



Porn and Your Husband

A Recovery Guide for Wives



About This Book

Covenant Eyes would like to thank Kay Bruner, Mark W. Gaither, Ella Hutchinson, and Harry Schaumburg for their invaluable insights and contributions during the creation of this book.

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Introduction

Help! He's Looking at Porn!

Anger. Betrayal. Mistrust. Loneliness.

Maybe this is the first time you've caught him using pornography. Maybe you've caught him many times and have finally reached the breaking point. Maybe he's even gone so far as acting out and having an affair. Maybe he's belligerent, insisting "It's no big deal" or "It's your fault I need it." Or maybe he claims to be repentant but doesn't seem to be taking steps to stop.

Regardless of the actions he is taking, your husband has betrayed your trust. Right now, your emotions are probably dominated by alternating feelings of anger and helplessness and numbness, and your thoughts are dominated by his use of pornography. Recovery may seem impossible. Approximately 70% of wives dealing with a husband's betrayal fit the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. These symptoms can include:¹

- + Hypervigilance, such as actively looking for things that might be sexual triggers for him (lingerie ads, attractive women, etc.).
- + Nightmares.
- + Obsessive thinking.
- + Fear.
- + Replaying the initial discovery.
- + Trouble sleeping.
- + Depression.
- + Anxiety.

Fortunately, **recovery is possible for both you and your husband**. This guide will help you understand why your husband uses pornography, as well as outline the pathway to recovery and restoration.

What Am I Going Through?





Section 1

Common Questions

Why does he look at porn?

There are a few things you need to understand about your husband's heart and his use of porn. The first is simply that men are visually stimulated in a way most women are not. Men like to look at naked women, and pornography offers unlimited access. Pornography also offers a fantasy world where they can imagine themselves being desired by eager and seductive women. Over time, as he watches more porn, his virtual harem can seem more appealing than face-to-face intimacy with his wife.

Psychological scars frequently contribute as well. Many men struggling with pornography use were exposed to it at a young age. For example, men often report having stumbled across a copy of *Playboy* in their father's dresser. With the advent of the Internet, more men than ever before were exposed to porn as children. One study reports that 93% of boys are exposed to Internet porn before the age of 18.² This early exposure almost inevitably leads to a struggle with pornography into adulthood.

It's also possible that your husband is experiencing what Mark W. Gaither of Redemptive Heart Ministries describes as a sense of "toxic shame," or the belief that he is horribly broken and beyond hope. (Normal shame, on the other hand, is the sense that he has done something wrong that has broken your relationship.) He may think he is unlovable, and fear that if he allows you to draw close, you will notice his flaws and lose respect for him. Rather than run this risk, he may have turned to the always-willing, always-happy girls of porn. Retreating to pornography can then make him feel even more of a failure, feeding into his toxic shame, and causing the cycle to continue. Eventually he builds up internal defenses to justify his use to the point that he no longer notices the shame.

There are likely other contributing factors (including in some cases sexual abuse as a child). A counselor will be able to help him identify and work through these. What you need to remember is that your husband would struggle with pornography regardless of whom he married. **His use of pornography is not your fault.**

Why does he prefer porn to sex with me?

Some men seem to prefer looking at pornography over intimacy with their wives. There are a few reasons for this. First, men crave respect and measure their own worth in terms of adequacy. Sometimes they fear really being known because it will result in you discovering his defects. Because of this, at the beginning of your relationship he may have overemphasized just sex instead of focusing on intimacy. For the same reason, porn and masturbation feel like safer alternatives to him. Even if you've made yourself sexually available to him, he knows that porn girls will never say "No"—never discover his inadequacies—and he never has to worry about meeting their needs.

There's a neurological side as well. Pornography rewires the brain, training him to desire the hormonal rush from porn instead of sex with you. The chemical vasopressin, which is released during the sexual act, bonds the man to his sexual partner.³ With repeated pornography use, he is bonding himself to images on a screen. Given that many men were exposed to pornography during childhood, he may have chemically bonded with the women of pornography long before you entered the picture.

Some men become so dependent on porn that it becomes a behavioral addiction. Much like a drug addict, men entrenched in pornography will do anything for their fix, including sacrificing what should be most dear to them.

Keep in mind that not all men show this symptom of addiction. A man might regularly use pornography and often pursue sex with his wife.

Read the e-book "*Your Brain on Porn*," available at www.covenanteyes.com/yourbrainonporn, for more details about how pornography has rewired your husband's brain.

