

The Official Guide to

Overcoming Pornography

2025 Edition



Relay Health ©

relay

A letter from the founder...

I still remember the first moment when I realized I couldn't do this alone.

I had convinced myself for so long that I could do it—that the “next time” would be the last time. Or that with each new year, I'd take advantage of the clean slate to finally sustain my sobriety. On the outside, people saw me as successful—someone who had it all together. But on the inside, I felt completely broken and frustrated. My struggle with pornography made me feel unworthy and incompetent; it muted and dampened the joy I felt in every other area of my life as I fixated on this hidden desire to be free from unwanted sexual behavior.

A big part of me hated the secrecy and the lies. Another part felt hopeless. Even though I was ashamed and embarrassed, I was desperate to be honest and open—to reach out and try something different. I knew that this old way of relying on willpower and beating myself up was only making things worse.

Though I felt like I'd already tried everything, I decided to try a different approach: I joined a group. I got support from a therapist. I opened up to trusted people in my life. I started focusing less on the number of days I could stay clean and more on my daily recovery work. I began to study my story at a deeper level, to understand the real roots of my addiction. Slowly, I started to cultivate a deeper purpose and desire to live a life that felt whole and meaningful.

Over the next six years, I began to feel real healing take place. Through my story, I learned the truth that addiction thrives in isolation—and far too many of us spend years struggling all alone. That's what led me to create Relay, a group-based program designed to help people overcome pornography with the kind of shame-free support and community I wish I'd had.

Relay was born out of my own private struggle. It's become everything I wish I had when I was trying to do this alone—when I felt like there was no one who truly understood what I was going through. If you're feeling stuck, ashamed, or exhausted from carrying this burden by yourself, I want you to know that you don't have to.

What I found, and what I hope Relay can offer you, is the support and connection I was so desperate for. It's not about quick fixes or surface-level solutions—it's about

finding a community where you're seen, where you can be honest, and where you can finally stop battling in isolation. You don't have to keep going through this alone.

This isn't just about quitting unhealthy behavior; this is about reclaiming control and confidence. It's about restoring you to your true self.

You can do this, and we're here with you every step of the way.

Sincerely,
Chandler Rogers

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chandler Rogers". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

CEO & Co-Founder, Relay Health

The Relay Program

Relay is the #1 group-based program to break free from the unhealthy system of addiction and find lasting freedom.



Group & Community

Get a private group where you can practice honesty, learn together, and escape the cycle of isolation.



Interactive Lessons

Identify the root issues that are keeping you trapped in shame and unwanted behavior.



Daily Exercises

Take concrete steps each day that help your brain rewire and form new pathways.



www.joinrelay.app/porn-recovery

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I. Introduction

Quitting pornography can feel like an impossible battle. You've tried countless times, yet the same cycle keeps happening. If that sounds familiar, you're not alone.

Porn addiction is extremely powerful. It probably crept into your life quietly. Over time, it left you feeling more disconnected, ashamed, and hopeless. Maybe it's damaged your marriage, strained your relationships, lowered your self confidence, or made you feel like you're living a double life. Because of these behaviors, it's become really hard to truly like yourself—to feel satisfied with the person you see in the mirror. The harder you try to fight it, the more powerless you feel.

But here's the truth: you don't have to stay stuck. The brain is able to heal and rewire at any age. This guide is here to help you figure out why quitting has been so difficult and how to start breaking the cycle for good.

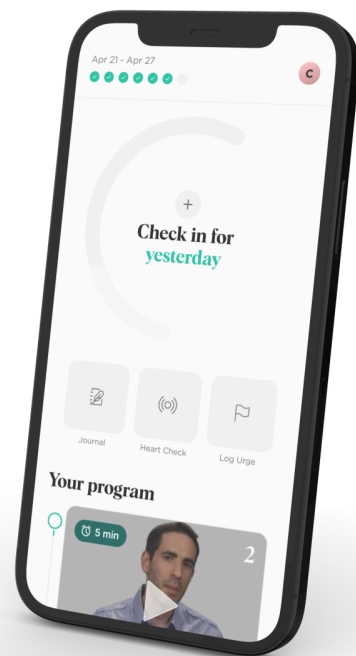
Real change is possible. And it starts now.

This guide is brought to you by Relay

Relay is a comprehensive program designed to help you overcome sexual addiction for good. With personalized daily exercises, therapist-created content, and a powerful team-based experience, Relay helps you rewire your brain to make changes that last. Unlike other programs, Relay surrounds you with real accountability and people who truly understand your struggles.

At Relay, we understand that true recovery is about more than just stopping a behavior—it's about transforming the way you live, think, and connect with others.

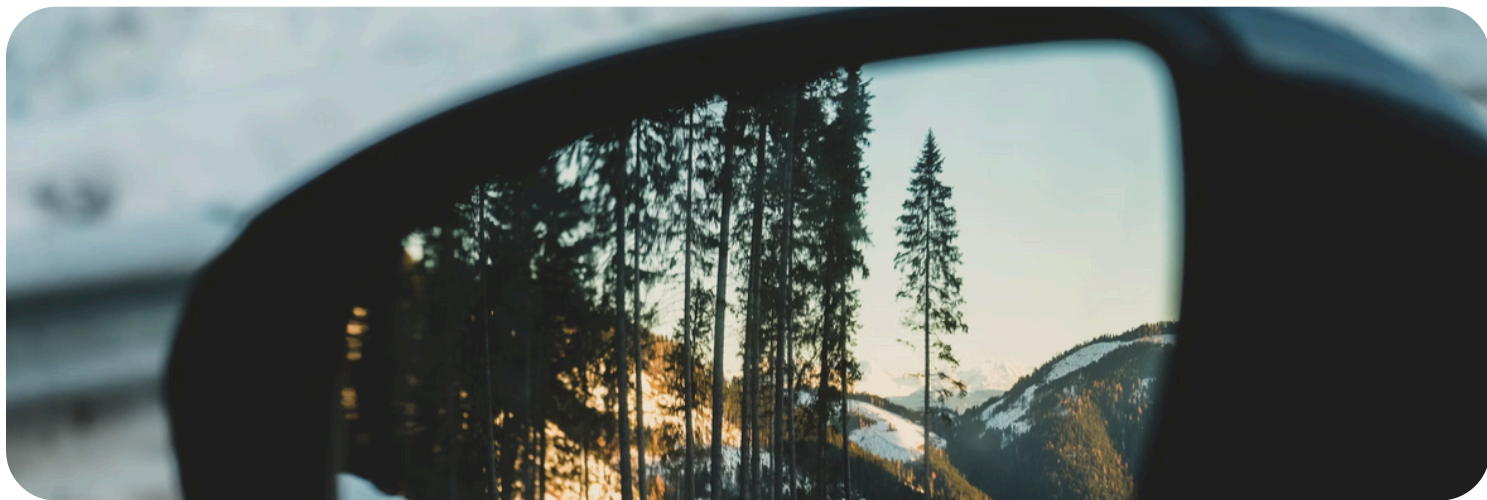
Throughout this guide, you'll find insights and tools that have helped thousands of people like you break free from addiction. Whether this is your first attempt at recovery or you've struggled for years, know that you don't have to walk this path alone. We're here to support you every step of the way, with proven methods, tools, and community to help you be successful.



