The Impact of Pornography on Marital Intimacy

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Agenda

- Name the problem
- Significance of these issues
- Detailed description of what each issue may look like
- Avenues for healing and change
- Questions
What Intimate Problems Exist With Pornography and Masturbation?

- Connection
- Spirituality
- Mutual Satisfaction
- Safety and Vulnerability
- Performance
“He felt now that he was not simply close to her, but that he did not know where he ended and she began.” (Leo Tolstoy)

- Early sexual experiences
  - Porn - sexual prograning software linking sexuality and expression with disconnection self vs. collaborative creation
- Genital engorgement 10% desire for sex women and 59% for men
  - Leaves women wanting
  - Ghost 2:12
Connection

- John Gottman
- Turning away
Connection

Maddie and Nate
“Our natural affections are planted in us by the Spirit of God, for a wise purpose; and they are the very main-springs of life and happiness—they are the cement of all virtuous and heavenly society—they are the essence of charity, or love; ... "There is not a more pure and holy principle in existence than the affection which glows in the bosom of a virtuous man for his companion; ... "The fact is, God made man, male and female; he planted in their bosoms those affections which are calculated to promote their happiness and union" (Writings of Parley Parker Pratt, 52–53).
Spirituality

- Sexual Wholeness in Marriage (Busby & Carroll)
  - Physical (Satisfaction, Pleasure, Health)
  - Emotional (Love, Attachment, Unity)
  - Spiritual (Meaning, Purpose, Progression)

- Sexuality in marriage is "...a symbol of total union: union of their hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything." (Jeffrey R. Holland)
  - When sexuality emphasizes this union and is an expression of appreciation for this togetherness
Spirituality

Jenna & Anderson
Sexuality

“...a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, *eroticism, pleasure, intimacy* and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.” (WHO, 2006a)
Mutual Satisfaction

- Porn impacts perception of partner "...that the effects of repeated exposure to standard, non-violent, commonly available pornography includes: increased callousness toward women; distorted perceptions about sexuality; devaluation of the importance of monogamy; decreased satisfaction with partner’s sexual performance, affection, and appearance; doubts about the value of marriage; and decreased desire to have children." (Zillman & Bryant)

- Sexual scripting theory (Gagnon & Simon)

- Rewriting sexual template (2014 theme was teen)
  - One person's control
  - Male-centric view of all sexuality
  - No humanistic side
  - Distorted image of bodies
Mutual Satisfaction

Sofia and Diego
"This little girl was born expecting those hands to be there – our nervous system is designed to connect with others. We never outgrow this. We know in our bones – if we call and no one comes we are oh so vulnerable. Love – infant or adult – is an ancient wired-in survival code (not a psychotic mixture of sex and sentiment that we can take or leave). But there are other laws." (Sue Johnson)

Attachment wounds and betrayal trauma become guideposts that then revise our otherwise secure bond.
Safety and Vulnerability

Emma and David
"Altered arousal template"- From an early age, our sexual experiences influence what we find sexually arousing. According to Carnes (2010), the smells, sights, sounds, and images that accompany sexual experiences become encoded on what he calls an arousal template. These elements become etched into our sexual memory and when re-experienced, increase sexual arousal." (Christina Bell)

Arousal template

- Alone, voyeurism, clicking, searching, multiple tabs, constant novelty, shock and surprise
- courtship, touching, being touched, smells, pheromones, emotional connection, and interaction with a person (Gary Wilson)
Performance

- Supernormal Stimulus (Nikko Tinbergen)

  - "Pornography may be just such a supernormal stimulus. With pornography use, much more of a normal stimulus may eventually be needed to achieve the response a supernormal stimulus evokes. In contrast, ordinary levels of the stimulus are no longer interesting. This may be how normal sex becomes much less interesting for porn users. The data supports this conclusion. In fact, use of pornography by one partner leads the couple to have far less sex and ultimately reduces relationship satisfaction." (John Gottman)
Performance

Julie and Sam
Recognize, accept, and make bids

"A bid is any attempt from one partner to another for attention, affirmation, affection, or any other positive connection. Bids show up in simple ways, a smile or wink, and more complex ways, like a request for advice or help." (John Gottman)

- **Text**
  - How do I look?
  - Can I have your attention?

- Ensure that bids don't stop at the bedroom door
- Sex doesn't have to just be physical
- Touch needs to be pervasive
Avenues For Healing Spirituality

- Occurs within the context of the overall relationship
  - When life purpose, goals, & progression are in line and the couple is sexually present and vulnerable
- Might evolve from a strongly physical interaction that symbolizes a union of lives
  - Doesn't necessarily need to be quiet, mellow, slow, or tame
Avenues For Healing Mutual Satisfaction

- Neuroplasticity goes both ways!
  - Acceptance of misinformation in sexual scripting
  - Awareness of specifically absorbed ideas and theories
  - Challenging misconceptions and illogical beliefs
  - Discontinue perpetuating old sexual scripts
  - Introduction healthy accurate scripts
- Not all men or women respond the same way
- Female-centric view of sexuality
- Recognition of humanistic side
Avenues For Healing Safety and Vulnerability

- Safe have and a secure base
- "When we lose this sense of connection with a loved one we experience emotional isolation, loneliness, panic, pain and helplessness. *This distress can heighten or it can crowd out other concerns –like sexuality.*" (Sue Johnson)
- Rebuild Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement “ARE you there for me?”) Responsiveness shapes bonds
Reconditioning and rewiring sexual excitement and response cycles to pair with normal stimulus VS supernormal stimulus

- Arousal template shifts from (alone, voyeurism, clicking, searching, multiple tabs, constant novelty, shock and surprise) to (courtship, touching, being touched, smells, pheromones, emotional connection, and interaction with a person)

- Addressing character weaknesses that fuel old arousal template ex. Selfishness, rationalization, or disconnection

- Partner engagement arousal style (Michael Metz & Barry McCarthy)
"Studies have shown that images are an especially powerful teacher, since they can pack in a whole lot of information that the viewer can understand very quickly. And while words are often interpreted as opinions, our brains are more likely to interpret images as facts; after all, it's a lot harder to argue with something you're seeing happen right in front of you. Now here's the kicker: research has shown that our brains learn better when they're sexually aroused. When you add in the focused concentration of searching through pornographic images to find exactly what the user is looking for, and reinforcing what’s being taught with the reward of sexual climax, it creates the perfect conditions for teaching and conditioning the brain."

-Fight the New Drug
Life Preserver "The New Talk"

- **Ongoing**
  - Not enough time to accurately address all aspects (intimacy, sexuality, biology, reproduction)
  - Need time to process
  - Structure of "The Talk" doesn't fit child sexual development

- **Part of every day life and not formalized**
  - We can talk whenever there is need or desire ~ No special circumstances required
  - Communicates sexuality is part of child's lived experience and integrated
  - Communicates shame or something weird when a big deal is made of it

- Help navigate life/relationships and pull into "safer waters"