



WHY WATCHING PORN IS AN ESCALATING BEHAVIOR

Because of its addictive nature, in order to just feel some sense of normality, an individual usually needs an ever increasing dosage of porn. The material that they seek out also evolves. Overtime their appetite pushed them to more hardcore versions to achieve the same level of arousal.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Most users start on free porn, but it doesn't end there.*
- *You begin to need more extreme versions of pornography and more often to get the same effects.*
- *Turning to porn becomes the users preferred solution to stress.*

Have you ever wondered how pornographers that charge for their material stay in business when there's so much porn available for free? As Wendy Seltzer—an attorney and fellow at Yale Law School—explained, the answer is actually pretty simple: once porn users get hooked, they'll want more and more. "Seeing [free porn] just whets their appetite for more," Seltzer said. "Once they get through what's available for free, they'll move into the paid services." [1]

Fortunately for pornographers, that pattern isn't likely to change any time soon since the reason it happens is built into the brain.

Pornography researchers have found that users acclimate to the porn they watch—they get used to it, and it stops being exciting or arousing. Why? Because their brain's pleasure response has gotten numb. [2]

When a person is aroused by porn, their brain releases a chemical called dopamine that makes them feel pleasure. [3] As the dopamine goes through their brain, it leaves behind a pathway created by a protein called iFosB (pronounced delta fos b) [4] that connects feeling aroused to looking at porn. [5] Basically dopamine is saying "this feels good; let's remember how to get back here," and iFosB goes to work building a brain pathway to make it easier for the person to do that again. [6] When this happens with healthy behaviors it is a good thing, but when it happens with unhealthy ones it can lead to trouble.

The problem is, when a person consistently looks at porn, their brain is constantly being flooded with a high level of dopamine. A healthy brain isn't used to that, so the brain responds by getting rid of some of its dopamine receptors, which take in the dopamine that's released so that the brain knows it's there. [7] With fewer receptors, the user can't feel the dopamine's effects as much—and suddenly the porn that used to excite starts seeming boring. [8]

Many leading brain researchers now believe that once a porn user's brain starts cutting back on dopamine receptors, to get the same excitement and arousal they used to feel, many porn users need an even larger surge of dopamine; to get it, they have to look at more porn, look at porn more often, or look at more hardcore material. [9] You see, it's not just arousal that gets dopamine pumping. The brain also releases it when it sees something novel, shocking, or surprising. [10] That's why consistent porn users often find themselves looking for harder and harder images. [11] On top of that, because they've built up such a high tolerance to arousing material, to feel excited many users have to combine sexual arousal with the feeling of aggressive release. [12] That's why so much of hardcore porn is full of images of women being physically harmed. [13] It's also the reason that many porn addicts quickly find themselves looking at things that used to disgust them or that they used to see as morally wrong. [14]

On top of needing harder material, many porn addicts find themselves craving porn more and more often. [15] That's because while they're overloading their brain with dopamine, they're also building up higher levels of iFosB. [16] The more iFosB, the more the user's brain drives them to look at porn, even if they don't like the material they're looking at. [17]

As the addiction deepens, users not only become more impulsive, making it more likely that they'll give into their cravings, [18] but also whenever they encounter a stressful situation, they're more likely to feel like they don't have any way to deal with the stress other than by turning to porn's temporary distraction. [19]

And the more they turn back to their habit, the deeper the brain pathways that lead back to using become, making it harder and harder to break the cycle. [20]

Citations

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