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# Hope and Healing: Understanding Addiction

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# I. Foundations of Addiction

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# What is the Attachment Theory?

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- The evolutionary strategy to keep parents and children close
- Attachment emerged during natural selection because proximity enhanced survival of children, and hence, survival of the group
- When parents and children are near one another, they feel calmer and a sense of well being — Louis Cozolino *Why Therapy Works*

# The Securely Attached Child

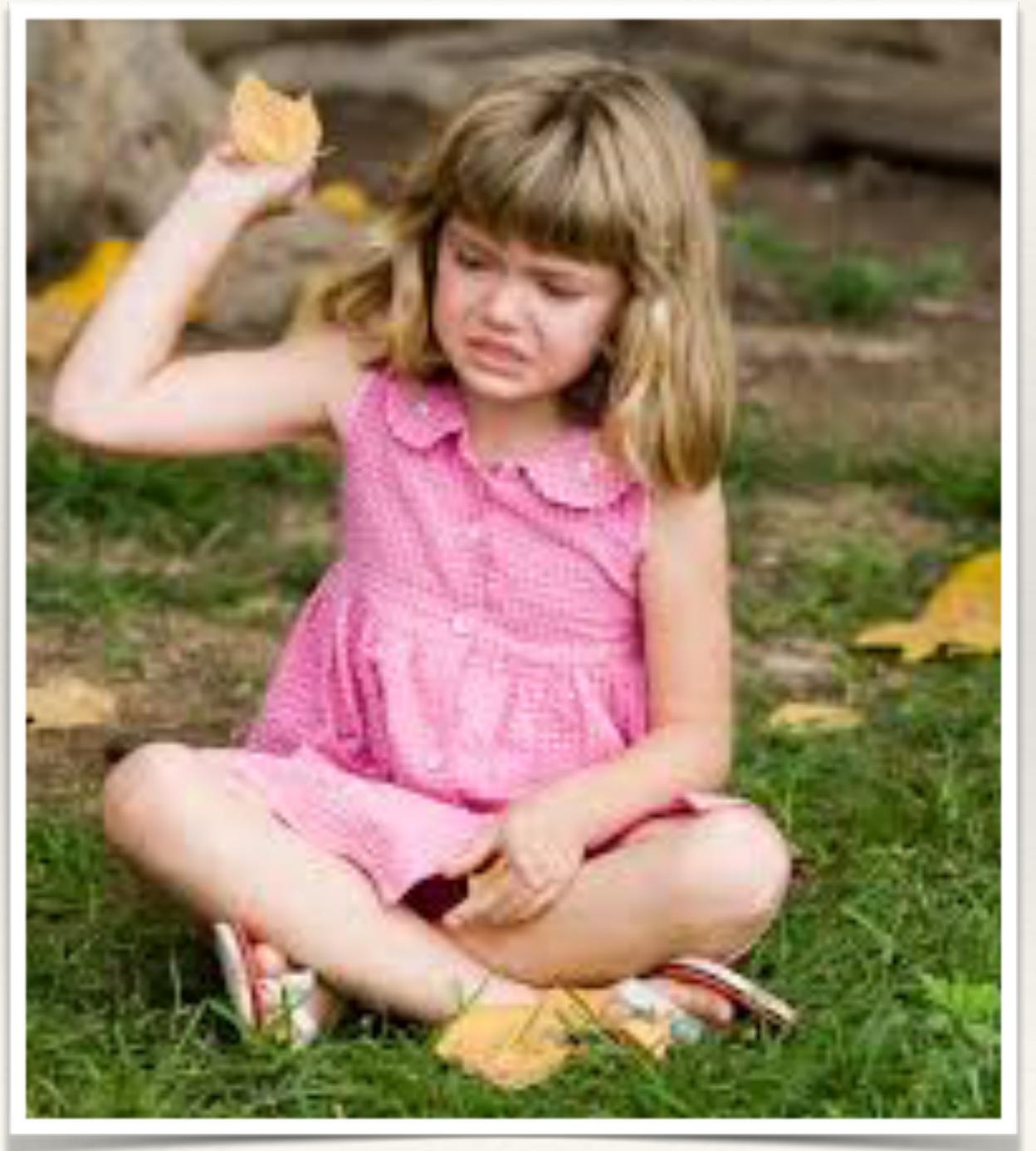
- Attachment figure consistently accessible during distress
- They C.A.R.E.—show ongoing *Curiosity*, *Accessibility*, *Responsiveness*, *Engagement*
- Teach child words for how they feel—emotional intelligence/mirroring
- Make ongoing repairs when inevitable misattunement happens—33% “good enough”
- Child learns to be soothed relationally. Come to expect caregivers as a source of soothing
- Identity of competence and resilience develops in early years and persists



