffrey J. Ford, MS, LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist)

Sex and pornography have become a top priority for parents and their children to discuss in recent years. With research indicating that adolescents appear to be using pornography much more than any other

3: Ether 12:27
age group, parents need to know how to talk about pornography and how to recognize signs that their child may already be struggling with pornography.

In a study conducted at Brigham Young University by Jason Carroll, Ph.D. (2008) and others, it was found that 9 out of 10 boys and one third of girls use pornography. Research like this can be sobering and overwhelming for parents.

Talking about pornography and sex is particularly difficult for parents who didn’t have that type of discussion with their own parents when they were children. Some parents are unsure about when to talk to their children about such an important topic, and feel torn between giving their child too much information or too little for their age. In whatever situation parents find themselves, remember that it is never too late to change and make things right.

Many young people have described their experience of having a “one-time talk” with their parents. This shouldn’t be; it should be an ongoing dialogue.

One young man shared that his father took him on a long walk when he was twelve years old. He told me, “I was in shock! My dad talked for two hours about things I had never heard of before!” After the walk ended the young man never heard anything about sex or pornography from his father again.

The boy took the new and confusing information his father gave him and did two things: (1) He asked his friends about it, but said that this confused him even more, because it was clear that his friends were just as ignorant as he was; (2) He went to the Internet and looked things up. Now this boy’s World Wide Web inquiry began innocently enough, but that day it ended with an exposure to pornography, one that created a hunger—that eventually developed into a full-fledged addiction.

Consider more regular discussions with your son or daughter, and sharing smaller packets of new information each time. This provides an opportunity for them to sort through confusing information and experiences. It also ensures that the parent is the person who gives the most accurate, safe information.

Remember that an adolescent will usually open up about things in stages, and rarely discloses all at once. Teenagers are trying to make sense of what’s going on around them, what their peers are saying and doing, and whether they will be accepted.

Sometimes parents scare their children away when children finally ask them a question. Parents may become too eager to help, and think, “At last, a chance to unload!” As the parent unloads, however, the child may tune out or feel lectured, but most importantly, his or her needs will not be met.

Our children will not learn everything at once, and we shouldn’t try to cover everything at once either. Learning about healthy sexuality and the dangers of pornography is a process that takes time and requires a safe setting for asking questions. There isn’t one right way to discuss this topic; just make sure discussions take place. Find a framework or analogy to talk about this subject that fits you, and draws upon values that are important to you and your family.

Regular, shorter conversations provide opportunities to clarify values and beliefs, express opinions, instill gospel truths about healthy sexuality, and answer questions. Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions; explore what the child thinks and feels about pornography—especially if they have been exposed already. Jill C. Manning, PhD, has said parents need to


“Start having new kinds of conversations about pornography—that go beyond scary statistics, frightening forecasts, graphic details and dire realities, and which shift into dialogues that are empowering and hopeful, and arm people with practical strategies for being able to address this issue in their own [lives] effectively.”
Tips That Create Safety When Talking About Dangerous Things:

1. Stay calm when your son or daughter begins asking questions, or sharing their experience with sex or pornography. Children are attuned to their parents’ non-verbal cues, and may avoid extending the conversation if they sense Mom or Dad is anxious or upset. Staying outwardly calm is particularly important if parents discover that their teenager has been looking at pornography. In this case, parents should carefully plan a response—even if it is done later—that is based on understanding and helping their teen, instead of punishing or shaming them.

Ask questions such as, “How long have you been viewing pornography?” or “Have you also masturbated?” If your child has been viewing pornography for a significant amount of time, he needs help. If parents can provide a safe setting for teens to share their struggles, they are more likely to come out of hiding. Isolation is one of their worst enemies.

One teen I worked with said this: “When my parents caught me looking at porn, it was an answer to prayer! The night before, I prayed that something would happen so I could stop looking at porn. I had tried and tried to stop by myself, and I just couldn’t do it. So I was relieved when my parents found out!” With this attitude, the teen and parents are more likely to begin recovery on the right foot.

Another teen shared this: “The last people I want to tell are my parents! Whenever the
subject of pornography in general comes up, my parents talk about how sick and wrong people are who look at it! Well, I look at it, so they surely will not love me if I tell them.”

Speaking with compassion, and not judging others in general will contribute to creating a safe place—not a hostile place for children. Showing your son or daughter that what they share isn’t going to send you over the emotional edge creates a lot of safety, and encourages them to share more.

2. Parents should allow room for mistakes as teens begin recovery. Giving the ultimatum, “Don’t ever let me catch you looking at pornography again!” is not at all helpful, and may cause panic, especially if the child has already attempted to stop, and failed.

Another young man shared that after his parents caught him, they scolded him and “forbade” him to ever do it again. He said, “My parents didn’t understand! I had already tried to stop, and I couldn’t do it. How can they expect me to just turn it off? So I just stopped talking about it with them because I didn’t want to disappoint them anymore.”

Some parents don’t understand, and should become more informed. Teenagers need a safe place to talk about how a slip affects them, and how to do better the next time. If your child feels safe, he will come to you whenever he is struggling, and is less likely to go underground with his addiction.

3. Some parents get caught in the trap of offering quick, false forgiveness after their teen discloses mistakes. The parent may say something to this effect: “It doesn’t matter, it’s water under the bridge; I forgive you and I love you.”

Certainly, communicating love when your child has done something wrong is important; however, love is not forgiveness. Forgiveness may occur after everything has been disclosed, and each party has had time to sort out how they feel. Initial disclosures only begin the process of getting the whole story—and it is rarely the whole story!

Offering forgiveness will likely feel cheap and fake to someone who knows there is more to it. And it does little to provide safety. It also robs him of the opportunity to grow by being held accountable for what he has done. Forgiveness is a process, just like disclosure. Tell your son that you’re committed to work with him to overcome his addiction; that will create real safety. Together, you can find solutions.

[End of Jeffrey J. Ford: “Creating a Safe Place to Talk About Dangerous Things”]
My husband and I first discovered our middle son, then age twelve, had a pornography problem when we were getting our computer fixed. I had asked the technician to look for pornography evidence. I felt shocked, angry, worried and confused. We had a home where we had consistently taught the importance of a relationship with God, and right from wrong. We had held regular family home evenings, family scripture study, etc. We had strong standards about appropriate media, had the computer in a well-trafficked area, and had established family limits on electronic devices. And at times we taught about sex in positive ways. But it had not been enough.

We confronted our son later that night. At first he denied it, but then admitted it. When we asked more questions he started to cry. His strongest reaction came when I asked him how many times he had looked at pornography. Finally he confessed to “over thirty times.” I suspected this meant even more. I felt compassion for him, and knew he needed to know that we still loved him and that we would help him. We talked about the damaging effects of pornography, and he promised he was done with it. I was naive so I believed him. We also installed a strict Internet filter.

We went forward with our family life but struggling through the something-is-not-right feeling. As time went on, I kept thinking our son’s impulsivity, shyness, feelings of entitlement, anger, blaming, lying, withholding the truth, lack of self-care, shutting down emotionally, lack of empathy and combative personality were just his weaknesses—or maybe they were just part of being a teenager. Sometimes when he was disciplined for doing something wrong, almost immediately he would do it again and my husband and I would scratch our heads and wonder, Why didn’t he get it? Is he just not very bright? On the other hand, he seemed plenty smart, but there were areas where he did not seem to be able to put two and two together.

Looking back, however, I can see that all these elements were outgrowths of his addiction. He just could not control his impulses because of the damage the addiction had caused his brain. Like other addicts, he often unconsciously tried to do things to make his loved ones angry so he would have an excuse to act out.

A couple of years went by. One afternoon I caught him looking at pornography and masturbating while I was in the same room. He thought he had hidden it. As I confronted him I was incredulous. I finally realized he had a serious problem if he was desperate enough to act out under these conditions. I told him I thought he had an addiction and talked to him about what that meant. I explained that he would need to tell other people about his problem so he could get help. Addiction means there is no way you can overcome it on your own.

My husband was our bishop at the time, and so he started meeting with our son regularly and gave him the Church’s 12-Step booklet. They had many great talks about shoring yourself up spiritually, and my husband asked for regular accountability from my son.
Because I knew my husband was working with him in an ecclesiastical role, and that meant confidentiality, I didn’t think I could be a part of this issue any more.

His side effects continued, such as lying, impulsivity, and a high demand for edgy entertainment and adrenaline-producing activities. But I did not realize that these were related to the pornography addiction. I tried to love and guide him, disciplining him for hurting his younger brothers, and not tolerating disrespectful attitudes. And when negative consequences didn’t seem to be helping his behaviors much, I’d switch and try a different approach, being more loving, and giving compliments and appreciation. I even made gratitude lists for everything he was doing right so I wouldn’t feel so frustrated or judgmental.

Occasionally, at church, I noticed he was not taking the sacrament, so I knew he was still having problems. But I continued to tell myself that my husband was working with him, and that this was something a lot of young men struggle with in their youth. Call it what you want: I was in denial.

Toward the end of our son’s junior year of high school, when he was sixteen, my husband felt a strong spiritual impression to read the text messages on our son’s phone. He discovered that our son was making out with girls for the purpose of becoming sexually aroused. He later confessed to lying for some time to my husband about his continuing to look at pornography, and had minimized his true masturbation habits. It was then that we all finally woke up to the stark fact that this was a serious addiction, and that it was not going to go away with just willpower, or teaching, or even spiritual interventions alone.

By the grace of God we found a therapist qualified in pornography and sexual addiction. My husband and I attended weekly therapy sessions with our son for a month. Because our finances and time were tight, my husband attended the 12-Step group called S-Anon; my son attended his own 12-Step group, and group therapy; I attended my own counseling group. We discontinued individual sessions. Hope was high but progress was slow.

After an initial honeymoon period where our son seemed willing to do whatever was necessary to get freed from addiction, he soon realized that recovery was really hard work and started to drag his feet. My husband and I did not always agree about what the best course of action was with our son’s needs, and since I was in therapy by myself, we were on different learning curves.

Periods of seeming “recovery” were followed by confessions of acting out and more lies. Because my son was a minor, there are complexities that adults in recovery do not have to navigate. Many weeks felt like we took two steps forward but one and a half steps back. If my son was doing well, I was flying high with hope and peace. When he struggled, however, I was in the depths of despair and anxiety. I call this “riding his roller coaster.” When he was up, I was up; if he was down, I was down.

Curiously, gifts for me started to unfold. Through counseling I was able to learn how to take care of myself and get off my son’s roller coaster. I was awakened to things about myself that I never would have become conscious of without having to wrestle addiction in my home.

For example, I never would have realized how much I had believed I could not trust others to help me with my needs. I learned specifics about our weaknesses as parents that likely contributed to the situation. I now have given myself permission to make mistakes and take responsibility for them—it’s part of life for everyone. I am now more comfortable in my own skin. I know that whatever I’m feeling is okay, that I have truth, and I can share it in a healthy way. I feel more comfortable in social settings and can see the goodness in others.

