

[Further comments from men cutting back on porn/masturbation who mention improvements in social anxiety levels]

One young man shared this:

Yesterday (day twelve) I was all shaky and anxious and feeling fidgety like a crack addict for an hour. For the most part, though, my life feels totally different. I treat people differently. Things are MUCH, MUCH, MUCH better socially for me now. It's easier to joke around with people at work. I'm becoming popular—that's how different things feel for me all of a sudden! I'm happy ALL DAY LONG instead of just for a few minutes each day.

From Holland,

When I was 13, I was a very popular guy. A lot of girls liked me and I had nice friends, almost no problems with schoolwork, and high grades. I never had much depression, regret, fear or sorrows. Girls seemed to me nice, beautiful, and attractive, but not to be feared.

The following year I began to masturbate a lot. Now, girls seemed arrogant; I was fearful of them. Schoolwork became hard, and I barely passed over to the next grade. I liked less to hang out with friends. What could I do with them? I preferred girls, but now they were so hard to get... I experienced many problems and sorrows as well. One girl began bullying me. For the first time I suicide came up as a passing thought. How weird, considering life was so blissful the previous year.

I decided to do a lot of sports to get my confidence back. It helped a little, because if you work yourself "to death" in sports, you can relax somewhat afterwards. I began looking on the Internet how to pick up a girl. Some "girl pick up" site said you needed to restrain yourself sexually to make some hormones, which could help your quest. I did it. It helped, a lot. I fell madly in love with a girl and I remember lying in the grass in the sun (after 3 weeks of sexual abstention), kissing in the sun and being MADLY in love, etcetera.

However, afterwards I began masturbating because I had boring homework and didn't want to think about my girlfriend all the time. My 'love' disappeared. The next time I met with her it was boring. Kissing was boring as well. No bliss, no love. Only a little lust. No deep conversations. No warmth. I could not 'feel' into her.

I wanted to have her eagerly sex me, because I became such an unfeeling, yet needy, person. In fact, when she had a car accident, I couldn't even feel sorry for her or provide a deep connection.

I began experimenting. It seemed that some sexual restraint was necessary to feel love for a girl. I tried to explain it to her to save my relationship, but it was too late. LOVE is what everyone wants and a degree of restraint is what gives you access to LOVE.

However, it is hard for people to hear this. They look on the web and read that sex doesn't hurt you at all, and is actually good for you. (The more the better.) This is what confused me as well until I made my own experiments.

Can't experts do some kind of experiment with couples and see if their love life improves when they exercise restraint? Or measure memory or sport performance of people who abstain for a bit? Or IQ? Or attraction for the opposite sex?

From a man whose marriage ended over porn use:

Porn was easy excitement. I didn't interact with others because it took too much work, I had to think too hard, and interaction was "boring." I was numb and my senses were dulled. And I feared they would continue to be that way even after I quit using porn. I'm dating a woman now for the first time since quitting (months ago). It's amazing! She's not supple and "perky" like the girls in the videos, but I'm more attracted to her real body than I ever was to porn. I never imagined that would happen, and it is so exciting. I had to stop orgasming and keep off of porn for an extended period of time. That got easier. Eventually I looked around and realized that the colors were back in my life!

Here's a man who has never dated, and been hooked on porn for twenty years:

I think I have lost almost all my ability to socialize with people. I have been a very big loner most of my life. I just get scared or angry with people. I have trouble putting my feeling on this into words. I have so crippled myself with this addiction it is hard to see a complete way out. If I do not get past this, what is the point of fixing my addiction?

Within weeks of quitting, and despite intense withdrawal symptoms, he had this to say:

I am starting to notice some differences. I function better at work around others now, and actually talk to my fellow workers because it feels better when I do. Before, I just liked my little hideaway where nobody bothered me. Now, I want something else. It is starting to hit me hard I think. I need more out of this life than what those images I have been addicted to so long can give me. I want love. (He soon developed a "penpal" relationship with a woman, and is starting to smile and greet women during the day.)