# The Anxiously Attached Child

- Attachment figure inconsistent or enmeshed
- Inconsistent=Responses to distress are different each time depending upon emotional state of caregiver
- Enmeshed=caregiver becomes just as distressed as the child over the child's distress.
- Distress is worsened by parent's "help", distress, uncertainty
- Does not consistently mirror child's emotional experience in a way that is calming
- Child becomes whiny; adult becomes pursuing
- Identity of insecurity develops and child more clingy and less exploratory. World feels dangerous

—Louis Cozolino *Why Therapy Works*



# The Avoidantly Attached Child

- Attachment figure consistently not emotionally available to regulate anxiety of child
- This is often because their own anxiety and ‘big emotions’ were not tolerated by their own caregivers so there is extreme discomfort in the expression of emotion
- Therefore child has no “mirror” to learn how to process own emotions
- Child comes to lack expectation that caregiver will regulate her and learns that its easier to self sooth
- Child learns to connect through outward performance rather than being seen, understood, loved independent of outward measures
- Identity of relational detachment develops although child still has need for calming



**WHEN ONE DOES NOT  
KNOW HOW TO BE  
SOOTHED RELATIONALLY  
IN TIMES OF  
ANXIETY AND DISTRESS**

**S/HE WILL LEARN OTHER  
WAYS TO BE SOOTHED  
NON-RELATIONALLY**

**THIS IS THE BIRTHPLACE  
OF ADDICTION**

# **II. Prevention: Educating our Younger Children**

# Fundamentals of Teaching Children

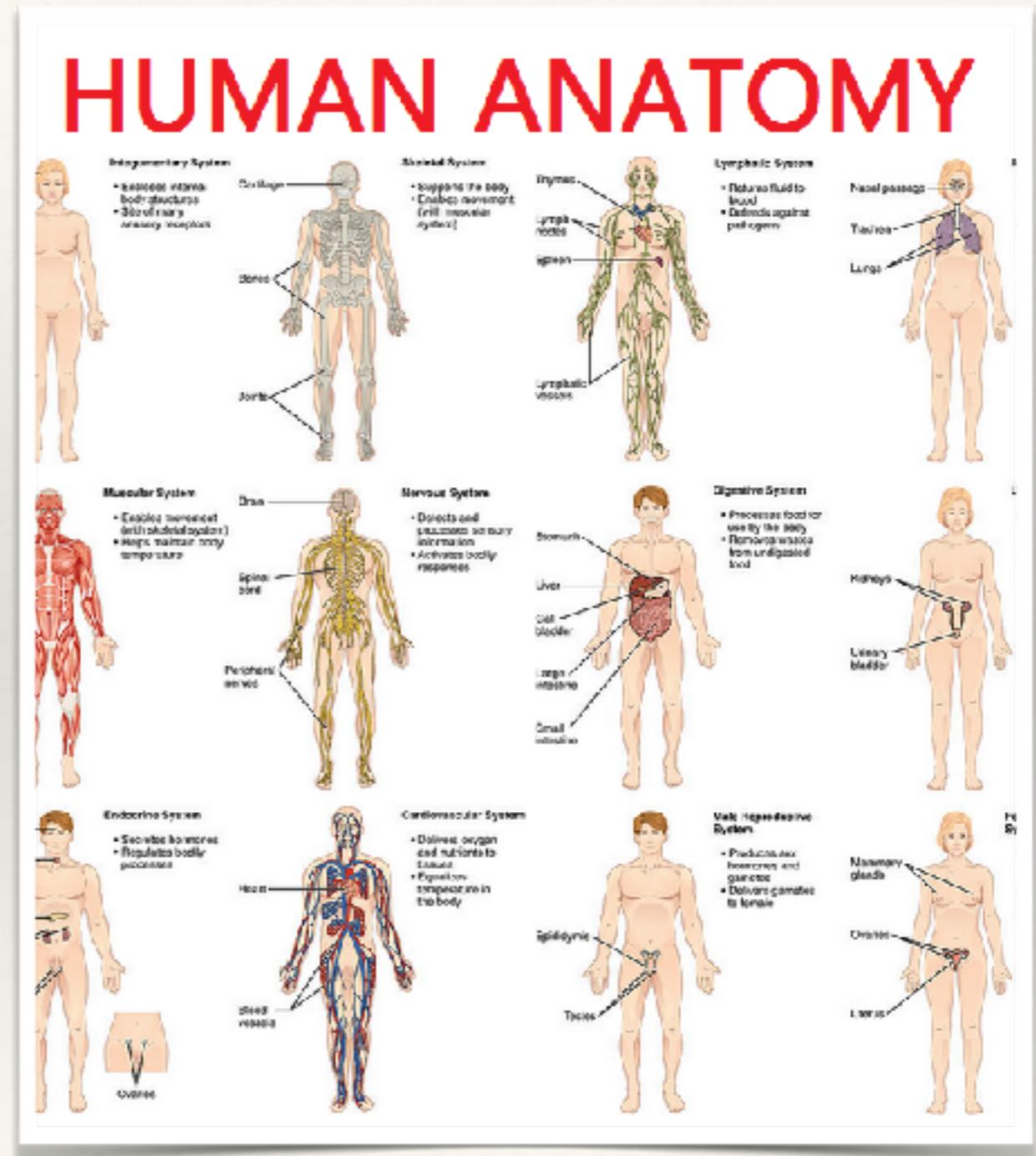
- ❖ **Define Pornography** in an age-appropriate way:
  - ❖ Pornography is pictures, videos, or even cartoons or stories about people with no clothes on
  - ❖ Pornography shows people doing things with their bodies that are sexual in nature—meaning they are showing you using parts of their bodies that are usually covered by our swimming suits
  - ❖ What they are doing is never okay to be doing for an audience
  - ❖ Sometimes it shows men being cruel to **women**

