



***Your Brain on Porn. Internet  
Pornography and  
the Emerging Science of Addiction***

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Billie Eilish, a young yet famous American singer-songwriter, had been trending online because of her conversations with a radio host. At the age of 11, she confessed she first started watching pornography, which gradually made a negative impact on her life. She narrated, "I think it [pornography] really destroyed my brain and I feel incredibly devastated that I was exposed to so much porn" (Eilish, as stated in Nicholson, 2021). Eilish is only one of the many who are secretly suffering from being addicted to pornography. Indeed, this has sparked a critical conversation about porn which many just shy away.

Even before Eilish talked about it, Wilson was among first ones who seriously recognized the negative repercussions of porn, most especially to the brain. Sadly, Gary

Wilson has passed away in 2021. He taught human pathology and physiology for many years and had been interested in the neurochemistry of addiction and mating. Called as a *savior* and *liberator* by many who got in touch with him and his work (Associated Press News, 2021), he gave a voice to many who are battling with Internet pornography. His legacy will live on, most especially in his book *Your Brain on Porn*, which is comprised of three chapters and has 224 pages.

Chapter 1, *What Are We Dealing With?*, conveys that most Internet users see Internet porn as a way to relieve boredom, sexual frustration, and stress. Wilson briefly narrates the history of today's pornography way back from CDs to magazines and then later to videos. He says that computer programmers and IT specialists were the first people to report problems brought by Internet pornography since they were ahead of many people in technologies and Internet connection. During 2006, Wilson claims that high-speed Internet gave a boost to Internet porn because snippets of porn videos can easily be accessed with convenience.

The author thought that this issue on porn was an elephant in the room, a taboo. He noticed several men were searching for help online concerning porn problems. Hence, *Your Brain on Porn* website came to life as a means to help them. Using the narratives of online porn users, he documents their experiences: (1) losing control; (2) inability to orgasm during sex; (3) unreliable erection during sexual encounters; (4) alarming porn fetish tastes; (5) loss of attraction to real partners; (6) inability to concentrate; (7) depression and discouragement. While many clinicians view online porn harmless, the author urges that this should be considered harmful, given the various first-hand narratives he learned.

Chapter 2, *Wanting to Run Amok*, puts forward that human beings inherently crave novelty because of dopamine. Wilson clarifies that dopamine is the evolution's strategy to discourage inbreeding and to keep the gene pool fresh. At the same time, Internet porn, as the author accentuates, has a lot of novel things to offer—with various clips being uploaded at a fast-paced rate and can be accessed 24/7. To add up to that, online porn has become hyperrealistic, innovative, and experimental, which can boost the element of surprise and novelty among the consumers. With this technological convenience, a person, who is not mindful, can easily become addicted. As emphasized by Sruthers (2008), porn can hijack our brain. If left unchecked, as the individual continues to consume online porn, his brain persistently rewires also. This leads now to abnormal behaviors and compulsive dependence.

Moreover, pornography can particularly be risky to adolescents and teens whose brains are very malleable and vulnerable to addiction. Wilson maintains that porn may register as satisfying at first, but it can make the person feel less and less gratified over time—a manifestation that sexual excitement is being revised. Wilson also cites several resources on the negative effects of Internet porn on brain. He continues that once people conditions themselves to Internet porn, they may not be satisfied anymore with sex because of unmet expectations. This can also lead to porn-induced sexual dysfunctions. Moreover, he contends that there is widespread ignorance about the scientific evidence concerning Internet porn addiction, leading to health care providers misdiagnosing Internet porn users.

Chapter 3, *Regaining Control*, contends that the beginning step to regaining control from Internet porn is to willfully stop watching it, which is otherwise known as rebooting. Wilson declares it may take months or years before the impulse to watch fades and eventually dies down; however, it does not necessarily mean that Internet porn users can immediately return and remove themselves safely again. This is because it is ingrained in the neural pathway of the brain. Wilson cites some suggestions which he prominently sees on forums: (1) remove all porn on phone and computer; (2) move the environment to make it conducive to the cause; (3) use porn ad blockers; and (4) track progress.

Additionally, Wilson recommends an Internet porn user can also seek support by: (1) having an accountability partner or group; (2) seeing a therapist or psychologist; and (3) writing in a journal. Meanwhile, one can seek to improve self-control by exercising, getting outside, socializing, meditating, or pursuing creative pursuits. Wilson recommends that Internet porn users wanting to stop must be gentle with themselves and learn more about the human brain. Surely, there are challenges along the way which they will encounter as they recover. Hence, not surrendering is pivotal. They should be mindful of the discomfort in the process and the triggers that make someone tricked into indulging in Internet porn again.

The author concludes the book by analogizing Internet porn as the new cigarette—like porn, cigarette smoking before was considered harmless. He narrates that it took many decades before consensus was reached explaining its hazards, but it was already late and had been affecting many people. With the prevalence of Internet porn which is increasingly seen as normal and risk-free, Wilson argues that people do not need to wait for consensus

before quitting Internet porn, most especially if they are already experiencing the negative repercussions in their lives. Particularly, he is blatantly against “good porn” being healthy and fine to be viewed by teens—since this can propel them more to explicit materials. Also, this can result in perceiving human beings solely as sexual creatures or erotic objects.

Talking about porn is taboo in many societies. Hence, many adolescents and youths decide to hide their pornography problems (e.g., addiction). They do that to avoid embarrassment or mockery. If not helped properly, their problems may mutate which can lead to serious consequences that can deteriorate their functioning and relationships. Through the concern and initiative of Wilson, this book has become a great contribution to the understanding of this situation. While the usage of narratives and scientific findings has reinforced its worth and clarity, the tips provided are practical and can help the readers surmount the pornographic predicament. Coupled with *The Porn Trap* (Maltz & Maltz, 2009) and *Wired for Intimacy* (Struther, 2009), *Your Brain on Porn* is highly recommended to adolescents, youths, and professionals dealing with young people’s concerns related to pornography.

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