Here's another post, from Mexico:

I have been spending way more time with real women, introducing myself to women, having conversations and some romantic encounters that required being very close, and lots of physical touch. The better I am at interacting with women, the more I want to do it. The next day I get these nice feelings of inner calm. Which is so different from porn. At one point I could watch porn for hours. Now, my body and mind have adapted to being around real girls. I'm not aroused by a 2-D substitute anymore. It's

just not interesting - all body parts and anonymous people. Even when I wanted to be aroused by it!

Looking into someone's eyes, hearing their voice say your name, feeling their hands on you, seeing the curves of their body in real life, that is amazingly different than porn. It just FEELS better to be around real girls. I would suggest to guys who are watching lots of porn and who don't have partners, to just get out and at least BE around women. Being around people in general, and women especially, will take care of some of these addictive tendencies. We're supposed to be with others. That's why it feels so good and the more you do it, the more you want to do it.

Another post:

I really like where I am at now. I am so much calmer. I am losing my rage and anger which I am glad about. I have found out that the temper I had was linked to this addiction.

A sad post:

I fear that I will never be able to have sex because I have not learned any social skills since I delved into porn eight years ago as a teen.

A thoughtful private message:

When I was growing up Playboy was porn, but the “new thinking” about masturbation was very much in vogue. It made my escalating porn/masturbation addiction seem “normal” to me for years. I can't imagine the long-term effects on society brewing in the generations behind me. What if Internet porn had been available to me when I was fourteen? I shudder to think of the consequences of being exposed to such things when your sexuality is developing. Ugh. I, at least, formed healthy crushes during my teen years and experienced romance. I don't think I would have had those experiences if I had had easy access to Internet porn. It's a few months since I quit masturbating, and I am just getting back in touch with those romantic feelings I had as a young man. But what if I had never had them to begin with? That is what makes me feel bad for younger people facing this problem.

From Europe:

A few words on how life is after almost a month without orgasm. I am amazed! I feel more confident than ever especially at work, with its many demands and stress. I have been able to keep lucid and cool, despite a heavy workload and pressure recently. I manage to socialize effortlessly, while normally doing so is effortful for me. In general, I feel as if the world at large is nicer to me; people tend to respond to and interact positively with me

[Later] In these months of long-distance relationship I have clearly noticed how, when I do not masturbate, my affection and love for my girlfriend increases. I can see that in the way I write to her as well as a very nice overflowing feeling of love tangibly felt in the area of the heart. But after masturbating there is a change in that. The feeling of love (albeit still there) gets less, and the way I write to her changes, too. I sort of become more aloof, and that is reflected in my words. After about two weeks of not masturbating things change back again.

Another post:

I've now been cold turkey (no porn) for a week. To begin with it was really difficult, as I struggled getting to sleep. But with the help of my girlfriend and a stubbornness to succeed I'm winning through. I'm just amazed at the difference it has made already! I think I'm getting some withdrawal symptoms as I get really intense bouts of irritability, but this is outweighed by everything else. I have so much more energy, I'm less moody, I have more enthusiasm and motivation for work, I don't feel drained all the time and I feel a deeper sense of connection with everything around me. But the biggest change it has made is in my relationship. My girlfriend and I feel so much closer to each other already.

From Australia:

Woke up very clear, as though I've been in a dream. Porn has become a temptation, rather than the overriding compulsion it was. Yesterday I met an adorable woman. If I could look into her clear and gentle eyes each day I would never need to look at porn again . . . because the beauty of actual magnetism that is felt with another goes so far beyond anything an orgasm in front of a PC can give. I feel like I'm reclaiming my life.

From a student:

Isolation is one of the root causes of addiction. I don't attend any recovery groups, but what I do attend is social events within my school, and I've also gained a social circle, something I've never had. So, for the first time, I have a group of people I know who actually care about me. Now, I find I'm finally willing to remove every last bit of the negative sexual stuff from my mind. In fact, I've lost my taste for porn and nasty fantasy. To my surprise, I've been clean now for five and a half weeks, and hopefully for the rest of my life.