I feel peace and serenity no matter what my son is doing or not doing—because I can more clearly recognize my responsibility—and leave the rest up to God. I now trust God completely to do His part. I know how to hold boundaries that are motivated by truth, love, and clarity about what my son is capable of managing. I used to think I was responsible to fix my son—and other people, for that matter. This made me
feel so burdened and frustrated. I always knew God loved me, but now I know He loves me for just being me, not because of anything I do, serve, sacrifice or accomplish. I love knowing He wants to give me good things and help me be happy right now, as well as in the long run.

Another precious gift is knowing in my bones that difficulties that happen to me can be consecrated for my gain, that nothing can really hurt me. God is always there for me, and I am safe in His hands.

I can discern other people’s shame and damaged spirits more often, and I feel compassion, not judgment or offense. I feel a new confidence in my daily priorities. All this growth is a process; I don’t have to know everything right now. I feel balanced and patient. Ironically, this addiction, though ugly, keeps giving me gifts in my own trauma recovery, for which I am so grateful. It was such an overwhelming adversity for our family that there was no way my puny human effort stood a chance to fight it and win. Turning to that majestic, loving Power greater than myself has given me the priceless gift of a deeper relationship with my Savior, and the increased trust, hope, and security I feel in His care.

If there were nothing else, the gifts I have received might be payment enough. Happily, though, there is more. My son has since made wonderful progress. He continues to fight the good fight and never gives up. His recovery is progressing, and we don’t always know if he is standing on solid ground yet. But he is more open with his feelings, his struggles and his triumphs. I feel like I am starting to know the real, great soul he is. Most of the negative effects of his pornography addiction are subsiding. He is rarely blaming or feels entitled, and when he is he takes responsibility for it more often. He has started expressing gratitude, love and an interest in his family members that previously did not exist.

He feels a tenderness and empathy toward suffering individuals now. He plans ahead and realizes the value of structure. He takes better care of himself physically, educationally, and with his goals in a way we hadn’t seen until the last six months. He can say he’s sorry now without berating himself or justifying. His relationship with me and my husband is closer, more connected and more honest than it has ever been.

Our son may be more aware than most adults of his complete dependence on God, and he has had some soul searching times to commit to what kind of a man he wants to become. He’s gaining an awareness of how his choices either strengthen or damage relationships. He can examine motives behind his own behavior, and he can stand up for what is true for him. And he has recognized miracles in his life—both big and little.

Do I wish we could have had all these great blessings delivered in a different package than sexual addiction? Yes, definitely yes. But since that is the way they came, we’ll take it. Truly, through the intense work of recovery, God is giving us beauty for ashes.
AS A PARENT, discussing principles of the gospel that relate to the topic of pornography is often challenging and we may wonder how to do it well. To make this easier we have compiled the following, which includes “bite-sized” simplified topics. You might talk about one simple principle while taking your children to school; another while you are both in the kitchen fixing a meal; and another while weeding the garden together. We have purposefully made these to be brief encounters or connections, with the hope you will make them regular encounters.

"The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior."
—ELDER BOYD K. PACKER
Ensign, May 1997

Conversation and Lesson Ideas A: Our Godly Potential

* We have been placed on earth as part of a divine plan to help us not only return home to God, but to become like God

* Our life here on this earth, as Elder Boyd K. Packer has explained, is the second act of a three-act play. Pre-mortal life is the first act, and life after death is the third act. (Search on the Internet for, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” Old Testament Teacher Resource Manual, pp. 13–19)

* Our mortal bodies, along with our capacity to procreate and our agency, make for the perfect set of conditions to test us, and which allow us to learn to become like God

* As we try to choose the right every day, Heavenly Father will help us resist temptations and be obedient so that eventually we can return to live with Him

* God possesses all of the best attributes in perfection, the most important of which is love
The opposite of God’s love is Satan’s lust

Pornography tempts us to move far away from God’s love to Satan’s lust

Have you ever been tempted to do something you knew was wrong? Can you tell me about it?

When have you felt God’s love in your own life?

Read the following, and choose certain short phrases to bring up during brief connections with your children:

The Family: A Proclamation to the World
Alma 38:2
Alma 24:19
Moroni 7:45
D&C 121:39-46

Share the story of Joseph in Egypt, and how he was faithful even during very difficult times, and didn’t forget his noble heritage. (See Genesis chapters 37 through 50, one of the longer and more detailed accounts in scripture, which is captivating and powerful.)

Share the following story of “The King’s Son:”

Many years ago I heard the story of the son of King Louis XVI of France. King Louis had been taken from his throne and imprisoned. His young son, the prince, was taken by those who had dethroned the king. They thought that inasmuch as the king’s son was heir to the throne, if they could destroy him morally, he would never realize the great and grand destiny that life had bestowed upon him.

They took him to a community far away, and there they exposed the lad to every filthy and vile thing that life could offer. They exposed him to foods the richness of which would quickly make him a slave to appetite. They used vile language around him constantly. They exposed him to lewd and lusting women. They exposed him to dishonor and distrust. He was surrounded 24 hours a day by everything that could drag the soul of a man as low as one could slip.

For over six months he had this treatment—but not once did the young lad buckle under pressure. Finally, after intensive temptation, they questioned him. Why had he not submitted himself to these things—why had he not partaken? These things would provide pleasure, satisfy his lusts, and were desirable; they were all his. The boy said, “I cannot do what you ask for I was born to be a king.”

—ELDER VAUGHN J. FEATHERSTONE

“The King’s Son,” New Era, November 1975, 35
Conclusion

Help children understand they are much like the prince in the story. Our Heavenly Father is the King, and just as the king’s son was exposed to many awful and vile things, sometimes we, as children of a Heavenly King, may be exposed to vile things also. But we were born to become kings and queens in the kingdom of God. We must be like the boy in the story and remember who we are and what we can become. But unlike the prince in his forced situation, we can choose to avoid being exposed to damaging influences and material in the first place. Like the prince, we must always turn away from evil and choose the right, even when we are tempted and our friends are disobedient.
The Importance of a Body

- God has a body that is resurrected and full of glory
- God created our bodies to help us be able to progress and become like Him
- We are made up of two bodies: A physical body we can see and touch, and a spirit body we can’t see or touch right now, but we can feel

"Know ye not that [your bodies] are the temple of God, and that the Spirit...dwelleth in [your body]?
—1 Corinthians 3:16–17

"We simply must understand the revealed, restored Latter-day Saint doctrine of the soul, and the high and inextricable part the body plays in that doctrine.

"One of the ‘plain and precious’ truths restored to this dispensation is that ‘the spirit and the body are the soul of man’.

"Exploitation of the body (please include the word soul there) is, in the last analysis, an exploitation of Him who is the Light and the Life of the world."

1: D&C 88:15
**Spirit + Body = Soul**

**Activity**

Put a glove on your child’s hand, the glove to represent their physical body, and the hand to represent their spirit body.

- What are some things that are the same with your spirit body and your physical body?
- What are some things that are different?
- Our spirit should be in charge of what our body does.
- We can show God we value our bodies by caring for them and using them as they were intended.
- God values each of His children because of who we are, not how we look.
- We should never criticize or make fun of another’s body.

“*The Lord said…: Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature...; man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*”

— I Samuel 16:7

**Conversation and Lesson Ideas**

- Your body is sacred. Respect it and do not defile it in any way.
- We can defile our bodies by drawing on them, such as with tattoos, or cutting or puncturing them with many rings, or by using its special and sacred parts in ways Heavenly Father does not approve of.
- When we respect something, that means we take care of it and treat it well.
- To show respect for our bodies we can follow the Word of Wisdom, take care of our health, and dress and act modestly.

“*Modesty is an attitude of propriety and decency in dress, grooming, language, and behavior. If we are modest, we do not draw undue attention to ourselves.*”

(See lds.org; also search the topic “modesty”)

“Rather than let the media teach our youth this their destructive worldly view, we can teach them that our bodies, in all their varieties, are wonderful God-given gifts, created to provide joy and fulfillment.”

(Dan Gray, LCSW)

“We have been taught to look upon these bodies of ours as gifts from God. We Latter-day Saints do not regard the body as something to be condemned, something to be abhorred. We regard [the body] as the sign of our royal birthright. It is particular to the theology of the Latter-day Saints that we regard the body as an essential part of the soul.”

1: Elder James E. Talmage of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Conference Report, Oct. 93
The Importance of Gender

- A long time ago we were born as spirit children to our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother
- They made us either a girl or a boy—that’s our “gender.”
- What are some things you especially like about being a (girl or boy)?
- Being a girl or boy is an important part of who we are
- Being a girl or boy is part of our divine destiny, purpose, and identity
- What makes girls different from boys?
- We all have questions about the body because they are full of wonderful things, and we do not need to be embarrassed or afraid to ask any question
- It’s good to learn about the wonders of our bodies
- When we have questions about our bodies or the purpose of different parts, it’s important to talk to our parents
- Each part of our body does something different
- Some parts of our bodies are more sacred or special than other parts

- What are the special and sacred parts of our body?
- What should we do to keep those wonderful areas of our body special and sacred?
- Girls and boys have unique roles and purposes in God’s plan

Activity Idea
Create two headings, male and female. Before the lesson, read “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” and write on several small cards one thing that is specific to each gender role. Put the cards face down, and give each child a chance to choose a card and decide under which heading it would go: male or female.

Possible elements to write on the cards:

**General male roles:**
Husband; father; presides over family; provides food and a home; protects family; educates and encourages children; teaches children to follow God; teaches children to love and serve; helps wife; equal with his wife.

**General female roles:**
Wife; mother; gives birth; feeds children; educates and encourages children; teaches children to follow God; teaches children to love and serve; helps husband; equal with her husband.

Activity Idea (See *Ensign*, August 2017, p.71)
Tell your children about the day they were born, and look at their baby pictures if they are available. Tell them how much you love them and how important they are as part of your family, and also how much their Heavenly Parents love them. If the time is right, be prepared to teach them, in an age-appropriate way, about sexual intimacy. Answer any questions they may have in an open, loving way.
Conversation and Lesson Ideas C: Healthy Sexuality

The Body is Sacred

- Review principles listed in the previous section on the body and gender. Healthy sexuality must be founded upon these principles.
- The body is an essential part of a person’s soul, it is not an object.
- Media often portray an unrealistic view of how our bodies should look and what they represent.
- We are not here to worship the “perfect body.”
- A significant part of our test in mortality is learning how to control the strong feelings the Lord has placed in our bodies.
- Our bodies can do many wonderful things.
- One of the things men and women can do with their bodies is create babies together. This is a very beautiful, special power! It’s a way men and women show they love each other.
- Heavenly Father says a man and a woman must be married before they use this sacred power.
- Life is a wonderful gift.
- Having a body is an important part of God’s plan for us.

