

7 Negative Effects of Porn

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Porn is a problem. It's a personal problem for many and a cultural problem for all. You may think you have not been affected by porn, but you have because it's embedded in the surrounding culture. The staggering size of the pornography industry, its influence upon the media and the acceleration of technology, paired with the accessibility, anonymity, and affordability of porn all contribute to its [increasing impact](#) upon the culture.

Pornography affects you whether you've ever viewed it or not, and it is helpful to understand some of its negative effects, whether you are a man or woman, struggling with watching it, or simply a mom or dad with a son or daughter. There is a plethora of research on the detrimental effects of pornography (and I do not think that what follows are necessarily the worst of them), but here are seven negative effects of porn upon men and women:

1. Porn Contributes to Social and Psychological Problems Within Men

Anti-pornography activist, Gail Dines, notes that young men who become addicted to porn, “neglect their schoolwork, spend huge amounts of money they don’t have, become isolated from others, and often suffer depression.” ([Pornland](#), 93). Dr. William Struthers, who has a PhD in biopsychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago, confirms some of these and adds more, finding that men who use porn become controlling, highly introverted, have high anxiety, narcissistic, curious, have low self-esteem, depressed, dissociative, distractible ([Wired for Intimacy](#), 64-65). Ironically, while viewing porn creates momentary intensely pleasurable experiences, it ends up leading to several negative lingering psychological experiences.

2. Porn Rewires the Male Brain

Struthers elaborates,

As men fall deeper into the mental habit of fixating on [pornographic images], the exposure to them creates neural pathways. Like a path is created in the woods with each successive hiker, so do the neural paths set the course for the next time an erotic image is viewed. Over time these neural paths become wider as they are repeatedly traveled with each exposure to pornography. They become the automatic pathway through which interactions with woman are routed....They have unknowingly created a neurological circuit that imprisons their ability to see women rightly as created in God’s image ([Wired For Intimacy](#), 85).

In a similar vein regarding porn’s effect upon the brain, Naomi Wolf writes in her article, "[The Porn Myth](#),"

After all, pornography works in the most basic of ways on the brain: It is Pavlovian. An orgasm is one of the biggest reinforcers imaginable. If you associate orgasm with your wife, a kiss, a scent, a body, that is what, over time, will turn you on; if you open your focus to an endless stream of ever-more-transgressive images of cybersex slaves, that is what it will take to turn you on. The ubiquity of sexual images does not free eros but dilutes it.

3. Porn Turns Sex Into Masturbation

Sex becomes self-serving. It becomes about your pleasure and not the self-giving, mutually reciprocating intimacy that it was designed for.

4. Porn Demeans and Objectifies Women

This occurs from hard-core to soft-core pornography. Pamela Paul, in her book [*Pornified*](#), quoting the research of one psychologist who has researched pornography at Texas A&M, writes,

‘Softcore pornography has a very negative effect on men as well. The problem with softcore pornography is that it’s voyeurism teaches men to view women as objects rather than to be in relationships with women as human beings.’

According to Brooks, pornography gives men the false impression that sex and pleasure are entirely divorced from relationships. In other words, pornography is inherently self-centered—something a man does by himself, for himself—by using another woman as the means to pleasure, as yet another product to consume (80).

Paul references one experiment that revealed a rather shocking further effect of porn: “men and women who were exposed to large amounts of pornography were significantly less likely to want daughters than those who had none. Who would want their own little girl to be treated that way?” (80).

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Again, it needs to be emphasized, that this is not an effect that only rests upon those who have viewed porn. The massive consumption of porn and the size of the porn industry has hypersexualized the entire culture. Men and women are born into a pornified culture, and women are the biggest losers. Dines continues,

By inundating girls and women with the message that their most worthy attribute is their sexual hotness and crowding out other messages, pop culture is grooming them just like an individual perpetrator would. It is slowly chipping away at their self-esteem, stripping them of a sense of themselves as whole human beings, and providing them with an identity that emphasizes sex and de-emphasizes every other human attribute (Pornland, 118).

5. Porn Squashes the Beauty of a Real Naked Woman

Wolf, in her own blunt way, confirms this,

For most of human history, the erotic images have been reflections of, or celebrations of, or substitutes for, real naked women. For the first time in history, the images’ power and allure have supplanted that of real naked women.

Today, real naked women are just bad porn (Quoted in Wired for Intimacy, 38).

6. Porn Has a Numbing Effect Upon Reality

It makes real sex and even the real world boring in comparison. It particularly anesthetizes the emotional life of a man. Paul comments,

Pornography leaves men desensitized to both outrage and to excitement, leading to an overall diminishment of feeling and eventually to dissatisfaction with the emotional tugs of everyday life...Eventually they are left with a confusing mix of supersized expectations about sex and numbed emotions about women...When a man gets bored with pornography, both his fantasy and real worlds become imbued with indifference. The real world often gets really boring...”
(Pornified, 90, 91).

7. Porn Lies About What it Means to be Male and Female

Dines records how porn tells a false story about men and women. In the story of porn, women are “one-dimensional”—they never say no, never get pregnant, and can’t wait to have sex with any man and please them in whatever way imaginable (or even unimaginable). On the other hand, the story porn tells about men is that they are “soulless, unfeeling, amoral life-support systems for erect penises who are entitled to use women in any way they want. These men demonstrated zero empathy, respect, or love for the women they have sex with...(Pornland, xxiv).”