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A FREE PRACTICAL RESOURCE

THE PORN RECOVERY QUICK-START GUIDE



Practical steps I use with clients seeking recovery from porn addiction. Protect yourself from temptation, understand your patterns, and start building a life of freedom.

FOUR PRINCIPLES. ONE PRACTICAL START.

SPARK

STRUCTURE

SKILL

SOVEREIGNTY

Catholic-informed. Practical. Accessible.

Educational resource; not a substitute for individual therapy.



START HERE

INTRODUCTION / 01

When you have tried to stop for years, it can feel as though nothing will ever work. But repeating the same attempt is not the same as trying every available approach.

WHAT COULD YOU TRY NEXT?

Have you made the hard decisions about your access to technology? The ones you know you need to make? Have you asked another person to help you stay accountable? Have you taken an honest look at bad patterns, habits, relationships, or emotional struggles? Have you sought professional help when needed?

This is not a judgment. You may already have worked incredibly hard. The question is whether there are important changes or sources of support you have not yet utilized.

If you have not tried everything, you have not run out of options, and there is hope.

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY

SPARK — Remember why change matters.

STRUCTURE — Make access to pornography harder.

SKILL — Understand your patterns and practice new responses.

SOVEREIGNTY — Build the kind of life you actually want to live.

YOUR FIRST 24 HOURS

- ☐ Remove one app or access point that has repeatedly caused trouble. You already know which one it should be.
- ☐ Choose one trusted person to help you establish restrictions, hold the password, etc.
- ☐ Write down one situation in which you are most likely to be tempted. Make a plan.



REMEMBER THE WHOLE STORY

SPARK / AWARENESS

Temptation tends to spotlight the immediate reward and hide what happens afterward. Your task is to bring the entire experience back into view in order to reduce temptation.

Pornography may promise excitement, relief, comfort, connection, or escape. But what has been the actual fruit? Maybe it is guilt, shame, secrecy, low self-confidence, feeling overly self-conscious, frustration, pain caused to others, or another trip to Confession.

Do not exaggerate the consequences to scare yourself, and do not use this exercise to punish yourself. Simply be honest about your real experience.

PLAY THE TAPE FORWARD TO THE END

What does pornography seem to promise me?

The feeling of being wanted, loved, or masculine? Excitement? A break from stress?

What usually happens afterward? How do I feel after finishing?

Think about the next minute, the rest of the evening, and the following day.

What do I want instead?

Peace, integrity, connection, freedom from secrets, confidence, a better relationship?

Don't think only about what pornography promises. Remember what it costs.

**Connect the temptation to the actual consequences.
Then porn becomes less tempting.**



FIND YOUR WHY

SPARK / PURPOSE

Getting free is not only about what you want to stop. It is also about the kind of man you want to become.

Imagine living without the cycle of hiding, regretting, making promises, and starting over. What could change in your marriage, friendships, fatherhood, faith, confidence, and peace of mind?

You will not feel highly motivated every day. That is why your reason for changing needs to be clear enough to revisit when motivation fades.

A FEW QUESTIONS WORTH ANSWERING

The people and values that matter most to me:

If I keep living the same way, what am I likely to lose? Who will I become?

If I make real changes, what could my life look like in a year?

"Freedom is possible. Even for you. Even after everything."



OUTSMART FUTURE TEMPTED YOU

STRUCTURE / GUARDRAILS

The motivated version of you can make excellent promises. The exhausted, lonely, stressed, or surprised-by-temptation version of you may choose differently.

Your job is to protect that guy. Do not design your recovery plan around your best day. Design it around the day when you least want to follow it.

We cannot depend on our goodness, our holiness, or our good intentions to keep us from pornography. We need to recognize our weaknesses and take practical steps to keep us from it.

A FEW QUESTIONS WORTH ANSWERING

How would future tempted me get pornography if he were determined to find it?

What apps/devices have I used to get at porn in the last year?

Have I discovered methods to get around filters or other barriers?

ACTION TO TAKE NOW

- ☐ Delete the apps you have used to access pornography, including social media apps if they repeatedly lead you to sin.
- ☐ On iPhone, use Screen Time to block installing or reinstalling apps. Have a trusted person hold the Screen Time passcode.
- ☐ Address browsers, private access routes, secondary devices, and realistic workarounds.
- ☐ Secure, remove, or responsibly dispose of unused computers, tablets, and old devices that could become a loophole.
- ☐ Ask a trusted person to help you test the plan and maintain it.