(From “Teaching the Proclamation to the Family,” Ensign, Aug. 2017, p.71)
"We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife. “We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan.”

—The Family: A Proclamation to the World

Teaching Children Healthy Sexuality

“One of the most powerful buffers and protections for our youth is to teach them healthy sexuality in the home, starting early,” say Dr. Jill Manning. “Our youth are suffering because they are growing up in a vacuum of toxic messages with too few positive messages within the gospel framework.”

Brigham University family life professor Mark H. Butler recommends a straightforward explanation: “the sexual response cycle exists naturally in us as human beings. The desire and drive we have is a God-given endowment which blesses us, drawing us naturally, toward marriage, and toward family life.”

Age appropriate discussions about healthy sexuality can begin early. Professor Jason Carroll, Ph.D. (Brigham Young University, School of Family Life) points out that conversations about good touch and bad touch and personal privacy, along with correct terminology for body parts, can be taught starting at a young age. By age eight, a child is able to gain a basic understanding of sex in its physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational context.

Youth also appreciate correct and direct language. One young man said, “If you beat around the bush, people can really misunderstand. I was taught about the law of chastity a dozen times before I knew they were talking about sex.”

(Excerpt from “Eight Strategies to Help Children Reject Pornography,” Ensign, August 2017)

Activity Idea

Based on the child’s own pace and comfort level, teach basic concepts regarding body parts, body functions and sexuality. Know and use the names of body parts and at least basic facts about body functions. Ask children if they have questions. Let these questions guide your discussion. Be prepared to answer questions simply, honestly and accurately.

Parents should also pay attention to the context of these discussions. Professor Jason Carroll, Ph.D. says, “Do everything possible not to ritualize these conversations. We take our child out to dinner, we put on our church clothes, or we have the conversation in the parking lot of the temple.” But if children get the message that sex can be discussed only under these special circumstances, they may not know how to recreate those circumstances when they have questions.

Rather, parents should create an ongoing dialog and opportunities for children to ask questions wherever and whenever they have them. “If the conversations happen sitting on the bedroom floor or in your pickup truck or out picking strawberries, they know how to get back there.” (Jason Carroll, Ph.D., from “Eight Strategies to Help Children Reject Pornography,” Ensign August 2017)
Many parents worry that discussing sexual topics plainly and boldly might trigger curiosity and encourage experimentation. However, when parents openly discuss sexual topics in an age-appropriate way, youth are less likely to experiment and are more likely to remain abstinent.

- Connect with children on a wide range of topics
- Bring up topics related to healthy sexuality regularly
- The changing age and maturity of children requires us to re-visit this topic honestly and candidly over many years
- If we teach only about misused sexuality, our youth might become insecure and uncertain. We may inadvertently convey this confusing message: “Sexual thoughts and feelings are bad, sinful, and wrong—save them for someone you love”
- Youth who receive only negative messages about sexuality may incorrectly conclude, “Since sexual feelings or urges are bad, and I feel them very strongly, I too must be bad”
- Open conversations can prevent confusion about the sacred nature of our bodies and procreation
- Help them understand and avoid the spiritual, emotional and physical dangers of pornography

From Dan Gray, LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker)

There was provided in our bodies—and this is sacred—a power of creation, a light, so to speak, that has the power to kindle other lights. This gift was to be used only within the sacred bonds of marriage. Through the exercise of this power of creation, a mortal body may be conceived, a spirit entered into it, and a new soul born into this life.

This power is good. It can create and sustain family life, and it is in family life that we find the fountains of happiness. It is given to virtually every individual who is born into mortality. It is a sacred and significant power, and I repeat, my young friends, that this power is good.

Much of the happiness that may come to you in life will depend on how you use this sacred power of creation.

—ELDER BOYD K. PACKER

"Why Stay Morally Clean," Ensign, July 1972

“As our children grow, they need information taught by parents more directly and plainly about what is and is not appropriate. Parents need to teach children to avoid any pornographic photographs or stories. Talk to them plainly about sex. Let this information come from parents in the home in an appropriate way.”

—ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD

The Importance of Context

Connecting with children during brief conversations gives parents a chance to talk about the importance of context, meaning, under what circumstances does the Lord want us to use these powers and enjoy these strong feelings, and on the other hand, in what context does the Lord not want us to stir up these strong feelings or use these powers.

“In the context of lawful marriage, the intimacy of sexual relations is right and divinely approved. There is nothing unholy or degrading about sexuality in itself, for by that means men and women join in a process of creation and in an expression of love.”
—THE TEACHINGS OF SPENCER W. KIMBALL
ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 311

Why does God allow such strong emotions to be tied to the sacred parts of our bodies?

Bridles are something we use on horses. What do they allow us to do? Why would God ask us to put a bridle on our passions?

Why does God give us the ability to procreate if He knows some are going to misuse it?

Why does using “the God-given body of another without divine sanction [permission]” abuse their soul?

Other Resources with Ideas for Talking About Healthy Sexuality

- Watch the DVD found in the inside front cover of this manual: Safeguarding Teens and Young Adults from Pornography (Presented by Jason S. Carroll Ph.D., sponsored by S.A. Lifeline Foundation)
- See ProclamationKids.lds.org
- A Parent’s Guide published by the LDS Church, available in print and online
- Watch videos from the series: Family Conversations: Talking about Healthy Sexuality. Dr. Ben Erwin of LDS Family Services interviews specialists Dr. Jill Manning, a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and nationally renowned expert on pornography’s effects on the family; and Dr. Jason Carroll, Ph.D., a professor in BYU’s School of Family Life who has extensively researched sexuality in families. (20 videos, 3-5 minutes each; Find on mormonchannel.org)
Our Physical Bodies (Also use ideas from Lesson B, “Importance of a Body and Gender in God’s Plan”)

- You were obedient before you were born on earth; that is why you now are blessed to have a physical body.
- Satan wasn’t obedient to God during pre-earth life, so he never will receive a physical body like we have; he only has a spirit body. No wonder Satan’s primary aim is to mock the physical body and its divine characteristics.
- Satan is jealous and tries to get us to mistreat our bodies so we are unhappy like him.
- Satan will tempt us to do things that will make us unhappy. What are some of those things?

A Common Way Satan Tries to Tempt Us is Through Pornography

- Satan tempts us to look at pictures and videos of people who dress immodestly, show their naked bodies, or make fun of and mock proper intimacy.
- Explain what are the special and sacred parts of our bodies.
- Have you ever seen pictures that show people who aren’t covering up the special and sacred parts of their bodies?
- How do you feel when you see these pictures? (Acknowledge that when children see such images, some may respond with curiosity, be drawn in, or even have feelings of elation or euphoria as the brain is stimulated to release hormones. The idea that children all respond...
with feelings of abhorrence or “ickyness” when these images are viewed doesn't reflect many people's experience, and discounts the power these images have to influence our feelings. Address these feelings, and talk about why those feelings are there and the purposes for which the Lord made them. Consider talking about ideas in the previous section, “Healthy Sexuality.”

**Elder Richard G. Scott has said,** “Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, videos, or movies with powerful images of a woman’s or man’s body.”

**Elder David A. Bednar has said,** “When any of Heavenly Father’s children misuse their physical tabernacles by violating the law of chastity, by using drugs and addictive substances, by disfiguring or defacing themselves, or by worshipping the false idol of body images, whether their own or that of others, Satan is delighted.”

**What is Pornography?**

Pornography is “material that is sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal.” It may depict nudity and sexual behavior. It can be on any media that is seen, read or listened to, such as cell phones and websites, in books, movies and magazines.

**Why is Pornography Bad?**

- Using pornography will reduce our ability to feel the influence of the Holy Ghost and be obedient
- Using pornography will weaken our ability to make correct choices because it is very addictive, like many other drugs

**Activity Idea**

Gather a snow hat, gloves, scarf, coat and umbrella, and dress a child with them while discussing the dangers of being caught in a storm. Explain how these articles protect us. Talk about what kind of shelter would protect us during a bad storm. Explain that protecting ourselves from pornography is as important as protecting ourselves from a bad storm.

“*The excuse is given that [pornography] is hard to avoid, that it is right at our fingertips, and that there is no escape. Suppose a storm is raging and the winds howl and snow swirls about you. You find yourself unable to stop it. But you can dress properly and seek shelter, [so] the storm will have no effect on you.*”

—PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

- Pornography is used to “sell” Satan’s lies, lies which teach there is no connection between human sexuality and honesty, commitment, respect for ourselves and others, and emotional closeness
- Using pornography conditions viewers to be calloused and crude about our divine gift of procreation
- Using pornography destroys trust, love and true affection
- Using pornography cheapens what is special between husband and wife

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1: Making the Right Choices, Ensign, Nov. 1994
2: Things as They Really Are, CES Fireside, BYU-Idaho, May 3, 2009
Using pornography decreases the desire to marry and have children.

Using pornography will affect our ability to have a normal, satisfying and rewarding sexual relationship with our future spouse.

Using pornography treats people like objects.

(Treating a person like an object is called objectification: it takes away human qualities and replaces them with qualities of an object, meaning something that doesn’t speak, doesn’t have feelings, and can’t make choices. This is a clever and evil ploy Satan and his followers use so that people are less likely to relate to or be sensitive toward the person being shown. When we begin to objectify others, we lose part of our humanity and diminish our divine ability to show empathy and compassion for others.)

Pornography is poison. Do not watch it or read it. It will destroy you if you do. It will take from you your self-respect. It will rob you of a sense of the beauties of life. It will tear you down and pull you into a slew of evil thoughts and possibly evil actions. Stay away from it. Shun it as you would a foul disease, for it is just as deadly.

—PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY
Ensign, Nov. 1997

Is Pornography Addictive?

Addiction is continuing to engage in certain behaviors in spite of negative consequences.

The more we choose to go back to those behaviors, the more difficult it becomes to stop.

We feel like we can’t stop—even when we really want to.

These behaviors often escalate and occur more frequently, and our lives become unmanageable.

Pornography is addictive and can take control of our lives.

Scientific data shows sexual arousal stimulated by viewing pornography causes powerful chemical changes in the brain, very similar to that caused by other substances such as drugs and alcohol.

For some, pornography is instantly addictive.

Which do you think is more addictive, cocaine or pornography?

Pornography is addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it “hooks” its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. A man who had been addicted to pornography and to hard drugs wrote me this comparison: “In my eyes cocaine doesn’t hold a candle to this. I have done both…. Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to trying to quit pornography.”

—ELDER DALLIN H. OAKS
“Pornography,” Ensign, May 2005

How Can We Avoid Pornography?

Pray for help so Heavenly Father will strengthen us to avoid pornography and other negative influences.

Teach children about healthy sexuality to counter the distorted messages they will likely hear.

One of Satan’s favorite lies is, “One time will not hurt anything.” But one time will hurt!

