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Introduction

The following pages contain content posted on the Covenant Eyes Blog in various posts during the summer of 2017. The blog content has been summarized in this ebook for easy download and printing, should that be your preference.

If you're easily offended, stop reading. To have a meaningful discussion about porn and its possible link to erectile dysfunction, we have to talk about a lot of uncomfortable things.

This is your warning!

Disclaimer: *This ebook does not provide a diagnosis or treatment of any type and is not a substitute for psychiatric advice. Please consult with a healthcare professional for treatment.*

Definitions from the PIED Community:

There is a unique set of words used among those who struggle with porn-induced erectile dysfunction (PIED). We will define a few of the more frequent words below. You might find these definitions helpful as you read this and other PIED content we've written.

Death grip: a masturbation technique that involves a tight hold of the penis that is typically used by men who are experiencing difficulties with maintaining an erection.

Edging: the process of watching porn and masturbating, stopping just before orgasm, and backing off in order to maintain sexual arousal for a longer period of time.

Fap/Fapping: the term “fap” is slang for male masturbation and originates in old pornographic comics that depicted men masturbating with the quote bubble, “fap, fap, fap” to indicate the sound made by masturbating.

Flatline: the loss of all libido. Nothing that used to cause sexual arousal works anymore, including masturbation, pornography, or girlfriends. During this time, men typically experience a loss of penis sensitivity, a change in penis size (“it’s shriveled”), no “morning wood” (waking up with an erection), and an overall decrease in emotional health.

PMO: porn, masturbation, orgasm. This phrase is used often in the reboot (*see definition of “reboot” below*) community, for example; “No PMO for 90 days and still flatline.” (*see definition of “reboot” below*)

Reboot: the process of abstaining from certain sexual activities and starting new behaviors in order to “reboot” the brain to be aroused during sexual experiences with a human partner.

Porn-Induced ED: Is It Possible?

Related Blog Post: “Porn-Induced ED: Is It Possible?”

“Is it possible that my ED is caused by watching too much porn? Do I have porn-induced ED?”

We asked people what they wanted to know about in this resource on porn-induced ED. We received more than 800 suggestions, including:

“How [pornography] affects intimacy, communication, oneness, and disinterest in sex with a spouse.”

“An honest analysis of available data—if the data is inconclusive, this should be strongly indicated. Speculation isn’t useful.”

“How to reverse PIED. I know it is real; I know it has happened; I don’t need any statistics to convince me—we all just need to know how to reverse it.”

Does Porn Impact My Body?

“If you are under 40, and not on specific medications, and don’t have a serious medical or psychological condition, your copulatory ED almost certainly arises from performance anxiety or Internet porn—or a combination of the two.” –Gary Wilson, Founder of yourbrainonporn.com

In a criminal trial, “beyond a reasonable doubt” is the test of evidence required to convict, and often relies both on the quality and quantity of evidence. I believe both the quality and quantity of evidence supporting the assertion that porn and erectile dysfunction are correlated are enough to reach a conviction.

We know that correlation doesn’t automatically equal causation. But, what you’ll see below includes some interesting correlations to consider.

Maybe you’ve asked questions like, “Does masturbation cause ED?” or “Can watching porn impact my sex life?” or “Why do I just feel worse after watching tons of porn?” The good news is that if you’ve asked similar questions, you’re not alone. We found people

who have asked the exact same questions. **We found thousands of men who have removed one variable from their lives and have discovered a radical improvement in the quality of their lives.** They found answers. They found hope.

There's a Native American proverb that says, "Tell me the facts and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever."

When it comes to the issues of porn, masturbation, and erectile dysfunction, it will require facts, truth, and stories to help us make sense of what can be both sensitive and recondite.

Are you watching porn regularly? If so, is your life going exactly how you want it to? If not, or if you're just plain curious to know more about porn and your body, then keep reading.

What Is Porn-Induced Erectile Dysfunction? (PIED)

The short answer is, "I watch a lot of porn and I can't maintain an erection during partnered sex." This includes (but is not limited to) the following list of symptoms:¹

- ▶ Difficulty maintaining an erection when putting on a condom.
- ▶ Losing an erection the moment actual penetration occurs.
- ▶ Difficulty reaching orgasm with a partner.
- ▶ Decreasing penis sensitivity.
- ▶ Shrinking of the penis.
- ▶ Needing to fantasize about your favorite porn to maintain erection during partnered sex.

Real Stories of Porn-Induced ED

When we asked people what they wanted to learn about in this PIED resource, we received the following suggestions:

- ▶ "Why can I get hard and orgasm watching porn, but I can't get hard and orgasm with real sex with my wife?"

- “My husband could not keep an erection, and it was very difficult for him to climax right from the beginning of our marriage. For the next six years our sex life suffered until he confessed that [he] had been addicted to porn since he was very young.”
- “Is this condition reversible without medication? Will my abstinence from viewing porn allow my body to heal itself much like your organs when you stop smoking or drinking alcohol?”