Reality check: No filter is perfect. The idea is to add Friction; to make it harder to get at porn. Strong safeguards make unwanted behavior harder; they do not replace skills, relationships, or support.



MAKE THE HARD DECISIONS

STRUCTURE / DECISIONS

Freedom sometimes requires restrictions. The inconvenient choice today may protect you from a decision you would regret tomorrow.

If an app like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram repeatedly leads you to pornography, that tells us you cannot handle having that app on your phone. That does not mean there is anything wrong with you. You are still a good, lovable person. It just is what it is.

You might need to change the apps you keep, the shows you watch, when you use devices, where you charge your phone, or how you spend time alone. You do not have to enjoy every boundary for it to be worthwhile.

YOUR PERSONAL LOCKDOWN PLAN

One technology boundary I need to stop negotiating with myself about:

The decision I am making TODAY (be specific):

How I will keep myself from undoing that decision when tempted:

Who will help me, and when I will ask them:

The goal is not to prove that you can handle unlimited access. The goal is to live in freedom.



FIND YOUR PATTERNS

SKILL / PATTERNS

Before you can change a repeated behavior, you need to get curious about what tends to happen before it. Patterns are clues, not grounds for self-condemnation.

Pay attention to patterns in time, location, emotional state, access to technology, and what had just happened before temptation hits. You may discover a habit, an unmet need, a painful situation, or several things interacting.

LOOK FOR THE CLUES

WHEN does temptation usually hit?

Late at night? After work? Weekends? When everyone else is asleep?

WHERE am I, and what device am I using?

Bedroom, bathroom, office, couch, hotel, phone, laptop?

WHAT AM I FEELING?

Hungry, Angry, Lonely, tired, bored, anxious, rejected, restless, excited?

WHAT HAPPENED RIGHT BEFORE?

An argument? A stressful day? Social media? Being alone?

WHAT MIGHT I BE LOOKING FOR?

Comfort, relief, affirmation, distraction, connection, pleasure?

"The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection." - Johann Hari



WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

SKILL / PRACTICE

When you know a pattern, build a specific response. You are practicing what to do with uncomfortable feelings and sexual urges, not pretending you will never have them.

THREE USEFUL KINDS OF CHANGE

01 / MEET THE REAL NEED

Lonely? Pursue genuine connection. Stressed? Make space for rest or problem-solving. Needing reassurance? Talk honestly with someone you trust.

02 / LET THE FEELING PASS

An urge is an experience, not a command. Notice it, breathe, avoid feeding it with scrolling, and allow it to rise and fall.

03 / CHANGE THE ROUTINE

Leave the room, move the phone, go outside, exercise, take a shower, work in a shared space, or call someone.

MAKE AN IF-THEN PLAN

IF I notice _____ leading me into temptation

Name a specific cue: time, feeling, situation, or device.

THEN I will _____

Choose an action you could actually see yourself doing within two minutes.

Make the better choice easier to start—before you need it.

Actually follow through, even if it feels dumb, artificial, or uncomfortable. This is how change begins.



NOTICE THE URGE. DON'T OBEY IT.

SKILL / ACT & URGE SURFING

An urge can feel strong without being an order. ACT helps you notice what is happening, make room for discomfort, and choose your response instead of automatically obeying the urge.



Rather than giving in to a craving, you can ride it out—like a surfer riding a wave.

AN URGE IS STRONG, BUT IT IS NOT AN ORDER.

01 / NOTICE IT

Say, "I'm noticing an urge." Notice the feelings in your body without judging yourself.

02 / MAKE ROOM FOR IT

Breathe. Let the urge be there without feeding it or acting on it. It can rise and fall.

Actually follow through, even if it feels dumb, artificial, or uncomfortable. This is how change begins.

PRACTICE BEFORE YOU NEED IT

When an urge comes, I will tell myself:

One action I can choose instead:



GUILT IS NOT SHAME

SKILL / RECOVERY MINDSET

You can acknowledge that something you did was wrong without shaming yourself.

