



*Of all the things you might hear about pornography, here are a few that can really make a difference.*

# 5 THINGS WORTH KNOWING ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY

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Church Magazines

**Y**ou may feel like you know all you need to know about pornography: What it is. Why it's enticing. How widespread it's become. How habit-forming it can be. The bad consequences of viewing it. How you should turn away from it and stay away from it. (See *For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 12.)

But here are five other things that are really worth knowing about pornography.

## 1 WORLDLY WAYS OF JUSTIFYING PORNOGRAPHY ARE BOGUS.



In the world, pornography has become almost mainstream. A lot of people view it. Many of them justify it, saying, "It's normal." But when people say this, what are they actually saying?

They may simply be saying, "Everyone's doing it." That, of course, is not a persuasive defense. There are plenty of harmful things we would never do, no matter how many people are doing them.

They may also be saying that pornography is "natural." This, too, is less than convincing. We're taught that "the natural man is an enemy to God" and that we should "[yield] to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and [put] off the natural man" (Mosiah 3:19). "Natural" doesn't necessarily mean "good" or "right."

It's pretty clear that hyper-fueling our sexual desires with pornographic imagery is *not* a very natural thing. In fact, it's entirely artificial. It's a very new thing in the history of mankind that

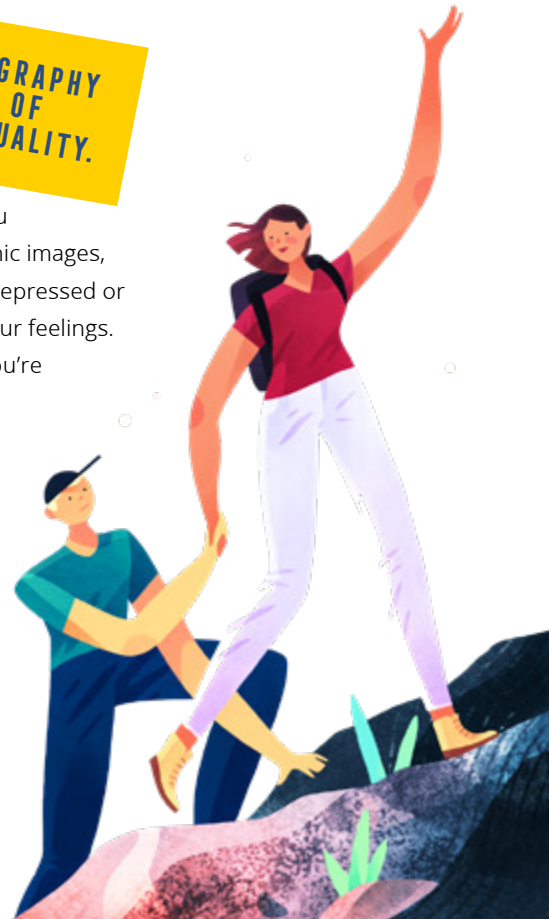
pornographic imagery has become so universally and instantly available. So, "natural" it is not. Our God-given sexual desires are natural enough. But just because we have those feelings doesn't mean that whatever we do with them is OK. We need to understand and control those feelings, not stoke them inappropriately.

Another thing the "pornography is normal" argument implies is that if you're against pornography, that makes you abnormal. Again, not true. There are plenty of good reasons to be against pornography (see below). There's nothing inherently weird or "off" about a person who speaks out against pornography and in favor of a higher standard.

## 2 BEING AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY MEANS BEING IN FAVOR OF LOVE AND HEALTHY SEXUALITY.


Sometimes when you tell people you want nothing to do with pornographic images, videos, or stories, they'll say you're repressed or sheltered, unhealthily bottling up your feelings.

But by opposing pornography, you're really standing up for God's plan of real love and healthy sexuality in marriage. In Heavenly Father's plan, a man and a woman are meant to bond together in a loving relationship that includes emotional and sexual intimacy. That's why Heavenly Father entrusts us with powerful feelings of attraction. He wants us to experience the joy of fully



loving and being loved. That's not repressive; it's sacred and beautiful. Pornography gets in the way because it does the opposite. It makes a mockery of this kind of relationship. It focuses on selfish indulgence and objectifying others. Again, sexual feelings and desires aren't evil; they just need to be kept in alignment with Heavenly Father's plan and laws, which He has given for our ultimate happiness and joy.

**3 THE SHAME CYCLE IS ONE OF THE ADVERSARY'S TOOLS TO KEEP PEOPLE TRAPPED.**



Viewing or reading pornographic media may bring temporary pleasure, but shortly afterward come feelings of guilt. These feelings are normal, because every person has been given a conscience, or the Light of Christ, so that we can know good from