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# Normalizing Sexual Interest

- ❖ It is normal for a kid to be interested in and curious about the male and the female human body and even the private parts of the body
- ❖ God created our whole entire bodies, even our private parts and they are an important part of what makes us children of God
- ❖ I can talk to you about our bodies and even our private parts
- ❖ I am not nervous about talking about this because I was interested in this too when I was a kid



# The Power of Pornography

- ❖ When we learn about the human body and our private parts through pornography, we learn lies about God's purpose for this part of ourselves
- ❖ Pornography can feel exciting because watching it causes a release a powerful chemical in our bodies that make us feel really good—for a short period of time
- ❖ This chemical hits our brain in such a powerful way that we can become addicted to this chemical



# The Power of Pornography

- ❖ These chemicals are so powerful that once we start looking at pornography, our bodies want more and more of these chemicals
- ❖ It feels like a giant magnet drawing us to more and more and it can become hard to stop
- ❖ Our brain needs more and more of that same chemical to feel satisfied and so we keep looking and looking

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# Define Addiction

- ❖ An addiction is a very bad habit that we cannot stop doing
- ❖ When we are addicted to something:
  - ❖ we make bad choices because we can't think straight
  - ❖ we lie to cover up our bad choices
  - ❖ we spend a lot of time trying to get the thing that we are addicted to
  - ❖ our family and friendships suffer
  - ❖ we want to stop but feel like we can't stop

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# Addiction and our TWO BRAINS

- ❖ The THINKING BRAIN is just behind your forehead
  - ❖ It is slow to develop—takes about 25 year to be fully working
  - ❖ It develops best when we have parents who care for us and help us understand our feelings
  - ❖ It helps us make choices about what to do with our feelings
  - ❖ It can learn RIGHT from WRONG
  - ❖ It like a muscle—the more you work it, the stronger it gets

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# Addiction and our TWO BRAINS

- ❖ The **FEELING BRAIN** is deep inside of your head
  - ❖ It develops much quicker...parts of it are fully developed at birth
  - ❖ It assesses experiences and helps us know if we should go towards or away from people and experiences
  - ❖ It has as special **reward center** that gives us feelings of pleasure for doing things that feel good
  - ❖ When we are young, our feeling brain is frequently in charge

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# The Attraction Center

- ❖ **The ATTRACTION CENTER:**
  - ❖ Part of the 'feeling brain'
  - ❖ It produces God-given feelings of attraction between a man and a woman and is important to perpetuating the human race
  - ❖ It is normal and healthy to be interested in boys/ girls even at a young age
  - ❖ The attraction center cannot always tell the difference between 'real' people and people in pictures
  - ❖ Seeing pornography at a young age turns on the attraction center prematurely, long before the thinking brain has the capacity to help it understand God-ordained sexuality

Jenson, K. & Poyner, G. Good Pictures Bad Pictures



# Gas and Brakes...

- ❖ The feeling brain is like a car's "gas pedal"
- ❖ The thinking brain is like a car's "brake pedal"
- ❖ The "gas pedal" develops sooner than the "brake pedal"
- ❖ Pornography can activate the feeling brain's 'gas pedal' before the 'brake pedal' is strong enough to resist, causing a powerful addiction

Jenson, K. & Poyner, G. Good Pictures Bad Pictures



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# How to Teach This?

