

Paleo Solution - 239

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Robb: Howdy folks. Good morning. This is another addition of the Paleo Solution Podcast. Robb Wolf with you. Today I have a very interesting fellow that I think folks will find incredibly fascinating topic that he was written about. This is Gary Wilson. He is the author of the recently released book Your Brain on Porn and also he is the presenter in the wildly popular YouTube TedX video the great porn experiment. Gary how are you doing?

Gary: I'm doing great. How are you?

Robb: Fantastic. Hopefully this isn't misinterpreted but I am incredibly excited to talk to you. So Gary, give folks a little bit of your background and in general like I was just chatting with you a moment ago and you seemed to have a fantastic background in anatomy, physiology and clearly some evolutionary biology leanings. Tell folks a little bit about that and then let's talk about how you started looking at porn and its effects on behavior, even some physical physiological manifestations like erectile dysfunction.

Gary: Yeah. Well I taught anatomy and physiology for years, human pathology at various schools and about 13-14 years ago I met my wife and that's where all this trouble began is we began writing articles about the neuro biology of mating, bonding, sex, orgasm, the effects of that on the brain, she published some books on it. She had a website and they had a forum and on the website there were lots of articles about sex and bonding and had the word ejaculation, dopamine, addiction.

In these, because the same part of the brain that governs sex, mating and bonding also is involved with addiction. Well about 8 years ago, guys started to show up on our forum, a forum that had nothing to do with porn or addiction and started asking her for help with their problems that she said what are you doing here? Well Google archived their post and more showed up and they started helping each other recover from porn addiction and porn induced mainly sexual problems such as erectile

dysfunction, loss of libido, morphing sexual taste, delayed ejaculation and then more and more showed up until forums just was flooded with these guys.

They recovered from sexual dysfunction by removing porn so she felt compelled to blog about it on psychology today. Eventually she said Gary could you create a website just for these guys so about four years ago I created yourbrainonporn.com to collect their stories, put together the science, have a few videos for them and that blew up with other forums and other websites linking to it from all over the world and I just really noticed this problem was huge.

Men were suffering from using porn or too much porn and then eventually I did a Ted talk which also blew up so it's just been a rollercoaster event that I had no expectation would occur and really didn't want to be involved with but you know, what's what happens in life.

Robb:

Absolutely. And particularly when you get something that is striking a need within a certain community and you're providing some sort of – again, interestingly this evolutionary biology deal, we evolved in hunter gatherer groups and we relied upon each other for health and support and so if you can find a way to solve a problem and there is a social compliment to that. Oddly enough, those things tend to be very, very successful ironically.

Gary, particularly being in the United States, you know, porn usually is on one spectrum. It's bad. It's evil. It's immoral all that type of stuff. On another spectrum it's exploitive of both men and women who are participating in it and that's usually about as deep as the conversation goes. How does this actually create a situation in which people are dysfunctional and they need like a Betty Ford clinic type intervention to get themselves recovered from this. From an evolutionary biology perspective, how the heck does this happen?

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Gary:

Yeah. I just want to prep that I'm not religious and I have no moral thoughts about porn. This is all just what we dropped into. Well first of all we have to realize things have changed. You have a podcast, a lot of them are about diet and we know that food has changed. We now have

concentrated sugars, fat, salt all into one package and we can consider is a super normal stimulus, something we have never faced before in evolution and it's very appealing, far more appealing than dried venison or boiled roots.

And so in that, super normal stimulus can cause someone to consume or over consume that particular stimulus. So think about porn and the internet. Things have changed. First of all, now with the internet anyone at any age can have the access to watching real people have so called real sex. So a young guy could start at 10, watch porn everyday and watch it for 8-9 years before his first kiss. This has never occurred before. Now not only is he watching porn but what has changed since the internet is he's able to watch streaming videos.

It just occurred in 2006 with the tube site is availability of just being able to click from video to video to video. Usually these are three minute videos. So watching real people have real sex actually replaces your imagination rather than looking at a picture of Playboy and you are the protagonist and you're imagining as a 13 year old what feeling them up or something like that. Instead your imagination is completely replaced. You learned about sex through watching videos. So that's one big difference.

However, when we think about a super normal stimulant, the other big difference is the delivery system of the internet. So yes, the content of porn has changed but the delivery system, think about Facebook. Facebook is just pictures and words. Yet there are studies showing that people actually become addicted to Facebook. That is as their Brian changes in similar ways that occur with drug addiction so that they have a compulsion to use. They can't control their use. They continue to use despite negative consequences. So it's the delivery system of the internet that makes internet porn so compelling and I can get into that.

