

Steven Donaldson, M.A., L.P.C.
503.231.0743
www.freefromcompulsion.com

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Four Reasons Men like Porn

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Long before *Playboy* magazine ever existed, men were trying to sneak peeks of nude women. Although what is considered sexy changes from culture to culture, men have always been driven by visual sexual stimulation. As far back as art is found we find porn. So why is it that men are so driven to see women in the buff?

Reason #1: Men are wired visually.

Men's brains work different than women's brains work. This may not seem like news but sometimes we expect that men and women are more similar than they really are. Research has found that men's brains automatically track a whole series of factors about women that are associated with reproductive health such as waist to hip ratio, skin tone and symmetry. Men track these automatically and unconsciously. They can't help it. Women's brains just don't do that.

There are a number of theories that try to account for these differences. One interesting one is that for a male to get his DNA to the next generation he needs to impregnate every female capable of bearing offspring he possible can. For a female to get her DNA to the next generation numbers don't matter as much as quality. Making quick assessments about the child bearing capacity of a potential mate is not as important. So while the males are trying to make it with every possible female who is capable of bearing offspring, the female is selecting only the best male to be impregnated by, which is a much more methodical process.

Visual sexual stimulation works for men in a way that it does not seem to work for women. People in the pornography industry have tried very hard to make pornography that is attractive to women and yet have never succeeded to the extent they have with men. There just doesn't seem to be a large section of the population of women that are interested in visual sexual stimulation. Although some women do enjoy pornography this seems to be the exception. Even *Playgirl* Magazine was more often purchased by men than women. On the other hand the market for men seems to be insatiable. Billions of dollars are spent every year producing pornography for men. Clearly men are turned on by seeing women naked and sexual.

So does this mean that viewing porn is normal and natural? This is a much more difficult question. Clearing viewing pornography for some men is harmful. For others it does not seem to have much effect. I think the more important point is that men are wired for visual sexual stimulation and it does have a very powerful effect on them. In some ways pornography is a new phenomenon. Even 100 years ago for a man to see a woman nude he would have to either talk

a woman out of her clothes or go somewhere where there was a lot of really good art. Today's high resolution photography and our ability to reproduce and transmit very high quality sexual images is completely new. I don't know that the male brain was designed to handle this much high quality sexual stimulation. Some men do not seem to be too affected by pornography while others become compulsive and find their ability to function compromised. We are only now seeing the effects of this new technology.

Reason #2: It's all about the power, baby.

Women have tremendous power over men. Men may not like this fact but it remains true. Men need women. Why we need them is another question but the fact is that men need approval, acceptance, affirmation and affection from women whom they value. Happily married men drink less, smoke less, use drugs less, are less depressed, are less anxious and live longer than single men. If a powerful man is going to fall it will usually be because of his pursuit of a woman. So many rich and famous men have lost their place at the top because of sex scandals that the story has become cliché. When a man is in love—meaning he both values and trusts the woman he is with, he feels invincible, as if there is nothing he cannot do. The problem is making a relationship work, which is a complicated equation. We all know what it is like to be in love; when that special other is all we can think about and we feel certain we will be happy forever. We also know how relationships fizzle; how things seem to change and that special someone just isn't who we thought they were. Making a relationship work is complicated and requires two mature people willing to be vulnerable and kind to one another. When a man is getting the affirmation he needs from a woman he values, he is as solid as a rock. When this same woman withdraws these resources his psychological world comes undone. In short, men are very dependent on women. Men may not always like to admit this fact, even to themselves, but it remains.

Now, combine the deep need men have for the affirmation of a beautiful woman with the fact that men experience love and acceptance physically first and emotionally or psychologically second—far second. It is very difficult for a man to feel loved without physical and sexual attention. If a woman wants her man to feel loved and respected it will be hard to do this without sexual generosity. Men are very simple this way. If a woman is willing to use the power she has over her man sexually in a generous way she can very easily make him feel loved. Women are not so simple. A man can't make a woman feel loved and appreciated by groping her—too bad for us guys.

