

Cycle of Addiction • Cycle of Addiction

Key Interventions to All Phases

Those Who Are Addicted:

Break the Silence.

You must recognize a problem exists. Secrecy can be cancerous to any hope of healing. Tell a friend or loved one of your struggles with this addiction. Ask them to hold you accountable when you make changes to stop. This may be by checking in everyday and giving an honest report. This is an important and difficult step for someone who is addicted.

Seek professional help.

You may use a 12-step program or individual counseling. You can choose many therapeutic approaches to assist you in your journey toward freedom.

Participate frequently in the Sacraments.

Our culture invades us with temptations that are hard to resist alone. Participating in the Eucharist and Reconciliation can fortify us to resist these temptations and say “yes” to follow our Catholic faith. Consider finding a priest/spiritual director that you can talk honestly with about your struggles. This can provide a spiritual safety net as you make the difficult but necessary changes.

Those hurt by this behavior...

- Respond with compassion while keeping them accountable.
- Be honest with your feelings if you are a family member who has been hurt.
- Be open to participating in individual, marital or family counseling.
- Know there is hope for healing. Many people have achieved freedom from this addiction by frequent participation of the sacraments, counseling and the support from their loved ones.
- SANON (sanon.org) Can help provide hope and support for spouses and family members struggling with pornography addiction.



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Intervention Strategies at Every Phase:

- **Stressor/Trigger** Although some first view pornography out of curiosity, most engage in this behavior due to an unmet need and or stressor. Stress is different for each of us. It may be one stressor or many that leads to the addictive behavior. Unresolved emotions (anger, sadness), relationship struggles, unrealistic expectations, work issues, spiritual disconnection are some of the stressors that can trigger addictive behavior. You must identify which stressors lead to the addictive behavior. This addictive behavior is most likely a substitute for a healthy way of dealing with the unmet need or experience of stress.
- **Addictive Behavior** Addiction is being abnormally tolerant, preoccupied or dependent (physically or psychologically) on a substance or behavior (Webster). Frequent viewing of pornography is harmful and most likely addictive. Masturbating while viewing pornography fuels the addiction because of the body's intense, short lived chemical responses (adrenaline, endorphins, orgasm). Stopping this behavior is crucial to breaking the cycle of addiction.
- **Guilt/Remorse/Depression** Guilt and remorse may lead to depression if ignored. Listen to these emotions because they give you information about yourself and the world. They may be an invitation from the Holy Spirit to take steps to heal and gain freedom from the addiction.
- **Vow To Change Behavior** Just like New Year's resolutions, we all make vows to change behaviors and fall short. Those addicted to pornography have a difficult time making these changes on their own. This inability to make these changes may lead to despair. Make small and realistic changes that over time, will lead you to stopping the cycle and gaining freedom. Put the computer in a public place and install filtering software. Throw out any pornographic materials and consider disconnecting Internet services.