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- ❖ This is a special part of the feeling brain created by God
- ❖ Everyone has an attraction center but it normally does not turn on until we are older
- ❖ It leads people to be attracted to one another and fall in love
- ❖ It leads people to choose a partner for life and then make a choice to create a family
- ❖ If the attraction center did not exist, the human race might not survive

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# How to Teach This?

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- ❖ Pornography shows people together in a way that is confusing and disturbing
- ❖ The attraction center draws us to be interested in pornography
- ❖ Watching pornography can lead someone to believe that people are objects instead of real human beings with feelings
- ❖ If we let our 'thinking brain' develop enough before the attraction center of our 'feeling brain' develops, we will have more power to make a good choice when we stumble on pornography

# III. Working with Adolescents

*“Sexuality and spirituality spring from the same vital life source and have the same end. They are both about relationship...about loving and being loved...about desiring and being desired about being vulnerable, honest, and intimate.*

*They both require growth and self knowledge, including awareness of ones limitations and shadows. They both include the whole self, including the body and emotions. These are not two different forces, nor are they at any way at odds with each other.”*

*–Paul Gibling*

**How can we Teach  
This Kind  
of Paradigm  
to our Adolescents?**

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# Sexuality as a God-Ordained Part of our Personhood

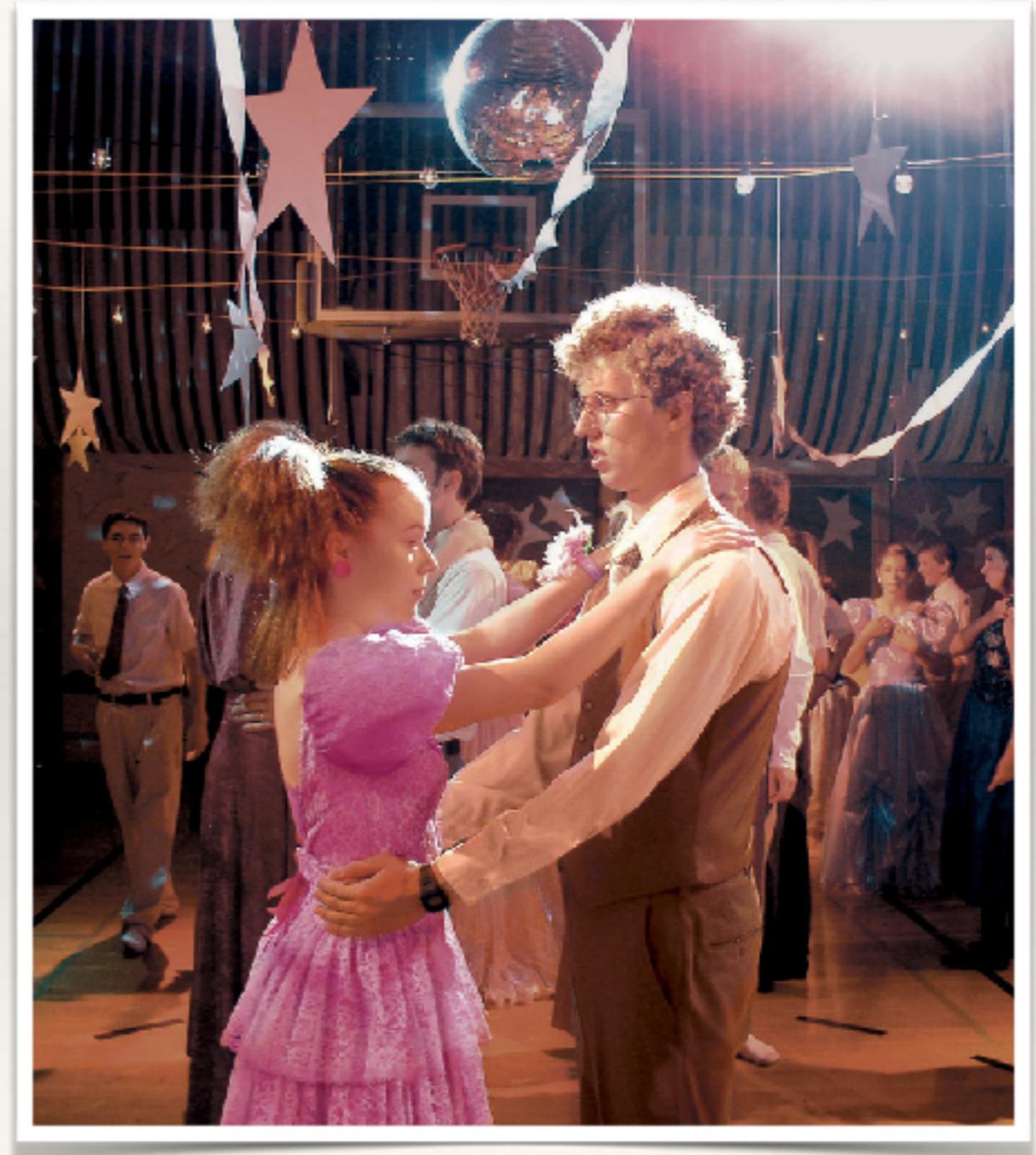
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- ❖ We are created as multifaceted beings
- ❖ There are multiple “parts” of ourselves...all of which we can cultivate to become a fullness of who God wants us to become
  - ❖ Spiritual Beings
  - ❖ Intellectual Beings
  - ❖ Emotional Beings
  - ❖ Creative Beings
  - ❖ Sexual Beings
- ❖ Each part is a key component of what makes us beautifully human and divine



