

## **Over 100,000 copies sold!**

When *Your Brain on Porn* was first published the porn industry and its lobbyists reacted with fury and outrage. How could a commodity so popular - and so profitable - be a problem? But evidence of porn's addictiveness has been accumulating ever since. In February 2022 the peer-reviewed journal *Psychological Medicine* published a large-scale, longitudinal study that confirmed what many users and former users of digital pornography had figured out for themselves: 'porn – a male-dominated industry that targets a male-dominated audience – is associated with the erosion of the quality of men's sex lives.'<sup>1</sup>

In the same month the World Health Organization issued a clarification to its diagnosis of Compulsive Sexual Behaviour Disorder (CSBD). Contrary to the claims of a vocal group of sexologists, the WHO insisted that the disorder 'may be expressed in a variety of behaviours, including sexual behaviour with others, masturbation, use of pornography, cybersex (including internet sex), telephone sex, and other forms of repetitive sexual behaviour.'<sup>2</sup>

Compulsive porn use is now recognised as a pathology by the world's leading health experts in the most widely used diagnostic manual on the planet.

Porn problems are rife today. When the BBC surveyed over a thousand young adults for a 2019 documentary, "almost a quarter (23%) of people aged 18-25 who watch porn [thought] they might be addicted – 14% of women and 31% of men."<sup>3</sup> In 2021 an international research team analysed some 3,400 men's survey responses and found that 20% of men under 35 had some level of erectile dysfunction when having sex with a partner, and that there was a highly significant relationship between time spent watching porn and increased difficulty. Men who watched more porn also scored higher on porn-addiction scales.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence of brain changes is piling up too. One study compared individuals suffering from CSBD, Alcohol Use Disorder and Gambling Disorder. All showed smaller grey matter volumes compared with controls. Higher severity of CSBD symptoms correlated with less grey matter volume.<sup>5</sup> Grey-matter changes are thought to inhibit control of impulses and alter attention in abnormal ways.<sup>6</sup>

This recent evidence should not be surprising. As soon as high-speed internet became widely available a decade ago, growing numbers of people began to worry that their porn use was running out of control. Far from preparing them for fulfilling relationships, viewing an endless stream of porn videos led to unexpected adverse effects. Perhaps most surprisingly, for the first time in history erectile dysfunction was becoming a pervasive problem for young men. This led to one of the largest informal experiments in the history of science. Tens of thousands of people have tried abstaining from sexually stimulating material in a process they call 'rebooting'. Many of them reported startling changes, from improved concentration and elevated mood to a greater capacity for real-life intimacy.

The late Gary Wilson listened to the stories of those who have tried giving up internet porn and related them to an account of how the reward system of the brain interacts with its environment. After Gary Wilson passed away in 2021, a reader shared in an online memorial that 'I will never forget the help he provided by listening and taking seriously the ramblings of lost souls online.' And a growing body of research is definitively confirming what these pioneers discovered for themselves - internet pornography can be seriously addictive and damaging. No doubt the porn lobby will continue to try to sow doubt and distraction. But the evidence of both formal science and lived experience is now overwhelming.

In *Your Brain on Porn* Gary Wilson provides a concise introduction to the phenomenon

of internet porn addiction that draws on both first-person accounts and research findings. In a voice that is generous and humane, he also offers advice for those who want to stop using internet pornography. The publication of *Your Brain on Porn* is a landmark in our attempts to understand, and remain balanced in, a world where addiction is big business.

### **Praise for *Your Brain on Porn***

A riveting, disturbing (and ultimately empowering) message for any of us who struggle with porn — and who want to help our children navigate the digital age. — **Nick**

**Thorpe**

In *Your Brain on Porn* Gary Wilson sets out to explain how abundant free pornography is causing serious problems for thousands of, mostly young, people. *Your Brain on Porn* gives guidance on how to break out of addictive porn use.

— **Dr Nicole Oei PhD, Addiction, Development and Psychopathology (Adapt) Lab, Department of Psychology, University of Amsterdam**

The book is written in a simple clear language appropriate for expert and layperson alike. It is rooted firmly within the principles of neuroscience, behavioral psychology and evolution theory.

— **Frederick Toates, Emeritus Professor of Biological Psychology, Open University, UK, author of 'How Sexual Desire Works: The Enigmatic Urge'**

This book crackles with energy, urgency and humour. It offers up the hope of recovery to those struggling with internet porn addiction and it does so with compassion and informed authority.

— **David McCartney, MD, Primary Care Addiction Specialist, Edinburgh**

The book describes many examples of the 'rebooting' process that is necessary for

sexual functioning to heal. He also explains the changes in brain physiology when sexual addiction hijacks normal sexual behaviour – including why recovery takes time.

– **Reid Finlayson, MD, Medical Director, Vanderbilt Comprehensive Assessment Program, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry**

At last a morally neutral and scientifically robust explanation for why so many people are getting hooked on porn. This book provides a comprehensive biological and sociological exploration of how and why pornography addiction is damaging so many people's lives and provides strategies for reclaiming control that are backed up by hundreds of stories of personal experience. This is essential reading for therapists, sex educators and everyone who cares about enjoying sex.

– **Paula Hall, PhD, Sex Therapist, Author *Understanding & Treating Sex Addiction***

Academic sexologists are finding it increasingly difficult to hide behind their veil of apologism and ignorance, and Gary Wilson's vast knowledge and skilful presentation of the neurobiological literature is contributing to this unmasking.

– **Donald L. Hilton, Jr., MD, FAANS, University of Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio**

*Your Brain on Porn* is the most considered, thorough and accurate account of internet porn addiction that exists at the time of writing.

– **Anthony I. Jack, Professor of Philosophy, Psychology, Neurology and Neuroscience, Case Western Reserve University**

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<sup>1</sup> Sommet, N and Berent, J. Porn use and men's and women's sexual performance: evidence from a large longitudinal sample. *Psychological Medicine*, Cambridge University Press: 09 February 2022, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003329172100516X>.

<sup>2</sup> 6C72 Compulsive sexual behaviour disorder, <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http%3a%2f%2fid.who.int%2ficd%2fentity%2f1630268048>.

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<sup>3</sup> *Porn Laid Bare: 6 Young People Go Behind the Scenes of the Porn Industry*, Natalie Gil, 13 March 2019, 23:34, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2019/03/226596/porn-laid-bare-bbc-three>.

<sup>4</sup> Jacobs, T, et al. Associations Between Online Pornography Consumption and Sexual Dysfunction in Young Men: Multivariate Analysis Based on an International Web-Based Survey. *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*, Published on 21 October 2021 in Vol 7, No 10: (2021) <https://publi-chealth.jmir.org/2021/10/e32542/>.

<sup>5</sup> Draps, M et al. Gray Matter Volume Differences in Impulse Control and Addictive Disorders—An Evidence From a Sample of Heterosexual Males. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, Vol 17, No 9: (2020) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S174360952030641X>.

<sup>6</sup> Seok, JW and Sohn, JH. Gray matter deficits and altered resting-state connectivity in the superior temporal gyrus among individuals with problematic hypersexual behavior. *Brain Res.* 2018 Apr 1;1684:30-39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainres.2018.01.035>.