Myth: Using porn is common, and that makes it okay.

Fact: Pornography use is common. It's estimated that 1 in 8 Internet searches are for erotic content.⁴

However, this does not make it morally okay. As Dr. William Struthers explains, "Just because something is a cultural norm does not make it morally right or wrong, good or evil."⁵ In fact, our society deliberately values women for more than just reproductive capabilities. Pornography, however, leads to the objectification of women as sexual objects, which actually makes it culturally reprehensible.

How can he watch porn and say he loves me?

Compartmentalization comes more naturally to men than women.⁶ To him, different parts of life—work, you and your children, his hobbies—don't necessarily interact. He may believe that viewing pornography in secret protects you from the consequences of his actions. He might even rationalize that hiding his actions or lying about it is the best way to love you in the midst of a bad situation.

As you both recover, he will need to learn that this is not true.

Why am I not enough?

Having sex and masturbating to pornography are two very different experiences. One is about touching, being touched, connecting, communicating, and serving one another. The other is about constant novelty: multiple tabs open, endless clicking, browsing, and always searching for the next exciting image. Porn is like highly concentrated sex that trains your husband's brain to desire novelty, variety, and selfish pleasure.

In this way, scientists now can see that pornography works like a powerful drug, rewiring the minds of those who consume it. Our brains are wired in such a way that we release natural "feel good" chemicals for things we should desire: things like food,

Myth: Pornography helps spice up your sex life.

Fact: Porn actually decreases sexual satisfaction. Porn and masturbation enable people to gratify themselves instead of finding fulfillment with another person. Porn makes reality seem extremely boring.

A study published in the *Journal of Sex Research* stated that, for men, frequently viewing pornography was correlated with lower satisfaction with sex and relationships.⁷ Another study published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* found that after even a moderate exposure to video pornography, people feel less satisfied with their spouse's sexual performance and physical appearance.⁸

Eventually, many men get to the point where they can no longer perform without imagining themselves in a pornographic situation. Dr. Judith Reisman explains, "If [a man] can't make love to his beloved, if he has to imagine a scene in order to actually achieve the heights of completion with this person, then he's no longer with his own power, is he? He has been stripped, he has been hijacked, he has been emasculated, he has in effect been hijacked by *Playboy* or *Penthouse* or any of the materials that followed."⁹

water, or sex. When a man watches porn over and over again, this hijacks the same circuits in the brain, but it is an overload to the system. Just like a drug, the more your husband gets, the more he needs to get the same “high.”

In simple terms, you’re “not enough” because his repeated porn use has accelerated his tolerance for these chemical rushes in the brain. Now, monogamous sex doesn’t excite his brain the way it used to. No woman, no matter how she looks, can give a man the variety pornography does because she is only one woman.

You do not need to “become enough.” He needs to rewire his mind to make you his standard of beauty again.

If you or your husband wants to learn more about what pornography can do to the brain and how to take practical steps to break the habit, download *The Porn Circuit* (available for free at www.covenanteyes.com/porncircuit).

Is this my fault?

Often men have the tendency to blame-shift, claiming that if you were prettier or thinner or more open to sex or less of a nag, that they wouldn’t need to turn to the fantasy that pornography provides. Even if men don’t say these things, their wives will often wonder such things about themselves. Often wives will tie their own self-worth to their husbands’ opinions of them. A drop in self-esteem is common after a betrayal.¹⁰

If your husband is telling you such things, he is trying to rationalize and justify his desire for porn by shifting the blame to you. By blaming you, he protects himself from shame

Myth: There’s no difference between porn and art.

Fact: The motives behind artists and pornographers are almost always different. In art, men and women are portrayed as people, whereas in pornography, they are objects for lust. Dr. William Struthers explains, “Pornography degrades and dehumanizes. Art celebrates the meaning and value of sexual intimacy between two individuals.”¹¹

Myth: Watching porn isn’t the same as cheating.

Fact: Pornography enables people to find physical satisfaction outside their married relationships. Dr. Phil McGraw says, “It is an insult, it is disloyal, and it is cheating.”¹² Ella Hutchinson, a Licensed Professional Counselor, adds, “He is receiving sexual gratification from other women. In my mind, that is infidelity.”

and avoids any suggestion he is not adequate. If he is not ready to take responsibility for his own behavior, “he will say anything to convince you, and even himself, that he does not have a problem. Blaming you is an easy way to save face,” explains Ella Hutchinson.¹³

You could be the most beautiful, supportive woman in the world and he’d still turn to porn. Remember, even Tiger Woods cheated on his supermodel wife.