It’s clear from these and other responses that watching porn impacts people and that they have a lot of questions about why this happens. Is there a correlation between porn and erectile dysfunction?

As you read some of the thousands of posts in forums related to PIED, there is an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and despair among those suffering. In contrast, you will also find amazing stories of hope, freedom, and purpose among those who have decided to live porn, and at times, masturbation-free. Here are a few subject lines from posts in forums we visited:

- “Crying, depressed, unmotivated, what’s happening?”
- “ED remains with 95 days done -Gutted” (“95 days done” refers to his abstaining from porn, masturbation, and orgasm for 95 straight days)
- “As you can tell, I’m pretty happy. Why? Because it’s like I’m alive again.”
- “Cannot keep erection more than 30 seconds. Please help”
- “Returned to my friendly, motivated self”
- “At least 6 weeks out and still flatline”
- “3 Years Rebooting HELP”
- “Need advice/where to buy Viagra/Cialis??”
- “Porn is not a part of my life anymore!”
- “I’m not turned on by my wife.”

- “70 days: I’ve noticed a ton of positive changes.”
- “I don’t get aroused being around girls anymore.”
- “My porn addiction is ruining my sex drive.”
- “Had sex for the first time in 10 years!”

Behind every post is a real person. Do any of these subject lines describe you? If you feel hopeless and alone, please understand that there is hope. It is possible to recover your life, and we’ve profiled three men who have recovered and are now helping others. Below, you’ll find the real stories of three pioneers in PIED recovery—Noah Church, Gabe Deem, and Alexander Rhodes. Real guys, each with a real story.

Noah Church of addictedtointernetporn.com

“I was with my first serious girlfriend. I was really attracted to her...but when the time came [to have sex] and she was naked in front of me, I didn’t have any physical response.” – Noah Church, Founder, www.addictedtointernetporn.com

Here’s just a piece of Noah Church’s story:

“I found myself as one of the first people to grow up in the age of the Internet when it was common for homes to have a computer with Internet access. Starting at around age nine or ten, I was using porn most every day, one or two times a day, sometimes more.

I started to escalate to types of pornographic content that really didn’t jibe with my natural sexuality. They were extreme and shocking, but I found that as time went on, I needed those more extreme stimuli to get the same amount of arousal that I was getting before.

By the time I was 18 years old, I was with my first serious girlfriend, and we decided we loved each other and wanted to experience sex together. This was something I had been looking forward to all my life.

I was really attracted to her. But, when the time came [to have sex], she was naked in front of me, and I just didn’t have any physical response.

I was shocked. I thought of myself as a person with a high sex drive. I always thought about girls and was masturbating most every day, so I was really confused and shocked about what was going on in that moment. I thought it might just be nerves because it was my first time, so we tried many more times and it just never worked.

I turned to Google for help, searching for phrases like ‘young man can’t get it up’ or ‘erection problems,’ and most sites indicated that it was either performance anxiety or some biological problem like blocked arteries. **I pinned it on performance anxiety because I had no trouble getting an erection while looking at porn** (which excluded the biological problem as an explanation).

[After a few years] I thought, ‘Maybe I masturbate too much.’ So I’d stop for a few weeks and quit looking at porn too, but that didn’t work either. **Man, this wasn’t just a sex issue, because it was devastating on my self-esteem, my self-confidence, and my sexual identity. Because I couldn’t have sex, I was sexually broken.**

My emotional health was a mess. Because I was feeding my brain so much dopamine through watching hours of porn, my brain craved more and more stimulation. And, unlike drugs—where there’s a rush of neurochemical activity giving that ‘high’ and then it’s gone—with porn, I was able to keep that dopamine level raised for hours clicking from video to video. We call it ‘edge’: delaying orgasm so that I could keep watching porn. Over years of doing this, my brain figured out that nothing in the real world could compete with the porn rush. Everyday things just became less stimulating. My friendships became less interesting. I didn’t want to do homework, because compared to porn, who wants to do homework?

I was numb to the world. From the age of 10 to 22 or maybe 23, I didn’t cry a single time.”

Gabe Deem of rebootnation.org

“Really it’s just you and a keyboard at the end of the day, with your pants around your ankles, and your loved ones are crying in the other room, and you’re not connecting with anyone, you’re not fulfilling what your heart really desires, which in my case was connection with a loved one.” –Gabe Deem, Founder, www.rebootnation.org

Here's just a piece of Gabe Deem's story:

“There was a significant mental aspect of porn for me. I didn't have any idea that my porn use growing up was affecting my mental clarity, my motivation, and my drive for other goals and pursuits I had in life. I didn't know it was affecting my interpersonal relationships with my friends and family or my ability to just see people as humans and not objects.