Ask, “Is there ever a safe time you can drink poison?”

Believe that any use of pornography will literally poison our spirits.
What should you do if you see pornography or a picture you know in your heart is wrong, even though you may be curious or drawn to it?

- Turn off the computer, cell phone or screen of any kind
- Make an immediate conscious choice to turn and walk away
- Immediately choose to look away. Even when accidentally exposed, we always have a choice to look away
- Make a conscious decision to think about something else
- Be honest and brave and tell the person showing you that you don’t want to see that kind of stuff
- Be courageous and true to yourself and tell your mom or dad about what happened

Dr. Jill C. Manning, Ph.D. teaches: If youth “have eyelids that work, a neck that can turn their head, fingers that can push a power button, feet that can walk or run them out of a situation, and a spirit that understands right from wrong, they are qualified to work with parents to keep themselves safe from pornography.”

Activity Idea

Have your children role-play regarding how they would react if they saw pornography at a friend’s house, on a cell phone, or in some other situation. Like the trained reflexes of a fighter pilot under stress, practicing what to do while not under stress is a secret key; such practice could involve acting it out, not just thinking it out. Even if done in a playful setting, the message can take root.

- If you find a picture or web site that makes you curious about the body, show it to your parents and ask any questions you might have
- If your friends tell you something that makes you have questions, ask your parents
- Ask your parents anything you are curious or concerned about
- Children may want to hide their use of pornography because they are ashamed or embarrassed
- They may still want to use it even though they know it is wrong. This is not uncommon
- Some are immediately drawn to the powerful response produced by the release of pleasure chemicals in the brain
- When children experience this euphoric “high,” they will often be drawn back for more
- When we catch them or discover they are using, if we shame them or punish them, we can easily drive them into hiding

A True Story

One man tells of an experience in his youth when his father caught him using pornography. His father removed his belt and threatened him, saying, “If I ever catch you doing this again, I will whip you with this belt!” The man says his father never caught him again—because he learned to hide it better.

- Threats and punishments are not effective in keeping children from using pornography
- Teach children the doctrine behind the dangers of using pornography. This builds confidence in how to overcome this vexing challenge

“True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior.”

—ELDER BOYD K. PACKER

A child may be concerned about past experiences of a sexual nature, or with pornography, which have not been disclosed. Lovingly encourage disclosure, and if they do disclose, be prepared to make lemonade out of lemons.

- Remember and learn from your own experience with pornography, and what happened
- The most effective way to teach is by example
- Every father and every mother will best teach healthy sexuality as they personally live within the bounds the Lord has set

Additional Information for Parents

- See also p. 101 in the section, *Tools For Parents*
- Read the article on p. 4, *Pornography and the Brain*, by Donald L. Hilton, Jr., MD, FAANS
- Watch *Safeguarding Teens and Young Adults from Pornography*, presented by Jason Carroll, Ph.D., included on the DVD on the inside front cover of this manual
Conversation and Lesson Ideas E:
Sin, Repentance and Recovery

Why Do People Hide When They Have Done Something Wrong?

- They know they have made a mistake
- They are ashamed or embarrassed
- They don’t want to be punished
- They are afraid
- They don’t want others to know what they’re doing

“Jesus saw sin as wrong but also was able to see sin as springing from deep and unmet needs on the part of the sinner.”

—PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL
"Jesus, the Perfect Leader," Ensign, Aug. 1979
What is Sin?

- To commit sin is to willfully disobey God’s commandments, or to fail to act righteously despite a knowledge of the truth (see James 4:17)
- The Lord has said that He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31)
- Sin results in the withdrawal of the Holy Ghost
- Sin makes the one who sins unable to dwell in the presence of Heavenly Father, for “no unclean thing can dwell with God” (1 Nephi 10:21)
- Other than Jesus Christ, we all sin

Why Do People Choose to Sin?

“Whoever said that sin was not fun? Whoever claimed that Lucifer was not handsome, persuasive, easy, friendly? Sin is attractive and desirable. Transgression wears elegant gowns and sparkling apparel. It is highly perfumed; it has attractive features, a soft voice. It is found in educated circles and sophisticated groups. It provides sweet and comfortable luxuries. Sin is easy and has a big company of pleasant companions. It promises immunity from restrictions, temporary freedoms. It can momentarily satisfy hunger, thirst, desire, urges, passions, wants without immediately paying the price. But, it begins tiny, and grows to monumental proportions—drop by drop, inch by inch.”

—SPENCER W. KIMBALL
Faith Precedes the Miracle

- Sometimes we make a mistake because we don’t know better (ignorance)
- Sometimes we sin because of our weaknesses
- Sometimes we sin on purpose (willful disobedience)

“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”
—James 4:17

- We are not bad people, but our sins are bad
- Using pornography is a sin
- Acting out behaviors that misuse our bodies are sins
- We always love the sinner, but we hate the sin (lies, use of pornography, acting out behaviors, etc.). Make this very important distinction

When Children Do Something Wrong, Such as Use Pornography, What Should They Do?

- Don’t hide (we also call this “isolation”)
- Talk to their parents and ask for their help
- How might they feel after they tell their parents what happened?
- How might they feel if they keep it a secret and don’t tell anyone?
When Children Do Something Wrong and Tell Their Parents, What Should Parents Do?

- Assure children they are still loved
- Appropriately and lovingly hold them accountable for their actions
- Encourage them to visit with the bishop, if warranted
- Teach them how to repent and repair any damage done
- Teach them how to avoid the mistake in the future

But what of those who find themselves in the grip of addiction?
Please know, first of all, that there is hope. Seek help from loved ones, Church leaders, and trained counselors....
Always remember, with the Savior’s help, you can break free from addiction. It may be a long, difficult path, but the Lord will not give up on you. He loves you. Jesus Christ suffered the Atonement to help you change, to free you from the captivity of sin.
The most important thing is to keep trying—sometimes it takes several attempts before people find success. So don’t give up. Don’t lose faith. Keep your heart close to the Lord, and He will give you the power of deliverance. He will make you free.

—PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF

"There is no royal road to repentance, no privileged path to forgiveness. Every man must follow the same course whether he be rich or poor, educated or untrained, tall or short, prince or pauper, king or commoner."

—PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL
Teachings of Presidents of the Church, 38

What is Repentance?

- Repentance is the only way we can be cleansed from our sins and receive forgiveness from God
- Sins slow down our spiritual progress and can even stop it
- When we repent, we can grow spiritually again, and progress like God wants us to
- The ability to repent is a privilege. It is what we call “the good news of the gospel.”
- The Atonement of Jesus Christ is the one thing that makes it possible for us to repent

"We came to this earth for the purpose of progressing. This lasts our entire life

While we are on earth we all sin. (See Romans 3:23)

We all have need to repent

Repentance sometimes takes courage, many tears and prayers, and endless efforts to change and live the commandments of the Lord
Why Should We Repent?

- We want to be forgiven by God, and made clean
- We want to feel good and confident about ourselves
- We want to feel loved by God and others
- We want to be worthy to receive blessings from God, including the influence of the Holy Ghost

“It is not easy to be at peace in today’s troubled world. Necessarily peace is a personal acquisition. ... It can be attained only through maintaining constantly a repentant attitude, seeking forgiveness of sins both large and small, and thus coming ever closer to God.”

—President Spencer W. Kimball
Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball, (2006), 34–45

How Do We Repent?

- To repent, we must confess to the Lord and ourselves that we have sinned
- If we do not admit this, we cannot repent

If we confess our sins, he [Jesus Christ] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”

—1 John 1:9

- We must feel very sorry for what we have done
- We must not want to sin any more

- If we have stolen something, we will steal no more
- If we have used pornography, we will use it no more
- If we have lied, we tell the truth
- We must make right any wrong we have done
- If we have hurt someone, we must apologize and help them heal

“...Ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.”

—D&C 64:9

- To make our repentance complete we must keep the commandments
- If we do not pray to Heavenly Father, and are not kind to others, we are not repentant
- When we repent our life changes
- Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, each person can repent and be completely forgiven of their sins

Let people repent. Let people grow. Believe that people can change and improve. Is that faith? Yes! Is that hope? Yes! Is that charity? Yes! Above all, it is charity, the pure love of Christ.

—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
“The Best is Yet to Be,” Ensign, Jan. 2010
A Family Story About the Recovery Process and Living In Recovery

After my husband’s full disclosure to me of his serious use of pornography and illicit behaviors, and after he had talked with his bishop and stepped onto the path of repentance and recovery, we decided to be open with our two oldest children. Our marriage needed time and space to heal, so my husband moved out of our bedroom for a few months. Including the older children not only alleviated the tension and fear I could see on their faces—as they could sense something was going on, but ironically it also opened a positive dialogue that still continues on nearly a daily basis.

While some parents fear their own struggles with pornography might keep them from being able to help their children, I would say that this has been, for us, an example of where God can make weak things become strong. My husband and I have chosen to be quite open with our children. They see our recovery books on our desks; they know when we are at recovery meetings; they see us writing in our journals, or may overhear us on the phone with our sponsors.

In our home, we are regularly trying to talk and live recovery. It has become a family affair and a lifestyle—and it is a positive and healthy lifestyle. Because our children see my husband and I trying to be aware of our negative emotions, our children are more aware of theirs; as parents we take time-outs when we need them, and make amends when our frustrations or impatience get the best of us.

My 12-year old son now frequently checks in with me when he sees images or hears music that he thinks are “pornographic” because they are trying to elicit a sexual response. My daughter and I can take a tough day—for example, when she doesn’t get the lead in the dance recital—and offer a prayer of surrender, asking God to take our pride and envy and replace it with his love, compassion and growth in whatever way it needs to come.

Being open and honest about the recovery process in our lives has opened a door of spiritual growth for not only my husband and me, but for our entire family as we are striving to be humble, honest and accountable one day at a time. None of these “gifts” would have come into our family life if we had chosen to hide what was happening. When my 10-year old daughter gave me a Mother’s Day gift, it was an “I Love You Because...” photo. The words she had written on her whiteboard? “Because you are honest with me.”

- Our own experiences, when honestly and appropriately shared in recovery, can become a blessing to our children
- No amount of study, education and even testimony can protect children if parents are living in hypocrisy, fear or denial
- A parent must “come to himself/herself” and repent and work recovery, then the Spirit can direct the teaching of their children
- See the Circles Models on pp. 142–146, and compare how the family is impacted by pornography use, and by recovery.

Scripture References

- Alma 7:21, no unclean thing can dwell in God’s presence
- 2 Corinthians 7:9–10, feeling godly sorrow
- Mosiah 4:10–12, the steps to repentance
- Isaiah 1:18; Mosiah 26:28–32, repentance brings forgiveness
- D&C 58:42, our sins are remembered no more
- 2 Nephi 9:23, repentance is necessary to salvation
The following sample handouts can be copied for non-commercial use. They are also available in bulk from SA Lifeline at SALifeline.org/bookstore.