# Sexual Interest and Attraction are a **NORMAL** and **HEALTHY** Part of Adolescent Development

- ❖ It is normal and acceptable to feel both desire and arousal for others when our bodies have gone through puberty
- ❖ Talk to your children about what they are feeling
  - ❖ Why they feel stirrings
  - ❖ How their bodies might be responding to others and that its normal
  - ❖ How it is important for them to feel these God-ordained feelings



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# Normalizing Sexual Development within a Christian Framework

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- ❖ Have conversations with adolescents about:
  - ❖ How their sexual selves are still in early development
  - ❖ How they might treat themselves and others in a way that respects their emerging sexuality
  - ❖ How they can both feel strong (sexual) feelings and still stay inside of their integrity with regards to what they do with the feelings they are having
  - ❖ Ask your adolescent what her goals and dreams are for the future
  - ❖ Help him align his goals for the future with choices he can be making in the here and now about potential sexual relationships with self and others

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# HOPEFUL OUTCOMES

## of Healthy Attitudes Around Emerging Sexuality

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- ❖ Capacity to talk to parents and mentors about their complex thoughts, feelings, fears, etc.
- ❖ A paradigm that *does not* link sexuality with shame, sin, or hedonism
- ❖ A paradigm that *does not* link lack of sexuality with virtue or honor



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# HOPEFUL OUTCOMES

## of Healthy Attitudes Around Emerging Sexuality

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- ❖ An understanding that sexuality is a powerful part of what makes us human and children of God
- ❖ Sexuality as NEUTRAL in nature (like fire, water, money)—it is what we do with it that determines its “goodness” or “badness”
- ❖ A desire to live inside of ones integrity around sexual choices based on love of God, Self, and others—not based on fear





**Our Quest:**

**Flexibility**

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# CONSEQUENCES of High Anxiety Paradigm Around Emerging Sexuality

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❖ RIGIDITY

❖ CHAOS

Seigel, D.