To put it as simply as I can, **I just had no drive to get out and do anything [while addicted to porn]**. My brain was hijacked and rewired to the point where all of my pleasure, all of my pursuits in life were digital.

I was skipping class in college, and I'd rather just be at home a bum on the couch watching porn (and playing video games) all day.

My drive for life wasn't there. I was just wired for pixels on a screen and online pursuits—not pursuing goals in real life. A lot of guys call it brain fog. **It zapped my motivation for anything in real life, and I dropped out of college.**

I didn't want to go to school anymore. I had no drive to get a good job and start a career or anything like that. I lost several relationships because my libido was for pixels on a screen, as well as my attention and my affection.

And it ended up hurting more than just my sex life. It hurt relationships all around to where I wouldn't want to go hang out with my family over Thanksgiving. **I'd rather stay home and watch porn.**

It ended up affecting all areas of my life. **Really it's just you and a keyboard at the end of the day, with your pants around your ankles, and your loved ones are crying in the other room, and you're not connecting with anyone, you're not fulfilling what your heart really desires, which in my case was connection with a loved one.**”

Alexander Rhodes of nofap.com

“I didn't know why I was so lethargic. I didn't know why I wasn't able to really have any self-discipline and my life was kind of a little bit of a mess in many ways.” – Alexander Rhodes, Founder, www.nofap.com

Here's just a piece of Alexander Rhodes's story:

“So, I grew up among the first generation of people who went through puberty with the existence of high-speed Internet porn. And we didn't really have the tools that Covenant Eyes is developing and currently publishes at our disposal. I was on a video game website and there was a pop-up ad featuring simulated rape pornography. It was really graphic stuff. And I wasn't looking for it, it just came up.

I was around eleven when I got exposed and that just opened up a whole new world for me. It was like, oh wow, you can find this stuff online. As a hormone-fueled adolescent boy you're going to be curious about seeing the naked human form. And I discovered it was online and did some Internet searches, and it escalated from there to a point where—I know this story holds true for a lot of people—I got addicted to it.

And, as a result, I started to notice changes in my body. It was more difficult to get an erection. I found myself wanting more and more degrading things. Something was wrong.

And, as I dug into the issue, I started to uncover information about a connection between porn consumption and impacts on the body. One of the most obvious being porn-induced erectile dysfunction for men.

We need to look at the fact that there are thousands of people—this story isn't just about me. **The real story is behind the thousands of people who decided to remove one variable from their life, and that variable is porn, right?”**

Why Does PIED Occur?

Related Blog Post: “Does Science Support Porn-Induced ED (Part 1)”

“In very layman’s terms, whenever these young men are trying to have sex with a partner... their brain is saying ‘What is this? I don’t really know what’s in front of me. I’m not used to this. This isn’t a computer screen. It doesn’t compute for me. I don’t know what’s going on.’” – Alexander Rhodes, Founder of www.nofap.com

How Porn Impacts the Brain and Body

In order to understand what is happening to your body, it’s necessary to understand what is happening between the ears. After all, there’s no such thing as an erection if the brain isn’t telling the penis, “Hey, it’s time to move!”

Neurons are cells that send and receive messages between the body and the brain. Stimuli from the outside world that are picked up by the body’s senses elicit a neurological response, whereby neurotransmitters begin sending signals between the neurons, setting off a chain reaction of activity throughout the body.

Probably the best known neurotransmitter is dopamine. It’s a critical player in a massive list of functions and conditions, ranging from Parkinson’s Disease, the release of breast milk, psychosis, attention, nausea, kidney, and heart function.

But dopamine’s celebrity status is often attached to its role in motivation, addiction, and lust, as part of the mesolimbic pathway.

The theory behind PIED goes like this. **Internet pornography from streaming online video sites is a supernormal stimulus, which means the brain’s reward center is bombarded with an amped up version of a normal stimulus.** Today’s online, streaming porn floods the brain with rush after rush of on-demand, high levels of dopamine.

Drug addiction studies have shown that the **repeated dopamine influx causes a decrease in D2 (dopamine) receptors.**² This is referred to as “desensitization,”

as the brain's reward circuitry fatigues from processing all of the dopamine and begins pruning away dopamine receptors in the same way you might cover your ears when someone next to you yells.

Although not proven, it's possible the same D2 pruning occurs in porn addicts.

As a result, in order to achieve the same neurological "high" as last week, more dopamine (ergo, more stimulation, often in the form of more extreme genres of porn) is required. Over time, this attachment to porn creates a neurological expectation that is vastly different from the "regular" (boring) human sexual experience.

And, according to Gary Wilson, **"When expectations are not met, dopamine drops, and so do erections."**³

Or, as feminist author Naomi Wolf says, "Real, naked women are just bad porn."⁴

Porn Is a Supernormal Stimulus

The material for this section has been provided by NoFap, a leading pornography addiction recovery organization.