- *Pornography: From Chaos to Recovery* (available as a 4-page Flyer)
- *Recovery and Healing from the Effects of Pornography and Sexual Addiction* (available as a Pamphlet)
- *Pornography and Dating* (available as a Flyer)
- *The Family Fight Against Pornography* (available as a Pamphlet)
Explaination of the Circular Models:

A. The 4 petals within each model represents an individual – as a physical, emotional, spiritual & mental being or entity.

B. The center of the circle indicates the primary focus of the heart.

C. The white area enveloping the 4 petals represents a person’s thoughts, behaviors & emotions.

D. The outermost circle represents actions, outreach & responses.
1. **Is using pornography a problem?**

   The choice to use pornography is more than a moral judgment:
   
   “Pornography is neither harmless nor helpful. It is a mood-altering, belief-changing, relationship-damaging, addiction-forming, socially-harmful, spiritually-deadening, life-crippling practice, through which one practices the ways of the adversary.”
   
   —Jill C. Manning, PhD

   Three stages lead to sexual addiction: 1) Unhealthy sexual behaviors provide self-centered pleasures; 2) Shame, emotional withdrawal and self-absorption escalate and life becomes unmanageable; 3) Efforts to stop such “acting out” are unsuccessful—in spite of negative consequences or a sincere desire to quit.

   For those who are caught in this vortex of a behavioral addiction, escape seems impossible. Serious relationship challenges emerge, faith in God is questioned, and life-threatening consequences may follow.

2. **Is recovery possible?**

   If the one caught in this trap desires—and follows—the path of recovery, recovery is possible! God’s grace is sufficient for all who honestly and humbly seek it.

3. **How does one recover?**

   One must freely choose for himself or herself to step onto the path of recovery from sexual addiction—and stay on it. That path is narrow and may seem steep at times, so a long-term commitment is vital. Without a firm resolve to “do whatever it takes,” discouragement may set in during setbacks, and sadly, a return to illicit sexual behaviors will likely follow.

   To step on the path of recovery, the most basic requirements are a willingness to surrender to God’s will, and courage to be totally honest, accountable and humble.

   To stay on the path of recovery, help from others is essential. This includes: 1) Seeking spiritual guidance; 2) Working with a qualified therapist; 3) Working the 12 Steps, and 4) Educating themselves.

   **Faith + Grace + Action =**

   **Recovery from Sexual Addiction**

4. **What does recovery look like?**

   Recovery is both observed and felt. Besides being free from sexual “acting out” behaviors, it is characterized by honesty, humility and accountability, and a willingness to serve God and others.
5. **How does pornography affect the spouse?**

A pornography or sexual addict is self-absorbed and thus has little or no emotional connection with others. Living with—or having lived with—such an addict brings feelings of confusion and fear into a spouse’s life. These women feel emotionally isolated and doubt their own personal worth. In fact, many characteristics of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) are present in such spouses. This is called *betrayal trauma*. They often take extreme measures to outwardly appear perfectly in control—yet inside they really feel out of control, “crazy” and unloved.

Most of these women sensed that something was not right in their relationship. But when they questioned their husband they were assured with comments such as “Everything is OK,” or with anger and resentment for even asking.

For a time the betrayed spouse may have felt pacified, but soon became preoccupied with thoughts such as: *Why won’t he even talk to me? Maybe if I were more sexual or changed my body, then he would love me. I can fix this for him.* Conversely, they may have thought: *He’s ruining my life and our family. I feel bitter, angry and afraid.* Or they may have minimized it: *It’s not that important. That’s just the way men are.*

Eventually the betrayed spouse realized that it was all about the lies. In despair, they didn’t know whether they could trust any aspect of their relationship. Something had to change. Yet they may not have known where to go for support and wise guidance.

6. **How does the spouse heal from betrayal trauma?**

To *step on* the path of healing, traumatized spouses need to embrace these truths: 1) They are not the cause of the addiction nor can they fix or change their addicted spouse—he is making his own decisions; 2) They have been deeply injured by the deceit, disrespect and anger in their relationship; 3) Only with God’s help can they themselves truly heal and thrive.

To *stay on* the path of healing and recovery, help from others is indispensable. This includes: 1) Seeking spiritual guidance; 2) Working with a qualified therapist; 3) Working the 12 Steps—alongside support from 12-Step groups for spouses, and 4) Educating themselves about the addiction and trauma and their effects on the family.

Some may argue that all of this effort is unnecessary—after all it is *his* problem. *If he would just stop, then everything would be OK.* But it is not that simple. If betrayed spouses do not recover from their own trauma, they may continue to live out an emotionally paralyzed life with fear always at the doorstep.

But with consistent effort, time and the grace of God, such spouses can and will heal. That is the miracle! They learn how to choose to live a healthy lifestyle, which includes self-care and honesty about their emotions and needs. They also learn how to set healthy boundaries based on safety, love, and respect for themselves and others. Such actions connect them more closely with God and they become more available for honest and loving relationships.
7. How does pornography use affect the marriage?

Pornography use often leads to sexual addiction, then betrayal trauma, and negatively impacts the marriage on several levels. Early on, a critical disconnection takes place between a husband and wife—even if both parties are not aware of the illicit sexual behaviors. Bitter seeds of dishonesty, disrespect and selfishness are sown and grow unchecked.

At the center of the distressed marital relationship we see the Drama Triangle. Ironically, both partners often take turns playing out the roles of rescuer, persecutor and victim. There may even be seasons of relative calm. Such calm, however, is usually based on apathy toward one another and projects a false sense of well being.

But we know that fear, resentment and anger eventually return. For self-preservation and a measure of safety many couples resort to living parallel lives—a kind of virtual divorce. They can be disconnected in nearly every meaningful way: emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. Too many stop striving for a synergistic relationship and accept apathy and dysfunction as their new way of life. Divorce often seems to be the only way out.

8. Can the distressed marriage be saved?

A marriage is made up of two individuals—two separate entities; the marriage itself constitutes a third entity. The marriage damaged by sexual addiction and betrayal trauma may need to be put on “the back burner” for a season while the husband and wife each begin their own recovery.

Healing the marriage comes next, and is a natural outgrowth if both partners are pursuing their individual path of recovery. Additionally, sacred trust that has eroded over time must be rebuilt over time.

The distressed marriage can indeed be saved! It even has the potential to thrive when its foundation includes a shared connection with God, total honesty, appropriate boundaries and healthy intimacy. Healthy parents who continue to strive to strengthen their marriage are then prepared to teach their children—by example—how to live a balanced life full of joy and peace.

*Explanation of the Circular Models:* The 4 petals within each model represents an individual—or a marriage—as a physical, emotional, spiritual and mental being or entity. The center of the circle indicates the primary focus of the heart. The white area enveloping the 4 petals represents a person’s thoughts, behaviors and emotions. And the outermost circle represents actions, outreach and responses.
9. How is the family impacted?

Try as they may, unhealthy parents cannot shield children from the collateral damage of addiction and betrayal trauma. This idea has been reaffirmed after two decades of research by The American Academy of Pediatrics who issued a landmark warning that toxic stress can harm children for life. “You can modify behavior later, but you can’t rewire disrupted brain circuits,” says Jack P. Shonkoff, a Harvard pediatrician who has been a leader in this field.

Even though they might not know why, children in such families are emotionally distanced from the addicted parent and grow up without that vital sense of belonging and safety. A lack of positive affirmations and encouragement stunts their potential. Their loyalty to the family may waver as they turn outside the family to fulfill their needs and wants.

Unsurprisingly, without healthy family anchors children tend to become confused or ambivalent about the line between right and wrong and their relationship with God. Other important values and life skills remain underdeveloped and their chances for happiness diminish.

10. How do healthy parents fortify children?

Even if not for themselves at first, addicted or traumatized spouses would do well to seek healing and recovery for the sake of their children. Good fruit (happy and well-adjusted children) comes from a good tree (emotionally healthy parents).

Since children are not born with a clear sense of self, they discover it—and it is molded—through the influence of those who are most important to them. Children come to trust their parents’ values and their love; then feeling personally secure, blossom and mature.

Parents who are unified by their shared relationship with God encourage each child to nurture that relationship. Children become more confident in their understanding of what is right and wrong, kind and mean-spirited, selfish and selfless, respectful and disrespectful.

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

—Frederick Douglass
If life is compared to a river, it is easy to imagine floating with the current, gently down the stream. But if we simply go with the flow, disaster awaits. Every worthy goal takes constant, if gentle, effort to move up the stream, and each individual must take responsibility for rowing their own boat if success is to be obtained.

So it is with sexual addiction and marriage: each person must take responsibility for their own recovery. Individual effort and commitment is required for the user and the afflicted spouse. While each can support the individual recovery of the other, ultimately each person is responsible for their own success. Only then is there hope that the relationship can recover, and the marriage can move, together, gently up the stream.

Our message is one of hope. Honestly seek recovery and you will find it.

—Steven & Rhyll Croshaw
Founders of S.A. Lifeline Foundation
Recovery for an Individual

Goal: Restore self-respect, connection with God, and wholeness

Decide to Fully Commit to Actions of Recovery
- Recognize the reality of pornography/sexual addiction.
- Progress will occur when a decision is made to fully commit to actions of recovery.
- Seek God's help, He will help you.

Come Out of Hiding
- Complete, honest disclosure to spouse, clergy leader, and qualified therapist is necessary.

Set Safe Boundaries and Self Care
- Set safe boundaries (for example, no private computer or television use).
- Daily physical and spiritual care: exercise, healthy diet, adequate rest, positive affirmations.

Gain Knowledge
- Learn about sexual addiction.
- Learn what recovery requires and the attributes of genuine recovery.
- Short-term sobriety (abstinence) does not indicate recovery. Full recovery is a life-time process.
- Learn how to support your spouse's healing.

Clergy Involvement
- Frequent accountability visits with an informed ecclesiastical leader.

Qualified Counseling
- Genuine commitment to on-going counseling from a qualified therapist. (Typical minimum is 18 months).

Join 12-Step Fellowship for Sexual Addiction Recovery
- Join a 12-Step Fellowship for sexual addiction, find a sponsor, work all 12 steps. Commit to long-term, perhaps lifetime involvement.

Recovery is a Spiritual Process
- Willingly acknowledge that alone a person is powerless over their addiction.
- Come to believe that a Power greater than oneself can restore wholeness to life.
- We must turn our will and life over to that Power.

Saving the Marriage

Goal: Restore connection and wholeness

Recognize the Marriage Relationship is Affected
- Trust has been violated. The marriage may be intact, but it is not whole. If the marriage relationship is recoverable, it will not happen immediately.
- Genuine recovery of a marriage relationship takes time. There is no universal rule regarding how long it will take. Follow your instincts.
- If you desire to save your marriage, seek out a qualified counselor trained in sexual addiction.