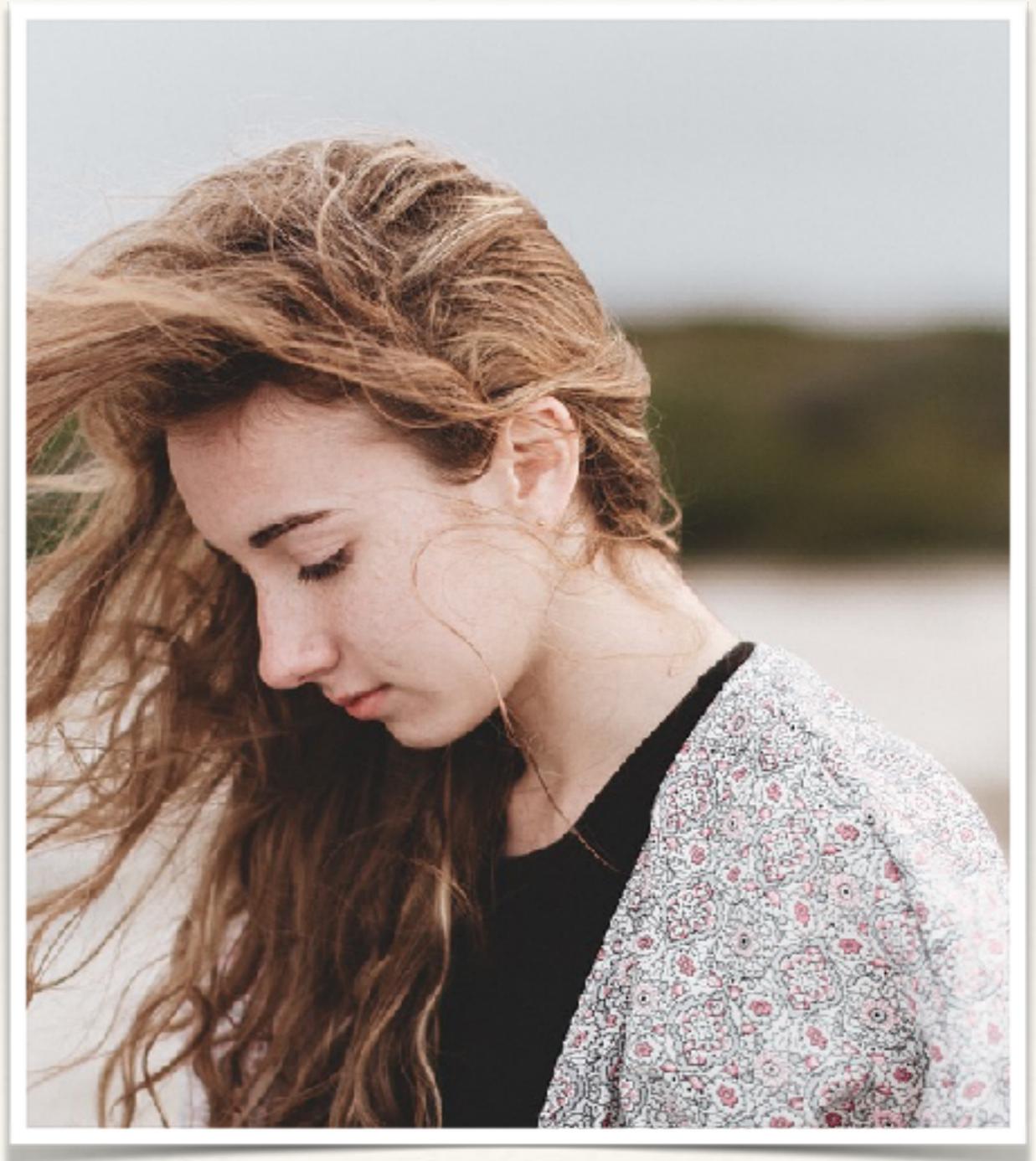


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# RIGIDITY

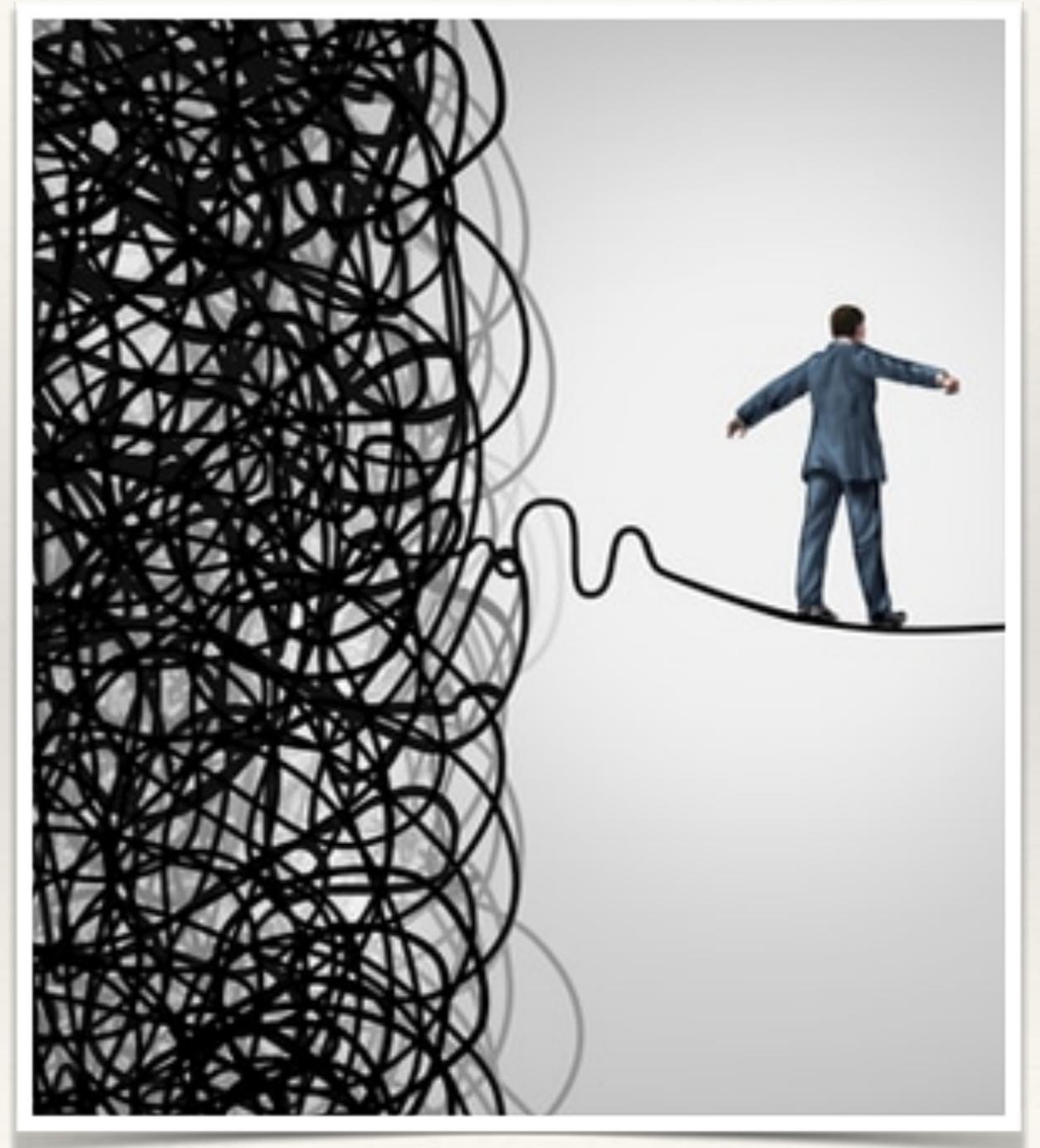
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- ❖ FEAR of ones' own changing body
- ❖ GUILT / SHAME about ones normal and healthy thoughts, feelings, curiosities around sexuality
- ❖ INABILITY to cultivate healthy relationships with the opposite gender
- ❖ UNHEALTHY attitudes that fuse asexuality to virtue and sexuality to sin / hedonism / selfishness
- ❖ DIFFICULT to “un-learn” when stage of healthy sexual activity has arrived



