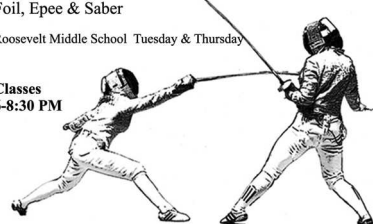


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# SAVAGE LOVE

**PORN AND CIRCUMSTANCE**  
 BY DAN SAVAGE



*My fiancée is extremely bothered by me looking at porn. It revolves around insecurities that have gotten so bad that even other girls bother her. (We can hardly go to a beach anymore.) I don't have any weird relationship with porn—no addiction, no violent stuff, and I look pretty infrequently. She acknowledges that it's a normal thing but is unable to get past it. She has gone through two counselors on her own, and we have gone through two couples counselors. They have ALL said the same thing: "It's completely reasonable to want him to not look at porn, and if he loves you, he won't look at it anymore." I have been asked how often I look at it, why I won't stop looking at it, why is it so important to me. They have recommended "clinics" to help me abstain from porn. This all happens after both of us say that our goal is for this—me looking at porn very occasionally—to not be a problem and even after we've told them that she used to be totally okay with it (four years ago) but now she feels crazy and doesn't want to feel this way about it. Our last therapist said my refusal to go to a clinic showed that we had a toxic relationship! I'm dumbfounded. Every time we see a therapist like this, it damages our relationship.*  
**Lack Of Sane Therapists**

"The therapists seen by LOST have drunk the Kool-Aid: Porn is automatically bad, stopping porn use is always the best answer, the person who doesn't like porn is always right," said Dr. David Ley, writer, clinical psychologist, and author of *The Myth of Sex Addiction*. "Such therapists develop target fixation when porn is involved and lose sight of other, real issues that need to be addressed."  
 The most obvious issue that needs addressing is your fiancée's evident and apparently metastasizing insecurity. (Yesterday you had to stop watching porn, today you can't go to the beach, tomorrow you won't be able to have female friends.) But since all the therapists you've seen thus far were batshit-crazy sexphobes—or "fixated" on porn, as Dr. Ley put it—her issues haven't been addressed.  
 "LOST's fiancée probably sees his use of porn as a reflection of his level of attraction to her," said Dr. Ley. "Or she's worried that a man who looks at porn is a man who will cheat. I understand and empathize with her fear."  
 But Dr. Ley wonders if something else is at work here. "LOST's fiancée might be dealing with a form of anxiety disorder, where obsession is sometimes expressed through irrational fears of infidelity," said Dr. Ley. "A therapist who specializes in cognitive behavioral therapy [the 'other kind of CBT'] for anxiety disorders may be helpful, and less likely to get distracted by blaming porn."  
 To find a therapist who specializes in CBT and isn't a batshit-crazy, smut-shaming sexphobe, Dr. Ley suggests you find a therapist through the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists ([aasect.org](http://aasect.org)) or the "Kink Aware Professionals Directory" at the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom ([ncsfreedom.org](http://ncsfreedom.org)). "The therapists LOST will find there are more likely to be sex-positive," said Dr. Ley. "and less likely to jump on the 'porn is the root of all problems' bandwagon." You can follow Dr. David Ley on Twitter @DrDavidLey.

*My husband and I have been married for 10 years and have two children. We had a wild sex life in the beginning, but his job (he's military) took him away so many times that our relationship (and the sex) took a nosedive. Upon coming back from deployments, he would always have an addiction to porn. I would believe him when he'd tell me that he stopped, but every time he'd come back it would start again. Last fall, he was gone for four months, and the addiction is still there. For the past year, he was going onto anonymous webcam sites and engaging in mutual masturbation with random women. I found out, and we are talking now about our problems and working to resolve them. The camming has stopped and we are going to attend counseling as a couple, but I also think he should attend counseling for himself. Our newfound communication and intimacy has reawakened my libido, and now I want it more than him. I'm angry that the lack of frequent sex is what drove him to porn, but now the problem is that I want it too much! I don't know how to handle my newfound libido and his lack of interest. I need him to be more adamant about showing me he wants me. Am I reading too much into it and being too needy?*

**Paranoid And Reawakened**

"Increased porn use in men is very often a response to loneliness—due to divorce, separation, etc.—or stress or depression," said Dr. Ley.  
 Deployment to a war zone, needless to say, can be highly stressful and very lonely.  
 "Sexual arousal is VERY good at diverting us from things we're bothered by," said Dr. Ley. "For many people, that's fine, and it works great to let off steam. But if you're not taking care of the real issue—loneliness, depression, stress—then the porn use can sometimes become its own problem."  
 Which is what seems to have happened in your case, PAR. Dr. Ley agrees that your husband should get some solo counseling in addition to the couples counseling you're planning on getting together.  
 As for your out-of-sync libidos, PAR, try to bear in mind that all of this—the discovery that it wasn't just porn, the communication that's happened in the wake of that revelation, the reawakening of your libido—basically just went down. It may take some time (and counseling) before you two reconnect and reestablish your sexual groove.  
 "PAR's husband might be intimidated by his wife's libido and desire—if he is a guy who is struggling with unmanaged feelings of depression and anxiety," said Dr. Ley. "So he could benefit from seeing a therapist and doing some work around how he is coping with these feelings while on deployment, and how he communicates these feelings to his wife. This way, she would know that when he's not interested in sex, it's because he's stressed or depressed, not because of the porn."

*My boyfriend likes to watch porn, but I do not. (Male couple, both 22, together two years.) He sometimes wants to watch it "with" me, and this is our compromise: He sits on my face, I rim him while he watches porn, we stroke ourselves. He's not "present" when we do this—he's focused on his porn. My best friend says this isn't sex and isn't healthy. She says I'm being used and she thinks less of my boyfriend now. I don't feel like I'm being used. We still have good "regular" sex with no porn. But it's true that I wouldn't do this (rim him while he basically ignores me) if it weren't for my boyfriend's desire to watch porn sometimes instead of having "regular" sex with me. Should I stop doing this? Am I being used?*

**Really Into My Man**

**P.S. I love eating his ass and I always come when we do this.**

"If it's working for him and his boyfriend, RIMM shouldn't let anybody tell him what he should be feeling," said Dr. Ley. "This is the epitome of healthy GGG compromise. Rim away."

On the Lovecast, Dan and Heather Havrilesky of Ask Polly discuss unfortunate tattoos: [savagelovecast.com](http://savagelovecast.com).