The human brain responds to the world around us, using a complex network of 50-100 billion neurons to send electrical signals throughout the body. But not all stimuli impact the brain equally.

Within the brain there is a cluster of neural structures called the "reward system."⁵

The reward system, true to its name, gives us neurochemical rewards for engaging in activities that are beneficial for our survival.

It is critical to humanity for us to survive and produce offspring with a mate. So, whenever people eat food or have sex, the reward system releases neurochemicals which provide feelings of pleasure. The person starts to associate the pleasure with the activity, and is thus encouraged to eat more food and have more sex in order to experience more feelings of pleasure.

The reward system doesn't just reward you. It also motivates you to do those things which are good for your survival. This motivation is mediated by the neurochemical called dopamine.⁶ Dopamine is released whenever your brain encounters a stimulus

in the environment that it knows to be beneficial. Say you visit a friend and smell some delicious food cooking. Your brain releases dopamine, and you suddenly crave the food. Or say your partner has just treated you to a candlelit dinner, and has invited you to bed. Your brain releases dopamine, and you experience sexual desire.

How does the brain know which stimuli or activities are beneficial for your survival and which are not? The brain has a feedback system that allows it to learn about new stimuli and activities. This process is called sensitization.

In sensitization, the brain wires together sights, sounds, feelings, aromas, tastes, and even thoughts associated with a certain beneficial stimulus. It does this through the operation of a protein called DeltaFosB, which accumulates in the brain when dopamine is released. DeltaFosB correlates certain memories of beneficial stimuli with the environmental and mental contexts in which these stimuli appear. The brain thus “learns” to associate certain cues, such as the smell of hamburgers on the grill, with something good. When the brain encounters such cues in the future, it releases dopamine, encouraging you to interact with that stimulus again and again.

Though sensitization helps us survive by encouraging us to do those things that are good for our survival, it can also make us crave stimuli and activities which are detrimental to our health.

Pornography exploits one of the deepest desires that a human can experience and offers one of the most pleasurable natural rewards for engaging in it—an orgasm.

Today, pornography can provide its users with sexual hyper stimulation unlike anything their ancestors would have encountered. In the past, sexually attractive mates came in limited quantities throughout a person’s life. Now with pornography, there is virtually endless novelty in not only different sexually attractive “mates,” but also different angles, focuses, lighting tricks, makeup, airbrushing and editing—not to mention the impossible proportions and hyper-erotic situations available in animated porn.

Today’s porn, available in virtually endless amounts, can goose the reward system beyond anything sex with a real person could provide. Through continual exposure, the brain can be conditioned to prefer pornography over sex with real people.

What Do Doctors Say About PIED?

According to Dr. Mary Anne Layden, a psychotherapist and Director of Education at the Center for Cognitive Therapy at the University of Pennsylvania, this continual conditioning eventually rebuilds their sexual template—a pattern of thinking built by a repeated experience.⁷ She explains,

Sexual arousal is very rewarding. So anything we hook to something that rewarding can become learned very easily. We've even found that, like with fetishes, if you show men pictures of women who are nude except for a high-heeled boot, they get sexually aroused by that image of that woman who's nude with a high-heeled boot on. Very quickly, if you just show them a high-heeled boot, they'll have an erection. Like, okay, that's not natural that you would get an erection to a boot. But, we can teach you to have an erection to a boot by just hooking it to a naked woman. So, **when they look at pornography, all the things they see get hooked to sexual arousal and those all become a part of their sexual template.**

So what does it mean when a man can get an erection from a shoe but not from his own partner? Layden explains,

[Porn users] notice they can function fine as long as they're with a screen but they can't when they're with a person. Part of it is what they're learning from the pornography. They're learning to interact with women who are not physically natural. Many of the woman are surgically changed and men are thinking, 'Oh, this is what women should look like.' Well, most women don't look like that. So, now men get aroused for only surgically changed women, not to the real women in their lives.

Dr. Abraham Morgentaler, the Director of Men's Health Boston, Associate Clinical Professor of Urology at Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, stated:

I'm worried...about the impact of porn on men and on women. I see young men coming in who are really confused about what normal is because all they know about sex is what they've seen on porn.

Once upon a time in the Victorian age when women wore long gowns...it was considered to be really sexy when a man saw a turn of an ankle. That was enough for men to go and write sonnets and all of these other things. Then, we went through the mini-skirt phase in the 60s and all that and we talked about, the apocalypse is coming, and oh my God, this is so sexualized. Now we have it where everybody's got a computer or even a smart phone and you're on the Internet and can see whatever you want. There's no surprises...I think that the concern is, what porn has figured out is what really works for the brain of the guys. It's the maximum stimulus.⁸

Dr. Dudley Danoff, MD, world-renowned urologist and founder of the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center Tower Urology Medical Group in Los Angeles, has observed a growing number of young men who speculate that their early viewing of streaming porn is the cause of their lack of sexual interest with their real-life partners. In a 2016 podcast with Diana Wiley, Ph.D., Dr. Danoff concludes that “porn is bad for sex.”