Working on Recovery Allows Marriage to Heal
- A healthy, whole marriage cannot co-exist with sexually addictive behavior. If the addiction continues, the marriage will never be whole — the addiction will always win.

Work on Individual Recovery and Healing
- Recovery of the marriage relationship follows continued individual recovery and healing from the trauma of addiction.

Reach Out to Each Other
- Notice ways in which your spouse is trying to reach out for connection. Respond to such efforts with honesty.

Build True Intimacy
- In recovery, a one-dimensional physical relationship is replaced with an intimate social, emotional, spiritual, and sexual bonding.
- Spend time together to develop a holistic relationship (walking, gardening, cooking, etc.).

Nurture Others
- Children need extra love and attention. They may also be suffering and are in need of healing.
- Needed personal renewal will be found in small acts of service.

Healing for the Afflicted Spouse

Goal: Restore serenity and wholeness

Recognize Your Own Need for Healing
- Recognize your trauma as an afflicted spouse of an individual addicted to pornography.
- Seek God’s help, He will help you.

Talk with Others
- Interact with an ecclesiastical leader.
- Communicate with a qualified therapist.
- Develop a support system.

Join a 12-Step Fellowship
- Find a sponsor, work all 12 steps diligently.

Self Care
- Slow down. Allow time for healing before making life changing decisions (1 year minimum). If you are at risk, decisions may need to happen more quickly.
- Prayerfully set boundaries defining unacceptable behavior to protect your emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.
- Daily physical and spiritual care: exercise, healthy diet, adequate rest, spiritually centering activities.

Education
- Fully recognize that you are not the cause of your spouse’s addiction, and that you cannot “fix” or control your spouse.
- Learn more about the nature of pornography/sexual addiction and how it impacts you.
- Learn what is required to experience healing as the spouse of one addicted.

Support Spouse’s Recovery
- Make very clear to your spouse that you will support his/her genuine commitment to recovery, but will not enable continued addictive behaviors.

Healing is a Spiritual Process
- Willingly acknowledge that you are powerless over your spouse’s actions. You can influence, but you cannot control.
- Believe that a Power greater than you can restore you to wholeness. Turn your life over to that Power.
When should I have this discussion?

Porn is a sensitive topic. Nonetheless, it is important to discuss porn early on as you become emotionally committed in the relationship. Porn should be brought up on more than one occasion and on various levels depending on the commitment level of the relationship. Closeness and relationship expectations can guide these discussions.

What should I say?

Share the importance of open communication and the care you have for the other person. Then bring up the need to discuss pornography despite the awkwardness of the topic. Items should be discussed that honestly explore both of your histories in terms of porn exposure, consumption, and attitudes toward porn. If a problem arose in the past or continues in the present, mention what actions are or have been taken to fix it. Useful questions could be:

- Have you been exposed to porn?
- Have you actively sought porn? If so, what was the frequency and surrounding circumstances?
- When did you last see porn?
- Do you think viewing porn is a problem?
- What actions have you taken to stop or protect yourself from porn in the past? The future?

What if I currently have a porn addiction?

While it may seem best to hide this problem, get help and recognize that honest, open disclosure to trusted individuals is crucial in overcoming this addiction. It is critical to learn about the nature of porn addiction, and the areas in which it disrupts your life. Help yourself by assessing the circumstances surrounding porn usage and strive to remove them. Overcoming pornography requires a strong commitment and desire to recover. Commit to on-going counseling from a qualified therapist (typically 18+ months). Join a 12-Step fellowship for porn addiction where you can gain a sponsor who can help you through the recovery steps. You may wish to commit to long-term involvement. Religious persons have found frequent visits with an ecclesiastical leader and communion with God to also be essential to their recovery.

What about dating if I have a porn problem?

Recognize that honesty is crucial in serious dating. Keep in mind the length of the recovery process and the probability of relapse. Consider how these interface with your partner’s expectations and the speed with which the relationship develops. Be up front about your struggle and share the actions being taken to correct the issue.
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Discussing The Sensitive Topic Of Pornography

Why should I talk about porn with those I date?

Nearly everyone has been exposed to porn. And exposure may motivate a person to actively and repeatedly seek out porn to fulfill sexual desires. Such consumption is addictive, causing a powerful hormonal release that affects the brain in a way similar to taking cocaine. Besides creating a dependency, porn changes how we value our bodies, relationships, view others, and is a destructive force in dating and marriage.

Discussing porn with those we date allows us to ascertain another’s history of porn exposure and consumption, and their attitude towards actively seeking out porn. Opening up communication and establishing mutual expectations can help guide relationship decisions. Especially when developing a serious relationship, discussing porn can help establish rules to protect your relationship and future family.

What if the person I am dating views porn?

While you should appreciate their willingness to share delicate information, don’t underestimate porn. Become educated and carefully weigh the emotional risks. Ending an addiction is a grueling process that takes significant commitment and time (usually 7 to 12 months abstinence to start gaining recovery), and often involves sporadic relapses.

Changing attitudes and behaviors can take years. As you gauge how this problem affects your relationship, assess the person’s willingness to stop.

- What recovery steps are being taken?
- What additional steps will they take?

Consider setting rules regarding the progression or continuance of the relationship. Speak with other trusted individuals such as family, counselors and close friends, to gain perspective. Supporting recovery is helpful; policing another’s addictive behavior is not. Attend counseling together or a 12-Step support group if appropriate.

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Does My Family Need to be Concerned About Pornography?

LDS young men and women who are impacted by pornography addiction are often exceptional young people. They are student leaders, athletes, young men and women who are preparing for or returning from missions, and children of good parents. They may also be children with poor social skills or low self-esteem. There is a high probability that they are your children and your children’s friends.

11 years old is the average age at which children first see online pornography.

Nearly 9 out of 10 (87%) young men, and 1 out of 3 (31%) young women report viewing pornography.

70% of men age 18–34 visit pornography websites in a typical month.

Parents cannot completely prevent their children’s exposure to pornography. If this isn’t something your kids are talking to you about, you need to start the discussion soon!

Prevention

- Make certain that computers are kept in high-traffic areas and have effective internet filters installed.

- Don’t allow computer or cell phone use in bedrooms. At night, personal cell phones should be handed to parents for recharging.

- Have regular one-on-one discussions with your children. In these conversations teach your children about (age appropriate) healthy sexuality, the nature of God’s gifts of our bodies, marriage-centered chastity, and the dangers of pornography. (The resources on the back of this brochure provide important information for parents on these topics).

- During your Family Home Evening, have a time where the kids can talk about some of “life’s challenges” that they faced during the week. Encourage them to be open and express their feelings.

“Internet pornography is a stealth attack on our homes and families through invisibly transmitted electrons. Education about the addictive, destructive nature of this attack is paramount”.

Donald L. Hilton Jr., MD
Author of He Restoreth My Soul
The Problem

Pornography is the most common addiction among LDS populations. Virtually all teens over the age of 16 have been exposed to pornography. Many who are exposed keep going back to it—even though they know it is wrong, feel ashamed, and are shocked by the images and videos they view.

For many children, teens, and young adults, education about sexuality comes from their peers, TV, movies, and from viewing pornography. This “education” is devoid of moral values and does not recognize sexuality as a God-given gift.

Realistically speaking, prevention measures alone are not enough to protect children from pornography. Parents need to teach their children that two of the greatest gifts the Lord has given them are their bodies and human sexuality.

Pornography is one of Satan’s most effective tools. It degrades and mocks the divine creation of the human body and the gift of procreation. As with all of Satan’s deceptions, pornography is a counterfeit of God’s gifts and causes pain to the soul of man, destroys relationships, and distances one from God.

Recognizing and Combating Pornography Addiction

Signs of Pornography Addiction

- Repeatedly accessing pornography in spite of negative consequences
- Emotionally disconnected
- Anger, depression, critical, hostile, judgmental
- Withdrawing from family relationships, friends, church, activities

Combating Pornography Addiction

- Pornography addiction is a spiritual, emotional, and physical addiction
- Pornography addiction isn’t conquered through willpower and spiritual efforts alone
- Pornography addiction thrives in secrecy and shame—and will escalate over time
- Successful recovery requires working with a qualified counselor, regular meetings with a bishop, education, and for those 18 and older, attending a 12-Step Sexaholics Anonymous group.

- Understand that recovery isn’t “white knuckle” abstinence. Recovery from pornography addiction requires a change of heart and a lifestyle change.

Effective Resources

*Understanding Pornography Addiction and Betrayal Trauma: A Resource for LDS Leaders and Parents.* Produced by the SA Lifeline Foundation (8½ X 11, 168 pages.)

*He Restoreth My Soul: Understanding and Breaking the Chemical and Spiritual Chains of Pornography Addiction Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.* —Donald L. Hilton, Jr., MD (6 X 9, 349 pages.)


*How to Talk to Your Child About Sex.* —Linda and Richard Eyre (Paperback, 240 pages.)

*Growing Up: Gospel Answers About Maturation and Sex.* —Brad Wilcox (Paperback, 132 pages.)

*Safeguarding Teens and Young Adults from Pornography*—Jason Carroll Ph.D. (DVD; Produced by SA Lifeline Foundation)

*Available online at www.salifeline.org | Email: info@salifeline.org*
**Definitions of Words and Terms Relating to Sexual Addiction**

**Addict** — To devote oneself or act on something habitually or obsessively, and includes behaviors such as gambling and sex (lust), or use of substances such as drugs, alcohol and nicotine. Broadly, a person whose persistent compulsive use of a behavior or substance is known by the user to be harmful.

**Acting out behavior** — Filling an emotional, physical or spiritual need with a lustful, self-centered sexual act. For the sexual addict lust is toxic, and sexually acting out is the “drug” of choice. The most common acting out behaviors are the pursuit of lust by using pornography and sex with self and/or other illicit sexual behaviors as an emotional escape.

It is important to understand that children and youth, as well as adults, may often experience euphoric reactions when using pornography and sex with self. They learn that engaging in such acting out behaviors “feels good” and that using will change their mood. Some have described using, especially during early experiences, as magical or mystical. Sexual acting out behaviors can be extremely addictive and, over time, may escalate into illicit sexual behaviors that are potentially illegal and even dangerous such as sexting, engaging in chat rooms where participant’s identities are unknown and may be predators, and predatory acts such as sexual molestation, and so on.

**Addict behaviors** — Lusting, desiring to be lusted after, objectifying, manipulating, fearing, resenting, expressing anger, lying, emotionally and/or physically withdrawing, playing the victim, fantasizing, feeling shame, minimizing, and so on.

**Information dumping** — Explaining or describing personal thoughts, feelings and actions without taking responsibility for them.

**Lapse** — Willfully choosing to pursue addict behavior and/or acting out behavior, and acknowledging the behavior to one’s sponsor within a pre-determined window of time. The sooner the acknowledgement happens to the actual behavior the better, but no more than 24 hours. (Compare with relapse, slip)

**Lust** — Uncontrolled or illicit sexual desire or appetite. Lust is an attitude demanding that a natural instinct serve unnatural desires. Lusting after another person or the desire to be lusted after. For a sexual addict, lust is toxic.

