



OVER 18

Discussion Guide



MEET JOSEPH, A 13 YEAR-OLD WHO INTRODUCES HIMSELF AS A RECOVERING PORN ADDICT

Joseph's pornography addiction began with a pop-up while playing a computer game at nine years old.

“ *For the few seconds that I saw it, I couldn't get it out of my head for the rest of the day. Then you almost feel like a little craving, but at first you think it's curiosity, not a craving.*
—Joseph Deschambault

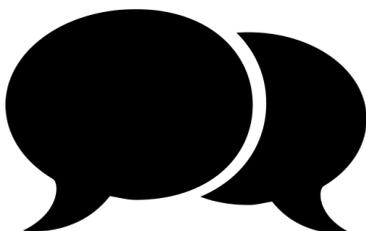
Then a friend taught Joseph what words to search for.

“ *At first, you're just naming the few words that you know. Then, you keep going and your knowledge expands. Dictionaries to find related words...*
—Joseph Deschambault

After he was caught, Joseph said he felt relief for a week. But then he went back to it even more aggressively than before, breaking through all his mom's filters.

“ *While you are in it, telling someone is never an option. And the longer you keep quiet, the harder it is to tell someone – I felt like I was the only one, I felt like no one understood me, I felt like I had it worse than anyone else.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



1. How does Joseph's story change your perception about children's access to pornography? How does porn addiction affect families?
2. Do Al and Tasha's comments impact how you see your role as a parent, grandparent, family friend, or caregiver to a child or teen?
3. Do you think the government has a responsibility to help parents?



MEET AL AND TASHA, JOSEPH'S PARENTS

Like many young people today, Joseph's addiction started at home. His parents had no idea.

“ *This happened right under our noses. His entire pornography addiction happened in the kitchen and family room of our home while the family was in the room.*
—Al Deschambault

Joseph's parents noticed a change in his behaviour. He began to act violently toward his mother and sister. From the moment they found out about the addiction, Al and Tasha started to teach him how to humanize people, which involved conversations about the value of the women on the screen as well as the women in Joseph's own life.

“ *I had flip-flopped back and forth and back and forth until finally she took the internet away, she took the computer away. Finally I was just free.*

—Joseph Deschambault

“ *If my son... with all of the safeguards that I had, was able to view it as frequently as he had, I'm telling you [parents] it's not your fault. The system is broken and something needs to change. I need help as a mom. I need my country to help me protect my son.*

—Tasha Deschambault



MEET CLAY OLSEN, FOUNDER OF FIGHT THE NEW DRUG

Clay discusses the nuances of the definition of the word “pornography.” Parents think of the Playboy magazines of 30 years ago, while kids think of porn as the hard core violence and group sex they see online today. Gonzo (hard-core pornography that is filmed to make the viewer feel like they are in it) has become mainstream.

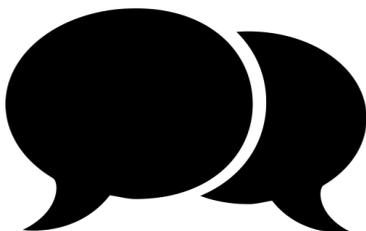
Research has begun to reveal the parallels between drug addiction and porn addiction - the process is similar. Your brain is over-exposed with pleasure chemicals, causing it to rewire and become dependent on those inputs.

“ *A young boy was arrested on his very first date, and he was strangling a girl in the car...when he police officer was asking him ‘what on earth were you thinking,’ he says ‘well isn’t that what they want?’ He had been consuming porn regularly since he was 7-8 years old, and his arousal and sexual template had been morphed, changed, quite literally re-wired, to the point where that was sexuality to him.*

—Clay Olsen

Clay also points out that if parents aren’t willing to teach their kids about sex and discuss the issue of pornography, the porn industry will. “And we won’t like what they teach them,” he warns.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



1. How might porn’s effect on the brain challenge our thinking about how to respond to children and teens who are viewing porn?
2. How are the partners of porn users affected by their porn use?
3. What are some ways to open up dialogue with your kids in a non-threatening way? What do you want them to know? Do they feel comfortable coming to you if they see something online?