GUILT

"I did something wrong." It can help you recognize a problem, take responsibility, and change direction. Guilt is helpful and useful insofar as it prods us along to change. Anything extra is useless guilt or shame.

SHAME

"I am bad, gross, hopeless, or beyond help." That message attacks your identity rather than guiding you toward a better decision.

From a Catholic perspective, destructive shame and despair do not reflect God's invitation to repentance and grace. You do not have to despise yourself in order to take sin seriously, accept his forgiveness, and try again.

Guilt is useful insofar as it prods us along to change. Any guilt over and above that is useless self-punishment.

WHEN YOU FALL

- ☐ Complete the 'After a Setback' worksheet on page 12.
- ☐ Be honest without attacking yourself.
- ☐ Notice the pattern or loophole that led to the setback.
- ☐ Make a concrete adjustment instead of another vague promise.
- ☐ Return to your plan immediately. One setback does not erase what you have practiced.
- ☐ If you are Catholic, return to Confession as appropriate; seek wise pastoral guidance if scrupulosity makes this overwhelming.



BUILD A LIFE WORTH CHOOSING

SOVEREIGNTY / GROWTH

Recovery is not just taking pornography out of your life. It is putting meaningful things back in.

What needs your attention right now? Connection with your wife? Honest friendship? self-care? Better sleep? A hard conversation? Something you have been procrastinating on? Unresolved pain? Exercise? Prayer? Something to look forward to?

Not every person needs deep trauma work or the same strategies. The point is to identify what is relevant in your life and address it seriously. Therapy can be valuable when deeper patterns, trauma, or relationship struggles need individualized attention.

YOUR NEXT HEALTHY STEPS

A relationship I want to strengthen:

A healthy way I can respond to stress or loneliness:

A difficult but necessary change I have been postponing:

One concrete action I will take this week:

Real freedom means living more consistently with who you want to be.



AFTER A SETBACK

WORKSHEET / REFLECTION

"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall." — Commonly attributed to Confucius

Complete this as soon as you can after a fall. Please reflect honestly. The purpose is to learn and get better, not to punish.

1. How do I actually feel about 1-5 minutes after using porn?

For example: Guilt, relief, disappointment, shame, sadness, emptiness, or something else?

2. What was happening before I chose pornography?

For example: Time, place, feelings, situations, websites, other access points.

3. What was the lie I bought into?

For example: "This will solve my problems." "I will feel loved." "I will feel masculine." "Just once."

4. What do I wish I had done instead?

For example: leave the room, go for a run around the block, call a friend,

5. What behaviors need to change to protect future tempted me?

For example: A device rule, call to a friend, different routine, or professional support?

6. A note to my future tempted self:

Tell your future tempted self what you want him to remember about the real consequences of porn use, (emotional, relational, spiritual, etc) and what do you want him to do instead? Write as much as you want. Write everything he needs to hear from you.



YOUR NEXT SEVEN DAYS

YOUR PLAN / BEGIN TODAY

You do not need to fix your entire life this week. You do need to begin making real, specific changes.

- ☐ Today: Remove the most obvious pornography access points.
- ☐ Today: Arrange for someone trustworthy to hold the restriction passcode.
- ☐ Tomorrow: Write down your three most common temptation patterns.
- ☐ This week: Create a realistic if-then plan for those patterns.
- ☐ This week: Identify one underlying need or relationship issue to address.
- ☐ This week: Share your plan with a trusted support person or professional.
- ☐ If you slip: Use the worksheet on page 12, make an adjustment, and begin again.

A FINAL WORD

You may have tried to quit a hundred times. That does not mean you are destined to keep struggling in exactly the same way. Be honest. Make the hard decisions. Use humility. Accept help. Build guardrails for the version of you who will be tempted. And keep moving toward the man you want to become.

Take this one day at a time. You can stay sober for just today.

Want individualized support? Learn about working with Jake Voelker, MA, LMFT at jakevoelker.com. This guide is educational and not a substitute for assessment or therapy. If your behavior feels out of control or is seriously affecting your safety or functioning, seek qualified professional help.



JMV THERAPY - RECOVERY TOOL

RECOVERY CALENDAR

Mark an X on the days you fall. Then look at the spaces in between.

WARM • GROUNDED • PRACTICAL

JakeVoelker.com

2027

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