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II. Roadmap

Imagine driving a car in reverse... without a backup camera. You have to twist around and crane your neck to see out the rear window, your view of the road is limited, your headlights become useless, you can't see the dash or control the radio or adjust the temperature, and there's probably a motion detector or something beeping loudly at you. Technically, you are driving. But it sure is not fun.



While driving in reverse is useful for brief moments, it's not an efficient way to travel from point A to point B. It's not only ineffective and dangerous, but it's also difficult to enjoy the beauty of a scenic road, sing along with the windows down, or bond with other passengers when all your effort is focused on driving backward.

In this metaphor, driving your car backwards is like going through life with a dependence on pornography. Technically, you're still driving and getting around, but you're bruised and banged up. Not only is it exhausting, but this way of navigating has led you to miss out on the full depth of beauty and connection around you. This is because you've gotten stuck living on a system that limits you, continually falling back into behaviors that you've probably come to hate.

At Relay, we believe in helping you learn how to drive correctly—empowering you to roll down the windows, taste the wind, blast your favorite song, and experience the freedom that comes from creating a life that serves you. While this guide can't replace the full Relay program, our goal here is to help you understand the kind of shifts you need to make in order to start heading in the right direction. This won't be the trite, unhelpful advice you can find in any random online article or Reddit thread. Instead, we'll teach you what it requires to actually change your brain—to help you break free from the old, unhealthy system of addiction and build a new, sustainable system of recovery.

Here's what we'll cover:

Section 1 | *How Did I Get Here?*

We'll walk you through why it's been so hard for you to quit in the past, as well as three actionable steps you can take to start turning things around.

Section 2 | *Building a Healthy Renewal Cycle*

Next, we'll discuss how to replace unwanted sexual behaviors with a new, healthy system you can integrate into daily life.

Section 3 | *Slowing Down the Addiction Cycle*

With a deeper understanding of your brain and healthier foundation to stand on, you'll be ready to learn some advanced tools and techniques to prevent relapses and handle urges with greater confidence than you ever have before.

If you've tried over and over again to overcome pornography for good, you've come to the right place.

If you're just hoping to find the fastest way out of this mess, it may be tempting to skip to the end. However, if you take the time to really digest and understand the science behind each section, we're confident you'll experience perspective shifts key to healing. But remember, information does not equal transformation. What we've seen from the thousands of people in the Relay program is that to actually experience behavior change, you must fully integrate each principle into your way of living. That's the hardest part—but the good news is that you have an incredible community accessible to you with so many others who are working towards the same goal. This approach is all about seeing this journey through a totally new lens and gaining a renewed sense of hope that change truly is possible.



Section 1

How Did I Get Here?

You probably didn't wake up one day and decide, "I think I'll get addicted to pornography today!" Of course not. Instead, a journey of countless small moments and factors led you here.

Malcom Gladwell teaches that it takes *ten thousand hours* to become an expert at something. You've probably spent a lot of time subconsciously practicing the addiction cycle you've been caught in. In

many ways, you're an *expert* at it.

The good news is that the way to break free is exactly the same. Each of the hours you put into overcoming addiction count towards your metaphorical "ten thousand." It may seem impossible right now, but with consistent repetitions—no matter how long you've struggled—your brain really is capable of becoming an expert at not needing pornography anymore.

Relational – Core – Behavioral

This probably isn't your first time trying to quit pornography. There's a reason it's been so hard to quit: it's become hard-wired into your nervous system as the primary way to find comfort, to de-stress, or to feel desired—even if it's hollow and fleeting. But where did this all stem from?

World-renowned addiction expert Gabor Maté, MD, has said that addiction is "an attention deficit disorder." This isn't referring to trouble focusing; rather, Maté suggests that early in our lives, no matter how good our upbringing was, we likely experienced a *deficit* of attention. At some point, when we needed to feel fully safe, seen, and validated in a relationship that was important to us, we didn't get that need met. There's an entire field of psychology dedicated to studying the effects that these wounds have on development (called Attachment Theory).

“Addiction is an
attention-deficit disorder.”

As humans, we all experience **Relational** brokenness. Whether in our family relationships, our friendships, or our romantic relationships, we experienced some form of imperfection in our bonding with others. This can encompass larger, more obvious traumatic experiences, but it can also include all the subtle ways you may have been overlooked or didn't get your needs met. *"Maybe,"* you thought to yourself, *"I'm not good enough, smart enough, athletic enough, pretty enough, or fully acceptable enough for them."* Whatever the story was for you, these experiences created wounds that, for the first time, you had to learn to soothe on your own.

Sound familiar?

These **Core** wounds often lead to feelings of fear or shame—emotions that are deeply uncomfortable. If you've struggled with addiction, you're likely familiar with them. Over time, as these wounds became embedded into your nervous system, you found ways to soothe the pain. Some of those ways were healthy and helped you grow; others were not, and only deepened the problem.