# CHAOS

- ❖ Those who struggle with a chaotic sexual style tend to
  - ❖ Be ill informed about healthy sexuality (sometimes leading to ‘self education’—a gateway into pornography exposure)
  - ❖ Have roll models (in real life or through media) that model a disconnection between commitment and sexuality
  - ❖ Have troubled primary attachment relationships and therefore seek comfort and connection through sexuality rather than through deep empathic emotional connection



# The Tug of War

- ❖ High anxiety attitudes (explicitly communicated or implicitly modeled by silence) about sexuality can cause a swing between chaos and rigidity in our adolescents
  - ❖ They feel healthy longings
  - ❖ They are naturally curious
  - ❖ They feel shame for what they feel
  - ❖ They bounce between extreme rigidity (improperly spiritualizing their fears) to extreme chaos (experimenting with porn, masturbation, sexually acting out)
  - ❖ This is often the experience of adolescents who end up struggling with pornography



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# What does that look like?

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- ❖ Model low anxiety around your relationship to your own sexuality
- ❖ Model healthy affection if in sexual relationship
- ❖ Teach correct principles around the sanctity of the body that is not fear oriented or shaming
- ❖ Allow open dialogue and lots of it (in all issues)
- ❖ Share your own insecurities if you have them...be vulnerable



# IV. Spouse Care

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# What the Recovering Spouse Needs:

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- ▶ to see REMORSE (emotional remorse)
- ▶ to know it is NOT about him/her
- ▶ addict to understand the delay in recovery time
- ▶ to feel VALIDATION (emotional validation)
- ▶ a major REFRAME of meaning behind addiction:
  - ▶ addiction as a metaphoric surrogate
  - ▶ addiction as a mood altering experience
  - ▶ addiction in light of childhood neglect/abuse

For a MUCH more detailed study  
of these and other topics go to  
[valeriehamaker.com](http://valeriehamaker.com)  
“Online Education” Tab

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# Class #1 Outline: Healthy Couples' Sexuality (Part 1 of 2)

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1. A brief overview of the attachment model of relational development
2. How securely attached, anxiously attached, and avoidantly attached children respond to threat and exploration
3. How childhood attachment tendencies tend to correlate with our way of relating in adult intimate relationships and in our sexual relationships
4. Synchronous, Solace, Sealed off sex explained
5. Individual identity development and its correlation to sexual development
6. Love and marriage in its historical context: How partnering has evolved over time
7. Brief overview of the evolution of sexual attitudes and mores due to the advent of the internet
8. Foundations of healthy sexuality as a reflection of an "I-Thou" relationship
9. The theology of sex as God-ordained means of profound connection
10. Struggles with intimacy due to life stage and other stressors
11. Items to consider when a couple is struggling sexually (medical, mental, medication use, etc.)