MEET GABE DEEM, FORMER PORN ADDICT AND FOUNDER OF REBOOT NATION

“ *No amount of porn can ever love you back.*
—Gabe Deem

Gabe is a recovering porn addict, personal trainer, and public speaker. He runs RebootNation.org, a free online community to help addicts and their partners overcome problems related to porn use.

His story details his dependency on porn to function sexually. It got to the point that he couldn’t feel anything when he was with a real person, regardless of his attraction for them. He felt numb without porn, preferring pixels on a screen to real intimacy. His addiction started with mild content he calls “vanilla,” but it quickly escalated to a preference for gruesome scenes that he at first found repulsive.

As a teenager, he scheduled his porn watching, knowing he had a window of opportunity between the time he got home from school and when his parents got home from work.

“ *Guys that have grown up with internet porn have reached a place where they have been conditioned so deeply by internet porn and the way it stimulates the brain, that they have created pathways in the brain that only internet porn can fulfill. So when they are with a real partner, their brain doesn’t fire up the same way, and they can’t feel any arousal. That’s called porn induced erectile dysfunction and it happened to me.*

—Gabe Deem



MEET GAIL DINES, SOCIOLOGY & WOMEN'S STUDIES PROFESSOR AND AUTHOR OF PORNLAND: HOW PORN HAS HIJACKED OUR SEXUALITY

“*The fashion industry shapes the way we dress. The food industry shapes the way we eat. How could the porn industry not affect the way we have sex? It would be the only industry in the world that had no cultural impact.*”

—Gail Dines

Gail Dines believes that there has been a mass abdication of responsibility on the part of adults. “We have thrown our children into the porn culture and said ‘sink or swim.’” She explains that pornography is popular because of its anonymity, affordability, and accessibility. The level of violence that young people are exposed to by the age of eleven is dangerous. Children are horrified and aroused at the same time, making sex confusing.

“*We know with trauma, that if you don't deal with the trauma then you keep going back to it. Where was the boy traumatized? At the point where he looked at the pornography. So it's an excellent way to lay the groundwork for potential porn addicts. Great business plan; devastatingly awful for the culture.*”

—Gail Dines



MEET ASHA KAYE BROWN, FORMER PORN ADDICT

Asha speaks of her online porn addiction and feeling so alone in it, especially as a woman. One day she impulsively shared her struggle with other women at a conference, and learned that many of them also struggled with viewing pornography.



MEET BRITTONI AND CRISSY, EX-PORN STARS

Both former actors in the pornography industry, Brittoni and Crissy share their stories of how life in the spotlight affected them. Both entered the porn industry at a young age, not realizing that the contracts they signed would mean that their images and videos would be out there forever and make it difficult to start a new life.

“*A lot of people who make bad decisions don't do it on camera. Pornography is done on camera for the world to see forever. Forever.*”

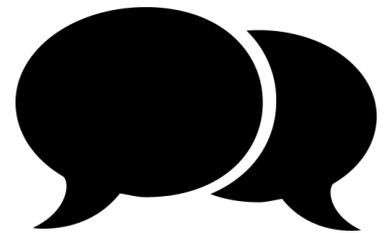
—Brittoni

“*If I have kids, they will see it. There's no way around it. It can haunt you for the rest of your life.*”

—Crissy

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are some potential dangers of the conflicting feelings children experience when exposed to horror and arousal at the same time?



2. What stood out to you in Brittoni's and Crissy's stories? Do you think it was enlightening or helpful to have them share their experiences?

3. Why is it more taboo for women to be open about pornography addiction? How can openness be fostered in our communities so that women can find healing and accountability too?



MEET JOSH GILMAN, FOUNDER OF STRENGTH TO FIGHT

Josh talks about his own recovery journey and how it required good mentoring, good accountability, and good systems. But it took a long time before he was desperate enough to get help.

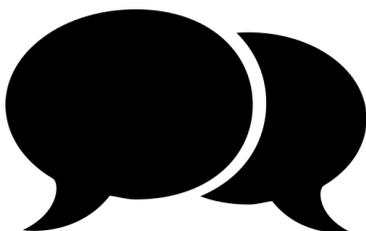
“ *For me, it got to the point where almost every single night, I looked at myself in the mirror, and I said, “I hate you.” I had begun to accept that people were commodities, that they could be consumed, and if nobody else was worth anything, then how do I have any worth myself?*

—Josh Gilman

Josh explains that he came to the point where he was willing to do anything to stop himself from stumbling across porn by accident. He got rid of his iPhone and got a phone without internet access. He surrounded himself with friends who would hold him accountable and support him. Now, he’s aware when he’s weak and vulnerable, and reaches out to his friends long before he’s tempted. He’s also learned to renew his mind and to unlearn the lies he had believed.