Is this it for our marriage?

When families break up through divorce, it is an awful experience. While many couples have worked through the betrayal of pornography use, other couples never recover from it. In fact, a survey from the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers states 56% of divorce cases involve one party having “an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.”¹⁴ Before considering divorce, there are many factors to consider: your children (if you have any), your religious beliefs about marriage, and your support system. Do not make this kind of decision alone. Find trusted counselors to help.

However, countless marriages *have* recovered in spite of the husband’s use of pornography, or even adultery. This will require significant work from both you and

Myth: You should have seen the signs.

Fact: There are undeniably signs that men could be using pornography, such as a decreased interest in sex or a push for sexual acts that may be uncomfortable for you. However, Ella Hutchinson reminds us that successful marriages are built on a foundation of trust, and most porn users are very good at deception. Believing in your husband is healthy. His lies are unhealthy.

Myth: Forgiveness means forgetting.

Fact: Forgiveness is a long process, not an event, which requires recognition of the pain and a deliberate decision to set aside the right to retaliate. Part of this process may require forgiving the same behavior over and over. It does not mean forgetting or tolerating the behavior in the future.

Anger and bitterness are common responses to betrayal, and it may take time to get to the point where you are ready to forgive your husband for what he has done. While forgiveness is eventually necessary for your own mental well being, it is better to forgive from the heart rather than a sense of cold obligation, even if that takes longer than your husband, counselor, or even you would like.

your husband. You will need to set boundaries that will re-establish your sense of safety and security during this time. When he violates one of these boundaries, be prepared to follow through on the consequences you have promised (see “Rebuilding Trust Through Boundaries” on page 20 for more information). You will also need to seek counseling and support to help you recover from the trauma his actions have caused to your marriage. Your husband will need to take whatever steps necessary to break free from pornography. This will likely involve putting Internet accountability software on his computer and smartphone, as well as seeking counseling and personal support for himself.

There is hope after porn.

Every day Covenant Eyes hears stories of wives who have restored their marriages after their husbands’ pornography use. We have gathered four of these stories together in *Hope After Porn*, the free e-book.

Download it at: www.covenanteyes.com/hopeafterporn





Section 2

3 Stages of Recovering and Moving Towards Forgiveness

Now that you have discovered your husband's pornography use, the next few months are going to be difficult. The recovery process will be slow.

Because of that, you need a general roadmap to understand what recovery will look like. On the bad days, remind yourself that there is an end; you just may not be able to see it yet.

Just as there are five stages to the grieving process, researchers Kristina Coop Gordon and Donald H. Baucom¹⁵ have identified three distinct stages in the recovery process for a marriage broken by betrayal: the Impact Stage, the Meaning Stage, and the Moving On Stage.



Impact Stage ●●●●●

- + In this first stage, you will search for an understanding of why this happened.
- + Your feelings may be constantly in flux. They may include fear, hurt, anger, numbness, and disbelief.
- + You may second-guess your husband's motive on every behavior, even habitual ones (like checking e-mail first thing in the morning).
- + Your husband may not be able to distinguish between appropriate shame for wrongdoing and his pathological sense of toxic shame.

- + Your interactions with your husband may be chaotic or intensely negative, leading to more frustration and anger with each other rather than resolution.
- + You may begin to re-establish barriers and boundaries (such as sleeping in a different room).
- + You both may feel like the balance of power has shifted. You may feel like your husband has proven his power by ruining your relationship, and you may lash out destructively against him to regain a sense of control. Your husband may feel like he has no negotiating power.

Meaning Stage

- + You will begin to search for a more thorough understanding of why the betrayal occurred, such as whether this was a habit from childhood, or whether a traumatic event in the past makes him fear intimacy with you.
- + You will look for the necessary information to determine the next steps for your marriage.
- + You will begin searching for ways to rebuild trust and intimacy.

Moving On Stage

- + You will begin moving forward with a new set of beliefs about your relationship, and start putting the event behind you.
- + You will come to terms with what forgiveness means for you, and how it is connected to reconciliation with your husband.
- + You may be required to make changes to your relationship with your husband so that it can continue (or end it, if necessary).
- + You may still get flashbacks, but they will be less severe and disruptive, and you will recover more rapidly from them.

What Do I Do Now?