Robb:

I would love to have you touch on that. I'm really tickled that you brought in the topic of hyper palatable food just to kind of jog lift on that topic a little bit because folks are usually used to me talking about food or exercise. There's been decades long debates about do we eat too much fat, do we eat too much carbohydrates. Is a calorie a calorie? And I've been in that kind of like insulin as the root cause of obesity and like a host of other problems.

But as time has gone on, it really seems like this story of hyper palatable foods like why do people just overeat? Like some people do, some people don't. What's the story behind that and it's these really amazing combinations of salty and crunchy and mouth feel and all these stuff that like you said, you don't get from a dried hunk of meat or a boiled root.

So it's not even so much the foods but the combinations of foods, how we tweak them and fiddle with them and change the textures and what not which really spins some dials in our brain in a way that has never been done and when we stick people in metabolic world settings then calories usually end up being the winner. But we still fail miserably changing behavior and that's because when we get out as free living humans, then there are snack wells and Twinkies and all kinds of stuff everywhere.

And so to your point now weaving back into the porn point, it's everywhere. It's on your iphone, it's on your ipad, potentially computers even just I noticed in some of your support material on yourbrainonporn.com it cuts you off from going on Facebook and a variety of other websites because of constant titillation, stimulation that you can get even at a medium like that.

So yeah, please expand on all the interface between the dopamine addiction part of the brain and the way that the internet is wired up at this point.

[0:10:00]

Gary:

Yeah. So you're talking about dopamine so the story both with hyper palatable foods and with internet porn is it comes down to the dopamine system sometimes called the reward circuit but sometimes called the reward circuit. But dopamine is a neuro chemical released in the reward system that urges you to go after things. It's the motivation to pursue reward. It's not the final reward. The final reward of eating a banana split is the release of opioid. The final reward of orgasm is the release of opioid. And in that, you have satiation. So oh, I'm done. I feel complete.

However, dopamine is not about satiation. It's about the opposite of satiation. It's about continuing, craving, wanting and consuming. So what occurs is that you want to think about food, you've just eaten a big dinner, big steak, mashed potatoes, you're at a restaurant and all the

sudden the dessert tray comes by and you see that nice chocolate torte with whip cream on it. You're not hungry for steak anymore. In fact you're stuck but all the sudden you want that chocolate torte.

Robb: I might be able to fit in just a little bit more.

Gary: And the reason is you can do that is because your dopamine just spiked and it's telling you to pursue that. You're not hungry. All those mechanisms that tell you you're full are still in place. But dopamine is overwriting satiation mechanism. And saying please eat that because it's high calorie and you know what it tastes like and it really activates the reward system.

Now, if you take that over to porn, porn has no satiation mechanism. But if we look at dopamine, sexual stimulation is the highest natural availability of dopamine there is. But the internet also had mechanisms that elevate dopamine. The first and foremost is novelty. Novelty makes dopamine third. It's the case in all mammals.

And I think that's the case because we were designed to go pursue new sexual partners, new territories, new sources of food and novelty is also in terms of predators to avoid new predators when you enter new territories. So novelty spikes dopamine. So you can sit there, put up 30 tabs of three minute videos they click from video to video hour after hour and watch per hour.

But that's not just it. Other aspects of the internet also spikes dopamine. One is violation of expectation. So dopamine spikes when something is better than expected or just simply unexpected so shocks, surprise, those types of things that are elevated during a horror movie or a roller coaster, also elevate dopamine. So you can just click on something really shocking, really surprising and it elevates dopamine.

Also what they've found in studies is that anxiety under certain circumstances can elevate dopamine and increase sexual arousal. So you can be watching something like lesbian porn, then you can go on to something like gang rape and it's anxiety producing and that could elevate dopamine.

So the takeaway is that with the internet, you can control your dopamine with the mouse. So you are training your brain to sit there, a click, be a

voyeur, watch other people have sex and whenever your dopamine just goes down a little bit, you click to something new, something new and finally searching.

The reward circuit is actually called the seeking circuit, the wanting circuit, so even searching and surfing on the internet cause dopamine to spike. So the internet has all these qualities, the odds of sexual stimulation that keep dopamine surging and that's what makes it a super normal stimulant.