Today, Josh’s life is very different. As a husband and father, he’s glad his former porn habits are not being dragged into his marriage and family. His own freedom has led him to start Strength to Fight, an organization that exists to equip men, women, and children to build porn free lives and communities.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



1. What do we learn about recovery from Josh Gilman’s story?
2. What are some of the positive and hopeful aspects of porn recovery?
3. Martin’s role as a father helped him see pornography differently. What are some other lenses or life experiences that could help people see past the seductive images and recognize porn’s realities?



MEET MARTIN DAUBNEY, BRITISH JOURNALIST AND FORMER EDITOR OF LOADED MAGAZINE

As a “lads and dads” magazine, Loaded contained soft core images that Martin considered harmless fun. When he was accused of being a pornographer, he became a staunch defender of the industry, never making the connection that it could hurt people. Then he became a dad.

“ *People have always said to me, Would you be happy for your daughter to appear in your magazine? I’d say, “Well no, I haven’t got a daughter.” Then when I had a daughter I was like, well definitely not. Then it became a kind of moral meltdown.*

—Martin Daubney

He started doing research and found that internet porn had changed everything. Young guys were literally seeing girls as body parts for sex acts. They saw the real world as they saw the porn mosaic, where categories of porn became offline categories of real sex.

It was causing problems for their relationships and for their work. One man left his laptop open and his daughter saw it the next day. Another man, desperate to see porn, pulled over to use his cell phone... there was a knock on his door by a police officer. He didn’t realize he was sitting outside of a school, so now he’s on a sex offender list.

Martin admits that his magazine may have been part of the problem, but now he wants to be part of the solution.

“ *I think that’s the moral duty that fathers have, the responsibility to say we don’t hurt, we don’t degrade, we don’t punish.”*

—Martin Daubney



MEET BRAD ARMSTRONG (ROD HOPKINS) AND WILLIAM MARGOLD, ACTORS AND DIRECTORS IN THE PORN INDUSTRY

Brad and William openly share their views on the industry. William Margold said how proud he was about his work in the industry, and legacy that he was leaving behind.

“*The most important thing in life is recognition. If you haven't been recognized, you haven't lived a life.*
—William Margold

“*I would die to protect this industry because it's given me my life.*
—William Margold

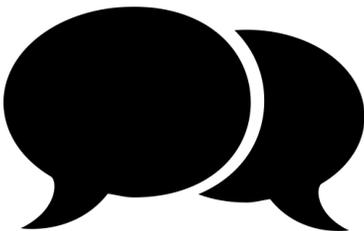
Brad is less aggressive, and explains how porn sex is different from sex with a loving partner. William Margold agrees that there's a difference between the two.

“*When you're a race car driver and you're going 200, you want to “win, win, win.” It's not like you drive like that when you're doing the carpool [or] when you're driving your kids to school. It's like you drive normal. You obey the speed limits and you do your thing. It's the same thing with performer sex where when you're in front of the camera you're going crazy and you're trying to make the director happy and make a great scene and really connect with the person that you're working with, but at home you're at home.*

—Brad Armstrong

“*No intimacy. Intimacy is the operative term. You're not allowed really to be intimate having sex on camera. Sex is like shaking hands in the business. It isn't personal.*
—William Margold

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



1. How did you feel about William Margold when you watched the film? What are some words you'd use to describe him? How does he reflect the lie of porn that humans don't have value? What could have curdled his heart and made him this way? Why the obsession with recognition?
2. Both Brad and William admit that intimacy is lost in porn sex. How does this affect children who are watching porn, and their perceptions of what sex is in a loving, committed relationship?
3. William Margold says that sex is like shaking hands. How does this flippant attitude trickle down into mainstream thinking?
4. What can we teach that will challenge the message of porn? How do we teach it?



**MEET OGI OGAS,
COMPUTATIONAL NEUROSCIENTIST**

Ogi Ogas conducted research into the content of people's searches, and found that domination and submission themes are universal.

