



WHEN YOUR

FRIEND



Struggles

WITH

PORNOGRAPHY

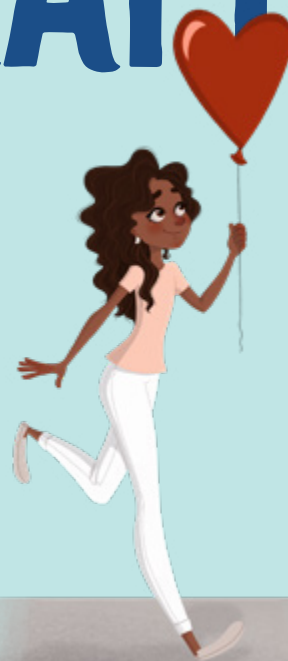


I'm so glad the Lord prompted me to stop being so judgmental before my friend opened up to me.

Name Withheld

I had known for months that something was going on, but it wasn't until this moment that my friend admitted the truth to me out loud: she had been struggling with pornography for years.

While sitting in the car listening to my friend, I was grateful for her honesty. Don't get me wrong, I felt very sad to know she had been struggling with this for so long. But I was glad that she could open up to me and that I was now able to respond with love and not judge her.



ABANDON NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ABOUT PEOPLE

Pornography is dangerous, destructive, and evil, and we should avoid it at all costs. But completely avoiding any exposure to this evil and its effects is nearly impossible. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, “Most days we all find ourselves assaulted by immoral messages of some kind flooding in on us from every angle. The darker sides of the movie, television, and music industry step further and further into offensive language and sexual misconduct.”¹

Even if you have never been exposed to pornography, you probably know someone who has. Sometimes, the knowledge that pornography is evil can seep into our perceptions of people with pornography problems. That’s what happened to me at one point. When I was younger, I would hear about people who struggled with pornography and often react with anger and even disgust—not to their face, but inwardly. I couldn’t understand how anyone could get caught up in that stuff. I let my disgust with pornography (which was a healthy reaction) justify my negative feelings toward other people.

But being unkind is never justified. Jesus Christ, our perfect example, sought out the people most despised by others. He spoke with Samaritans, tax collectors, and sinners. The Lord, who “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:31), “[looks] at us, imperfect as we are, without recoiling in horror and disgust,”² because He knows He can forgive and cleanse us if we repent. So, listening to my friend, I tried to think of how Jesus would respond. The story of how the Savior had compassion on the woman caught in adultery was one of the things that helped me know what to do and say that day (see John 8:3–11).

For More Information

For information, videos, and other resources regarding pornography problems, go to addressingpornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.



RESPOND WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION

For those strictly living the law of Moses in Jesus’s day, there wasn’t a lot of room for compassion. There were very specific, often brutal punishments for certain sins, and adultery required stoning. When the people brought the woman to Jesus, He wasn’t shocked or disgusted; He showed her compassion. As Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught, “The Savior did not condone adultery. But He also did not condemn the woman.”³ Rather than congratulate the accusers on finding someone guiltier than them, He reminded them of their own sins (see John 8:3–7).

I was in a better place to comfort my friend that day because I had a more mature view of my own sins and weaknesses than I did when I was younger and so judgmental. I no longer felt better than those struggling with pornography, and I’d done my best not to justify my own sins just because they were more “acceptable.” After all, we “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We cannot allow our knowledge that pornography is evil to distort our view of other people, who are also children of God and whom we should love. Jesus Christ loved others and showed compassion, and we certainly should too (see John 13:34–35).

We should all follow the counsel He gave—to “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

GO, AND SIN NO MORE

We should respond with love, but just loving someone with a pornography problem will not be enough. Love is simply the first step. There are some basic things that everyone struggling with pornography needs. Often, they need help overcoming deeper issues that are driving their use of pornography. So encourage them to talk to their parents and to see their bishop. They will have resources and tools to help your friend through this trial. Address the influences around them by supporting them in changes they feel they should make.

For example, if they don't have content blocks on their devices, help them set them up. If they're always tempted at certain times or in certain circumstances, help them make plans to change their patterns. They might benefit from seeing a professional or joining a support group. Point them to addressingpornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org. Above all, love and support them in whatever they may see as their next step. Encourage them and give them hope as they move forward.



THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE

No matter what any of us has done, we “have *not* traveled beyond the reach of divine love,” Elder Holland has taught. “It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”⁴

If you know someone struggling with pornography, don't give up on them! That moment in the car with my friend was only the beginning of a process that is still going on today as I strive to replace judgment with love in my reactions to people. Reach out with love and compassion just as Jesus Christ would. It will not always be easy; these struggles do not go away overnight. There have been many times when I have helped my friend resist temptation but also many times when she has admitted relapsing. Be patient with your friend and with yourself.

Remember, though, that you can't repent for them or change them, and you are not responsible for what they do. You can listen, give advice, and encourage. In the end, they have to take their own steps.

Learning to love and understand someone going through something so difficult isn't easy. But I trust that all the love I give my friend will not be in vain, no matter the length or end result of her journey. **NE**

NOTES

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, Apr. 2010 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 44).
2. Dale G. Renlund, Apr. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 30).
3. Dale G. Renlund, Apr. 2017 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 30).
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, Apr. 2012 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 33).