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Comparing Recovery and Addiction

Prepared by Jill C. Manning, Ph.D.

Recovery	Addiction
Rooted in humility	Rooted in shame
Emotionally engaged & present	Emotionally withdrawn
Open to discussion about issue	Defensive about issue
Self-caring	Self-centered/narcissistic
Honest	Deceptive
Takes responsibility for problem	Criticizes and blames others for problem
Transparent	Secretive
Recognizes need for help	Rejects help
Insists on boundaries	Has poor boundaries
Values people	Uses people
Focused on health	Focused on pleasure-seeking & escape
Has a plan for healing & healthy living	Has an urge that feels uncontrollable

Contrasting Healthy Sexuality and Pornographic Portrayals of Sexuality

Prepared by Jill Manning, Ph.D.

Many people erroneously think of pornography as a substitute or preparation for healthy sexual relations. Healthy sexuality and intimacy, however, stand in sharp contrast to pornographic portrayals of sexuality. If left unchecked, pornography use can even hinder a person's ability to develop an intimate relationship and experience satisfying sexual relations in marriage. The following table is intended to help clarify some of the main differences between pornographic portrayals of sexuality and healthy sexuality.

Pornographic Portrayals of Sexuality	Healthy Sexuality
Lustful	Loving
Public	Private
Isolating	Unifying
Deceptive	Honest
Fantasy-based	Anchored in reality
Body is treated as an object, toy, or weapon	Body is sacred
Decreases well-being	Enhances wellbeing
Degrading	Respectful and honorable
Involves using or harming someone	Involves loving someone
Spiritually deadening	Spiritually meaningful
Socially irresponsible and costly	Socially responsible and beneficial
Often involves violence and coercion	Involves mutual consent and volition
Associated with crime, abuse, infidelity, addiction, prostitution, and divorce	Associated with life and joy

Comparing Healthy & Toxic Relationships

Prepared by Jill Manning, Ph.D.

When seeking a partner to date or marry, it is helpful to understand the differences between healthy and toxic relationships. All relationships experience ups and downs, but ideally, the majority of interactions with your partner will be in the healthy realm. When you consider the qualities listed in each column below, evaluate which side the spectrum the majority of interactions with your partner fall into.

Note: Keep in mind that people can have toxic or healthy relationships as it relates to a thing, place or behavior. For example, if a person is dependent upon a substance, he or she is engaged in a toxic relationship with a drug.

Toxic Relationships	Healthy Relationships
Clouded with deceit	Rooted in honesty and truth
Disrespect demonstrated by one or both	Mutual respect is apparent
Distrustful	Trust and safety are present
Lopsided focus	Well-rounded focus
Drama-based	Drama is limited and acute
Feels draining, confusing, depressing, or shameful	Feels energizing, hopeful, and empowering
Solving problems is avoided and differences are viewed as threatening	Problems addressed openly and differences respected
Sense of entrapment or being controlled and manipulated	Increased sense of freedom
Sexism or hierarchy exists	Partners are equals
Boundaries are difficult to detect or are breached	Appropriate boundaries are respected
Breeds selfishness	Encourages self-respect and selflessness
Decreases wellbeing	Increases wellbeing
Fear- or lust-based	Love-based
Hinders or stagnates growth	Fosters and encourages growth

Handouts

Am I Serious About Dealing with My Pornography Problem?