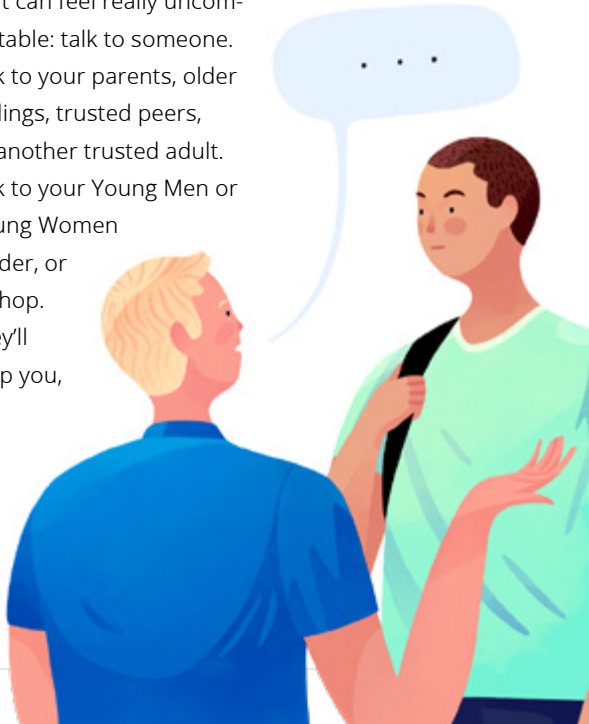
evil (see Moroni 7:16). Those who have the gift of the Holy Ghost have His warning voice, and they notice when He withdraws. But Satan tries to get us to either dull our spiritual sensitivity or transform our healthy feelings of guilt into destructive feelings of shame.

The difference between guilt and shame comes down to its focus. Guilt is focused on our relationship with God. The scriptures call it "godly sorrow," which "worketh repentance to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). It's a good thing because it can lead to real change. Shame, on the other hand, is focused on self—self-image,

self-regard, and what others think of us—rather than on how to draw closer to God. Instead of thinking, "I did something bad; I need to repent," we think, "I'm a bad person, and I can't change, and nobody could ever love me, including God, so I may as well stop trying." That's the cycle: sin can lead to shame, which can lead to self-loathing and despair, which can lead to continued sin.

The shame cycle can be especially strong with pornography. For example, one symptom of shame is embarrassment, which can lead people to hide what they've done, including (or perhaps especially) from parents, siblings, and priesthood leaders. That's what Satan wants. He doesn't want a pornography user to get help and repent. He wants to keep them trapped, and the shame cycle is one of his best tools for doing just that. But we can break the cycle.

**4 THE SOONER YOU TALK TO SOMEONE, THE BETTER.**



If you've been viewing pornography, one thing that will help you greatly is probably also something that can feel really uncomfortable: talk to someone. Talk to your parents, older siblings, trusted peers, or another trusted adult. Talk to your Young Men or Young Women leader, or bishop. They'll help you,



## ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND'S COUNSEL: HOLD FAST

Let me offer a modest little formula that I have used in counseling over the years.

**F IS FOR "FLEE."** Leave the scene of the crime, get away from the temptation, put distance between yourself and the problem in any way possible. Like Joseph in the presence of Potiphar's wife, I say just run! And please, do not leave a forwarding address!

**A IS FOR "ASK."** Too many do not ask for help. Initially, anyone who is trustworthy can be asked to help—a parent, spouse, friend, Church leader, counselor, physician, and so on. Above all, ask God for help, pleading for the mercy and grace of the Almighty to aid you in this difficult task. I would ask and ask until my throat was hoarse. I would knock and knock until my knuckles were bloody.

**S IS FOR "STRIVE."** Pornography is not a simple problem and it will not be overcome easily. It will take work. But I believe virtually every problem in life will ultimately yield to persistent effort aided by divine assistance. It may take days, it may take years, it may take a lifetime, but I believe in the reward of persistent effort.

**T IS FOR "TRIUMPH."** I know people can win this war. I have seen them do it. You have to believe. You need to have and keep that hope always—to believe you can be victorious in this battle, that you can conquer this implacable foe.

When these temptations and tribulations come, I pray that you will assume personal responsibility and "hold fast," saying as one young prophet once said, "[I will] give place no more for the enemy of my soul" (2 Nephi 4:28).

Adapted from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Plague of Pornography" (Utah Coalition Against Pornography keynote address, Mar. 12, 2016), [utahcoalition.org/elder-jeffrey-r-holland-the-plague-of-pornography](http://utahcoalition.org/elder-jeffrey-r-holland-the-plague-of-pornography).

not condemn you. The sooner you take this step, the sooner you can really start to heal and change. Yes, there may be consequences, including feeling some embarrassment, but any consequences are going to be better than letting the problem go on and get worse.

Some people tell themselves they'll quit pornography on their own first and *then* talk to someone about it. The longer it continues, the harder it is to quit. It's better to talk to someone.

If you find out that a friend has been viewing pornography, be loving and kind, but be firm in encouraging them to talk to their parents or another trusted adult, as well as their bishop. That's the best thing you can do for them.



**5** THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE FOR SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO BREAK AWAY FROM PORNOGRAPHY.

Nobody is *ever* too far gone. If you have a desire to change, Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost will help you. Though your path of healing may not be easy and will likely also include spiritual, physical, psychological, and social changes, the Savior will be there to lift and bless you. He has carried the burden of all of our sins—*all* of them, including the ones we can't seem to shake yet. Be patient with yourself, and rely on the Savior's healing power as you improve, step by step.

Whether you're struggling with pornography yourself or are aware of a friend or loved one who is struggling, remember the Savior's grace and mercy. There is *always* reason for hope. **NE**

### For More Help

For more help dealing with pornography, go to [addressingpornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://addressingpornography.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) and [fightthenewdrug.org](http://fightthenewdrug.org). See also Dallin H. Oaks, "Recovering from the Trap of Pornography," *New Era*, Oct. 2015, 2–7.