



After 16 years working as a therapist with adults, teens, and families; I have noticed a growing trend of pornography and sexual addiction wreaking havoc on the lives of men and women. In a particular way, I have seen the struggle of good men who want to be better husbands and fathers. Over the past several years, I have focused my practice on reaching out to these men and their wives to help them get free from sexual addiction and restore their marriages.

I keep hearing the same message from men who struggle with pornography...

“I have gone to confession and prayed for God to take this away... but I still fall.”

Hi! My name is Justin and I’m a licensed therapist who specializes in working with Christian/Catholic men and their families. I am dedicated especially to helping men who struggle to live the virtue of chastity in their life by overcoming struggles with pornography, compulsive masturbation, and other struggles with purity.

While prayer and confession are certainly powerful and essential components of gaining freedom, practical strategies, tools, and counseling are also needed to equip you to fight and win your battle over pornography and sexual addiction.

Sexual Addiction is like a disease. If you had diabetes, you wouldn’t just try to pray it away, would you? No, most likely, you would go to the doctor and follow his treatment plan. This plan might include taking medication, changing eating habits, and an exercise regimen. In the same way, recovering from sex and porn addiction requires a comprehensive plan of healing. This brief guide will provide you with the essential steps to begin your journey to healing and freedom from your struggles with sexually compulsive behavior.

Step 1. Get Honest & Seek Help - It's time to take a courageously honest look at your struggles.

This means taking a look at your current and past sexual behaviors and how they are affecting your life and relationships, including your relationship with God.

How has your struggle with pornography led to negative consequences in your life?

Part of getting honest with yourself, is reviewing your sexual history and how these struggles developed. This helps to identify root causes including past sexual abuse and early exposure to pornography. It can bring to light the true effect this addiction has on your life. It is so easy for us to deceive ourselves about the extent of the problem.

Through individual and group counseling, you will be guided toward the process of self-discovery and self-knowledge, so you can break through the denial and minimization that keeps you enslaved to addiction.

Action-Plan:

- 1)before you begin this step, take some time to pray for guidance and protection by the Holy Spirit. It is challenging to take a serious look at an addictive behavior and can often bring up unhealthy shame.
- 2)get a notebook to write down your answers and reflections about the following steps.

Step 2. Know your Triggers - It's time to explore your rituals and the typical triggers that lead to your use of pornography.

There are two categories to consider when we think about triggers, sexual and non-sexual triggers.

Sexual triggers are the most obvious ones. These include both external triggers such as visual ; and internal sexual triggers such as thoughts..

Non-sexual triggers include distressing or uncomfortable emotions that stem from day to day life stress or from past traumatic experiences. Common emotional triggers include loneliness, boredom, rejection, anxiety, and anger. ***Identifying your particular emotional wounds and triggers will be a key part of your recovery.***

Action-Plan:

- 1) write down your top 3 triggers in your notebook or journal.
- 2) include both sexual and non-sexual triggers and your common patterns or rituals of acting out sexually.

Step 3. Create your Battle Plan - Now that you know your unique triggers and patterns for acting out, it's time to create your plan of action to interrupt this pattern and replace it with a new healthy one.

Think about how you can deal with external sexual triggers. This may include: installing accountability and filtering software such as Covenant Eyes on all your digital devices, avoiding common places that can trigger you like the beach or gym, and practicing custody of the eyes.

For your non-sexual trigger plan you should address the true emotional need or wound. For example, ***if your emotional trigger is loneliness, who can you reach out to and connect with in a healthy way.*** Maybe you can call a friend or meet up with someone to have coffee.

Action-Plan:

- 1) write down your plan for each trigger in your notebook
- 2) share it with a trusted friend, spiritual director, or your therapist.

Step 4. Seek Help from a Professional - Identifying your triggers, exploring emotional wounds, and uncovering the root causes of your addiction is a tall task. You don't have to do it on your own!

There are many areas of our lives that are blind spots. A qualified therapist, will help you explore root issues related to your addiction such as, childhood wounds or traumas and other mental health challenges that may be blocking your complete recovery. Getting the help of a professional therapist who specializes in sexual addiction is an essential part of gaining lasting freedom.