**Relapse** — Willfully choosing to pursue addict behavior and/or acting out behavior, and then hiding, lying or failing to honestly disclose the lapse to one’s sponsor within a pre-determined window of time. (Compare with lapse, slip)

**Sexual addict** — A person to whom lust is toxic.

**Slip** — Accidental exposure to a triggering event which is then acted on by choosing to pursue addict behavior and/or acting out behavior, then acknowledging the behavior to one’s sponsor within a pre-determined window of time. The sooner the acknowledgement happens to the actual behavior the better, but no more than 24 hours. (Compare with lapse, relapse)

**Transparency** — Total honesty. Truly acknowledging and taking responsibility for our own feelings, thoughts, desires and actions with a person (or persons) with whom we are striving to rebuild trust.

**Trigger** — Event, thought, image, dream, environment, sounds, or a host of other things which when encountered may prompt addict behavior and/or acting out behavior.

**User** — A person who uses illegal drugs, or when the “drug” of choice is sexual acting out; someone who uses pornography and other sexual acting out behaviors for pleasure, to change mood, reduce stress, relieve boredom, and avoid difficulties or responsibilities (escape).

**Using** — Describing an action or a situation, specifically an acting out behavior, which is done repeatedly.
Resources

Understanding Pornography and Sexual Addiction

- He Restoreth My Soul: Understanding and Breaking the Chemical and Spiritual Chains of Pornography Addiction Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, Donald L. Hilton, Jr., M.D.
- The Heart of the Matter, Directed by Jessica Mockett, DVD, ISBN 642078466427. SALifeline.org
- Spiritual Exodus, Mark H. Butler, Ph.D. BYU Academic Publishing AcademicPublishing@byu.edu
- What’s the Big Deal about Pornography? A Guide for the Internet Generation, Jill C. Manning; (General Audience/Parents and Youth).
- Life After Lust, Forest Benedict, LMFT, SATP, Stories and strategies for sex & pornography addiction recovery, LifeAfterLust.com

For the Afflicted Spouse or Loved One of a Pornography and Sexual Addict

- Love You, Hate the Porn: Healing a Relationship Damaged by Virtual Infidelity, Mark Chamberlain, Ph.D. & Geoff Steurer, MS, LMFT.
- From Heartache to Healing: Finding Power In Christ to Deal With A Loved One’s Sexual Addiction, Colleen C. & Philip A. Harrison.
- Boundaries in Marriage, Henry Cloud and John Townsend.

12-Step Program Literature for Sexual Addiction Recovery

- Sexaholics Anonymous White Book, SA.org
- Step into Action, SA Literature, SA.org
- Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book), AA.org
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA.org
- He Did Deliver Me From Bondage, Colleen C. Harrison. Hearthhaven Publishing. HearthhavenPublishing.com
- A Gentle Path Through the 12-Steps, The Classic Guide for All People In the Process of Recovery, Patrick Carnes, Ph.D.

12-Step Program Literature for an Afflicted Spouse or Loved One

- S-Anon 12-Steps, S-Anon Literature S-Anon International. SAnon.org
- Working the S-Anon Program. S-Anon International. SAnon.org

Teaching Children about Healthy Sexuality:

- Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today’s Young Kids. Kristen A. Jenson, MA and Gail Poyner, Ph.D. (ages 6 to 11)
- A Parent’s Guide, see lds.org
- Let Virtue Garnish Thy Thoughts, LDS Church Distribution.
- How to Talk to Your Child about Sex, Linda and Richard Eyre.
- Growing Up: Gospel Answers about Maturation and Sex, Brad Wilcox.
- Where Did I Come From?, Peter Mayle.
Resources

Internet Sites

- SALifeline.org
- lds.org
- FightTheNewDrug.org
- UCAP.org (Utah Coalition Against Pornography)
- EndSexualExploitation.org (Nation Center on Sexual Exploitation)

DVDs

- The Heart of the Matter, produced by Jessica Mockett (SALifeline.org) Included in this manual.
- Safeguarding Teens and Young Adults from Pornography. Jason Carroll, Ph.D. (SALifeline.org) Included in this manual.
- Pornography and the Brain, Dr. Donald L. Hilton Jr., MD. (SALifeline.org)
- Preparing for Healthy Intimacy: A Message for Singles, Jill C. Manning, Ph.D. and Dan Gray. (SALifeline.org)
- Healing Relationships Damaged by Pornography, Geoff Steurer. (SALifeline.org)

SA Lifeline Materials Available Online (SALifeline.org)

- Recovery and Healing from the Effects of Pornography and Sexual Addiction (Pamphlet)
- Dating and Pornography (Pamphlet)
- The Family Fight Against Pornography (Pamphlet)
- Young Adult Lessons, Vauna Davis

Audio CDs

- Strengthening Recovery through Strengthening Marriage, 6-part Audio Program, Geoff Steurer and Kevin Skinner. For couples dealing with pornography addiction. (order at SALifeline.org)
- Let’s Talk about the Elephant in the Room, Jill C. Manning, Ph.D., CD (DeseretBook.com)

Internet Filters (FREE and for purchase.)

- Convenant Eyes – covenanteyes.com (paid plans for both individuals and families.)
- Ever Accountable - everaccountable.com (monthly subscription; free trial available.)
- iKeepSafe - ikeepsafe.org (multiple products, certifications, and resources for schools and admins.)
- K9 - k9webprotection.com (free internet filter and parental control software)
- KidzSafe - kidzsafe.org (education and resources for schools around bullying, child abuse, and abduction.)
- NetAngel – netangel.com (free and paid plans.)
- NetNanny – netnanny.com (paid plans for both individuals and families)
- OpenDNS – opendns.com (free and paid plans for both personal and enterprise use)
- WiredSafety – wiredsafety.com (resources around cyberbullying, cyberabuse, cybercrime, and harassment.)
- OnlineFamily.Norton.com

Locating a Therapist

- Find a Therapist (SALifeline.org/finding-qualified-therapy)
- AddictionRecovery.lds.org
Bibliography

- AA Big Book; SA: White Book; 12 Steps & 12 Traditions; Step into Action Books 1,2,3.
- A Parent’s Guide, see The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Clean Hands, Pure Heart (2010), Phil Harrison
- Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself (1986), Melody Beattie, Hazelden Publishing.
- Growing Up: Gospel Answers about Maturation and Sex, Brad Wilcox, Deseret Book Co.
- He Did Deliver Me from Bondage (2002), Colleen C. Harrison
- He Restoreth My Soul (2010), Donald L. Hilton, Jr., M.D. Forward Press.
- How to Talk to Your Child about Sex (1999), Linda and Richard Eyre, St. Martin’s Press.
- Let’s Talk about the Elephant in the Room, Jill C. Manning, Ph.D..
- Lord, I Believe: Help Thou Mine Unbelief, by Rod W. Jeppsen, MC, LPC, CSAT.
- S-Anon: 12-Steps, S-Anon Literature.
- Strengthening Recovery through Strengthening Marriage, CDs, Geoff Steurer and Kevin Skinner.
- To Strengthen the Family, JoAnn Hamilton.
The 12 Steps originated with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), founded in 1935 in Akron, Ohio by a desperate drunk (Bill Wilson, a.k.a., Bill W) and a struggling alcoholic physician (Dr. Bob Smith, a.k.a., Dr. Bob). Together, they discovered that they could maintain sobriety by sharing their story and helping other alcoholics. They based their 12 steps on ideas from the Oxford Group, a Christian organization that believed fear and selfishness were the root of all personal problems, and that a spiritual solution was required based on surrendering one’s life to God.

What started with the recovery of just these two men expanded rapidly, and now includes over 2 million members and 100,000 meetings worldwide. The AA “12-Step Program” includes regularly attending AA group meetings, studying AA literature, “working the steps” with a sponsor, and helping other alcoholics. The primary reading materials for AA are Alcoholics Anonymous (the “Big Book”), which describes the program and includes numerous recovery stories, and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (“Twelve and Twelve”), which further expands on the fundamental principles of the program. Since the founding of AA in 1935, new programs have continued to emerge, adapting the 12 Steps for recovery from other behaviors ranging from nicotine and food to gambling and sex. While over 30 such groups now exist, at least six are aimed at recovery from addiction to sex (the so-called “S” groups).

There are a number of issues to consider when trying to find the right 12-Step recovery group. In this search, we should follow counsel from prophets and apostles who have encouraged us to “…seek for truth wherever we might find it” (President Deiter F. Uchtdorf, 2013 LDS Broadcast).

First, with the exception of Sexual Addiction Lifeline (SAL) and Sexaholics Anonymous (SA), many “S” groups have liberal definitions of sobriety, or may have no definition and leave that up to addicts themselves. Second, many of the meetings offered by most “S” groups are open to both men and women. Because of the sensitive nature of sexual addiction, however, and safety issues that may be involved in bi-gendered meetings, we can only recommend “S” groups whose meetings are gender specific. Third, as has happened with AA, even the more conservative SA group is becoming more secular. For example, many SA groups now discourage the explicit mentioning of God, and the offering of prayers—other than those found in AA or SA materials.

These concerns led SA Lifeline Foundation to establish Sexual Addiction Lifeline (SAL), which offers a 12-Step program for sexual addiction recovery. Of the several nondenominational 12-Step groups, SA Lifeline Foundation can only recommend SAL.

12-Step Programs for Sexual Addiction Recovery

Sexual Addiction Lifeline (SAL)

SAL was established in 2014 by the founders of SA Lifeline Foundation. It is nondenominational and adheres to principles and doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). SAL holds to a definition of sobriety, which is that sobriety requires no sex with self or others except one’s spouse in a heterosexual marriage, and progressive victory over lust, including not using pornography. Additionally, all groups are gender specific to men or women. And references to God and His enabling power are welcome. Prayers from the heart are given to begin and end each meeting. SAL has also developed an online meeting program which provides access to safe and effective 12-Step meetings for those living in areas where in-person meetings are not available.

The SAL 12-Step program draws upon material in the AA books, SA books and also publish their own program literature. Similar to AA, fundamental to working recovery in SAL groups is studying program literature, attending group meetings, fellowshipping with other group members, and working the 12-Steps with a sponsor. SA Lifeline Foundation offers support and educational resources to SAL 12-Step groups that...
function autonomously through the service of group members. Neither SA Lifeline Foundation nor SAL is affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For more information about SAL sexual addiction 12-Step recovery meetings, including a schedule of meeting times and locations, visit SALifeline.org.

