

Guest Posting
Men and Pornography

Ger Murphy

Jack(56) came to see me at my psychotherapy practice some months ago complaining of depressive episodes and lack of motivation. As he spoke he revealed that he had been experiencing strong feelings of loneliness and isolation following his wife`s recent work changes, which meant she had taken on a demanding new work role and was increasingly unavailable to him. He disclosed that their sexual relationship ,which had been vibrant, had diminished and that he had begun watching pornography for significant periods 3-4 times a week and masturbating to ejaculation.

The phenomena of the use of pornographic materials has become a major issue in the lives of many men. The increased availability of materials especially over the internet has exponentially increased the usage of porn . Pornography is now the biggest sales product on the Internet!

Many men view pornography and would say that it is harmless, and would not see it as having an impact on their sexual relationships. Many women find it distasteful, and for some it is objectifying and unacceptable. The use of pornographic material is often a secretive activity and is difficult to speak about. It is important that we can find a way to speak of it ,and not to simply condemn it or to guiltily laugh about it.

One way of looking at pornography which I have found useful in my work with couples as a psychotherapist is to look at the basic urge within porn. Pornography is about the urge to look. Men like looking at sexual material, and we can say that looking is an important erogenous zone for men. This may well be different for women. How could we think about reclaiming looking and its basic function for men? Men want to look, perhaps women want to be looked at? If these two urges could be rehabilitated into sexual relationships, how might men`s use of pornography be different? If men were able to acknowledge their desire for erotic looking to their women and if women were able to allow themselves be looked at ,it could make a big difference in the use of porn.

Many men I have spoken to found that when they could ask their partners to dance for them ,dress up in risqué clothing and allow their men to gaze at all parts of their body, they found this deeply satisfying and felt deep gratitude and deepened connection with their partners. This can be risky for men and women to do. Men need to be able to acknowledge their own sexual needs without guilt and with deep respect for the feminine. Women need to be able to open and be seen ,also to say no where appropriate, and have a healthy respect for the masculine including its wish to look: Engaging in such conversation can have a profound effect on the use of pornography which otherwise can be isolating, guilt-laden and a lonely and unfulfilling experience for men.

When Jack was able to discuss his emotional situation with Jane ,his wife, including his wish for increased contact and they were able to commit to a regular time for intimacy ,including the urge to look, Jack's symptoms improved significantly.

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Names have been changed to protect confidentiality