Your brain, wanting to keep you safe from painful feelings like fear and shame, found ways to distance you from them. But, unfortunately, your brain (the *limbic system* in particular) is more concerned with immediate pain relief and pleasure than it is with making rational choices. The prefrontal cortex is the part of your brain that drives your decisions and values (the part that says, “*I know that pornography isn’t good for me, and I feel like I shouldn’t be watching it*”) and it takes a back seat when there’s immediate pain to remedy. So the limbic system of your brain takes you right to the unwanted **Behaviors** that it knows will numb this pain, even if it’s only for a little bit.

Quick side note—these “acting out” behaviors aren’t limited to pornography or other sexual behavior. They can include things like food, alcohol, scrolling, entertainment, workaholism, or any other combination of things that we might use to escape the pain, boredom, or discomfort of life.

Try not to feel frustrated with your brain. It’s designed to keep you alive, and is more concerned with your survival than with your happiness. But your brain is your friend. This circuit of Addiction is a part of your brain, a part of you, and you’ll need to be intentional about working together with your brain to help it re-learn what you *actually* need and what is *actually* best for you.

The Problem with the System

Here’s where we get tripped up. When we feel pain, we turn to **Behaviors** like pornography to cope with it. Then, we feel ashamed that we engaged in this unwanted behavior (or someone we love finds out and confronts us, or we suffer a consequence of this behavior), and so we feel even worse. To deal with that shame, we turn to the same behavior again to escape the very shame that acting out created.

The Addictive Cycle



The issue with this Addiction Cycle is that it’s self-reinforcing. Each step creates a “need” for the next one, and so on and on and on and on. The more you act out sexually or engage with pornography, the more wounds you create and the more you distance yourself from the relationships that matter most to you. This vicious cycle of isolation and shame continues to feed itself, digging us deeper and leaving us feeling more stuck and hopeless than ever.

So How Do I Get Out?

Our goal in the **Relay program** is to teach you how to get yourself out of this unhealthy system of addiction, and instead build a new system for healthy, wholehearted living: a system where you will no longer need your addiction. First, we'll focus on developing a new, strong foundation for you to stand on. As we do that, we'll learn how to dismantle the old cycle of addiction. Once we get the Behavior under control (slowing down and preventing relapses), it will free you up to address the deeper Core Wounds that got you into this mess in the first place.

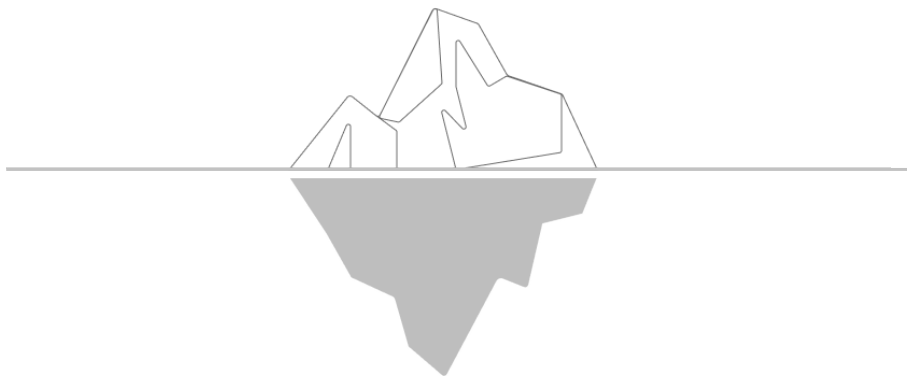
Something important to keep in mind as you move from the old, unhealthy system into the new, healthy system is that it will take work and consistency. This is because we're trying to help your brain forge new pathways! There are three major areas of work you'll need to do in order to set yourself up for success:

1. Study your story
2. Do the daily reps
3. Surround yourself with unshakable support



1. Study Your Story

Studying your story means becoming intimately acquainted with your past in order to understand your present. Remember the **Core Wounds** we talked about in the last segment, and how they manifest as addictive **Behaviors** that hurt our important **Relationships**? Any addiction is really just a *behavioral manifestation of a lifetime of core wounds* that weren't ever properly dealt with, like the tip of an iceberg that extends deep into the ocean. To create lasting change, you have to have the courage to go under the surface and address the full breadth and depth of the iceberg. And yes, it does require courage!



As you start building a life of freedom from addiction, you'll need to identify what your core wounds are, and what you'll need to do to address them moving forward. Some wounds run deep while others may be more like scratches. Regardless of size or shape, they can keep us stuck in the cycle if we don't work through them fully. This step is all about self discovery and gaining more awareness around your personal story. It may be uncomfortable, but it's a critical step towards healing.

2. Do the Daily Reps

You didn't get here overnight, and the truth of the matter is that you're not going to learn an entire new way of approaching life overnight either. This isn't a *7-Day Hack to Overcome Pornography For Good!* kind of playbook (hint, those things aren't real). We want to help you to achieve sustainable, lasting change—to not just achieve sobriety, but to become a more healthy, whole person. To do that, you'll need to put in the daily work.

Think about a skill you've developed—it could be anything! Whether it's playing basketball, painting, or mastering Excel spreadsheets, odds are, you've spent many hours practicing that ability in order to gain the skill level you have now. Quitting compulsive behaviors is no different!

Breaking free from pornography is *not* like a video game boss that you have to fight over and over until you finally beat it; rather, it's more like putting in reps at the gym to build healthy muscle. Putting in the daily work consistently helps your brain rebuild its damaged pathways and start functioning at a normal, healthy level again. If you're willing to hang in there and simply show up to trust the process every day—even when progress is hard to notice—you can be successful. We'll talk about what this looks like practically later on.

3. Surround Yourself With Unshakable Support

The truth is, you can't overcome this alone. It's not a question of your strength or willpower. In fact, research shows that connection is the key. As Johann Hari shared in a TED talk, "the opposite of addiction is *connection*."

If you're reading this, you've likely felt the deep loneliness that comes with pornography addiction. Pornography isolates us—that's a fact. To break free, you need to surround yourself with people who understand and support you. Being part of a group that's committed to recovery, where you can both give and receive help, is essential. Together, you'll put in the work and walk the path to healing.



*The opposite of addiction
is connection.*

Finding support from others on the same path is key, but it's just as important to be open with your loved ones. You don't need to tell everyone your struggles, but being honest with those who care about you allows them to truly support you. To break free, you need unwavering support—people who understand your journey and who see the *real you* inside.