By watching porn 3-4 times/day, these men are creating a perfect recipe for erectile dysfunction. When young people are exposed to porn early in adolescence, they begin to ask, ‘Is this the norm? Is this to be expected? Is this how I want my mate to act?’ It [pornography] really is mind-distorting.⁹

Our Brains Can't Handle Today's Porn

The human brain is a complex, intricately constructed mechanism that's fine-tuned to preserve and perpetuate human life. But, according to Gary Wilson, “Evolution has not prepared your brain for today's porn.”¹⁰

Recent Scientific Studies on PIED

Related Blog Post: “Does Science Support Porn-Induced ED (Part 2)”

*Significant portions of pages 19-26 have been provided by Gary Wilson, Founder of www.yourbrainonporn.com and author of *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction*.*

We’ve established how pornography impacts our brains and bodies. Now let’s take a look at scientific studies that have been performed during the past two decades as we continue to explore the curious correlation between porn and erectile dysfunction.

Correlation or Causation?

The use of pornography while also experiencing erectile dysfunction could simply be seen as correlated actions but not necessarily actions that show causation.

In other words, the correlation argument might say, “I’m a Christian who uses porn, which makes me feel horribly guilty, and I know it has hurt my relationship with my wife. All of this means our sex life is a mess, I’m constantly anxious that she might catch me, and I therefore I suffer from erectile dysfunction.”

Pornography use and erectile dysfunction are thereby correlated—they are connected and have some mutuality; but there are many other variables contributing to the erectile dysfunction.

But, what does the science prove? Let’s first establish some baseline figures for men prior to the creation of online, streaming pornography.

ED Rates Before Online, Streaming Porn

In 1999, a major cross-sectional study reported “trouble maintaining or achieving an erection” in 7% of men ages 18-29 in the United States.¹¹ In 2002, a meta-analysis of 23 erectile dysfunction studies from Europe, the USA, Asia, and Australia reported consistent ED rates of 2% in men under 40 (except for the preceding study).¹²

It is widely accepted that streaming pornography began in 2006. For reference, Pornhub, the largest pornographic website in terms of number of videos and viewers, launched in 2007.

ED Rates “A.T.” [After Tube]

Now that “tube” sites are the norm (sites that allow users to upload content), a 2016 study on Canadian adolescents showed that 45.3% admitted to problems in erectile functioning.¹³

The Global Study of Sexual Attitudes and Behavior (GSSAB) administered a yes/no questionnaire about ED to 13,618 sexually active men in 29 countries in 2001-2002. This first group was aged 40-80.

A decade later, in 2011, the same “sexual difficulties” (yes/no) questionnaire from the GSSAB was administered to 2,737 sexually active men in Croatia, Norway, and Portugal. This second group was 40 and under.

Based on the findings of prior studies, one would predict the older men would have far higher ED scores than the younger men, whose scores should have been negligible. Not so. In just a decade, things had changed radically. **The 2001-2002 ED rates for men 40-80 were about 13% in Europe. By 2011, ED rates in young Europeans, 18-40, ranged from 14-28%.**¹⁴

An analysis of questions asked on “MedHelp.org ED Forums” showed that nearly 60% of visitors who mentioned their age, were younger than 25.¹⁵ “Porn” was the most prominent word used in the forum by these participants when describing their current erectile dysfunction situation.

Peer-Reviewed Analysis of Porn and Erectile Dysfunction

Still not convinced? Read some of the findings from these three peer-reviewed studies below. Additional peer-reviewed studies can be read at yourbrainonporn.com.

Is Internet Pornography Causing Sexual Dysfunctions? A Review with Clinical Reports

In 2016, in *Behavioral Sciences*, an eight-member research team published the article, “Is Internet Pornography Causing Sexual Dysfunctions? A Review with Clinical Reports.” The abstract states: **“Traditional factors that once explained men’s sexual difficulties appear insufficient to account for the sharp rise in erectile dysfunction, delayed ejaculation, decreased sexual satisfaction, and diminished libido during partnered sex in men under 40.”**¹⁶

Their peer-reviewed work gathered the results of studies performed globally by counselors, urologists, psychologists, and sociologists. Some of the information scrutinized in the review included analysis of the following studies:

- ▶ A 2015 study on men (mean age approximately 36) reported that ED accompanied by a low desire for partnered sex is now a common observation in clinical practice among men seeking help for their excessive sexual behavior, who frequently “use pornography and masturbate.”¹⁷
- ▶ Kinsey Institute researchers were among the first to report pornography-induced erectile dysfunction and pornography-induced abnormally low libido, in 2007. Half of the subjects recruited from bars and bathhouses, where video pornography was “omnipresent,” were unable to achieve erections in the lab in response to video porn. Once more extreme types of porn were introduced, some were able to become sexually aroused. But, for a quarter of the subjects, no amount of variation in the genre of porn used caused sexual arousal.¹⁸
- ▶ A 2015 study of men (average age 41.5) seeking treatment for abnormally high libido (hypersexuality), who masturbated (“typically with very frequent pornography use”) seven or more hours per week, found that 71% had sexual dysfunctions, with 33% reporting difficulty orgasming.¹⁹
- ▶ In a 2014 functional MRI study, Dr. Valerie Voon, et al. found that when compulsive pornography users were shown sexually explicit films, they exhibited similar brain activity as substance abusers responding to drug cravings. Additionally, Voon et al.’s subjects (mean age 25) “had greater impairments of sexual arousal and erectile difficulties in intimate relationships but not with sexually explicit materials.”²⁰

One of the more fascinating steps taken by the review team was to intervene with three active servicemen who visited a Navy physician. Two saw a physician for their non-organic erectile dysfunction, low sexual desire, and unexplained difficulty in achieving orgasm with partners. The third visited for mental health reasons. Their ages were 20, 24, and 40. All three used pornography, masturbated regularly to porn, and found their female partners no longer sexually stimulating. All three were asked to remove or significantly decrease the amount of pornography consumed. In two of the servicemen, both saw their erectile dysfunction disappear. The third serviceman was not able to stop watching porn and was continuing to “work on his behavior on his own.”

According to the review team, “In summary, intervention studies designed to reveal causation by removing the variable of Internet pornography use are much needed to investigate unexplained sexual difficulties in Internet pornography users under 40.” A full explanation of the clinical experience can be found in section 2.0 of the review.²¹

Italian Society of Andrology and Sexual Medicine

In 2011, the Italian Society of Andrology and Sexual Medicine (SIAMS), the largest urology organization in Italy, released results from a survey of 28,000 European men showing that young men who indulge in “excessive consumption” of Internet porn gradually become immune to explicit images.²²

Over time, these men experienced a loss of libido, impotence, and a notion of sex that is totally divorced from real-life relations.

“It starts with lower reactions to porn sites, then there is a general drop in libido and in the end it becomes impossible to get an erection,” said Carlo Foresta, head of the Italian Society of Andrology and Sexual Medicine (SIAM).

Many respondents became hooked on porn as early as 14, exhibiting symptoms of so-called “sexual anorexia” by the time they reached their mid-twenties.

In 2016, Dr. Foresta co-authored a study titled *Adolescents and Web Porn: A New Era of Sexuality*, which studied 1,492 teens entering their final year of high school and found “19% of overall pornography consumers report an abnormal sexual response, while the percentage rose to 25.1% among regular consumers.”²³

European Study by Leading Sexologists

The top sexologists in Europe published a paper in 2016 whereby the current President of the European Federation of Sexology shared his clinical experience with 35 men who developed erectile dysfunction and/or anorgasmia, and his therapeutic approaches to help them.²⁴

The author states that most of his patients used porn, with several being addicted to porn. The results? **“Initial results for these patients, after treatment to “unlearn” their masturbatory habits and their often associated addiction to pornography, are encouraging and promising. A reduction in symptoms was obtained in 19 patients out of 35.** The dysfunctions regressed and these patients were able to enjoy satisfactory sexual activity.” In other words, they removed porn and regained the ability to have meaningful sex.

Addressing PIED Naysayers

In debating the existence of porn-induced ED, doubters make this point: “Some guys who watch Internet porn develop ED—so—correlation does not equal causation.”

According to Gary Wilson, the problem with that statement is it doesn’t address the rest of the facts,²⁵ such as:

1. All subjects had been using porn for years with no problems getting erections early on.
2. Few report any moral or religious misgivings, or guilt, surrounding their porn use.
3. Subjects experienced a gradual decline in sexual function, often over the course of years.
4. Many subjects had seen medical professionals, and had tried various therapies or regimens, with no success.
5. Subjects could not attain an erection without porn, but many could with porn.
6. When they abstained, most subjects experienced similar psychological and physical symptoms, which mimic withdrawal from a substance addiction.
7. **The clincher: All had only one variable in common. When that single variable was removed (masturbation to porn)—nearly all regained erectile health.**

(If they did not regain erectile health and libido, the cause of their ED was likely not porn use.)

8. Men who regain erectile health and then return to regular porn use, experience a return of ED, once again settling the issue of causation.