I am not serious if:	I am serious about changing if:
I lie, am evasive, or only disclose information when asked.	I am honest.
I was caught or reported by someone else rather than admitting to or confessing inappropriate behavior.	I am open and willing to talk about what I do, think, and feel.
I pretend or try to convince others that there are no problems, that they are taken care of, or are no big deal.	I am trying to find out what caused my addictions and prevent addictive behavior from happening again.
I am defensive, deny, minimize, rationalize, and blame others in order to avoid dealing with my problems.	I take responsibility for making personal changes.
I want to go back to the way things were before getting caught, rather than improving and growing.	I have made up my own rules for staying out of compulsive sexual behaviors and am following them.
I refuse to attend 12-Step meetings or get a sponsor, and continue to “punish” myself.	I regularly attend 12-Step groups, report to my sponsor, and accept the Atonement in my life.
I am not willing to put in the time or effort to fix problems or work the 12-Steps.	I am working on the 12-Steps and my issues daily.
I run away, hide, or won’t talk about my behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and fantasies.	I meet regularly with my ecclesiastical leader.
I do not actively participate in counseling.	I decide to see a counselor on my own rather than being forced to or told to by someone else.
I use other addictions—like alcohol or drugs—to avoid dealing with my real problems.	I go to professional counseling sessions, work on issues underlying my behavior, and do all homework given.
I act as if I am the victim and seek sympathy or try to get others to take sides.	I am working more on what I need to change rather than on what I think my spouse needs to change.
I want my spouse to be okay with my addictions and feel cheated if I can’t continue.	I give my spouse the space and closeness she needs.
I criticize and blame others more than I take personal responsibility.	I show that I understand the hurt which I have caused my spouse and loved ones.
I am angry, moody, resentful, critical, or out of control, and only think about my own needs.	I work to earn others trust and forgiveness.
I try to make a quick-fix deal and apologize—just to have the issue dropped.	I work to solve problems that were caused by my addiction.
I am manipulative and use fear, guilt, or threats to get what I want.	I speak and act with respect.
I make impulsive decisions and have impulsive behaviors.	I am dependable in taking care of my family, occupation, and religious responsibilities.
I make promises rather than changes.	I am setting specific, measurable goals and achieving them.
I am not living Church standards.	I am living the standards of the Church.
I continue to put myself in situations where I’ll be tempted.	I have made significant lifestyle changes.

Am I Making Effective Changes to Deal with My Spouse's Addiction?

I am probably not making needed changes if:	I am making effective changes if:
I feel that in some way my spouses addiction is my fault and blame myself for his behavior.	I recognize that pornography addiction is a serious problem and requires hard work to find recovery. However, I do not blame myself for my spouses addiction.
I pretend there isn't a problem, it is already taken care of, or it isn't a big deal.	I require honesty and transparency from the addict and ask him directly when something is bothering me.
I believe whatever the addict tells me, even if my gut tells me something is wrong.	I take responsibility for making positive changes in my life.
I refuse to take responsibility for changing what I can and taking care of myself.	I find help and support from others in dealing with the betrayal and trauma I am experiencing and its impact on me.
I try to deal with my emotions on my own.	I openly share what I think, feel, and am experiencing with appropriate trusted people.
I keep the addiction a secret and fail to seek outside help.	I meet regularly with my ecclesiastical leader.
I think that only the addict needs counseling, not me; or, I fail to do homework and skip sessions.	I work with a therapist who is trained in sexual addiction— whether or not my spouse wants me to.
I make excuses for not attending 12-Step meetings for spouses or, quit going once I feel okay again.	I actively attend 12-Step meetings for spouses and work on my own recovery daily.
I rationalize that I don't really need any guidance.	I find a sponsor and work with her regularly.
I neglect or minimize my needs and wants.	I practice self-care daily.
I bury my emotions, or utilize other addictions such as food or drugs to avoid them.	I allow myself to feel natural emotions, hurt, and anger, and then surrender them to God.
I persist in believing that God doesn't care about me.	I seek to feel God's love for me.
I deny, minimize, rationalize, or blame others to avoid making changes or letting go of resentment.	I work towards forgiving and letting go of the resentment for the hurt which the addicted spouse has caused.
I criticize or blame the addict—rather than set boundaries or make changes to protect myself.	I set and follow boundaries to protect myself from my spouses addictive behavior and from obsessing about his addiction.
I make a quick-fix deal: If the addict says he is sorry, I will just forget it and won't talk about it anymore.	I refuse to accept or enable addict behavior; I look for positive changes—not just promises.
I obsess about what the addict needs to do, rather than work on my own recovery.	I focus on the changes that I can make, rather than on what I think my spouse needs to change.
I choose how to act based on my fear of the addict's reaction, or I respond explosively.	I appropriately share my needs and feelings with the addict instead of worrying about how he might respond.
I set my level of affection based on what my spouse wants rather than on what I need.	I ask for the space, closeness, or help that I need.
I go along with addictive behavior, or tell myself that it is okay—or that it is not really that bad.	I work towards extending trust if my spouse is showing behavior that is deserving of trust.
I use demands, fear, guilt, manipulation, or threats to get what I want or need.	I take care of my personal and family needs.
I do it all myself—even if I'm overwhelmed, and constantly demand perfection from myself.	I set small measurable goals for myself and work for progress—not perfection.
I do not put in the time and effort to deal with the problem, or fail to set realistic expectations.	I accept that healing from the effects of my spouse's addiction is a long process that will take time and effort.