We have to be honest with ourselves: shame and fear are the culprits that keep us stuck. These are the voices inside our head that prevent us from reaching out to others.

Real change happens only when we're willing to step into that discomfort and surround ourselves with the right resources, the right people, and the right tools.

If you're ready to break free, it's time to rethink how you approach support and connection. Building a strong system isn't easy, but the reward is lasting freedom, confidence, and a new way of living.

What Now?

Dr. Patrick Carnes, a pioneer in the field of sexual addiction recovery, has said, "The whole first year of recovery is learning to grab ahold of your prefrontal cortex and not let go."

In the next section, we'll help you learn to grab ahold of the prefrontal cortex, the decision-making, values-informed part of your brain. We'll lay out a step-by-step process for you to build a healthy renewal system, strengthening the parts of your prefrontal cortex that addiction has weakened.

But why is building this healthy foundation so necessary? Think of it like trying to dispel the darkness from a room. No matter how much you jump around or flap your arms, the only way to

really get the darkness to leave is to replace it with *light*.



Section 2

Building a Healthy Renewal Cycle

This section is all about building a strong foundation for renewal—addressing key areas of your lifestyle overall. The word “renew” means to *restore freshness*, and if you've been dealing with

addiction, you likely feel anything but fresh. Instead, you probably feel worn out and beaten down by life.

By addressing your habits and lifestyle all together, we actually make it easier to tackle unwanted behaviors like pornography. Rather than giving you a generic list of “good habits” you’ve heard before, we’ll design a strategic, personalized system that fits where you are now and moves you toward where you want to be.

Finding Your Why

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) famously said, “He who has a *why* to live can bear almost any how.”

Having a solid *Why* is really important, so the first step we’ll take in building a renewal cycle will be to identify your *why* that’s driving you to stop pornography. If the only reason you want to quit porn right now is to make the pain stop, that’s understandable. If addiction is living mindlessly, behaving in ways that go against our core values, then being motivated by a strong *Why* is the exact opposite. Finding a goal, a motivation, a robust *Why*, will strengthen the prefrontal cortex of your brain, allowing you to focus on what you really want.

Take the time to go over the next segment of this guide carefully, working out your answers to the following questions. If you’re able to, pull out a sheet of paper or the notes app in your phone, and write down your responses to these questions as you craft a strong *Why*. There’s a much more expanded version of this exercise within the full Relay program, but we’ve provided a sample for you here.

Creating a Powerful *Why*

Mini Version

- 1** Why do you want to quit pornography?
- 2** What personal values are being violated by your addiction?
- 3** Who in your life will benefit most from your recovery?
- 4** If you didn't give up porn, what could it cost you?
- 5** If you did successfully give up porn, what might your life look like?

Look over your answers. Are the things you wrote down sincere? Are they vulnerable? These answers should help you start to identify some of the core elements of your *Why*. Just like a good bonfire needs both tiny pieces of kindling, and large pieces of dry wood, a powerful *Why* is composed of a variety of elements.

Here's an example of a powerful and effective *Why* from a 42-year-old man, Michael:

"I want to quit pornography because it's tearing apart the life I've worked so hard to build. My wife Emma is amazing, and I've seen how my addiction has put cracks in our relationship—she deserves a husband who's present, not dishonest or hiding behind a screen. I think about my kids, especially my son, who's eight now, and how much I want to be a father he can look up to. I don't want him to grow up with a distant, preoccupied dad. Honesty and loyalty are values I've always prided myself on, but I can't keep pretending that porn isn't violating those values every day. I feel like I'm living a double life—a successful engineer on the outside, but secretly battling shame and guilt on the inside. If I don't stop, I will lose Emma's trust completely, and I'm terrified that one day, my kids will sense the distance I've created. But when I imagine a life without porn, I see myself feeling proud of who I am again, not hiding behind lies. I see a stronger marriage, one where Emma and I can truly connect without this barrier between us. I see myself being fully there for my kids—present, engaged, and the kind of dad they deserve. And more than anything, I want to live with integrity, knowing that I'm no longer letting this addiction define me."

Notice how specific and vulnerable that is? Really aim to get specific with your *Why*, even if it might feel unattainable right now.

Once you have a working draft in place, find strategies to revisit it often. To help you remember your *Why*, you might try some of these ideas:

Suggestions to Remember Your *Why*

Discuss it with the people in your support system, opening up about why it's meaningful & motivating for you

Share it with your partner or family members who are aware of your journey towards overcoming pornography

Write it on a card and place it somewhere you can see it

Putting it on a sticky note that stays with your computer

Change your screensaver to something that reminds you of your *Why*

Use a dry-erase marker to write it on your mirror or your shower door

Carry a written version of it in your wallet

Set a few reminders of your *Why* on your phone to go off at various times throughout the day

Leave a written version of your *Why* next to your phone charger, or something else you use or see regularly

Choose a physical object, such as a beaded bracelet or anything special to you, to serve as a symbol for your *Why*

Moving out of the Addiction Cycle and quitting pornography are not easy things to do. Change won't happen overnight, but it will happen. Keeping your *Why* at the forefront of your mind will help you as you continue in your journey. Renewing it often will bring you strength, especially in times when you feel weak or tempted.

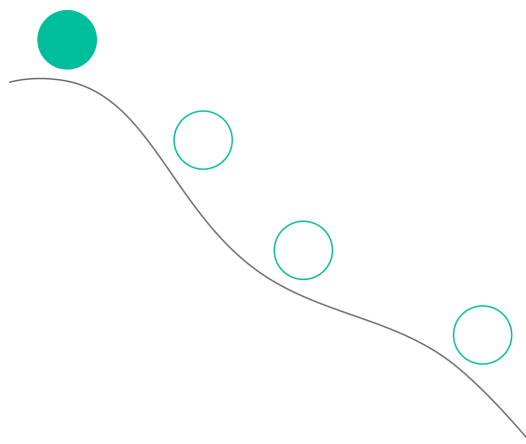
Establishing Healthy Rhythms

Now that you've established why you're putting in all this work, it's time to build a new mental system for your brain to rely on. Let's use an analogy to illustrate why this is an important piece of the puzzle.