In addition, Nicole Prause and Jim Pfaus issued a manuscript in 2015 titled, “Viewing Sexual Stimuli Associated with Greater Sexual Responsiveness, Not Erectile Dysfunction,” where they attempted to show that pornography use actually increases male sexual responsiveness. A complete explanation of the critiques written in response to the manuscript can be found at yourbrainonporn.com/data-missing-findings-misrepresented.

The Largest Porn-Induced ED Study Is Happening Now!

If you skim through the comments and forums hosted on Gary Wilson’s website, NoFap, or Reboot Nation, what you find is page after page of stories from men who are down, depressed, struggling, broken, confused, and wondering, “What’s wrong with my body? Why can’t I have sex with real women?”

For those who have decided to stop watching porn as a step in eliminating their erectile dysfunction, they are participating in the world’s largest scientific study on porn-induced erectile dysfunction. And, in the words of Gary Wilson, “This ongoing experiment examining porn-induced ED is valid, reproducible, and empirical.”²⁶

The Unofficial PIED Test Subjects

- Participants of the unofficial study include thousands of otherwise healthy young men in their early 20s with only one variable in common: years of masturbation to Internet porn.
- The subjects differ in backgrounds, ethnicity, diets, exercise regimens, religious beliefs, moral beliefs, country of origin, education, and economic status.
- These young men cannot achieve an erection without porn use, and gradually, some can no longer achieve an erection with porn use.
- Many have seen multiple health-care practitioners, and most have tried a number of approaches to cure their copulatory ED with no results.

- ▶ Most state that they cannot believe that porn use could have caused ED. Some are very skeptical prior to starting their experiment of giving up masturbation to porn.
- ▶ The cause of their ED was not performance anxiety, as they failed to achieve full erections while attempting to masturbate without porn. Additionally, many subjects have no moral or religious misgivings about pornography, thereby eliminating guilt as a contributor to ED.

The PIED Recovery Regimen

- ▶ All eliminate porn use.
- ▶ Most (but not all) temporarily eliminate, or drastically reduce, the frequency of orgasms.
- ▶ Some decide to add other positive behaviors like exercise into their routines.

The Unofficial PIED Recovery Results

Nearly every subject reports a similar constellation of physical and psychological symptoms when they stop porn use/masturbation, a similar time-frame for the appearance of symptoms such as agitation, cravings, complete loss of libido, gradual recovery, and need 2-6 months (or longer) to regain erectile function. This suggests a very specific set of physical brain changes, and not a psychological “issue.” The usual pattern of recovery is as follows:

- ▶ Subjects experience varying withdrawal symptoms that parallel drug/alcohol withdrawal, such as cravings, anxiety, lethargy, depression, brain fog, sleeping abnormalities, restlessness, agitation, aches, pains, etc.
- ▶ Within 1-2 weeks, most subjects experience what is called “the flatline”—low libido, and perceived changes in genital sensation or size.
- ▶ The flatline slowly abates and libido gradually increases, morning erections and spontaneous erections often show up, attraction to real partners increases, etc.
- ▶ Lengths of full recovery generally vary from a few weeks to over 12 months. Most are in the 2-9 month range for chronic, longstanding ED.

Summary of the PIED Experiment

Young healthy men, with unexplained ED and only one variable in common (Internet porn use), attempt multiple regimens and treatments with no success. The subjects remove the one variable they have in common and almost all experience the same results: remission of their medical condition. That's an experiment with unequivocal results. This is empirical evidence.

Does Science Support Porn as a Cause of Erectile Dysfunction?

We believe the answer is yes. Naysayers suggest the need for “peer-reviewed studies” to confirm the existence of porn-related ED before we can say it exists. YourBrainOnPorn.com is accumulating those studies. To find them, go to the site, and search for the phrase, “Reality Check.”

However, according to Mr. Wilson, “It’s painfully obvious that no researcher can conduct a study where one group of young healthy men use Internet porn for 10 years, and a comparable control group does not, with erectile function assessed through masturbation to sensation only (no porn). **There’s only one way to confirm whether erectile dysfunction is porn-induced (PIED) or not: Eliminate porn use for an extended period of time and see if the sufferer regains normal erectile functioning.**”²⁷

In other words, it may be that the only possible experiment is well under way—with thousands of results now reported.

I Think I Have Porn-Induced ED.

What's Next?

Related Blog Post: "Porn-Induced ED: Is It Possible?"

What do you think? Maybe you've read enough and it is time to learn about PIED solutions. Most guys who follow certain steps regain their ability to maintain an erection during partnered sex. Those who are most successful not only STOP a few habits but they also ADD a few new habits as part of the rewiring process. Here are a few steps you can take.