Robb: So it's like replacing the Jersey Shore disco and you don't have to leave your house.

Gary: Right. Guys, as soon as they get bored, let's say they've been watching porn for years and they're tired of a certain genre. Well only with high speed internet and a tube site can you be watching one genre porn, lesbians and then all the sudden go to some other genre that's completely new, novel, exciting, anxiety producing, and go through something and then you watch that and masturbate through that and then you get bored with that after a few months and then you're on to a new genre, new genre, new genre. You just couldn't do that before broadband and the tube site.

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Robb: You would be dashing down swapping out your VHS tapes and there's really not quite the same satisfaction with that I guess. So are you seeing any of these in women?

Gary: Yes. Seeing some of it in women. Now the vast majority of the recovery stories on my website that I've collected are of men. We wrote an article maybe a couple of years ago but we went over to a place called Reddit NoFap and Reddit NoFap sort of came about a couple of years ago because guys were wanting to get off porn.

And we looked at the user names and found that women, they make their usernames pink so we found this username for the women investigated it and we thought that the women, would just be on NoFap complaining about their boyfriends or husbands. But actually they were on NoFap complaining of their own porn addiction and their loss of libido

and their inability to have orgasms anymore. So it does affect women but the vast majority of what I bumped into are men.

Robb: Okay. And just to – I think the point that you made just a moment ago even before that is a really important one. From watching your video and then reading some of the other material on your website, each time somebody does – so they can do kind of a lateral shift and say like the genre that is stimulating them and let's say they do kind of a vertical escalation so it's not just – say like on the one spectrum it would be scantily clad women but there's no sex and then it goes to naked women and then naked women by themselves maybe and then actual sex.

But then it goes into absolutely ridiculous territories that normally the person wouldn't be stimulated or turned on by that per se but that's the only place left that they're able to get that next hit and then going backwards they really don't get any response off of that. And then the real world stimulus doesn't even – it's not even on the radar. It's not even cause any type of a normal type of sexual arousal response.

Gary: Yeah, I mean that's a perfect description because when you think addiction and I'm not saying all these men are addicted, some are, some aren't. Yes they have negative effects is tolerance. Tolerance is need for greater and greater stimulus or consumption to get the same buzz. So you really have two choices. You can consume more but and that's what usually happens with drugs or food.

But what makes internet porn different is they don't have to consume longer. Instead you can move to new genres that violate your expectation and thus raise dopamine and dopamine in the brain is what powers erection. So dopamine from the reward system, it activates sexual sensors and then that sends impulses down the spinal cord to activate your erection. So they can as you say move on to new genres or kinds of porn's they've never seen before to get that dopamine hit.

Robb: Interesting. So can you – I like one of the first things on your rebooting basics. If you're looking for a set of rules that you will not find them other than no artificial sexual stimulation during your reboot, it seems like this is a pretty somewhat customized kind of process that people need to go through depending on their own situation. Can you give folks some kind of big picture story beyond just like you need to – and I think that this

would be surprising for folks but even things like Facebook, even things like scanning through different ad material and what not like I mean it's not cold turkey.

It's like cold ostrich or something. It's big. You're really locking all that stuff down. Can you walk folks through that process and kind of what the mechanisms that are occurring when you do that?

Gary:

Yeah. So if we think about why guys are showing up, it's primarily sexual dysfunctions, erectile dysfunctions, delayed ejaculation, loss of libido, no longer attracted to real partners. So that's what the reboot is based on. It says no artificial sexual stimulation because what has gone on is the man have wired their sexual arousal to everything associated with watching porn.

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Of course that voyeurism, that's extreme novelty, having to click from scene to scene, controlling your dopamine with your mouse, so you have to remove artificial in order to get excited by real. Because what you've done is you've created a mismatch. You've trained your brain for the wrong sport. You trained it for sitting and clicking and when you get with a single real person, you can't control her with a mouse and watch her. You actually have to interact. So it's a mismatch.

So what occurs is you remove not only porn but you remove anything else that reinforces the mismatch. So guys will often give up hardcore porn but they'll go to YouTube and click from sexy video to sexy video or they'll go to dating sites and just click on pictures of women or they'll go to Craigslist and serve prostitute ads and yet they're doing that for a couple hours.

And again, what are they doing? They're controlling their dopamine with a mouse in front of a screen to get aroused. So you've got to unhook from the screen so that your brain will now rewire itself to a real person in front of you, real people and real life under normal circumstances. So you can't have what are called porn substitutes. Guys find that they fail because they never really completely unhook. Does that make sense?