Imagine a large round boulder, perched at the top of a rocky mountain face. If something were to push it, it would wobble, and then start rolling down the hill. When would be the easiest time to stop the roll of that huge rock? Definitely not when it gets to the bottom of the slope, crashing through trees and brush at a hundred miles per hour. And probably not halfway down the slope, as it's really starting to move fast, gathering more and more momentum as it barrels toward the bottom.

The easiest place to stop the boulder is the very moment it starts to move! If you can stop the initial wobble *before* the boulder gets free and starts rolling down the hill, you won't have to deal with the wreckage at the bottom of the slope. So the question is this: if the bottom of the hill is a "relapse" (watching porn, masturbating, or any other acting out), then what are the early indicators or warning signs that your boulder is starting to roll?



We talked already about studying our *past*, but addiction is also perpetuated by neglecting areas of our life in the *present*. Self care are two words that get thrown around a lot, but, in reality, it's the things we do proactively to take care of our body, mind, spirit, and relationships that keep our boulder balanced and secure at the top of the mountain. And by the way, self care here isn't

referring to taking a spa day or getting a luxurious haircut—we're talking about caring for your basic health in all the important areas.

When we neglect self care in our lives, it results in the ground around our boulder becoming *unstable*, which effectively means our boulder isn't secure. To remedy this, we need to focus on developing a strong Renewal Cycle. The Renewal Cycle is composed of four different areas of self care: 1) physical health, 2) mental & emotional health, 3) relational health, and 4) spiritual health.

Areas of Self Care

"Beneath every behavior is a feeling. And beneath each feeling is a need. And when we meet that need, rather than focus on the behavior, we begin to deal with the cause, not the symptom." —Ashleigh Warner

Physical

There's a line from *The Princess Bride* where the villain admits, "If you haven't got your health, you haven't got anything."

This is true in real life. Our physical health sets the tone for our entire lives. If we haven't established healthy rhythms with proper sleep, diet and exercise, it is nearly impossible to create a lifestyle that will lead to freedom from porn.

When we neglect the basics, it creates problems—i.e., when we're tired or hungry, we get angrier faster, leading us to snap at our spouse or withdraw from activities that would have been fun and connecting. These problems are deeper holes that our brains want to fill as fast as possible to keep us from hurting. And what does our brain try to fill painful holes with? Things that keep us distracted and numb, like addiction.

As you find resources and practices to improve your physical health, you'll be able to address deeper concerns from a place of stability, leading to lasting change.

What steps do you need to take to strengthen your physical health? Write down your thoughts and any takeaways you've come up with, and make a plan to put them into action!

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Heal your relationship from pornography.

Get accountability and the power of community.



Mental & Emotional

This is where people tend to have the most trouble. Generally, we live in a culture that divides emotions into two categories: Good and Bad. Can you think of some emotions that you label as “Bad” and try to avoid? Anger, sadness, fear are just a few. But here’s the truth:

There is no such thing as *good* or *bad* emotions.

Emotions are just signals. They’re little messages our brain sends us to help us be aware of our needs. Even the most extreme emotion rarely lasts longer than ten minutes in the brain. One of the most important skills you will gain as you pursue addiction recovery is becoming emotionally fluent. This means learning what our emotions are trying to tell us, and studying them with curiosity like they’re little bugs under a microscope to learn from.

Do you ever feel like your emotions take you hostage? Do they arise suddenly, almost without warning, and lead you to do or say things you sometimes regret? Does it ever feel like you're on a freight train without brakes, unable to stop the momentum?

If you relate to any of these, it could be a sign that the muscles that control the emotional pathways in your brain aren’t very strong. Surprisingly, there are actual exercises you can do that will genuinely build these muscles. Doing daily reps of these exercises might feel hokey or weird at first, but in reality you’re strengthening an actual connection in your brain.

Tools for Emotional Fitness

Journaling, affirmations, and meditation are powerful self care exercises that can strengthen your ability to overcome addiction.

Journaling

Keeping a journal helps you to study and process your emotions and daily experiences. Even if you don't like journaling for fun, writing with a purpose in recovery is a powerful form of "heart work."

Affirmations

Affirmations are simple statements that reinforce what is true, similar to your Why. Repeating affirmations in the morning has been shown to increase both motivation and your propensity to internalize the truth you're reciting.

Example Affirmations

I am a good person.

I'm not excited to go without porn today, but I know I'll be a better person and feel better about myself when I do.

I'm going to do my best today.

I'm worth the effort it will take me to quit porn for good.

Meditation

If you're reading this guide, it's likely that the muscle that allows you to dismiss an urge without acting on it isn't as strong as you want it to be. Meditation is the art of sitting still and simply focusing. Whether you focus on your breathing, an object in front of you, or something else, meditation is a great way to put in quality reps to strengthen important connections in the brain.

Brain scans show that sincere, honest prayer provides benefits similar to meditation. While addiction pushes you to constantly seek distractions, both prayer and meditation help you slow down and focus, strengthening the same brain muscles used to dismiss urges. If you're religious, try turning prayer into a meditative time to connect with your Higher Power.

What positive rhythms can you focus on to better your mental and emotional health? Write down your thoughts and any goals you've come up with, and make a plan to put them into action.

Relational

Chris Chandler (LMHC, CSAT), a therapist with over 20 years of experience helping people overcome addiction, noticed something interesting about almost every single addicted individual he counseled. The majority of these people expressed feeling an absence of close, meaningful friendships.

We know that pornography is isolating, but what many of us don't realize is that isolation isn't just a *physical* state. It's more than being home alone while your friends or family go somewhere else. It's a mental, emotional, and even spiritual state of *disconnection*. You may have noticed yourself putting distance between you and your partner, loved ones, and friends. There are many reasons pornography triggers this kind of behavior, but that's beyond the scope of this guide. The important thing to know is that without secure, deep attachments to the people around you, it's difficult to achieve permanent change or deep happiness.

Remember the quote from earlier, "Connection is the opposite of addiction"? Many studies have focused on the benefits of support groups in addiction recovery (you can read the most commonly-cited one [here](#)), finding that individuals who utilized a group recovered faster and experienced longer-lasting sobriety than those who didn't.