Section 1

The Next Steps for Recovery

Your husband's recovery is ultimately his choice. If he chooses not to change his behavior and work to restore your trust, it is not your fault.

There are steps you can take to encourage him toward reconciliation, and you certainly still play a role in his recovery. Before you begin the process, however, remind yourself (and your husband) of these vital truths:

- + Your husband is responsible for his porn habit. **Not you.**
- + Your husband is responsible for his lies and secrecy. **Not you.**
- + Your husband is responsible for making changes in his habits. **You are not responsible to fix him.**
- + Your husband is responsible for developing new behaviors that you deem trustworthy and trust-building. **You cannot do this for him.**
- + You are responsible for communicating to your husband **what trustworthy and trust-building behavior looks like to you**—and then taking note of those behaviors when they are present.
- + You are responsible for communicating to your husband **what hurtful behavior looks like and how you plan to react to protect yourself**—and then following through with consequences when necessary.
- + You are responsible for **seeking help for yourself** so you can cope with debilitating and negative emotions.



Section 2

Having Productive Conversations

For many women, one of the first challenges to reconciliation is in relearning how to communicate productively. Many wives are tempted to lash out in pain and anger. This, however, is usually unproductive for both people, and may cultivate a sense of toxic shame—the belief that he is horribly broken and beyond hope. (In fact, he may have turned to pornography because of this. See “Why does he look at porn?” for more details.)

As you talk to your husband about this problem, it is important to respond to his problem in a way that denounces his wrongdoing without feeding into his toxic shame.

- + Do **recognize when he is pushing your buttons** (like when he says he wouldn't need porn if you were more attractive) and disconnect from them. This may involve deliberately choosing not to respond when he makes statements like this. You may also find it helpful to repeat reaffirming truths to yourself. (If you are Christian, for example, you may want to memorize Psalm 139:14 and repeat it whenever he attacks your appearance.)
- + Do **recognize lying and hiding is part of your husband's addictive cycle**—largely because he fears what others (including you) will think of him. Acknowledge to your husband you know this and that you desire to have open conversations with him. Tell him, “I want you to be open with me about your struggles, and when you tell me, I will likely be upset initially. Let's agree to this: I will work on not lashing at you, and you will work on being open and honest with me.”
- + Do **recognize it's his problem to solve**. If he claims that he looks at porn because of something you will or will not do, remember that he is trying to justify his problem as a defense mechanism.
- + Do **present a positive belief in your husband**. Calling him a horrible person will simply reinforce toxic shame. Telling him you believe in his ability to face his addiction, take responsibility for his actions, and then rise above this challenge will give him hope and encourage him break free from it.

- + Do **give yourself grace when you do lash out** (and ask for his grace if you do), especially early on in the recovery while you're still dealing with the shock and trauma of his porn use. As Ella Hutchinson explains, "Wives may behave in ways that are uncharacteristic as they adjust to this new information and try to figure out what to do with it."
- + Do **be ready to talk about next steps he should take**. You may want to hand him specific resources. Point him toward a counselor or 3-day intensive to help him get to the heart of his pornography use, and suggest Internet accountability software to help him guard his Internet use. See the Additional Resources section (starting on page 30) for some suggestions.
- + Do *not* **promise to keep his secret for the sake of your marriage**. While you should be discerning about who you talk to, he will not break free from his struggle if it's just the two of you.



Section 3

Rebuilding Trust Through Boundaries

Often, when trying to repair a relationship broken by pornography use, one person feels responsible for all of the healing and ends up resenting it, while the other person doesn't take on enough responsibility and becomes self-centered and controlling.

To avoid this or correct this in your own marriage, it's vital to establish relational "boundaries." Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend describe a boundary as a personal property line, the line where you end and someone else begins.¹⁶ A boundary defines what is your responsibility (your feelings, attitudes, choices, and behaviors), and what is your husband's responsibility.

How does this help rebuild trust? Because as you see your husband following through with the boundaries that have been set, it will give your heart reasons to trust him. Consider these words by Vicki Tiede in her book, *When Your Husband is Addicted to Pornography*:¹⁷

"You will choose to trust your husband when you are ready. Don't worry—trusting and forgiving are not the same thing. Rebuilding trust will probably take much longer than it will take to forgive. You will know it's time to trust when your heart helps you to choose to believe that he will make the right choices. His behaviors will become your trust barometer."

Boundaries Checklist

The following boundaries are designed to get you started. Whatever boundaries you choose to set, make sure you communicate them clearly to your husband.