Robb:

Absolutely. Yeah. They're still able to get that super normal stimulus even if it's with a seemingly benign things like you said like cruising through

Facebook or Twitter whatever the medium is and trying to find that lower – I'll be it lower grade but still a replacement.

Gary: Yeah. And so this isn't about any type of moral thing like oh my god this site's saying you can't ever look at pictures or all pictures are bad. No, this is men rebooting their brains in order to get aroused with real people. So there's a reason they're rebooting and there's a goal in line. So that's what it's about. It's not saying it's never okay to look at naked women. That's not what I'm saying.

Robb: So let's talk about that. Let's say somebody gets back to a reasonable – maybe the question where do – is there any literature, anything in the research like where did this stuff really start happening? So there have been pornographic material since we've been able to figure out how to draw in caves virtually. There have been depictions of people having sex with each other, with animals, with all kinds of stuff and then we developed a photography and as soon as photography hit we had photographic porn.

And then that progressed through to color and then we had movies. And has this always been a problem? Has it been just a little bit of a slow degradation until we hit the internet and then dial up was a little bit of an issue but then high speed internet just had this asymptotic explosion and being able to hyper stimulate one's self or has this always been a little bit of a background issue?

Gary: I think it's best described as stories of men. So we had various ages of men who come down with erectile dysfunction and then recover. The men who are in their 40s 50s and 60s, they have been using porn for 20, 30, 40 years, never had any problems. They all say that they started to develop sexual dysfunctions after the tube sites came online and they're able to line up a bunch of short videos of the hardest of the hard and click from ones to next.

So it's the delivery medium that seems to make the big difference. And these men then develop ED and here's the scary part is the older men in their 50's who obviously are older. They have less testosterone. Their tissues have degraded over time. They recover from erectile dysfunction in maybe only 6-8 weeks and when they recover, they're solid as can be, there's no looking back.

However, the young men who grew up using internet porn, using the tube site, they can take six months a year, two years to get back erectile dysfunction. These are men in their early 20's and yet they're still not fully functional. If they watch some porns, they will often drop back into ED.

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So this shows us the difference between a couple of things. The new medium via the tube site, high speed and also when you use them in other words what age you use them. If you use internet porn during adolescent, it has a much different effect.

Robb: Wow. Because we are getting so much of the brain wiring occurring then, the normal growth surges, wow.

Gary: Yeah. So if you look at the adolescent brain, it's quite different from either an adult brain or a child's brain. It's at a unique point. So it's different in a couple of things. First of all, the reward system is in overdrive and you have bigger spikes of dopamine for anything that's novel, thrilling, seeking, different and you also have sort of a lower baseline dopamine.

So if we look at a teen, let's say age 15, they're bored with school. They don't want to take out the garbage. Everything's boring. But if a new movie comes out or a friend calls them up, they'll get really excited. So that's that high spike of dopamine.

So what's going on is novelty all adolescent, all mammalian adolescents get a big spike of dopamine for novelty, for sexual stimulation, for anything that's new. What's also going on during the same time is that the brain is pruning down billions of nerve connections so that it can be more structured by the time it hits about age 24-25.

So it is rewiring itself to its environment who can learn and of course the number one purpose for any animal is to reproduce so it's rewiring itself to a sexual environment so it can learn all about sex so that it can successfully reproduce once it reaches adulthood. So these two effects of having much higher spikes for anything exciting and novel really can lead to problems because it is the spike of dopamine that tell the brain what to rewire itself to. Because dopamine helps solidify memory.

So we have the rewiring of the brain. So what occurs with the young men is they're rewiring their sexual response to everything I talked about before to internet porn being a voyeur, clicking from scene to scene and then when they get with the real partner, real partner doesn't match that and then they have sexual problems.

Robb: Wow. And like you said again, this is more severe situation in the younger individual which usually you think about exercise or any one of a number of different disease states and usually it's the older individual that is harder to recover from that but they've already gone through this kind of crystallization process that was not skewed in this hyper stimulatory kind of environment.

Gary: Yeah. So if you're a young guy, just imagine if you spent every masturbation session from age 12 to 17 in front of the screen every single one clicking, clicking, clicking. Then you date a girl, you start kissing her and you notice that nothing's happening down stairs and you're going what's going on? Objectively, this is what they say over and over again. Objectively I find her attractive. She's a 10. She's so hot but nothing's happening because it doesn't match what they've been doing for the last six years.

