

# Porn shouldn't damage relationship

BY ANNE REBAR  
Columnist

This week, images of busty blonde women who had impossibly high silicon-to-natural-flesh ratios infiltrated my friend's computer. They were engaging in activities I don't find necessary to elaborate on.

It was mildly entertaining to learn of this event considering, she probably was horrified when these explicit images began popping up. I only wish I had been there. The virus' thorough takeover via massive amounts of porn caused great hassle and annoyance, but it also sparked conversation. Should women be offended, worried, or outraged if their boyfriends look at porn?

Last month, Simon Louis Lajeunesse, a scientist and a professor at the University of Montreal set out to compare the sexual views of men in their twenties who used porn to those who didn't. However, he ran into a little snag. He couldn't find any men who had never viewed the adult material.

While failing in his original goal, Lajeunesse proceeded to interview 20 men who were porn consumers about their current sexual habits. Lajeunesse found the average age males first viewed pornography was 10-years-old, which is consistent

with findings from other studies about porn. He also discovered that single men watch porn an average of 40 minutes three times a week, while men in relationships watch only 20 minutes an average of 1.7 times a week. Ninety percent of the guys' porn consumption came from the Internet.

Lajeunesse said none of the men in the study had an altered perception of women, and all still wanted relationships that were happy and fulfilling. None of the subjects showed any signs of sex addiction, and all had pretty conventional sexual practices.

Dr. Russell Stambaugh, a psychologist and sex therapist, said in an article for Web MD that oftentimes in couples one person has a porn interest, and the other thinks it's a problem. But he said that is rarely the case. The best studies suggest only about 5 percent of porn users have a problem that interferes with their daily life. Compare that with about 7 percent of gamblers, 10 percent of drinkers and 75 percent of illegal drug users who become addicts. Basically, for a large percentage of the population, porn probably is not going to have a negative effect.

Many women feel betrayed by their partners viewing other women in a sexual way, and they can also become insecure be-

cause they think they are not as attractive as the porn stars. Sex therapist Lonnie Barbach said men's attraction to porn rarely is a reflection of his partner. He said it is not about what men aren't getting at home, but rather a novelty. In other words, those 50 percent silicon bionic sex dolls are not who your boyfriend wishes he were sleeping with in real life instead of you. They are also not little two-dimensional mistresses he is cheating on you with. If he has told you he doesn't watch porn, coming across his XXX collection is definitely a violation of trust — and lack of a good hiding spot on his part — but it's not an affair.

Critics of porn say it can lead to adultery, sexual violence and a corruption of a normal sense of sexuality. In the 1980s, anti-porn campaigns claimed porn led to increased sexual violence, however, since then the availability and ease of access to porn has grown exponentially, and rates of sexual violence have dropped by 85 percent.

Some deride porn for its misogyny and mistreatment of women. I find no argument with that. Most porn on the Internet is downright degrading. However, to jump to the conclusion that men will treat women poorly just because they watch porn is probably a stretch. Obvi-



ously a large amount of the male population has watched porn on a regular basis. I'm sure most of my male friends fall in to this category, and all of them are generally smart, upstanding citizens, if not always gentlemen.

Sure, there will be the random whack job who thinks that because they saw something in a porno that it's all right to do in real life, but then again, isn't that the same with violent movies and video games? A majority of the population is able to separate reality from what they see on a TV or computer screen.

For good measure, I decided to do a quick, unofficial poll of my own friends. I asked 20 of them — from the most conservative to the more liberal — if they would be angry if they found out their boyfriends were looking at porn. After the hundreds of advice Web sites I found with women complaining about their husbands' and boyfriends' porn usage, I was surprised to find that all but one said they would be OK with it, provided it didn't

affect their relationships and it wasn't anything too out there.

This was similar to a 2003 survey conducted at Illinois State University, in which a broad population of women was asked the same question. One-third said they thought porn was a form of betrayal or infidelity, but the majority were either neutral or positive about their significant others' porn consumption.

Whether porn is something completely natural with absolutely no personal or cultural ramifications or it brings about the downfall of humankind and obliterates morality as we know it, I cannot say, and it seems no one else can either.