- + **Financial and Technological Transparency:** Ask your husband to make his cell phone, bank statements, e-mail accounts, and credit card statements available to you. You may also want to consider locking down specific apps on his phone, the ability to download new apps, messaging software, etc.
- + **Full Disclosure:** Consider getting a professional counselor to do a guided therapeutic disclosure between you and your husband. This is especially true if your husband uses porn compulsively. Ella Hutchinson explains that without this step, husbands will often keep hiding, either lying outright or only telling partial truths. A guided disclosure session will help him move toward a lifestyle of full honesty.
- + **Check-Ins:** Ask your husband to tell you if he slips.
- + **Recovery:** Ask your husband to seek out counseling, a support group, or an accountability group. This will be critical for him to overcome his porn habit.
- + **Transparency About Recovery:** Ask your husband to tell you about the steps he is taking to recover. Feel free to ask him questions: What is the format of the group you are attending? What do people talk about? Are you building any good friendships in the process? What do you and your therapist/counselor talk about? What are your triggers? How do you manage them?
- + **Avoiding Temptation Patterns:** Ask your husband to avoid patterns that may open the door to temptation. For instance: limit overnight travel, come to bed with you at the same time, limit non-productive time online, give up his smartphone for a non internet-enabled phone, etc.
- + **Verbal Reassurance:** Ask your husband to really open up to you about his feelings. For instance: regular voluntary reassurance that he is working through things, sharing his positive and affirming thoughts about you, or not going to bed with unresolved conflict.
- + **Physical Reassurance:** Ask your husband to initiate non-sexual intimacy with you, connect with you emotionally, and pay attention to you when you talk.

Emotional boundaries

These are ways you can take responsibility for your feelings, attitudes, and emotions.

- + **Third-party mediation:** Involve a trusted friend, mentor, pastor, or counselor to serve as a mediator. Say, “I have spoken to _____, and they have agreed to help us work through our difficulties because I don’t know how best to deal with this. I would love it if you would agree to this, but you must decide for yourself.”

Physical boundaries

There are times when physical separation is important. Minimally, this may mean a period of abstinence while you both recover. You may need to tell him, “I cannot be sexually close with you until I see that you are serious about rebuilding genuine intimacy.”

- + **Protect your children:** Your husband’s porn use can easily spill over into the lives of your children, especially if they use common Internet devices. Take responsibility for their protection. Put the Covenant Eyes Internet Filter on all devices in your home.
- + **Remove yourself from the room** when you notice things getting heated. Choose not to enter into a volatile situation. Say, “If you speak to me that way, I will need to leave the room.”
- + **Take time away from your husband**—for a few hours, an afternoon, or a day—to think through things.

Accountability boundaries

Believe his behavior, not his words or promises. The only way for him to establish healthy behaviors and rebuild trust is to become accountable for his actions, demonstrating to you and others that he wants to change and is changing.

Some of these boundaries, while necessary, may need to be addressed with caution. Often men are led to believe that their wives are being controlling, when in reality, as Ella Hutchinson says, “they want to know what their husband is doing to help prevent himself from hurting her again.” Remind your husband that the more open he is about his recovery and his computer and phone use, the less you will feel the compulsion to snoop in order to feel safe that he is not betraying your trust. You may need to say something like, “I love you, but I do not trust you. You have lost my trust with deception and hiding, and you need to regain my trust with trustworthy behavior.”

- + **Accountability Software:** Ask your husband to download Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability on all his devices. He can then choose others he trusts to receive a regular Internet use report in their inbox. This will keep him accountable to where he goes online. (Note: this is not “spying” on your husband, because he consents to having his devices monitored.)

- + **Counseling:** Seek out professional counseling or a support group for yourself, even if your husband refuses to join you. Say, “I cannot force you to go to counseling or seek help, but I personally need guidance and help right now. I would love for you to join me, but you must decide that for yourself.”

Setting personal action items

You may find that you need to set additional boundaries beyond those listed here, or set specific tasks for yourself. Counselor Mark W. Gaither recommends creating personal action items in response to two questions:

- + “If my husband refuses to seek help and continues his current pattern of pornography use, I will...”
- + “If my husband earnestly seeks help for his habitual use of pornography, I will...”

For the former question, boundaries may include physically removing yourself from a situation. For the latter, commit to working on your relationship. For example, as he works to rebuild trust, give him trust in return.