Whether you feel fulfilled in your current relationships or not, joining a **group-based program**, either in person or online, can be a turning point. These groups are safe spaces where you can work together with others who understand you, find answers to questions without judgment, and celebrate your victories. Especially if you've struggled with pornography for a long time and felt unable to make progress, establishing a healthy relational rhythm for yourself by joining a group can help you to make real and lasting change.

"People in groups get better faster. It's that simple." — Chris Chandler, CSAT

What positive rhythms will you establish in your life that pertain to your relational health? Write down your thoughts and any goals you've come up with, and make a plan to put them into action!

Spiritual

Faith and spirituality are powerful anchors in addiction recovery. Regardless of how spiritual or religious you may view yourself, establishing a healthy spiritual rhythm can be transformative.

Spirituality isn't just about religious rituals—it's about grounding yourself in truth and connecting to something greater than your own desires.

In the journey to overcome addiction, the spiritual element is rooted in connection. But unlike the connection we build with others, spirituality connects us with our Higher Power and the person we are meant to become when we let go of pornography. For many, this is a deeply personal and faith-based relationship with God, where surrendering to His guidance brings strength and peace.

Take a moment to reflect: what truths matter most to you? What values do you want to live by?

At the core of any spiritual journey is surrender—acknowledging that we are part of something greater than ourselves. Faith teaches us to be selfless, to love, and to serve. Addiction, however, pulls us in the opposite direction, encouraging selfishness and isolation. Pornography, in particular, feeds a fixation on fulfilling personal lust.

To unlearn these patterns, we must embrace three key practices: service, stillness, and surrender. These principles not only bring us closer to our Higher Power but also align our daily actions with the deeper purpose we were created for.

Spiritual Skills for Recovery

Surrender

Can you quit pornography? Yes! Can you do it alone? No. Have you been able to do it before now? Probably not. This isn't meant to discourage you, but rather to help you see the pattern. If you're currently white-knuckling the wheel, determinedly "driving backwards," then consider this your invitation to let go. Learning to surrender to the truth that we need help is a critical part of recovering from any addiction. In the 12 Step Program, they repeat the phrase, "We've learned that our lives are powerless, and we need a power greater than ourselves."

What do you need that's greater than yourself? Is it a deeper connection with your Higher Power? Support from a group of people on the recovery path alongside you? Is it an acceptance of stillness? A willingness to examine your Core Wounds and begin to work on healing them? We cannot truly heal until we learn what it means to fully surrender.

Service

Your mind might jump immediately to organized service projects, like soup kitchens or humanitarian aid trips to clean up after tornadoes. While these have their place, they are not the only way to provide meaningful service to the people around you. You encounter opportunities to serve every day, whether it be cleaning off the countertops for your partner, doing the dishes for a roommate, or getting the door for someone and giving them a kind, sincere smile when you're out in public. Service is simply stepping outside of yourself and learning to give attention to other people's needs without expecting anything in return.

Stillness

We live in a world that glorifies busyness, where every moment is filled with distractions, to-do lists, and noise. Addiction thrives in this chaos—it keeps you constantly looking for the next distraction, the next escape. But true recovery begins when we stop running. Stillness is where healing starts.

Stillness is not just the absence of noise. It's the practice of intentionally slowing down, quieting your mind, and learning to sit with discomfort rather than running from it. In stillness, you can finally hear the truth your soul has been whispering all along.

In recovery, stillness is your chance to reconnect with yourself—and, if you're a person of faith, to reconnect with God. It's in the still moments that you gain clarity about what matters most and where you can hear the voice of your Higher Power guiding you through the storm. When you embrace stillness, you realize you don't have to numb the hard things. Instead, you can face them with courage, knowing you have the strength to endure.

What positive rhythms will you establish in your life that pertain to your spiritual health? Write down your thoughts and any goals you've come up with, and make a plan to put them into action!

Secrets to Success

It's tempting to commit the New Years Resolution Fallacy when implementing change by jumping in with both feet when a positive change looks promising and motivating, attempting to become a totally different person by changing everything all at once. However, when it comes to overcoming addiction and permanently changing behavior, it's important to start small. Remember that large scale change is nothing more than an accumulation of small and simple things. It's okay (good, even!) to start at the bottom and work your way up.

There's an affirmation from Workaholics Anonymous that brings some wisdom here: *"The slower you go, the faster you'll grow."*

 *The slower you go, the faster you grow.*

The next secret may sound simple, but it's important: track your progress. Whether through your journal or a habit tracker on your phone, it's impossible to see how far you've come if you don't record your progress.

In **Relay's recovery program**, we've built a personalized Recovery Zone designed to track your progress in key areas like Sobriety, Boundaries, and Self Care. By logging your behaviors, you get real-time feedback and support to help you spot patterns and make smarter decisions along the way. Unlike basic tracking apps, Relay uses data to create insights tailored to your journey, allowing you to adjust and refine your plan as you grow. It helps take the guesswork out of the process, giving you clear, actionable steps to stay on course.

Accountability

Accountability is more than just reporting mistakes—it's about building a support system that actively helps you stay on track. Too often, accountability has been seen as a source of shame or guilt, where people only confess after they've slipped up. But real accountability is about *partnership*. It's about having people who help you *before* things fall apart, not just picking up the pieces afterward. It's a shift from focusing on outcomes to focusing on the daily inputs that lead to progress.

Imagine sitting down with a trusted person—whether it’s your group, your partner, or a close friend—and saying, “Here’s what I’m working on right now, and here’s how you can help.” This proactive approach allows you to ask for support before you find yourself struggling. It’s empowering, not shaming. Real accountability involves people who walk alongside you, helping to secure your progress and prevent setbacks, instead of making you feel like you’re constantly in damage control mode.

When done right, accountability actually becomes a safeguard, not a burden. It doesn’t only provide strength during the moments when you feel weak; it creates a foundation where true growth can happen. Healthy accountability should be embraced as a tool that can transform your journey by keeping you grounded, supported, and connected to your goals.

