

Understanding Porn Workbook

1. Your current situation.

Chances are, you've arrived at a point where you want to reduce or completely stop your pornography use. This might be the first time that you've tried to do this, or it might be one more attempt in a long string of attempts.

You might have arrived at this decision on your own. You may have decided that your pornography use is getting out of hand and is starting to impact the rest of your life. Perhaps it's taking too much of your time or perhaps you really dislike some of the material that you've been looking at. You might be feeling that pornography just doesn't fit with the person that you want to be.

You may also be considering changing your pornography use due to the influence of another person. Perhaps you've decided to make changes because you feel you'd like to be closer to your

partner and you feel that pornography is only taking you further away. Or, you may be facing intense pressure. Your partner has discovered your pornography use and the relationship has suddenly become very tense. If you're in this situation, you may feel like you have little alternative except to stop using pornography.

No matter your situation, you feel that you now need to make a change. This workbook is something that you can use to help you make that change.

2. Your goals.

A good starting point is to work out what your goals are. Sometimes when men feel an urgent need to stop using pornography, they rush into making promises to themselves and others. They don't take the time to reflect on what goal they really want, or why they want it. Instead,

they often rush into promising to stop using pornography.

This is something that I don't generally recommend. In many cases, a man's urgent objective stop using pornography is an immediate response to a tense situation. For instance, if you are discovered using pornography you may promise to stop using it to try and ease the situation with your partner. You might be feeling deep shame about using porn and promising to give up porn forever looks like the way to stop feeling ashamed.

Even though your desire to stop using pornography might be well-intentioned, don't make a quick commitment. It's essential to stop and consider if this is something you really want to do. If it isn't, you may have some serious difficulties in reaching this goal. Far better that you set a goal that's a reflection of what you really want, even if it's a short-term goal.

3. Making SMART goals.

Whatever goal or goals you decide to set for yourself, make sure they're SMART goals.

The acronym SMART refers to:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time-based

Why make it a SMART goal? When you get clear about your goals and think through what they actually mean, then they're

more likely to become something you work towards.

For example, your goal might be:

"For the next two weeks, I'm not going to look at any pornographic images or videos for more than two seconds"

Or:

"For the next week, I am only going to use a computer when at work"

Or:

"For the next month, I am only going to use my mobile phone when my wife is awake and in the same room as me"

Or:

"For the next month, I will only use pornography once a week on a Thursday night for a maximum of 20 minutes"

These goals all have the attributes of SMART goals.

Whatever goal or goals you set for yourself, make sure they're something you can get behind; importantly, make sure it's a goal that you set, not a goal that's been set for you by someone else.

4. Getting on top of it.

Whatever goal you set for yourself regarding pornography, you need to

understand that you may not succeed straight away. If you're like many men, pornography's been part of your life for years. You probably haven't talked about

it to anybody else before, and so you might not really have a good handle on why you use it.

The key point? If you don't understand why you use pornography, it's probably going to reduce or stop using it. That's the purpose of this exercise; to help you understand why you use pornography. Once you understand why use it, then you can make a better choice about what to do about it.

5. Your use of porn.

You probably feel different things about pornography at different times. Sometimes, you

might feel guilty or ashamed about pornography and very regretful that you've used it. At other times, however, you might be very excited about the prospect of using pornography and be anticipating it.

This variability about emotions connected with pornography is one of the things that makes it harder to understand, and consequently harder to stop.

It's critical to understand that for many men, pornography use isn't strongly connected with their sex drive. Time and time again, men report to me and other sex therapists that the use of pornography is more about boredom, stress relief and habit than it is about their sexual drive.

If you try to stop using pornography based on the idea that it's all about sex, then you're looking in the wrong place for the solution.

This workbook is designed to help you understand why you *actually* use porn.

6. Using the worksheet.

Print out the following 2 pages and keep a record of the times when pornography use

seems like a good idea, noting down certain things about yourself and the environment.

This workbook asks you to track the following things every time you feel the desire to use pornography:

1. the day of the week
2. the time of day
3. what happened before you started to feel the desire to use porn i.e. any significant or unusual events
4. what was your mood before you wanted to use porn (i.e. angry, sad, distressed, bored, upset, resentful, jealous, happy etc)
5. your level of sexual desire on a scale between zero and 10
6. if you ended up using porn, the amount of time you spent doing it
7. your mood after you stopped using pornography
8. your best guess about what you were really looking for when you wanted to use pornography
9. an alternative activity that might have satisfied this real need.
10. What you guess your mood would have been if you'd done this alternative activity

1. Day of the Week	2. Time of day	3. What happened before you wanted to use porn?	4. What was your mood before you wanted to use porn?	5. What was your level of sexual desire (1 to 10)	6. If you used porn, for how long?	7. If you used porn, what was your mood after?	8. What do you guess was your real need?	What alternative activity would satisfy this real need?	What would you guess your mood would be after this alternative activity?
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Questions to ask yourself to help you understand:

Did your mood change between wanting to use pornography and actually using it? What did using pornography do for your mood?

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Are there any patterns to the time of day? What usually happens at this time? Why did this time look like a good time to use pornography?

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Are there any patterns to the day of the week? What usually happens on this day? Why did this day seem like a good time to use porn?

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What were you are really looking for when you went to use pornography? Is there a pattern here? Do you feel like the same reasons keep coming up again and again?

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What you think your mood would have been after the alternative activity. Is this different from what your mood ended up being?