As he is working on being honest and open with you, do the same for him. As you see him growing, learning, and improving, tell him what you see. If this issue has harmed your physical intimacy with him, tell him when you think you are ready to be intimate with him again.

Avoiding extremes in boundaries

There are two important things to keep in mind when it comes to boundaries. First, you must follow through with consequences when boundaries are crossed. If he blames you for something that isn't your responsibility, leave the volatile conversation. If he chooses not to show you trust-building behavior, do not give him your trust. If he refuses to honor your physical boundaries, put more distance between you and him (move out of your bedroom, move out of the house, etc.), and do not back down even if he begs or claims he will fall apart without you.

Second, resist the urge to speak of your boundaries in a punitive way. This is not about getting revenge, being the porn police, or carrying around a “porn stick”—bringing up his transgression every time there is conflict. Instead, boundaries are about structuring your relationship so you feel the enormous freedom of avoiding responsibility that isn't yours, and so you feel the great control of taking responsibility for the things you can do. Within these boundaries, love and trust can bloom again.



Section 4

Internet Safety and Accountability

The availability of pornography exploded with the advent of the Internet. Psychologist Al Cooper describes that because the Internet makes pornography more available, affordable, and anonymous, it's a lot easier to fall into the porn trap, and a lot harder to break out of it. By removing the secrecy of Internet viewing in your family, you dramatically reduce temptation.

Installing Internet accountability and filtering software is vital. First, it protects others in your home—like your children—from pornography. Second, it is a way for your husband to be proactive about being honest with others about the temptations he faces.

Covenant Eyes Internet Accountability monitors the websites your husband visits and e-mails an Internet use report to your husband's Accountability Partners on a regular basis, with each website rated for the maturity of its content. This not only reduces temptation to view porn, it also removes the temptation to be dishonest or minimize when your husband has gone somewhere he shouldn't.

If your husband has built up a severe dependency on porn (or if you have young children in the home), you may wish to supplement Internet Accountability with the optional Covenant Eyes Filter to block pornography outright. However, using Filtering alone is inadvisable for recovery. Filtering addresses behaviors, but a strong accountability relationship will address not just his online activities but also the heart issues that led to them.

Helping your husband choose Accountability Partners

Successful use of Accountability software depends on picking the right Accountability Partners and having regular conversations about Internet use. When considering someone, you and your husband should ask yourselves these questions:

- + Do you both trust him?
- + Does he share your religious/personal values?
- + Is he in a similar life stage? (If you're married with kids, you probably don't want him to be a young bachelor.)
- + Will he encourage your husband to change and grow?
- + Will your husband actually listen to him?
- + Will he ask the tough questions, like how often your husband stared at other women this week, or what led him to look at porn?
- + Would he be willing to let you know about major issues if he felt it necessary?

Should you receive your husband's Internet reports?

Receiving his Internet reports might be one of the trust-building boundaries you establish. This is your choice. This can have many positive outcomes. Your husband will be more likely to think twice before he clicks on a questionable link. In addition, you might appreciate it as a sign of openness and transparency in your marriage.

This can also have negative outcomes. You may not want to receive a constant reminder of the temptations your husband faces online. This might place a very unhealthy strain on your marriage or unintentionally make you feel like you've been put in a mothering role.

If you do receive your husband's reports, don't be the only one. Your husband shouldn't lean on you as his counselor or the person who grills him about his reports every week. Your husband needs another man or group of men to do that.



Section 5

Finding a Counselor

One of the most important things to do is to seek professional advice and support, both for yourself and your husband. No matter how much research you do or how many friends you poll, no advice can beat that of a trained counselor.

Personal Support

Both you and your husband should seek personal counseling, whether it's with your pastor or religious leader or a counselor. Before you choose a therapist, ask them whether they have experience working with the partners of porn or sex addicts, and how many people with similar problems they have counseled in the last two months. If required for your situation, ask whether they have specific training to deal with rape victims, incest, or other traumas.

You can also seek someone with specific certifications. The American Association for Sex Addiction Therapy (<http://www.aasat.org>) or the International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals (<http://www.sexhelp.com>) are good places to start.

Seeking Pastoral Counseling

If you are actively involved in a church or religious community, your first reaction may be to approach your church leader. Unfortunately, not all ministers are trained for this situation. Make sure to ask your ministry leader whether he has training or experience. If he does not, ask if he has recommendations for counselors who share your faith.

