It’s Time to Talk About Porn Addiction: Implications for Counselor Educators & Supervisors
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Pornography Addiction

- The pornography industry is valued at over 13 billion dollars (Garlick, 2011).
- According to Pornhub, one of the most popular free web-based pornography services, approximately **80 million videos are watched daily** (2017).
- Individual negative effects found thus far are physical/neurological, psychological, and behavioral in nature (Gola, Lewczuk, & Skorko, 2016; Szymanski & Stewart-Richardson, 2014; Willoughby, Carroll, Busby, & Brown, 2016).
- Researchers have found that when viewed without one’s partner, pornography use contributes to reduced sexual fulfillment and relational satisfaction, and increased partner shame and guilt (Walters & Spengler, 2016).
- To note is the polarization vis-à-vis the effects of pornography use. For example, in their study, Grov, Gillespie, Royce & Lever (2011) support the notion that pornography use is “related to greater sexual knowledge, and openness to new sexual experiences” (Walter & Spengler, p. 354, 2016).

Counselor Competence

- In a recent study of 183 mental health practitioners, a significant portion of surveyed clinicians reported that **they do not feel competent** to treat individuals with sexual or pornography related concerns, although most reported that they have worked with clients presenting with these issues although most reported having experience working with clients presenting with pornography use or sex addiction (Short, Wetterneck, Bistricky, Shutter, & Chase, 2016).
- Counselors’ discomfort regarding discussion of pornography use or sexual issues with clients stems from having **limited to no education** on the matter and/or **difficulty processing their discomfort or biases** (Walters & Spengler, 2016).
- Piercy (2008) found three main factors that influenced the assessment of online infidelity: therapist’s age (younger therapists placed greater focus on environmental issues and reported fewer sessions), therapist’s religiosity (more religious therapists were more inclined to diagnose the acting out as an addiction), therapist’s own personal experience with infidelity (they were more likely to see the presenting problem as “typical.”)
- According to Katehakis (2012), practitioners often conceptualize out-of-control sexual behaviors through the lens of a depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, a relational problem, or a personality disorder, ignoring the core issue.

Implications for Counselor Educators & Supervisors

- There are many problematic pornography users that do seek professional help for this issue (Kraus, Martino, & Potenza, 2016), but they often end up empty-handed and **pursue self-help groups** instead (Cavaglion, 2008).
- Counselors need to be trained in the assessment of pornography addiction key factors involved in the genesis of sex addiction. Future addition to the DSM?
- Hertlein and Piercy (2008) stressed the need for family and marriage therapists to be trained in cybersex addiction, so that no further damage would be done to the marital system.
- There is a need for counselor educators to conceptualize couples and understand the referral process regarding recovery for both the addict and the partner.
When Ayres & Haddock (2009) provided study participants with a clinical vignette, they found that while 77% of the surveyed clinicians addressed pornography as a problem, only 3.0% indicated that they would consider validating the wife’s concerns, and 5.1% reported that they would address her feelings around the husband’s porn use in a couples’ session. Less than half of all surveyed clinicians were considering the administration of an assessment for sexual addiction, and none of the therapists indicated that they would interview the wife regarding the changes observed in her spouse’s internet use.

CACREP requires that master’s and doctoral level counseling students are taught theories and etiology of addictive behaviors (CACREP, 2016, Section II, 3.d.).

The revised International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) beta draft contains a proposed provision for its inclusion under Compulsive Sexual Behavior Disorder: “Compulsive sexual behavior disorder is characterized by a persistent pattern of failure to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges resulting in repetitive sexual behavior. Symptoms may include repetitive sexual activities becoming a central focus of the person’s life to the point of neglecting health and personal care or other interests, activities and responsibilities; numerous unsuccessful efforts to significantly reduce repetitive sexual behavior; and continued repetitive sexual behavior despite adverse consequences or deriving little or no satisfaction from it. The pattern of failure to control intense, sexual impulses or urges and resulting repetitive sexual behavior is manifested over an extended period of time (e.g., 6 months or more), and causes marked distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Distress that is entirely related to moral judgments and disapproval about sexual impulses, urges, or behaviors is not sufficient to meet this requirement” (http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/).

Future Research

- Strategies to effectively educate graduate level counseling students on cybersex-related problems
- The relationship between human trafficking and pornography addiction
- The effects of pornography use and the eroticized brain on domestic violence
- Assessments that measure a couple’s established patterns of attachment to understand family of origin issues, attachment styles and deficits, power and control, boundary system, and sexual intimacy (Walters & Spengler, 2016)

Assessments

- Sexual Addiction Screening Test–Revised (SAST-R; Carnes, Green, & Carnes, 2010)
- Compulsive Sexual Behavior Consequences Scale (Muench et al., 2007)
- Compulsive Sexual Behavior Inventory (Coleman, Miner, Ohlerking, & Raymond, 2001)
- Hypersexual Behavior Inventory (Reid, Garos, & Carpenter, 2011)

References Available Upon Request
My Secure Family
A live parent portal offering a place to connect with other parents and experts working to protect children. Constantly updated video trainings on dangerous hiding apps to help keep you in the know. www.mysecurefamily.com

Protect Young Minds
Brought to us by the creators of the book, Good Pictures, Bad Pictures, this website and email list offers tools, resources, a fabulous blog, and ever-updating info to help you connect with and protect your children. Especially helpful tools for parents of younger children. www.protectyoungminds.org

Fight the New Drug
This group makes fighting pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation very cool. Aimed at appealing to teens and college students, this site offers great video testimonies, school presentations, and a free online recovery program for teens (it is especially helpful for teens that have just started to struggle with compulsively using pornography)
www.fightthenewdrug.org

Internet Safety 101
Built by Enough is Enough, this comprehensive website offers research, tools, videos, conversation starters, and more.
www.internetsafety101.com

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation
This organization is a central hub for all other major organizations in the fight against sexual exploitation, pornography in particular. If you would like to join the fight, this is one of the best places to get plugged in nationally and globally. Go to the “Get Involved” tab on their website to subscribe, check out their Action Center, and begin to follow them on social media.
www.endsexualexploitation.org

Your Brain on Porn
While it is not a particularly flashy site, this address will connect you to the vast body of current research on the harmful effects of pornography to the brain and, consequently, relationships and the body. It is geared more towards men, especially those struggling with Porn Induced Erectile Dysfunction (PIED), but any adult will learn a great deal by spending a little time on this site.
www.yourbrainonporn.com

Educate and Empower Kids (EEK)
This organization provides resources to parents and educators to encourage deep connection with their kids through media education, meaningful family communication and intentional parenting.
www.educateempowerkids.org

Loving on Purpose
“Our parenting resources are aimed at helping parents shift from the impossible mission of controlling their children to learning to control themselves no matter what their children decide to do. Our relationship with our Father gives us a perfect example and template for how to lead our children in love, freedom, and power.”
www.lovingonpurpose.com