Action-steps:

- 1) research therapists in your area who specialize in sexual addiction and integrate Christian/Catholic faith into treatment.
- 2) here are two online sources to assist you in that process: www.integrityrestored.com and www.catholictherapists.com.

3) call me at 561-472-0397 or email Justin@CornerstoneCounselingPB.com I will be glad to work with you or assist you in finding a qualified therapist.

Step 5. Seek Fraternity & Accountability - You can't do this alone. Finding a community of like-minded brothers, whom you can trust to share your struggles with, is crucial.

You can do this in several ways. One option is to join a men's group or Bible study at your church. Another, is to attend a 12-Step Meeting, such as, Sexaholic's Anonymous. Finding an accountability partner, or participating in a specialized therapy group for men recovering from sex and porn addiction is also a great way to connect with others to receive encouragement and support.

Breaking your isolation and telling on your secret shame is scary, but will absolutely be worth it and it will move you forward in your recovery and healing process.

Action-Plan:

- 1) choose one man or a men's group to reach out to for support in your recovery.
- 2) share courageously about your struggle with them and ask if they can help you stay accountable. You may be surprised to find other men, even friends, who have struggled with chastity as well.
- 3) consider joining a 12-step or therapy group.
- 4) write down the name and contact information for your accountability partner or men's group in your notebook.

Step 6. Focus on Spiritual Growth - Like they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, *addiction is a spiritual disease and requires a spiritual awakening to recover and heal.*

One root cause of addiction is having a weak spiritual life.

Take some time to discern the areas in which you can grow spiritually.

- How is your prayer life?
- Have you gone to confession lately?
- Do you strive to grow in virtue and serve others?
- Do you have a Spiritual mentor or accountability partner?

Ask yourself questions like these and choose one or two areas to work on. ***For example, make a commitment to pray for 15 minutes every day.***

I would encourage you to consider finding a spiritual director, usually a priest or deacon, who can guide you in fostering your spiritual life.

Action-Plan:

- 1) write in your notebook one or two areas in which you will commit to growing spiritually.
- 2) find a spiritual director or mentor and meet with them once a month or make a commitment to attend confession with one priest at least once a month..

Step 7. Repair Broken Relationships - It is likely that your addiction has affected those closest to you. If you are married, the number one person you continue to hurt is your spouse.

A husband's pornography use affects his wife in profound ways that often are traumatic. It has many of the same effects as an affair such as damaging her trust in you, lowering her self-esteem, and potentially leading to divorce.

If you are single, relationships with your girlfriend, parents, friends, and especially with God have suffered because of the addiction. These relationships must be healed..

The wisdom of the 12 Steps and Christian tradition teaches when we search ourselves and confess our moral failings; making amends or reparation is an essential part of healing and recovery. Where relationships are broken, we are broken. So the healing process is naturally communal and relational. ***This acknowledges that we don't live in isolation but that God made us for relationships.***

Action-Plan:

- 1) spend some time searching your heart and soul and ask God to reveal those shortcomings. Then spend time with Him in confession and gratefulness for His grace.
- 2) write down five ways to begin repairing the damage your addiction has caused to your relationship with God and others, especially your wife or girlfriend.

Final Thoughts & Recommendations

Recovery from pornography and sex addiction is a process so be patient and give yourself grace during your journey. It is my hope and prayer the steps I shared above will bring about a new beginning for you as you journey towards a flourishing and joyful life where your sexuality is more wholly integrated in your life and relationships in a healthy way.

These steps are not meant to be a complete guide to recovery, but just some beginning points to consider. I would love to connect with you and help you put these steps into action. ***Even with the best information at hand***, it still takes professional support and guidance to achieve a long-lasting recovery.

Email me at Justin@CornerstoneCounselingPB.com to schedule a complimentary call to explore how the Men of Integrity Therapy Group can support you in overcoming sex and porn addiction.

Sincerely,

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