For the most part, porn seems a generally innocuous part of most men's and even some women's sex-lives, and it seems issues arise only when partners don't accept that. Obviously there are possibilities for problems to be created when it comes to over-indulgence, but then again, that's pretty much the case with most things in life.



BY ANNA MEIER  
Columnist

America's sweethearts: Self-proclaimed "guido" and a dysfunctional teen mom with the attitude and maturity level of half the girls at Kirksville Middle School.

I'm impressed by the scope and variety of the shows on MTV these days — the Music Television Network I grew up with now probably boasts less than 10 percent of shows that actually have anything to do with music. Instead, they've opted for a slew of programs featuring underproductive, overindulged people from our generation. These people grew up eating the same Handi-Snaks, watching the same "Rocket Power" and "Are You Afraid of the

## Talking About Our Generation: MTV shows display frivolity

Dark?" and listening to the same Hanson we did. Where things went wrong for them, the world will never know, and yet we'll spend hours of our lives watching their shows hoping to figure it out.

I like to think of the Truman community as being made up of 18- to 23-year-olds who make adult decisions, have intellectual conversations and aspire to bigger things than getting nicknamed Snooki or JWovv, but sometimes it seems as if the rest of America is on a vastly different level.

Most recently in the news of celebrities who fall into our age bracket is the dating union of Farrah Abraham of MTV's "Teen Mom" and Pauly D from the infamous "Jersey Shore." Abraham became pregnant at 16, and, for some reason, still thinks she has every right to go clubbing multiple nights of the week, leaving her 2-year-old at home with her mother, Debra, who appears to be on Quaaludes or some form of barbiturate.

Pauly D, on the other hand, is apparently one of Rhode Island's most renowned DJs, has a tanning bed in his home and orders hair gel by the case, according to his biography on MTV.com. He has to do his hair twice a day — once in the morning and again before he goes out at night. More often than not he starts a fight on one boardwalk or another and heads for the hills in his ripped graphic T-shirt when the cops show up.

I'm all for May/December romances, as I suppose you could call this one with a 10-year age difference between the couple. Some people benefit from the wisdom

of the older person in the relationship, but unfortunately, these two seem pretty much on the same intellectual plane, one shared with multiple seventh-graders and, unfortunately, probably some Truman students.

The problem with this whole scenario is the involvement of Sophia, Abraham's destined-to-be-screwed-up lovechild with an absent father. I hardly can think of two people more unlikely to have a healthy relationship based on their apparent emotional instability constantly demonstrated on their respective TV shows. Not only does Abraham go out with her half-baked friends to drive across the country from Iowa to Rhode Island to see and be seen with Pauly D at one of his DJ gigs, but she seems to have little to no mothering instinct or desire, something Pauly apparently finds attractive.

Beyond the new dating setup, Abraham was also in the news Jan. 19 for her involvement in a domestic violence case with her befuddled mother. In Abraham's previous show, "16 and Pregnant," she gets slapped in the mouth by her mother during a car ride. Now her mother has done it again, though seemingly more severely because she was arrested for allegedly choking Abraham and hitting her on the side of her head and mouth. Even worse, Abraham's mother basically is Sophia's primary caregiver, seeing as Abraham can't seem to stay home long enough to shower, much less to be bothered with dealing with the consequences of her own irresponsibility.

I'm entertained by these people. I

have been since the sixth grade when my parents finally broke down and got cable. But when I was in middle school, the people on "Real World" and "Road Rules" and whatever would be the equivalent of "Teen Mom," seemed so much older, so grown up. Now I see them as people I went to high school with, people who never could grow up with the rest of us and probably never will. They are people so narcissistic and demanding that their own mothers — or Abraham's, for example, who is practically in a state of pharmacologically induced comatose — can't handle being around them.

I'm not sure how we got to this place, but, after considering this couple, it's pretty clear how our generation has acquired many of its negative stereotypes and reputation for laziness, pettiness and ungratefulness. Abraham and Pauly D both make much more money than I ever could dream of having at this point. And for doing what? Absolutely nothing, unless you count tanning and being argumentative. The bottom line is that this makes for a very unpromising cycle for Abraham's daughter and her generation in general.