Robb: And there's just no way to make to reality match that up.

Gary: No. There's no way to make to reality match this up.

Robb: Sort of going to the bunny ranch and dropping like \$100,000 and securing the whole place but then you'll never going to be able to replace that one again. So wow.

Gary: And actually that doesn't work either because a few guys, very few will go to prostitutes and they find that they cannot get an erection with a prostitute. In fact there's some stories where guys have actually talked to the prostitute and the prostitute will say you know, I could tell what guys are hooked on porn and what guys aren't by what goes in the bedroom here.

Robb: Wow.

Gary: So no, nothing matches it. There's no match to sitting back, watching and controlling your dopamine arousal by clicking from scene to scene. That doesn't match reality. Never.

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Robb: Gary, what – clearly I mean when you break your – if an individual breaks their sexuality, that seems like it would have potentially catastrophic effects elsewhere in their life like what else is this affecting for these individuals? It seems like it would affect damn everything but what the work life, work environment, I mean – I've heard in Japan, a remarkable number of the youth are not planning on getting married, not planning on having kids and large disinterested in sex which I'm kind of wondering if this whole process that you're describing is kind of going on there. But you could have a remarkable unstitching of the social fabric because of something like this.

Gary: In Japan they did a survey and a 16-19 year old guy, 36% were not interested in sex. That was 2010. That doubled from 2008. So 1/3 of men – I don't know if you remember being 17 years old, I do. Not being interested in sex, that's unbelievable. And a study came out this summer and it's a really unique study and a look at the sexual dysfunction in young people ages 16 to 21 and here's the shocking statistic. 54% of men 16-21 had sexual dysfunction. 54%. 27% had ED. 24% inability to orgasm. 10% had a complete loss of libido. 16-21. I still can't believe that.

And then to follow that up, Dr. Carlo Foresta, which I mentioned in my TED talk has continued to do studies. He hasn't published them yet but there's a lecture online and he's been observing high school seniors. And in 2005 just about 1% of them had loss of libido, had low libido which makes sense. In 2012, 10% had low libido and then when he dug down deeper, he correlated with that porn use.

So he's seen a doubling of sexual dysfunction in high school seniors and now he's about to do a study on ages 19-25 men and he divided them into two groups. One group was regular porn users and the other group wasn't and he found that the regular porn users had far worse sexual function. They had more cases of erectile dysfunction and when he looked at their libido, they had half the libido of the men who used porn.

50% of the libido in terms of score, huge difference between regular porn users and non-users.

Robb: Wow.

Gary: So really just at the front edge of a few studies starting to be done right, previous studios done on porn really didn't look at these variables. I could go on and on but we'll really take up the whole show is that they didn't ask the right questions. They haven't looked at the brain. They just really haven't looked at modern internet porn and its effects on sexuality.

Robb: And you know, I think that's probably because of the kind of moral background again, particularly in the United States relative to other westernized countries, it's probably hard to get funding for research in this area and then it's also likely hard to get anybody to take it seriously.

Gary: Exactly. When we look at just even internet addiction, the US doesn't study it at all. It's all the other countries. The Asian countries and some of the European countries. So right now there's about 75-80 internet addiction brain studies, every single one of them shows the same constellation of brain changes that occur in drug addicts.

So we know that using the internet in a compulsive way can change this brain the same way that it occurs in substance abusers. The studies, the two brain studies that have come out in the last few months, one's from the UK, ones' from Germany, they also found similar brain changes in porn users.

In fact, the one in Germany didn't look at addict. It looked at a correlated year of porn use and hours of porn use with a couple of things, the reward circuit and with sexual response. And what they found is that the more hours per week and the more years of porn use resulted in less nerve connection in the reward circuit. In other words they lost brain matter.

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And they found that those same men had less response to sexual images. And they found that they had alteration in the connections between the frontal part of the brain, the frontal cortex and the reward circuit. All these changes are changes that are common with all addiction except for

of course the loss of the sexual arousal. None of these guys were addicted. It was just correlation with use.

Robb: Which was rewiring the architecture so that again you just needed that super physiological dose to be able to get a response.

Gary: Yeah, I mean that's the ultimate case. And that was the Cambridge study from the UK that looked at severely addicted porn users and they discovered that that's what occurred is they had extreme response. In other words their reward circuits lit up for porn but didn't light up for real sex. In fact 60% of the subjects complained that they have sexual problems with real partners.