- **Continue to educate yourself.** Remember, we aren't doctors, so please check with a medical professional before coming to any conclusions about your erectile dysfunction in order to eliminate a serious health issue.
- **Get on the fast-track to recovery, today.** We've created a 10-day PIED recovery challenge that might be exactly what you need. Recovery is possible. **Start the RecoverED Challenge today at <http://learn.covenanteyes.com/pied-challenge/>.**

We hope the stories in this ebook have helped you understand that you are not alone. In secret, dark places, issues like porn and masturbation almost always rule over us. It's easy to lie to yourself and believe, "Hey, I'm in control. I can stop whenever I want," but be honest—you've said that 1,000 times. Maybe you said it last night.

Let us say it again. You are not alone. The problem isn't just your penis. Your most important sex organ isn't between your legs. It's between your ears. And it might need a reboot.

But there's something even more important than your neurology. We sincerely want each person reading this book to live a full, amazing life. Porn is an equal opportunity destroyer. It takes. It robs. It lies. But you were meant for more. And finding your "more" will require you to do different things. That's why we've written the 10-day email challenge just for you. The *RecoverED* email challenge will send you 10 days of science and encouragement as you start your reboot process. Thousands of men have already registered for the challenge and now you're invited to join them. Recovery is possible! It can begin today.

Appendix: My Husband Has PIED. What Do I Do?

Porn-induced erectile dysfunction is crushing marriages.

In a survey sent to over 70,000 Covenant Eyes friends, we asked for their input about what types of questions they wanted answered related to porn-induced erectile dysfunction (PIED). We were surprised at the number of responses we received from wives, many that went like this:

Question: What's the one thing you want to see addressed in a book about PIED?

Answer: “[Please tell] the truth about the way it makes a wife feel when being intimate with her husband.”

Answer: “What this is doing not only to men with their problems, but also what it’s doing to their wives. I agreed to stay with my husband through this, and it’s been hell for both of us! I can’t live with this!”

Answer: “Porn interferes with natural sexual feelings. The guilt and shame caused my husband to not be able to perform. Even red-hot marital sex can’t compete with porn, cause that’s what he was getting. Be sure to tell other women that it isn’t her fault that he chooses porn over her.”

This is just a sample of the gut-wrenching responses we received from women who are in the midst of the fall-out from a porn-addicted husband. Covenant Eyes has written extensively about ways women can protect themselves during his recovery. Because, let’s be honest, even though everyone sees it as his recovery, it’s also very much *your* recovery.

Whenever a husband is looking at porn, there are typically a number of questions that go through the mind of his wife. A few might include:

- I’m right here. Why does he keep looking at porn?
- Why does he prefer porn over sex with me?

- How can he watch porn and say he loves me?
- Why am I not enough?
- Is this my fault?
- Is this it for our marriage?

This appendix is not going to answer all of these, but we've written an ebook that does called *Porn and Your Husband: A Recovery Guide for Wives*, which you can download at <http://www.covenanteyes.com/marriage-advice-my-husband-watches-porn/>. In this appendix, we want to provide actionable, practical steps wives can take if they suspect their husband suffers from porn-induced ED.

What Specific Steps Can a Wife Take During Her Husband's PIED Recovery?

Covenant Eyes friend and frequent blog contributor Kay Bruner offers some advice to a wife who is struggling to find her way while her husband is dealing with porn-induced erectile dysfunction:

- **Think about your boundaries.** What do you like, want, and need in the relationship? Does this relationship meet your needs as a whole person: mind, soul, spirit, and body? If not, what needs are left unmet? Have you been compromising your boundaries in the relationship, doing things that you don't like or want? Doing things that cause you harm? If so, why? What would your healthiest, happiest, best relationship-life look like?
- **Process your emotions.** Research says that when you're working through a difficult issue, journaling 20 minutes per day is a great tool for emotional processing. Notice throughout the day how you are feeling: sad, mad, scared, happy? Set aside time each day to identify one emotion you'd like to process, and free-write about that for 20 minutes.
- **Care for your physical body.** Eating healthy and exercising regularly are great for your physical self-care. Best exercise the research says you can do for your emotional self in recovery? Yoga. Find a restorative yoga class, or look around YouTube for practices that address anxiety, trauma, or heart-break.

- ▶ **Educate yourself on what makes healthy, successful relationships work.** Understand that emotional trust is the basis for a healthy relationship, and learn what it takes to build that trust, so you'll know if it's happening or not in your relationship. Read *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, by John Gottman. Invite your significant other to read the book with you; there are many discussion questions included.
- ▶ **Find community.** Find a therapist, just for you. Find a trauma-informed support group. Use the online resources at Bloom for Women. You are NOT alone!
- ▶ **Remember that you are NOT your significant other's sex toy.** He has to work on his own recovery and solve this problem for himself. Stay in your own lane with healthy boundaries, good self-care, and plenty of support.
- ▶ **Tell yourself the truth.** Be wise about recovery, and don't re-engage sexually until YOU are ready.

We are grateful for Kay's wise words. If you are married to someone who suffers from porn-induced ED, we hope that they are a salve to your wounded heart.

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