Three 12-Step programs, noted below, have been created for sexual addiction recovery with an LDS focus. These groups do not use AA or SA 12-Step study materials, but their 12-Step study materials are related to the original 12 steps of AA. These groups are grounded in the doctrines of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

**LDS Addiction Recovery Program (ARP)**
The LDS Church has created its own 12-Step addiction recovery program (ARP). LDS Family Services publishes a manual (available for purchase in print, or as a free PDF download), which is about working the steps in light of the gospel, but is not specific to any particular addiction (or in other words, it is not specific to sexual addiction). Meetings are most often held in meetinghouses or seminary buildings and are available in many stakes throughout the U.S. and other countries. Some addiction recovery meetings are general (intended for all addictions), and some are specific to sex addiction and are called PASG meetings (Pornography Addiction Support Group). ARP meetings are typically led by individuals who have been called and set apart as part-time Church service missionaries or stake welfare specialists, with part of each meeting being facilitated by an individual who is also working his/her own recovery. For more information, including a schedule of meeting times and places, visit the Church’s addiction recovery website AddictionRecovery.lds.org.

**Healing Through Christ Foundation**
This curriculum is specifically written addicts seeking recovery from pornography/sexual addiction, and is anticipated to be published near the end of 2017. Their Workbook goes beyond the ARP and Heart t’Heart program curricula in that it includes more information about addiction and recovery drawn from medical and scientific sources, therapists and religious leaders. They offer a Christ-centered, 12-Step approach to recovery. Healing Through Christ Foundation is not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For more information, visit HealingThroughChrist.org, and click on “Contact Us” to email them to find support groups that are using their materials.

**Heart t’ Heart**
This program predates the LDS Addiction Recovery Program (ARP) in being the first to integrate the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the 12 Steps. We understand the LDS ARP program was inspired by Heart t’Heart program materials. They produce their own literature, including the book He Did Deliver Me From Bondage, which is their guide to working the steps and is used in their group meetings. Some meetings have general focus for any addiction, while others are specifically for food addiction or sex addiction. They offer face-to-face meetings in numerous states throughout the U.S., as well as telephone and online meetings. Heart t’Heart is not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For more information, including a schedule of meetings, visit Heart-T-Heart.org.

**SUMMARY**
SAL groups are grounded in 12-Step principles and actions drawn from AA, and have a strong emphasis on sponsorship and fellowship with other group members. On the other hand, the LDS-based 12-step programs noted above demonstrate how the 12 Steps seamlessly integrate with principles of the restored gospel. Some individuals who are recovering from sex addiction prefer to attend the nondenominational groups, some prefer the LDS-based groups, while others have found the greatest success by being involved in both (such as attending one meeting a week of each type of group). What is most important,
However, is finding a group and getting involved, working the steps with a sponsor, and attending meetings regularly—preferably a minimum of two times per week. As it is often said, “It works when you work it, so work it, you’re worth it.”

**SA Lifeline Foundation does not endorse the following nondenominational “S” group 12-Step program for these reasons:**

1. **Their meetings may not be gender specific.**
2. **Their groups may discourage the explicit mention of God.**
3. **Their groups may only allow prayers in meetings that are from material they have published.**

**Sexaholics Anonymous (SA)**

SA is the only “S” group, other than SAL, with a clear and established definition of sobriety. Specifically, sobriety is “having no sex with self or with persons other than [one’s] spouse,” with spouse being defined as “one’s spouse in a marriage between a man and a woman.” Accordingly, pornography use, masturbation, and any sexual contact outside of heterosexual marriage is a violation of sobriety. The primary literature for this group includes Sexaholics Anonymous *White Book*, which discuss fundamentals of addiction and recovery as well as the principles and actions associated with each step, and *Step Into Action*, which provides examples of how to work each step. Most SA meetings are not designated as gender specific. For more information, including a schedule of meetings, visit SA.org.

**A Brief History and Overview of 12-Step Meetings for Spouses and Family Members of Addicts**

Shortly after Alcoholics Anonymous formed, Lois W (wife of AA co-founder Bill W.) and Anne B. founded Al-Anon to provide support for families (particularly spouses) of addicts. The program curriculum is built around the 12 Steps of AA, but slightly modified for family members of addicts (only changing the wording of Step 12 from “alcoholics” to “others”). The purpose of Al-Anon is not to help families get the alcoholic to stop drinking, but to help family members heal from the trauma of living with and being in a relationship with an alcoholic. As with AA, Al-Anon has its own literature and support group meetings. 

Fortunately, such support groups are also available for families dealing with sexual addiction. Similar to programs for sexual addicts themselves, these family support programs encourage studying program literature, attending meetings, fellowshipping with other group members, and working the 12 steps with a sponsor.

**12-Step Recovery Meetings for Spouses, Mothers and Family Members Whose Lives are Impacted by Living with or Associated with a Sexual Addict**

**SAL Betrayal Trauma Recovery 12-Step Program**

The SAL Betrayal Trauma Recovery program was established in 2014 by the founders of SA Lifeline Foundation. It is nondenominational but adheres to principles and doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). The 12-Step recovery meetings are for family members (primarily spouses and mothers) of sexual addicts. The SAL Trauma Recovery 12-Step Program is based on the original 12 steps of AA. SA Lifeline offers support and educational resources to SAL 12-Step groups who
A Brief History and Overview of 12-Step Programs

function autonomously through the service of group members. SAL Betrayal Trauma Recovery Groups utilize the S-Anon 12 Steps (blue book) as well as the Working the S-Anon Program (green book) as well as some of their own literature and online tools as the primary study materials. Sponsorship is a critical component of the success of this program.

Some of the fundamental principles of SAL include gender specific meetings, an emphasis on “prayers from the heart,” and an open (non-proselyting) environment for those of all religious and non-religious affiliations. SAL has also developed an online meeting program which provides access to safe and effective 12-Step meetings for those living in areas where in-person meetings are not available. For more information, including a schedule of meetings go the website SALifeline.org

SAL Mother’s Support Groups
This is an online study group held monthly for mothers whose children struggle with pornography use. These women attend a weekly SAL 12-Step support group, online, to work their own recovery. For more information, including a schedule of meetings go to the website SALifeline.org.

Healing Through Christ Foundation
The workbook, Healing Through Christ: Help, Hope, and Healing for Those Who Have a Loved One in Addiction, provides information on how to process and heal from the heartache, trauma, fear, anger, and betrayal that is experienced by those who have a loved one in addiction. By applying the spiritual principles in this workbook, family members begin to experience peace and hope in their lives once again. This Christ-centered, 12-Step approach to healing, is currently being used by spouses, fiancés, parents and other family members across the United States, as well as in a number of foreign countries. For more information, see their website: healingthroughchrist.org which lists several support groups that are using their materials.

Heart t’Heart
This program predates the LDS Addiction Recovery Program (ARP) in being the first to integrate the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the 12 Steps. We understand the LDS ARP program was inspired by Heart t’ Heart program materials. They produce their own literature, including the book He Did Deliver Me From Bondage, which is their guide to working the steps and is used in their group meetings. Some meetings have general focus, including family support. They offer face-to-face meetings in numerous states throughout the U.S., as well as telephone and online meetings. Heart t’ Heart is not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For more information, including a schedule of meetings, visit Heart-T-Heart.org.

S-Anon
S-Anon is a companion organization to SA (Sexaholics Anonymous), just as Al-Anon is to AA. So, it draws on written materials from AA, Al-Anon, and also produces some of its own literature. In particular, S-Anon modified the 12 Steps of SA for family members, and describes how to work the steps in their primary books S-Anon 12 Steps and Working the S-Anon Program. For more information, including a meetings schedule, see their website: SAnon.org. Meetings are available throughout the U.S as well as in several other countries. In addition to many face-to-face meetings, they also offer telephone and internet meetings.

ARP Spouse and Family Support Program
The LDS Church also has support groups for spouses and family members of addicts. The study materials are not the Twelve Steps. The study literature outlines 12 principles for healthy living based on gospel principles. For more information, including a schedule of meetings, see the Church’s addiction recovery website and click on “Spouses & Families”. AddictionRecovery.lds.org.
**He Restoreth My Soul:**
Understanding and Breaking the Chemical and Spiritual Chains of Pornography Addiction through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, by Donald L. Hilton Jr., MD.

This book is written to an LDS audience and is the #1 seller in its category. Dr. Hilton explains sexual addiction and hope for recovery on both a neurological and spiritual level.

**What Can I Do About Him? Me?**
Healing from the Trauma of My Husband's Pornography and Sexual Addiction, by Rhyll Anne Croshaw. A top seller in its category. Rhyll provides a firsthand account of both the trauma and recovery from living with or having lived with an individual with a pornography and sexual addiction. Rhyll describes her journey from gut wrenching pain, trauma, and abandonment to peace and serenity, and provides hope to all.

**Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids,** by Kristen A. Jenson, MA and Gail Poyner, Ph.D.
A comfortable, read-aloud story about a mom and dad who teach their child what pornography is, why it’s dangerous, and how to reject it. Using easy-to-understand science and simple analogies, this ground-breaking book engages young kids to porn-proof their own brains. How? With a 5-point CAN DO Plan that helps kids install an internal filter! For ages 6 to 11.

**What's the Big Deal about Pornography? A Guide for the Internet Generation**
By Jill C. Manning, Ph.D.
Dr. Manning discusses the problem of pornography in an open, frank manner that is easy to read and understand. She tactfully addresses questions such as: “Can pornography teach me things about sexuality that I need to know in the future?” and “What should I do if I can’t stop looking at pornography?” I’m not the kind of mother who can freely talk to her kids about pornography and sex. This book was amazing—something I could read, something my teams could read, and something we could discuss together. —LDS mom

**Spiritual Exodus: A Latter-day Saint Guide to Recovery from Behavioral Addiction,** by Mark H. Butler, Ph.D. A companion to 12-Step work, group work, couple therapy, or ecclesiastical counseling with priesthood leaders. A gathering of self-help tools designed specifically to assist Latter-day Saints in overcoming habit-forming behaviors and addictions. Strategy and self-help interventions for recovery from pornography addiction are included.
"[It] is a much more serious problem now. . . . It is like a raging storm, destroying individuals and families, utterly ruining what was once wholesome and beautiful. I speak of pornography in all of its manifestations. . . .

"All who are involved become victims. Children are exploited, and their lives are severely damaged. The minds of youth become warped with false concepts. Continued exposure leads to addiction that is almost impossible to break."

—President Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Tragic Evil Among Us," Ensign, Nov. 2004

". . . .[P]ornography can be an addiction of the highest order. . . . This ought to be seen like a public health crisis; like an infectious, fatal epidemic. . . . It is the most inglorious, deceitful and destructive work known on such a wide basis in the society of our day, affecting young and old by the millions. . . .

"I know people can win this war. I have seen them do it and so have you. . . .

"I have deep, personal feelings for the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of his redemption. I declare that force, that pull, that saving grace to be infinite and eternal in its reach, a force and a grace that will save us from all kinds of bondage and lift all kinds of burdens if we but permit it, if we but seek it, and allow it into our lives."