Robb: And as you've mentioned this process of rebooting depending on the individual, depending on habituation and what not could go anywhere from 30 days to 2 years to really get back to something that approximates a normal base line in pre-high speed internet times.

Gary: Now there's something interesting going on. As I said, originally the men were showing up and they were using porn. They were happy with it and the only thing that stopped them is their dick stopped working. So they said okay I got to do something.

But what occurred in the last few years is that some of the men had chosen to stop using porn especially the young men and they don't have sexual dysfunction. This is big over on Reddit NoFap and what they found is not only – they found that other symptoms with this, some of them had social anxiety that got better. Some had lack of motivation that went away. Some of them were depressed or slightly depressed and improved brain fog, concentration problems went away.

So what they've seen is other benefits, non-sexual benefits simply by eliminating the porn use and that's been the biggest surprise in all of it.

Robb: We talk about brain fog on this show a lot. Sounds like everybody's going to need to do an internet holiday from everything from Facebook to hardcore porn. Luckily I'm not particularly good looking so I don't think I'm causing any type of problems for anybody one way or the other but wow, this stuff is fascinating.

Gary, what else do you want to talk to folks about? What's definitely a checking out yourbrainonporn.com checking out the great porn experiment, your YouTube video will have links to both of those and your book in the show notes. What else do folks need to know about this?

What about if – it definitely seems like some women are experiencing this problem but it seems to be much more heavily skewed towards men. How are men kind of bringing their partners or wives or girlfriends or I guess even gay couples into this? How are they bringing partners into this process to facilitate this? Is that successful doing that or are there lots of road blocks with that? What are you seeing when people are reaching out and trying to get some support and help with this?

Gary:

Our population that we look at on all this many forums that link to yourbrainonporn.com. So there are men who have partners but the majority of them I would say probably about 60-70% are single men, I think for women, the big thing is it's hard for them to understand. They walk in on their husband and they see their husband watching some really strange porn and masturbating to it and she cannot understand why he is attracted to that. Then she projects it onto herself and says well I can never match that. So it really makes them feel rotten obviously.

So here's the thing is it's not about her. It's you can never match the internet. You can never match someone clicking from scene to scene with a new porn star every 2 minutes, a new scene every 2 minutes, a new genre every 2 minutes, a new genre every 2 minutes. That cannot be matched in real life. So it's not really about you. It's about a super normal stimulus that men are exposed to that's very appealing that they over time just slowly fall into, become dependent upon, get hooked on.

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So it's really not about the women. So that's the most important things for the women to understand. And often if they watch some of my videos or read a few of the articles, they get that this isn't really about them. That's the most important takeaway there.

Robb:

That seems like fantastic advice. Gary I watched your video. I want to say it was probably close to a year ago and it was just a huge eye opener for me and again, having slung through this food thing, food isn't nearly as controversial as porn is and sexuality and all that clearly but it has a

definite religious undertone to it whether you're vegan or paleo or just kind of standard American diet deal but I've always tried to tackle my understanding of this from this evolutionary biology framework.

And I find that when we're able to do that, what's been interesting you know, food addiction and overeating, let's just not even say food addiction but just general overeating has been incredibly moralized and people feel horrible about themselves. And what I've found in – it's often times hard to convey this but if we can get people to wrap their minds around this notion that you've got a certain set of genetics that we're wired for a particular environment, now we live in an environment that is completely at odds with those genetics and that if you didn't respond the way that you did to a bag of potato chips, to a twinkly, to that chocolate torte at the end of an otherwise you know, kind of balanced satiating meal, if you didn't respond that way, then none of us would be here.

Those drives to eat and define sustenance and what not are the reason why we're here. We just happen to live in an environment now that is rich in calories, rich in novelty with food and it can cause serious problems and it can be incredibly gratifying too if we're able to figure out a dose response curve that doesn't get us into trouble, some people are able to play with that much more effectively than other folks.

But I find that it removes a lot of the kind of morality around overweight or obesity and overeating and I just find it's an interesting parallel there when we start talking about people in a relationship and one individual may be feeling they're inadequate because of the choices that a partner could be making with regards to their porn consumption but it doesn't have anything to do about them. It's not a moralistic issue. It's not a failure issue.

This is actually just our evolutionary woven brain and all that survival mechanisms that we have and reproductive mechanisms that are being exposed to a hyper stimulatory environment and we have to figure out strategists for coping with that. Is that a pretty good summation and maybe some cross pollination between the food and the sexuality piece of this?