Intensives

Many men or couples have benefited from intensive onsite, one-on-one or couple-to-couple counseling. These highly personal workshops usually last 2 to 3 days and include a tailored action plan.

The following list is a limited selection of counselors offering intensives.

Counselor Name	Location	Additional Details
Jeff and Rose Colón www.purelifeministries.org	Dry Ridge, KY	7-9 month live-in program for men
Joe Dallas www.joedallas.com	Tustin, CA	2-day workshops for men or couples
Jonathan Daugherty www.gatewaymen.com	San Antonio, TX Mt. Bethel, PA Denver, CO	3-day workshops for men, including an aftercare program
Marnie Ferree www.bethesda workshops.org	Nashville, TN	4-day workshops for men, women, spouses, and couples
Robb Horner and Anthony Trader www.theugm.com	Easton, MD	4-day workshops for men and spouses, with recovery groups across Maryland and Delaware
Ella and Jeff Hutchinson www.comfortchristiancounseling.com	Houston, TX	3-day workshops for couples
Mark Laaser www.faithfulandtrue.com	Eden Prairie, MN	Workshops for men, wives, and couples
Milton Magness www.hopeandfreedom.com	Houston, TX	3-day workshops for men or couples, with options for clergy, physicians, or high-profile clients
Harry Schaumburg www.stonegateresources.org	Port Washington, WI	7-day workshops for men or couples
Michael and Amy Smalley www.smalley.cc	Houston, TX Dallas, TX Branson, MO	2 day workshops for couples
Doug Weiss www.sexaddict.com	Colorado Springs, CO	3-5 day workshops for men or couples, with options for teens, sex abuse victims, or others



Section 6

A Parable of Hope

Have you heard the story of the prodigal son?*

A young man approached his wealthy cattle-farming father one day and said, “My life would be better off if you were dead. Give me my share of the inheritance, so I can go off and live as if you were.” So the father went through his possessions and divided up the estate between his two sons.

The young man quickly sold off all the land and family heirlooms to other members of their small community. Not caring about the scandal this would cause, the young man left town and headed off to the big city, where he did what he wanted and squandered all his money on alcohol and prostitutes.

Eventually, about the time that the young man’s money was running out, there was a famine in the land. Abandoned by all his friends, and unable to pay for rent or food, he took the only job he could find—feeding slop to pigs, the grossest possible job for a Jewish boy. Worse, the pigs were eating better than him. He had finally hit rock-bottom.

In this moment of crisis, he finally came to his senses. He thought, “Even my father’s lowest-paid workers live better than this! I’ll go back to my father, tell him I’m not worthy to be called his son and beg for a job as a hired hand.” Still smelling of the pigsty, he quit his job and headed home.

He hadn’t even gotten to the village limits when his father saw him. As soon as he saw his son—the boy he raised and loved and missed—he dropped everything he was doing. Despite being completely undignified for a man of his age and wealth, the father ran out to his still-dirty son and hugged and kissed him over and over.

The young man broke down and couldn’t even get through his rehearsed speech. “Father,” he said, “I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

* Adapted from Luke 15:11-24.

But rejoicing, the father shouted out to his servants, “Run and get my best suit of clothing, and give him access to the family money, and kill the best veal calf we have and make a banquet for the whole town! This son of mine was dead and has come to life again—he was lost, but is now found.”

Wives, your unrepentant husband is the prodigal son. His use of porn is a slap in the face of your marriage. Depending on the depth of his problem, it will more than likely cause a break within your own community (whether that be your extended family, your neighborhood, your circle of friends, or your church). For some of you, he may go so far as to act out through an affair, or request a divorce so he can feel free to do his own thing—to “squander his estate with loose living.”

But just as with the story of the prodigal son, even when things seem bleak, not all hope is lost. It will take time, and it may even take a crisis before he comes to his senses. The boundaries you set may even become part of that crisis. But repentance and reconciliation is still possible, and it happens. We have a number of testimonies about marriages that have been saved. (You can read some of these prodigal homecoming tales in the e-book *Hope After Porn*, available at www.covenanteyes.com/hopeafterporn.)

Wives, have faith! It will not be easy, and even after your husband repents it will take a lot of forgiveness and rebuilt trust on your part. But just as the father in the story took his son back into his arms, you may yet look back on this period and say, “The marriage that almost died is alive again! It was broken, but it has been restored.”