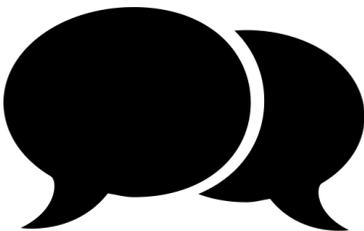
Men's internet searches focus on youth, with thirteen being the most searched for age, and many girls are made to look young so that the porn user has "the visceral experience of masturbating to a barely prepubescent teenager."

Gail Dines comments on the "money shot" as the power scene – a man is standing over the woman. In reference to its popularity, one man indicated it was "marking his territory."

“*The woman's expression during the money shot serves as an emoticon. She might be happy, sad, troubled, angry, upset, scared, or whatever the case might be. Different men prefer different emotional states.*

—Ogi Ogas

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



1. What do the popular search terms and the obsession with the money shot say about our society and the things we value? What does it say about power?
2. How does this impact society's view of the treatment of women and girls?
3. How does research on brain development and addiction impact our actions in terms of protecting our children and teens from possible exposure to porn? How does the concept of neuroplasticity give hope for addicts?



**ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT**

Continued research in the area of brain development is helping us understand why children and teens have a heightened risk for porn addiction.

Sexual pleasure creates a 200% dopamine spike in the brain's reward centre. That's about the same level as morphine. The prefrontal cortex, the forward-thinking part of the brain that recognizes consequences and acts as a firewall, doesn't fully develop until a person is in their early to mid twenties. When kids watch porn, it's as if they are getting a morphine hit to their brain, potentially a decade before they're able to protect themselves.

The brain responds in the same way to pornography as it does to heroin and alcohol, and has parallels with compulsive behaviour, like over-eating and gambling.



**GOOD NEWS FOR THOSE
STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION**

The brain has incredible neuroplasticity, which means it's capable of learning new patterns if input changes. With time, the brain creates new pathways.

“*We know guys who took over a year to recover, and for those who have stayed away from porn, they have all come back and say their life is so much better without porn.*

—Gabe Deem



A FINAL WORD TO PARENTS

Joseph's parents had to educate themselves quickly about how to respond to their sons addiction. Joseph's dad realized that it was time to take back their house and monitor their kids. He poses some questions for all parents to consider:

- Do your kids have access to internet? All the time?**
- Do they have laptop in their room all night?**
- Go take a look at the search history of your son or daughter — what do we see there?**

Joseph's parents performed a radical amputation. They limited the hours of the internet, and when they do go online, they do it together. Though Joseph is recovering, he feels he's not ready to go on the internet alone yet.

What if every kid, when they heard a word on the playground, knew they could run home and ask their parents what that word meant without fear of judgment or awkwardness? If kids start searching words online, they quickly encounter pornography at an age where they are completely unprepared to handle it.

“ *This is not a one time discussion. This is an ongoing, layered dialogue that starts sooner than you think and onto their adulthood. It uses age appropriate dialogue, and it's layered like an onion that evolves over time.*

—Clay Olsen

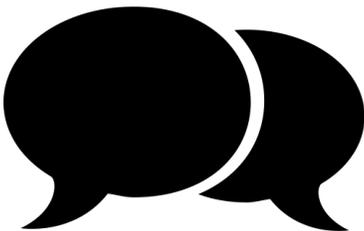
“ *Protection is a lot different than sheltering... having conversations with your kids about what sex is, is crucial.*

—Asha Kaye Brown

“ *In today's world, it's not a matter of if your child runs across something that is porn or like porn — it's a matter of when, and you have to be prepared for that moment and what you will say. Will you just freak out, horrified and crushed that your child saw it, or will you recognize the opportunity to deal with the issue and address it before they are pulled any further in...*

—Josh Gilman

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



1. What are some things to consider when talking to children or teens about their online habits?
2. What are some emotions children and teens might be experiencing about their porn viewing?
3. What emotions might parents be experiencing? What do adults need to do with their emotions?
4. How does an understanding of the addictive nature of pornography affect your approach?
5. How does Josh's advice fit into your role as a parent/grandparent/teacher etc?
6. What are some ways that you can begin to engage in conversation with the children in your life?