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**IN THE NEWS**

## Online Porn Addiction

At the core, it's just a group of colored pixels, but the accessibility and discreetness of the internet has made online porn addiction a real problem.

BY GABRIEL LEFRANCOIS

A new realization is becoming of an industry draped in the lives of your average everyday man or woman, and its grip has shown to be stronger than the many individuals that delve in it. Don't believe it? Take a look at some of these 2006 statistics reported by internet tracker comScore Media Matrix, the National Research Council Report and Family Safe Media:

- Two in five Internet users visited an online adult site in August 2005
- 63.4 million unique visitors visited adult websites in December of 2005 reaching 37.2 percent of the internet audience
- The cybersex industry generates approximately \$1 billion annually and is expected to grow between \$5 to \$7 billion over the next five years
- The pornography industry generates \$12 billion in annual revenue—larger than the combined annual revenues of ABC, NBC and CBS. Of that, the internet pornography industry generates \$2.5 billion in annual revenue

### Hard To Grasp

Finding out the true size of an addicted population is not simple. According to Dr. Stanley Ducharme the exact statistics as to the prevalence of sexual addiction are generally unavailable because of the shame and guilt associated with the behavior. Legal consequences also prevent the collection of reliable statistics. Secrecy and shame are the hallmark of a sexual addiction.

Internet-filter-review.com reports 10 percent of men admit to having an internet sexual addiction. It can more than likely be assumed that this number in relation to the statistics above is much higher.

One thing about online porn addiction is that the problem is real and many are seeking the same help and, in many cases, the same types of help an addict of drugs would vie for in a time of desperation, conformation and realization. The proponents of pornography addiction attest that addicts experience similar patterns to those involved in psychological addiction to substances such as drugs or alcohol.

And like drug addiction, the apple of any addiction does not fall to far from the tree.

### The Effects

According to psychologist Dr. James Dobson, pornography addiction causes a person to become desensitized to the material, no longer getting a thrill from what was once exciting. They also fantasize about acting out various pornographic scenes; shows callous towards ordinary sexual relationships; becomes reclusive, attempting to hide the habit from family or friends; views the opposite sex as an object; and views sex as being solely for the pleasure of himself or herself.

Dobson believes that men who are addicted to pornography, in general, will be unable to be satisfied with their sexual partner, causing marital problems or even divorce.

"Half of my clients are men and two-thirds are married," says Brenda Schaeffer, a licensed psychologist and certified addiction specialist whose area of specialty coincides with sexual addiction. "I believe that married men are often torn between their love of their partner and their secret life. Very often they are discovered and at first minimize or deny and eventually feel good about having the secret out. If they do not take the problem seriously, the marriage or relationship has very little hope of surviving. It should be noted that one survey where one partner was into cybersex, 68% of couples had lost interest in relational sex."



Kaia Lai (www.kaialai.com)  
Online porn addiction is a real problem for some, but there is help out there.

### POLL

Have you ever suffered from an addiction?

- Yes  
 No

Submit

**True Story**

John James,\* 29, of Tennessee faced many of the symptoms and relationship problems described above during his first few years of college. "It began taking up more and more of my time—it never really occurred to me that it was abnormal. I became involved with online relationships that soon began affecting my real-life relationships; there was a lot of deception involved with the people I was involved with online. The whole thing becomes bigger than the individual."

James has been married for two years now and realized through what he describes as extreme lows, dealing with his cybersex addiction was something that he ultimately had to face on his own.

"They were just some really extreme lows... I mean, I just wanted to have a committed relationship with my wife" says James. "I was physically, but not psychologically monogamous, and I was desperate for help."

James soon found that his wife of two years would be the one who was fundamental in his recovery. "My wife's support was absolutely key—she gave me an incredible mixture of support and space; support in the sense that she made it clear that she loved me no matter what and this was something we could face as a team, and space in that she didn't press me for details of push or become my recovery 'manager'. She basically said 'you do whatever you have to do and I'll support you 100 percent—you just let me know if I can do anything to help.' She couldn't have handled it in a more loving and supportive way."

**There Is Hope**

Schaeffer relates to James' plight, regurgitating the premise that, "In my practice I have found that when both are in therapy and the behavior is viewed as an addiction and not personalized, the couples have recovered and moved into a healthy relationship that includes sex."

For people like James, there is hope. Dr. Schaeffer and James both recommend programs like Sexual Addicts Anonymous. Because of the internet, pornography addiction has been taken to new and unimaginable heights. And if the flickering of a screen becomes more alluring than the warm sheets next to your spouse, it's time to log off and seek help, it's out there.

**RESOURCES:**

Sexual Addicts Anonymous  
Center for Internet Addiction Recovery

***\*Editors Note: The person interviewed for this article wishes to remain anonymous.***