The most successful members in **Relay** do this by leveraging their support system to hold them accountable in their daily recovery work—not just when a relapse happens. They reach out to their group, share their goals, communicate their emotions, and invite feedback regularly—building an accountability system that’s active and engaged. This kind of accountability creates lasting change because it transforms how you approach both recovery and connection. It becomes something that energizes you rather than something that drains you.

Reminder...

It’s easy to feel overwhelmed by all the areas you want to improve. While it’s great to aim for change, focus on just a few things at a time. The goal of these healthy rhythms is to gradually build daily momentum that you can grow and strengthen over time.



Section 3

Slowing Down the Addiction Cycle

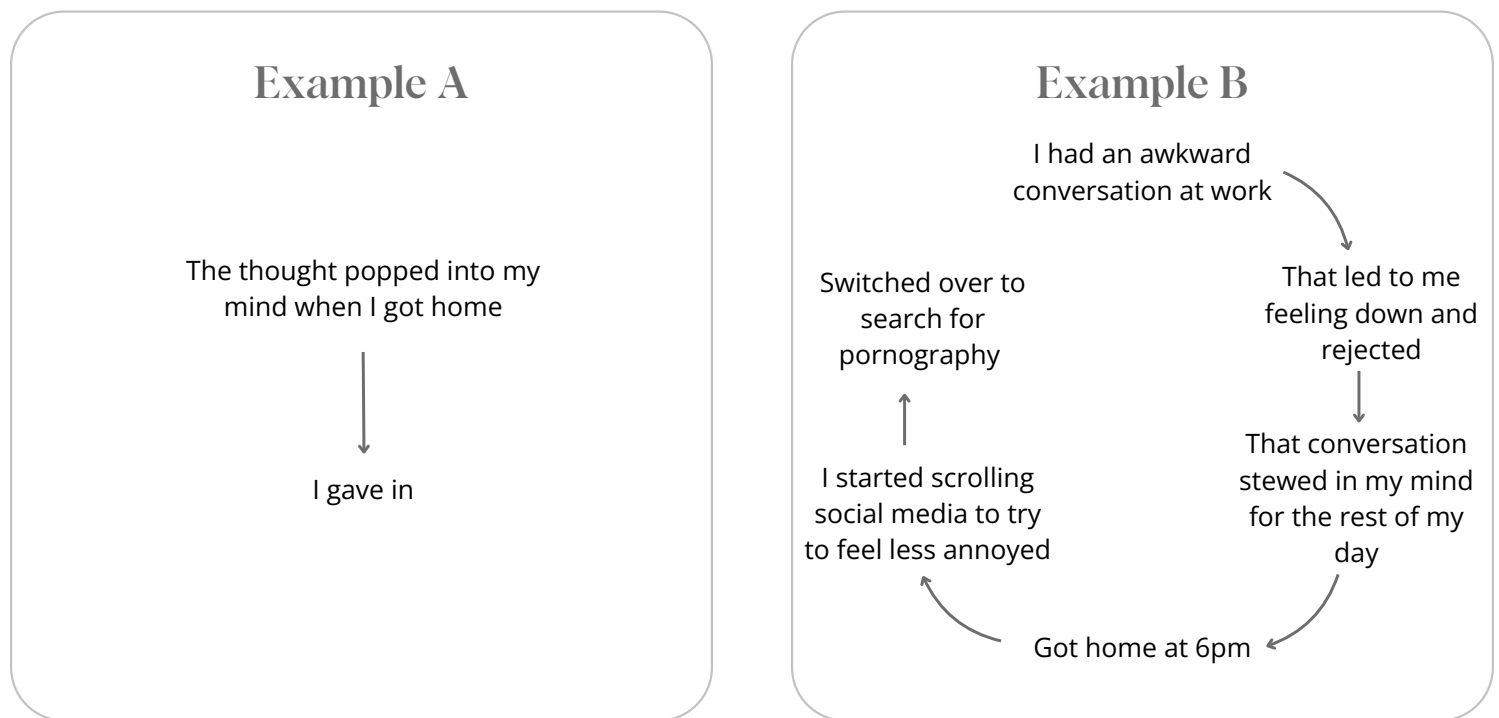
With a solid foundation underneath your feet, you are better prepared to tackle the issue that brought you here in the first place: breaking the cycle of addiction. By now, you should see that recovery isn't just about stopping a bad habit—it's about transforming your entire lifestyle. To truly quit pornography, you need to become healthier, more balanced, and more connected with

yourself and others. Now, let's dive into how we can push the brakes on the Addiction Cycle and prevent relapses.

Understanding the Addiction Cycle and How to Stop It

You may feel quite familiar with your own addiction already. But how well do you *really* know the specific ins and outs of that cycle?

If we asked you to, you could probably recall the last time you felt an urge to view pornography. But how far back would your memory of that experience go? Consider these two examples of how an urge played out:



Which example illustrates a deeper understanding to you? (Hint: it's the second one)

For many of us, this whole cycle has been happening on auto-pilot for too long. We aren't truly aware of what's happening when the boulder is rolling down the hill. As we begin to really study how this cycle plays out, we take back control of our situation, as opposed to being tossed around blindly by every craving or urge we experience. When we understand what's happening to us at each stage, we can play back the tape after acting out and spot exactly where we let our boundaries or self care slip. Then with those insights, we can revise our strategy and be better prepared going forward.

As we become more aware of our personal cycle, we can identify potential dangers *before* our boulder even starts to roll down the hill. From there, we can better rely on our prefrontal cortex

(the part in the brain that controls decision making) to intervene and more intentionally choose how to respond to an urge.

Overcoming Urges

Most people think of urges like a wrestling match between you and yourself, or white-knuckling the steering wheel in your mind as you try to resist with all your might. While these analogies might capture how it feels, there is a more effective way to think about urges—one that will help you fear them less and know how to navigate them confidently.

Learning to overcome an urge to view pornography is sort of like learning how to surf.

In surfing, you need to stay on top of the wave. You don't have to fight it. In fact, trying to *fight* a powerful wave is almost a sure way to get knocked down or swept away in the current. But if you handle it right, the wave can actually carry you to where you want to go. There are four key parts to successfully navigating an urge. Each of these steps are designed to help you be mindful and aware of your mind and emotions so that you can surf the wave without it feeling like you're holding on for dear life.

