

Bio Part 1 - My Journey of Addiction

When I was young, pornographic material was hard to obtain, TVs had clear adult viewing times and the internet didn't exist. So how was it possible for me to develop such a 'hard-core' addiction...and why am I still fighting 30 years later?

I was brought up belonging to the Church of England. This meant our family tried to go to church on Christmas Day but only because it was the traditional thing to do. I certainly had no comprehension of what it was all about. Sexual matters were not discussed and any information I obtained was from the schoolyard...or my dad's pornography magazines. Sexual boundaries did not exist and I had no understanding of morality from a Catholic perspective.

God most certainly allowed me to enter my mother's arms free of any sexual abnormalities. I had all the right number of X and Y chromosomes and my sexual orientation was 100% male. In fact, millions of my cells were all 'stamped' with an indelible chromosome marker reminding my body it was male. So how on earth could I possibly be so confused 30 years later?

How my addiction started (I think):

(Age 0 – 5)

My trigger is absurd to people yet if you look online it is suggested that up to 10% of men suffer a similar 'issue'. However, I do know that this trigger was originally attached to a feeling of safety that I linked with my mother. My brain developed a neural pathway attaching that trigger (an item of clothing) with pleasure and/or a need for my mother's attention. My mother was working long hours and I was left with child minders. Seeking comfort through that item of clothing became a way of replacing an emotional or physical need. In essence I 'learnt' that my trigger made me feel safe and happy when I *felt* alone.

(Age 5 – 10)

When I attended school, I learnt that some items of clothing were only for females. This is when I first developed feelings of confusion, shame and secrecy. I wanted to wear the item but was afraid of negative reactions from friends and family and was too immature to comprehend why. As I became anxious my brain recognised my need for 'comfort' and triggered a chemical reaction that reinforced my 'compulsion' to wear the item. I was now forming a behavioural pattern that was, in essence, a vicious circle. (In my case it may never have occurred if my mother had been able to stay at home.)

(Age 10 – 11)

I was now secretly wearing my sister's clothing (not just the original trigger item) and had started purchasing things with money from my paper round. By this stage I felt a need to be seen/accepted by other girls whilst wearing female apparel – central to my later fantasies. I was still too young to understand why I was different. My family was still unaware, though I had convinced my younger sister it was fun to play 'dress up'. Looking back, I find that my lack of communication with my parents was critical in this behaviour's progression. By this age my obsession had taught me to become secretive, manipulative and self deceptive about my activities. I had no reason to trust that my parents would understand or care about me and I had a fear of being ridiculed by them. I also had no desire to give up the 'feelings of pleasure' associated with this activity.

(Age 11 – 12)

I found my father's pornography magazines and my brain formed a 'new' and 'destructive' pleasure pathway...

It's all about the chemistry...

With just a little bit of research it was easy to see how a young male can find himself doing activities that are so contrary to everything he knows is normal. What is so powerful that makes you act in a manner you don't want? I can say with 100% certainty that, many times during my early years I hated that I wore items of female clothing...so why couldn't I stop? It's all in the head...

Stage 1:

- My brain created a neural pathway that linked 'clothing' with comfort (an attachment).
- DOPAMINE is released to help the brain remember this activity – this is transmitted to us as 'feeling good'.
- Repeat behaviour encourages regular dopamine 'hits' and the pathway is established.
- The brain now makes an automatic link to 'item of clothing' and 'feeling of comfort'.
- At this stage, the original cause of the attachment no longer affects the learnt behaviour. Now I just need to feel down or anxious to feel a compulsion to my trigger activity (my brain's auto response).

Stage 2:

- Dopamine also enhances or activates 'reward' centres the more it is used.
- It makes the activity 'more' desirable over others you may think about. It creates a craving or need.
- So not only do I revert to this behaviour when miserable but I also put this behaviour first when I am bored or wanting that 'good' feeling. It now becomes a dominant proactive behaviour over anything else that does not get a greater dopamine injection. (Only sport ranked more importantly for me).

So, as a result of a random association with an item of clothing and my mother, my brain has been able to develop a complex neuro-chemical process that will alleviate my emotional needs for when she abandons me. Clearly, social factors do also work within this framework but it is only the chemical release that causes the 'attachment' to form.

So the answer to the first question I ask myself when looking for someone to blame is, 'NO' I wasn't born this way.

What comes next:

Read what happens when I discover pornography and feel the effects of several other neuro-chemicals racing around my brain when puberty hits.

