

Ask a psychotherapist ? porn is addictive

Question: I recently discovered that my husband has been using Internet pornography in a big way. He says it's just fantasy and a ?normal guy thing? and that I shouldn't be so upset about it ? that men have a greater sex drive and need for variety. But I feel betrayed ? like he's cheating on me. It makes me feel like there's something wrong with me, otherwise why would he need to use that stuff?

Answer: There is no scientific evidence that men have a greater sex drive or ?need for variety? than women. Both women and men can find themselves sexually bored in a relationship that has lost its passion or in which other problems are interfering with intimacy (e.g., the constant presence and needs of young children or in-laws, work and scheduling demands or unresolved conflict about any number of issues in a marriage). But porn is not the answer.

Media depictions of male-female relationships reinforce the notion that males are driven to seek sex while females are designed to inflame male desire and to respond to it rather than acting on sexual desires of their own. These fictions about the true nature of human sexuality can have tragic consequences for real relationships.

Male porn users condition themselves to a world of instant gratification where the woman on screen makes no demands and has no desires of her own that don't mesh entirely with the viewer's. Male viewers can select a woman's body type that may not correspond to anything available in the real world and, via repeated ?encounters?, condition himself to respond mostly or only to this type. A real flesh and blood woman with her own desires can't compare.

Porn use, like substance abuse, floods the brain with pleasure-causing neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine and can turn the user into an addict. So no, there's nothing wrong with you and you are right to be concerned.

To be continued.

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