Recognize

Be truthful with yourself. You've already been unsuccessful in trying to ignore and suppress your urges, so instead let's identify them for what they are. Become aware of what you're feeling, and don't let yourself panic. Remember how we said most intense emotions only last ten minutes? Urges are the same way.

Now that you're aware of what you're feeling, see if you can identify where it's coming from. What triggers, thoughts, or emotions may have led to this moment?

Resist the temptation to make any sort of judgements about yourself based on what you find. Remember, you're not battling against a huge wave, you're just surfing along it.

Recognize your situation.

Tip: Your emotions are simply information. Try to be curious and notice them without judgement.



How strong is it? *Simply observe.*



What time is it right now?



Where am I? Am I alone?



What have I been feeling? *Name it.*

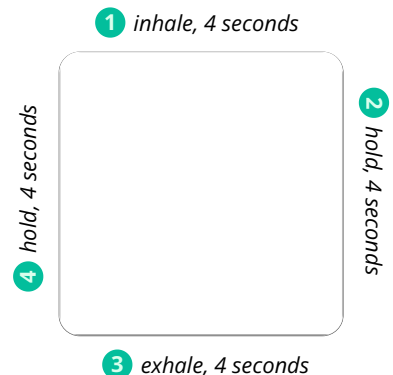
Reconnect

Reengage with the real world and the present moment. You can do this by focusing on your breathing, using mindfulness or grounding techniques, or going outside without your phone. You're not distracting yourself from the urge, you're simply riding it out.

Try looking for ways to reconnect with your *Why* or with your physical senses. One way to do this is to identify five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can touch, two things you can smell, and something you can taste. Ultimately, reconnecting can be anything that helps you connect back with truth.

Reconnect with yourself.

Focus on your breath.



Respond

Now that you're grounded and back in the driver's seat of your prefrontal cortex, you can make a plan for how to respond. Just like a fire drill, the best plans usually involve getting out of your current environment. If you're alone, leave the house and go somewhere where you can be around other people. You could also do something active to reset, like sit ups, stretching, or going for a short walk. Even better, try to do something that forces you to get outside your head. Talk to your

neighbor, get started on a project you've been putting off, or call your mom on the phone and ask her about her day. (This one only works if you listen to what she has to say.)

Respond with intention

Gently redirect to something useful.



Listen to inspiring music



Write a letter from your future self



Take a walk outside



Renew your why/ what you truly want



Identify the true needs your brain is trying to tell you



Do a mindful meditation

Tip: The more automatic your response becomes, the more wins you'll experience. Be patient; it takes practice.

Reach Out

Regardless of how successful you were at surfing the urge, reaching out to somebody is key. Trust us—the chances of acting out go down dramatically if you can just open your mouth and talk with a real human being! Even if you successfully processed the urge and are feeling better, take a moment to connect. You can share your victory, or get their advice, or just strengthen your relationship with them. Remember, “the opposite of addiction is connection.”

Once you've done this, take a moment to map out your urge surfing experience in your journal. What did you notice? What was helpful? What will you repeat in the future? Are there any gaps in your boundaries that you need to address?

Reach out and connect.

Even if you're feeling better right now, reach out to your support system. Connection is the surest way to help an urge pass.

If You Happen to Relapse

You may not always be successful at resisting urges to act out, but if you take the time to recognize what you're feeling, reconnect with yourself and your *Why*, respond intentionally to the urge, and reach out afterwards, you will have a much higher chance of success. But if you do happen to slip despite your best efforts...

The truth of the matter is that relapse is painful! Patrick Carnes once said, "Relapse is not further evidence of how bad you are, but rather further evidence of how deep the wound goes." Some of the wounds we use pornography to deal with are very deep indeed. So if it does happen, don't waste a relapse!

That's right— a relapse is a very unique opportunity for learning. This pain is valuable. It can help you gain clarity and insight into your own mental patterns, as well as give you a chance to connect with the wounded inner child, teenager, or young adult. Don't let yourself feel the pain of a relapse without letting it benefit you and bring new insights! Take the time to learn from your own brain. Be curious and compassionate. See if you can pinpoint where that boulder started to roll down the hill so you can make any needed adjustments going forward. Don't let shame keep you trapped.

III. Conclusion

This guide has been about one thing: helping you reclaim control of your life. You've learned to recognize the triggers that keep you stuck, the patterns in your brain that have held you back, and the steps to break free without shame or judgment. Change isn't immediate, but every step forward matters.

As you study your story, do the daily work, and surround yourself with strong, reliable support, you'll start to feel those old, destructive patterns lose their grip. A healthier, more authentic version of yourself will begin to emerge. You won't be ruled by compulsions or temporary bandaids—you'll have the freedom to live with integrity and purpose.

A life free from pornography isn't just possible—it's achievable, and it's the life you deserve. Take a moment to reflect on what impacted you most in this guide. Use that insight as fuel to take the next step in your journey, and remember: you don't have to do this alone.

IV. About Relay

At Relay, we understand that breaking free from pornography is more than just about stopping a behavior—it's about creating lasting change in your life. Our program goes beyond surface-level solutions to help you dive deeper into the root causes of your addiction. We provide the tools, resources, and support system you need to rewire your brain and heal the underlying wounds driving your behavior.

What makes Relay different is our focus on real connection. Addiction thrives in isolation, but recovery happens best in community. When you join Relay, you'll be part of a strong, supportive group that understands the struggle and can work together through the ups and downs.

With a personalized plan, therapist-designed tracks, and daily exercises that are tailored to your unique patterns, Relay equips you with everything you need to take control of your recovery journey. It isn't just about getting sobriety—it's about transforming your life, one step at a time.

The most successful members of Relay didn't do it alone—they surrounded themselves with inescapable support and committed fully to the process. Now, it's your turn. If you're ready to take this journey to the next level, Relay is here to walk alongside you.

You've already taken an important step by reading this guide. Now, imagine what you could achieve with a dedicated team and community behind you. **Join Relay today** and see how deep, meaningful change is possible. Together, we can build the life you were meant to live.

www.joinrelay.app/porn-recovery | hello@joinrelay.app



*Make **today** the start
of your new chapter.*

Overcome sexual addiction for good.



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