From a six-month veteran in his forties:

After a few days I noticed increased energy, increased attention, and higher self-esteem. After a month—although it took several tries to get there—those improvements were all through the roof. And before the second month was over, I had had real sex for the first time in ages. Steps I took:

- Cancelled my “porn” credit card
- Cleaned my computer with an adware removal program
- Deleted all links
- Purchased and installed a comprehensive porn blocker
- Kept a journal for the first three months, just typing my feelings and logging improvements
- Called friends and family nightly, even old friends. Engaged people socially. Went to a corner coffee shop. Stopped watching the tube or biting my nails and did something!

The porn I used is all a blur now. It is nice to get aroused by little things, like a revealing blouse or just a woman’s flowing, shiny hair and fragrance. The best change is a far improved self-image and much better self-esteem. All this makes my complete abstinence from “burping the worm” SO WORTH IT.

Another man:

The interesting part is the mind-shift that is taking place since I cut back on masturbation. I’ve gone three to four weeks now. I feel I’m working with a “new neurochemistry,” in which I interact with other people on a whole new level, because I NEED to. I absolutely NEED to. The urge has dissipated, and my satisfaction from interacting with people is much greater.

From England:

I desperately wanted a girlfriend but I was painfully shy and embarrassed. Looking back there were lots of girls who really liked me but I was unable to flirt as I didn't know how - and I was terrified, literally, of being told I was a sex fiend. I used to get so wired after a porn binge. I had to have everything *now*. I made crazy, irrational decisions. I ate more, put on weight, didn't want to socialise or talk to people. It affected my entire life. I used to get so angry with everyone and everything. I couldn't hold a job or a friendship. I'm only just learning how to flirt now, and actually it a completely different feeling than what I thought.

A man in his thirties:

I am more at ease with myself and can look people in the eye, with kindness and a superhuman confidence. I had two women introduce themselves to me yesterday, shake my hand and HOLD IT. Wow. I was so comfortable talking to everyone—not my usual chicanery of waiting to speak or trying to hustle someone with what they think is a cool guy. I have the beginnings of a resolve now, and my groin feels solid and "peaceful"? I wrote two pages of a script that went in an even deeper direction than I was aiming for. Exercising is through the roof.

A man in his twenties:

I feel again. I feel emotions again. Having cut way back on porn viewing (over months), I notice I find it less stimulating every time I see it. I actually fell asleep during an adult movie the other night! My interest in women has heightened, my confidence is up and gives me motivation again. I'm 28 now and until the last couple of years I felt I had the maturity of a 15 year old. But as I heal and recover from this addiction, I've felt emotions I've never had to deal with before. It has helped me grow up.

A recovering addict, several months in:

It is getting easier to resist. It is hard to explain in words. I think those feelings and cravings are all still there. Maybe even as strong or stronger than ever. It is just I do not have to act on them any more. I just can do other things. I feel other things. I want and desire other things. I am no longer always seeking my next fix. Do I still need to be careful? Heck yeah! This stuff can suck me back in a heartbeat, but these things don't have the power they once had over me, nor are they draining my self worth, nor am I a lust ball all day. I am starting to finally have a mind that has the concentration to think about other things besides sex.

A man who formerly hated his looks, now off porn for a time:

Had a thought today about myself that may be a sign of a big improvement for me. I thought, "Well I do not look half bad. I look OK." That thought just stopped me. I was in shock at even thinking that. I have not thought of my self image in a positive way I do not think ever. To just not even really think about it to just have the thought come into me head as if it were the most natural thing or way to think about myself was just well a shock to the system.

Another man:

This addiction, all of it, the withdrawals, the weird emotional stuff, is losing its power. I feel like I'm unclogging a drain. I'm pulling out one hair, but it's pulling everything connected with it out as well. I wish I had known this one hair was the culprit to all my mental maladies years ago! I am feeling myself get better too.

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