Additional Resources





Section 1

Books For Further Reading

Books for You

Partners: Healing from His Addiction

By Dr. Doug Weiss

The hope of this book is that any woman in a relationship with a sex addict can feel supported and not alone in this silent addiction. Doug Weiss, President of the American Association for Sex Addiction Therapy, walks partners through the healing process.

When Your Husband is Addicted to Pornography

By Vicki Tiede

When your husband's addiction to pornography leaves you shattered, betrayed, and alone, where do you turn? Who do you turn to? Writing from personal experience, Vicki Tiede gently guides readers toward God and away from despair.

Healing Your Marriage When Trust is Broken

By Cindy Beall

Cindy Beall uses the story of her husband's pornography use and adultery to help families heal and rebuild trust in their relationships after betrayal.

The Gaslight Effect

By Robin Stern

Some husbands will be manipulative or emotionally abusive to their wives, claiming things like "Porn is normal, and it wouldn't be a big deal to you if you weren't so

insecure.” This book will help you identify manipulation in relationships and set boundaries to protect your emotional well being.

Reclaiming Stolen Intimacy When Your Marriage is Invaded By Pornography

By Clay and Renee Crosse

This 8-week Bible study designed for a women’s support group will walk you through the common reactions, experiences, and struggles you’re likely to face as the wife of a porn addict.

Undefined

By Harry Schaumburg

This book looks at sexual sin and biblical sexuality, and helps you and your husband walk the path toward redemption.

Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners can Cope and Heal

By Barbara Steffans and Marsha Means

Highly recommended by counselor Ella Hutchinson, this book helps women understand that they are not alone in dealing with a sexually addicted spouse, and offers insights that lead to healing.

Hope After Porn

By Covenant Eyes

Discovering her husband uses porn may be one of the most emotionally devastating experiences of a wife’s life. In this e-book, four women share their stories of heartbreak because of their husbands’ betrayal, and how they found reconciliation and restoration in spite of it. Download it at www.covenanteyes.com/hopeafterporn.

Books for Your Husband

Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn-Free

By Tim Chester

This book helps men be captured by a better vision than that offered by porn, and provides practical strategies for escaping the temptation to use it.

False Intimacy

By Harry Schaumburg

Recommended by Focus on the Family, this book helps those struggling with sexual sin to identify the root causes and break free from the false relationships available through pornography.

Your Brain on Porn

By Luke Gilkerson

This free e-book unpacks a study that demonstrates five concrete ways prolonged pornography use actually lowers sexual satisfaction, lowers one's view of women, and desensitizes the viewer to cruelty. It also provides three biblical ways to renew your mind. Download it at www.covenanteyes.com/yourbrainonporn.

The Porn Circuit

By Sam Black

Science shows us acting out with pornography taps into our powerful brain chemistry, and this can quickly lead a person to use porn habitually. The good news is that the brain has a lifelong ability to wire and rewire itself. This free e-book shows why people become obsessed with pornography, and how to break the cycle of porn use. Download it at www.covenanteyes.com/theporncircuit.



Section 2

Software and Websites

Software

[Covenant Eyes | Internet Protection for Your Family](#)

When someone you trust receives a report of the websites you visit, it changes how you use the web. These reports are great conversation starters about Internet use, both for your husband and for your entire family, especially for older children and teens who might be just beginning to explore their boundaries online. Age-based content ratings make it easy to see what's appropriate and what's not. Internet Accountability and Filtering is available for Windows, Mac, iPhone®, iPod Touch®, and iPad®. An Accountability-only app is also available for Android™ phones and tablets.

Websites

[Covenant Eyes Resources for Wives](#)

<http://cvnteyes.co/restore-marriage>

Covenant Eyes has compiled a number of helpful blog posts, podcasts, and other resources for wives of porn addicts. You can also read our archive of blog posts for wives of porn addicts at CovenantEyes.com/category/wives-of-porn-addicts/

[New Life Partners](#)

www.newlifepartners.org

This is a Christian online support group for women impacted by a loved ones' pornography use. Membership is free.

Pure Intimacy

www.pureintimacy.org

This website, offered by Focus on the Family, looks at how pornography impacts all sorts of relationships, as well as a Christian perspective on sexuality.

A United Front

www.settingcaptivesfree.com/courses/a-united-front

A United Front is a 60-day course that teaches wives of porn and sexual addicts to work through both their husband's and their own issues.

Journey to Healing & Joy

www.journeytohealingandjoy.com

This counseling and support website helps you connect with other women and lets you share your own story. Counseling is also available.



Section 3

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