Gary:

Yeah. It's a very good summation. The sexuality piece of course is more tricky because of all that's wrapped up in – demoralizing aspect, the

religious aspect, talking about sex, it is very complex and we of course are here because our ancestors were very successful in terms of reproduction and they certainly liked novelty because we've spread ourselves throughout the entire world searching for new things. So we are a product of a bunch of ancestors that enjoys novelty and sexuality. So of course they would be attracted to what's on the internet.

But it's interesting. If we think about sexuality and what makes it different from pretty much every other stimulus in fact including food is that we have these innate circuits in our brain through sexuality that are supposed to be molded and shaped once we reach adolescence. And powerful memories are formed during adolescence. And it's going to be shaped one way or the other so that we can't successfully reproduce.

So if we're sitting and watching a screen no matter what the content is and getting our sexuality through that, that's what's going to shape it. So I want to stay away from demoralizing but that's just something that's really new. I think I – if you think back to the 70's and I'm looking at a Playboy and yes that's exciting but it's boring after a while. It doesn't compare to real life girls when I was in high school. But now we have a stimulus that real life girls in high school cannot compare with.

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Robb: That's a fantastic point. Well Gary again, really appreciate you having on the show. Maybe we need to a robbwolf.com no fap for 30 days. There's all kinds of challenges that go out there but I don't know if you'd be game for helping to steward this but maybe we can do a robbwolf.com no Facebook no porn no fap for 30 days and get some feedback from folks and see where they're at.

And I'd be interested to know within the folks that kind of follow this bigger ancestral health evolutionary medicine story to see you know, what's the reentrance of this phenomena in that population? I'd be really interested to know that.

Gary: Yeah. It'd be great to do a challenge. I don't know if you want to do a no fap but if you want to do no artificial sexual stimulation that would be good. And that brings up the final point I think I'm looking forward point is that people do not know how this affects them until they remove a variable for several weeks. In fact many of them get worse. They feel

worse. They have anxiety depression, lethargy, they go through what they call flat line where they lose their libido and that can last from weeks for months. So the bottom-line is until you remove this variable for an extended period, you really have no idea how your porn use has affected you.

Robb: I'm smiling. I wish we were doing a video conference on this because I'm pretty geeked out on the gluten intolerance kind of story. It seems to affect so many different issues. Literally there's not a tissue in the body that's not affected but it's so ubiquitous in our food chain that the same story, please 30, 60, 90 days remove it. See how you look, feel and perform. See how bio markers of health and disease change.

Then if you want to reintroduce it and see what happens but people have often times literally since birth they've never had a baseline of actual health and it sounds crazy but I'm not a particularly smart guy. I'm not particularly well spoken. You know, I don't have anything really that interesting going on other than at some point I made some of these connections and I said hey, why don't you try this and then the people trying it, they experienced improvements ranging from dermatological issues to neurological issues and then that message started spreading and kind of going out there. So I'm just kind of smiling that this is a...

Gary: It's the same thing.

Robb: It's exactly the same thing.

Gary: And you got to understand that unlike the gluten and I'm gluten free and my son has gluten problems and we removed it from him and a lot of his problems went away so I'm very much aware of that. Is that the young people today grow up with it. They see masturbation and porn use as synonymous. They'll be talking on this forums and they'll call it fapping which is the sound of masturbation but they're talking about porn. There is no separation.

So they are like fish in water. They don't know what it's like to not masturbate without porn, to not use porn. So for them, it's quite a shock for many of them to remove a variable that they've always lived with. And I think that's the takeaway from this.

Remove the variable. Watch what occurs. If you have any negative effect then that shows you something's been going on and then if you stay longer with removing this variable and you start having positive effect, that shows you even more.

Robb: Wow. Gary thank you so much for being on the show. I really appreciate it and we'll talk after we wrap this up and put our heads together about doing some sort of a 30 day challenge on this and see if we can collect some information and hopefully help some people.

Gary: Okay.

Robb: Awesome Gary. Again, for folks, we'll have all this in the shown notes but check out yourbrainonporn.com do a search for the great porn experiment and definitely check out Gary's new book, *Your Brain on Porn*. Gary, again, thank you so much for being on the show.

Gary: Thanks Robb.

Robb: Okay. Take care. We'll talk to you soon.

[0:49:48] End of Audio