Writing this only brings more attention to Abraham and her greasy boyfriend, but I think it's time to ask why we love them or love to hate them so much. And also to make an effort to commend some teen moms, or just average college-aged girls, who are not chasing after some guy 10 years her senior with a Cadillac tattoo down his side and a step-by-step hair tutorial.

## MEDITATIONS OF MICHELLE: Meditating unclutters mind

BY MICHELLE MARTIN  
Columnist

"You get all that by just sitting there?! I don't believe you." That was my dad's abrupt response when I tried to explain how meditating actually improved my mood and concentration. Somehow, the idea of "just sitting there" seems almost daunting. No text messages, no Internet, nothing to look at and not even music to listen to. It sounds dull at best, frustrating at worst.

Like my dad, I also was skeptical about meditation — until I tried it. One day I couldn't focus on my homework — my mind was buzzing, and I was flat-out lost in distraction. I was curious to test the lofty claims of meditation, so I went down the hall into an empty lounge and played a guided meditation I found on YouTube. Surprisingly, I enjoyed it so much that when the 10-minute video was done, I kept sitting. I found when I least expected it, a massive wave of peace hit me. I felt completely open, loving and content. I didn't want anything,

When I finally stood up, I found "just sitting there" for a few minutes had left me feeling lighter and more alert. I left feeling the inner glow of true contentment.

You know how you feel when you can't concentrate — like there's a cloud of thoughts buzzing around your mind like gnats? Whenever I sit down to work, and my mind is restless and flighty, it's usually a symptom of some unresolved worry I am subconsciously trying to wrestle with: stress about all of my homework, people in my life, the cold weather or any number of things. Meditation clears away all of that clutter. Somehow, when you "just sit there" for a few minutes, no longer distracted by the endless enticements of the external world, you temporarily surrender control of all those concerns — you are letting go. Ironically, when you sit down to meditate and stop trying to solve everything, you leave feeling more alert, thus more capable of fixing your problems.

Millions of Americans regularly meditate to reap the priceless mental and physical health benefits.

Meditators generally have low stress, a relaxed demeanor, a boosted immune system, mental clarity and improved health overall. A huge body of research exists on the benefits of meditation. One study that caught my eye was conducted at University of Madison-Wisconsin. Brain imaging of meditators suggested meditation gradually rewires the brain, conditioning it to react favorably to stressful situations. Instead of the typical fight-or-flight response, regular meditation cultivates an attitude of acceptance, which fosters contentment. A Harvard study found that meditating shuts down the parietal lobe, which integrates sensory perception. This allows the subject to loosen their sensory limits and achieve a feeling of "oneness" and connectivity with the wider world.

A few months ago, I upped my semi-regular meditation practice to twice a day for 20 minutes per session. But those 40 minutes a day bring me astounding results, my favorite being that most days I can sit in a classroom and do something I've

never done before: effortlessly pay attention. I am absolutely convinced the change was due to meditation. For years, I always had my Adderall prescription on hand so I could focus and work efficiently, but now I easily do without. I tend not to sweat the small things quite so much. As a general rule I'm less irritable, more pleasant and happier.

The point of meditation is not necessarily to clear your mind of all thoughts. That's nearly impossible, because all your life you have been conditioned to constantly think. If you try to force yourself to stop thinking, it will not work unless you have been meditating heavily for many years. Rather, the point is to let go of the world for a few minutes. If your mind overflows with thought, let it happen. If you think something unpleasant, let it happen. If you feel some emotion, let it happen. If you get bored, let it happen. The only thing you can do wrong in meditation is to try to do it right. As soon as I started grasping for moments of deep contentment during my meditations, they slipped away. The sensation only struck me



when I wasn't looking for it. That's when I learned that meditation only works if you don't try to do it right. This gets difficult, because once you experience the joy and lightness that can occur during and after meditation, you naturally want the same effect every time. But as the Buddhist ideal dictates, only by giving up your desire for something — in this case, peace — can you truly find it.

If you're curious about meditation but would like some help, try a guided meditation hosted by the Art of Living club at 4:30 p.m. each Wednesday in McClain room 209. All are welcome. You might leave with a clear head, a lighter load and a smile on your face. I leave you with the words of Remez Sasson: "Your mind is your instrument. Learn to be its master and not its slave."