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Note that the focus here isn't on whether you used pornography or not. Instead, it's on what was happening for you *when you wanted to use pornography*.

7. Take the time to understand.

Take some time to collect this data about your desire to use pornography use. You might

want to make extra copies of the workbook so you can collect more data.

Here's some things to think about:

- If you used porn on this occasion, did your mood change between wanting to use pornography and actually using it? What happened? What did using pornography do for your mood?
- Are there any patterns to the time of day? What usually happens at this time? Why did this time look like a good time to use pornography?
- Are there any patterns to the day of the week? What usually happens on this day? Why did this day seem like a good time to use pornography?
- What were you are really looking for when you went to use pornography. Is there a pattern here? Do you feel like the same reasons keep coming up again and again?
- What you think your mood would have been after the alternative activity. Is this different from what your mood ended up being?

The purpose of these questions (and others you might ask yourself) is about why you use pornography and if doing something else instead would have helped more.

In my experience, the key question is *"What were you are really looking for when you went to use pornography?"*

Your answer might be different to these ones, and it might be different at different times. As a starting point, answers that others have come up with include:

- To feel less alone
- To feel more connected
- To comfort myself
- To distract myself
- To do something private for myself

If you can start to see what the real need is behind your desire to use porn, then you can start to work out how you can address this real need more directly.

8. Entering new territory.

If you're like many men, you've never talked about your porn use with anybody

else before. It's something that you might have been doing for decades, but you've never had a conversation with anybody about it. This is quite an unusual situation, and it doesn't help you understand why you use pornography. There is something about dialogue with another person that can really help us understand ourselves. Whether this dialogue is with a partner, a counsellor or with someone you really trust, find someone to talk to about it.

After you've filled in the workbook, you might want to talk about it with this trusted person. Talking it through will help you see yourself even more clearly.

You might want to tell your partner, or you might not. Just be aware that your partner might not yet be ready to hear.

If you decide to seek counselling with me or anybody else, the understandings that come out of this exercise are likely to be quite valuable and can be something to build upon.

9. New perspectives.

Now you've completed this exercise, you are likely to have some new understandings

about yourself and about your desire to use porn. You are likely to be able to make some connections that you've never made before between what you do and how you feel about it.

Take a moment to think back over some of the other times you've used porn in the past. Perhaps these new understandings help you see your actions in the past a bit clearer.

10. Taking the next steps.

Having done this exercise, you're in a much better position to work out what next steps you want

to take. Perhaps you would like to extend your goal for a longer period of time. Or, you might want to rethink your goal based

upon the new understanding of yourself that you now have.

You may also want to seek out further resources to help you achieve this goal. There are a number of resources on the Internet for helping people trying to deal with pornography problems. These resources can vary in terms of approach, philosophy and usefulness. I'd recommend that you seek out an approach that fits in with your own philosophy and is aligned with the goals that you've set for yourself.

For many men, counselling plays a key part in their battle to change their pornography use. Men can find it helpful to talk to someone who is comfortable talking about pornography and sex. Further, many men also report that the idea of talking to someone who is both independent and disposable helps them talk about this touchy issue.

I'm very comfortable talking to men about their desires to change their use of pornography. I offer a free initial consultation; to take this up, go to <http://timhillpsychotherapy.com/contact-us/>

11. A note for partners.

If you're the partner of someone who's trying to make changes to their pornography use, then I hope the following will help.

Firstly, I can understand if you feel shocked, betrayed and very hurt by your partner's pornography use. Chances are, you didn't know that your partner used

pornography or, if he had used pornography, that he'd ceased using it some time ago. If you feel like this, it'd be understandable that you want your partner to make immediate changes to stop using pornography. You might still be shocked, hurt and betrayed, but at least you would feel that things were on track to be healed.

Firstly, if your partner is like many other men, he has been using pornography for a long time. In that time, it's become very habitual for him. Putting aside any other considerations, giving up something which is habitual is difficult. It means making significant changes and some of these changes are unconscious. In my experience, changes may take a while.

Secondly, it's also very likely that the reasons that your partner uses pornography are different from the reasons you fear he does. I've talked to dozens of men about why they use pornography. The outcome? The primary reasons that men use pornography are:

- stress,
- boredom,
- habit,
- an escape, and, down the list,
- unmatched sexual desires.

Whilst pornography does have strong sexual content, this content is a factor that makes it compelling to men, rather than the thing that they're actually seeking out.

Men and women perceive pornography use very differently. This is one of the key things that needs to be worked through for a couple trying to repair their relationship after pornography use. As long as men and women have a radically

different understanding of why men go to pornography, then mutual understanding and eventual repair will be elusive.

Thirdly, it's clear that this situation has been brought on by your partner's use of pornography. However, it may be beneficial for you to seek out some counselling of your own to support you through the situation. Chances are, you have strong feelings about what's happened. It could be really useful for you to start to work your way through these feelings with the help of a trained professional. Whilst it can seem very unfair that you need to do something about the problem that he has created, getting more support for yourself will lead to a situation which is better for you – and better for your relationship.

Fourthly, you might feel that if your partner's pornography use is somehow your fault or a reflection of how he sees you. It's really important to explore this with your partner and to come to an answer you can believe. I've never heard a man say that he uses pornography because of his wife.

Lastly, any change that your partner decides to make regarding pornography use will be more powerful if it's a choice that he makes for himself. The more freedom that he has to make a choice which is meaningful for him, the greater the chance of being a choice that he commits to in the longer term.

- Tim Hill