So what has all this got to do with porn? When we understand just how much power women have over men, porn begins to make sense. Pornography provides a way for men to temporarily escape their psychological dependence on women. Since men are so powerfully stimulated visually they can easily use pictures or videos of beautiful women as fantasy. Pornography allows men to escape into a world where there are endless beautiful women who want them and wish to gratify their every sexual needs. While involved in this type of fantasy men are no longer vulnerable to the woman they love and need—they can get their needs met with any one of many women. They are independent and at that moment that is exactly what they want to be. Of course their independence is not real, but sometimes fantasy must do.

Reason #3 It's the greatest anti-anxiety drug ever.

One little understood fact about pornography is that it is the best anti-anxiety medication on earth

for men. Men get anxious for a number of reasons—work, money, relationships. They also get anxious because of things that have happened in their past. When a boy experiences some kind of abuse or neglect in childhood he can carry that around for the rest of his life. The anxiety is not really attached to anything that is currently happening in his adult world. He just feels anxious about everything all the time.

Men may not even be aware of it, but when they are looking at porn they don't feel anxious. In fact they really don't feel anything at all. Their brain really just goes into an altered state and they are numb. Men often come to rely on porn to escape anxiety. This can lead to sexual addiction problems. Most men who develop a problem with pornography are using it to deal with anxiety. Oddly, most of these men are not aware of why they use porn. They just know they can't stop and often feel depressed and shameful. Interestingly, porn only works to alleviate anxiety during the cruising phase—that is while a guy is looking at it. Once he masturbates and achieves orgasm, the spell is over and his anxiety returns. Some men even feel shameful about using porn and so their anxiety hits them like a ton of bricks. But whether porn is used addictively or recreationally, it acts as a powerful anti-anxiety drug.

Reason #4: Porn use is a discharge of anger.

Another interesting use of porn is to discharge rage. Most men can relate to being angry, like after a fight with a lover, and having a strong impulse to go find someone to f**k. Men are taught from an early age to control their aggressive impulses. The message comes from a thousand directions, “Don't be angry!” Angry men are scary men, so they learn that they had better control their anger or they will be in trouble. The problem is of course that anger is a very natural and helpful emotion. We simply cannot *not* be angry.

When boys are raised in healthy homes their parents value their anger and help them learn to understand it and use it to make changes that need to be made. When the child is angry the parents are interested in why he is angry and help him figure out what to do. In less healthy family systems parents take their children's anger personally and either emotionally withdraw or forcefully crush their children's anger. Either way the child never learns to value and utilize his anger to solve problems and create more intimate relationships. They learn to repress their anger and become compliant and passive. Unfortunately this is never a complete solution. There is never passive without aggressive. If anger is disowned or repressed it will find another expression. Sex is a very good discharge of anger. Sexual impulses originate in the brain stem; the same part of the brain that aggressive impulses come from. Discharging anger sexually is very natural for men. Men sometimes develop a pattern of compliance in their “normal” life and yet have a secret life where they act-out by going to strip clubs or video arcades or cruising the internet in the middle of the night while their lover sleeps. For some men the problem is further complicated by shame. They repress anger that they feel they cannot express then act out by using pornography and masturbation then they feel very shameful about their activities and again become overly compliant. This can become a very destructive cycle that can lead to depression.

Conclusion

We live in an increasingly sexually tolerant culture. Only a generation ago couples choosing to “live in sin” could hardly be members of polite society. Today we are increasingly comfortable with polyamorous relationships and friends with benefits and almost any other kind of sexual arrangement people can think of. Pornography is now as close as your computer

and it seems here to stay. There are pros and cons to this new acceptance. Certainly people do not feel compelled to hide their sexual desires and live in secret. On the other hand many people get hurt. I see the negative results of our new sexual freedoms far too often in my office. Pornography is like any other sexual freedom in that it can go too far. When pornography is destructive to a person's life, he or she needs to get help. When it hurts a person's ability to function in relationships or becomes a crutch that interferes with their productivity and happiness they should seek help. For more information go to my web site: www.freefromcompulsion.com.