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# Class #2 Outline: Healthy Couples' Sexuality (Part 2 of 2)

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## **Class #2 Outline: Healthy Couples Sexuality (Part II)**

1. An overview of the “thinking brain” and the “feeling brain”
2. Fundamentals around issues of sexual desire and arousal
3. Explaining issues of sexual desire and arousal from the perspective of the thinking brain and the feeling brain
4. A deep look at struggles in sexuality and common issues that couples have that stem from belief systems embedded from culture, church, family of origin, etc.
5. Issues around sexuality and gender
6. Women and sexual identity development
7. Overcoming myths around women and low desire as a birthright
8. The female body and its sexual potential when supported by a knowledgeable and caring partner
9. Taking ownership of ones own sexual identity development
10. Key learnings: what healthy couples do to have a vibrant sexual relationship

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# Class #3 Outline Human Attachment and Addiction Vulnerability

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1. A deeper look at human attachment theory as a means of keeping parents and children in close proximity in times of stress and struggle
2. Some fundamentals of early brain development and how attachment to primary caregivers correlates to healthy cognitive and emotional brain development
3. A breakdown of the three fundamental attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant attachment) with illustrations and personal and clinical examples
4. How are the main characters in the movie FROZEN great examples of the three attachment styles?
5. Addiction as an outcome of one trying to get ones healthy attachment needs met in an unhealthy way
6. Fundamentals of addiction in general
7. Sexual addiction and food addiction as most complicated addictive processes as they each are a fundamental part of what makes us human
8. Jesus Christ as the ultimate healer

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# Class #4 Outline: Classic and Contemporary Sexual Addiction Fundamentals

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1. Classic sexual addiction (definitions, correlations, treatments, etc.)
2. Contemporary sexual addiction (definitions, correlations, treatments, etc.)
3. How each variation of sexual addiction resemble and differ from the other and how are treated differently clinically
4. Healthy sexuality defined
5. Addicted sexuality defined
6. Levels of exposure to flesh media and its impact
7. Elements common to addictive disorders
8. Activities associated with sexual addiction
9. Behaviors and attitudes associated with sexual addiction
10. Hope in healing through God's creation of a brain that is "plastic" in nature and can be changed throughout life

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# Class #5 Outline: Sexual Addiction—The Brain on Porn

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1. Brain chemicals that are involved with sexuality
2. How these same chemicals play a role in addiction
3. Why is porn addictive?
3. A close look at the Super-Chemical: Dopamine
4. A simplified explanation of how key sections of the brain are impacted by sex addiction
5. The thinking brain and its key functions in healthy brain development
6. How to maximize the functions of the thinking brain
7. The malfunctions of the brain impacted by porn and masturbation
8. Going deep into the addiction cycle (core beliefs, triggers, rituals, etc.)
9. Sobriety versus recovery in addiction
10. Hope that healing is possible through the ever-changing brain

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# Class #6 Outline: Stages of Recovery and the Power of Group Recovery

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1. Stages of recovery overview:
  - I. Developing Stage
  - II. Crisis/Decision Stage
  - III. Shock Stage
  - IV. Grief Stage
  - V. Repair Stage
2. Each stage of sexual addiction recovery reviewed including how long the phase generally lasts, how one feels, how they impact and are impacted by others (family, support groups, etc.), key areas of growth in each phase, key areas of struggle in each phase
3. Key factors to successful recovery
4. The power of group work
5. Overview of Sexaholics Anonymous (SA)
6. Overview of SA's definition of "The Problem"
7. Overview of SA's definition of "The Solution"
8. A discussion of how the 12 STEPS are incorporated into SA group work and how they benefit those who seek true recovery

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# Class #7 Outline: Preparing our Children for Encounters with Pornography

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1. Setting up the need for prevention: A review of studies done on the porn industry, average age of exposure, parental lack of knowledge, etc.
2. The detrimental effects of pornography on children and adolescents with regards to the formation of attitudes and beliefs relative to sexuality
3. The role of parents and other primary caregivers in modeling healthy gender equality and other formal education
4. Fundamentals of sexual/intimate relationship education
5. A background for parents on the workings of the child's developing brain
6. The child's brain: learning, imitation, and habit formation
7. A step-by-step breakdown of how to teach a child about healthy sexuality and addicted sexuality
  - a. pornography defined
  - b. normalizing sexual interest
  - c. addiction defined
  - d. a simple explanation of the 'thinking' and 'feeling' brains and how these relate to making smart choices
8. A protocol to teach children when exposed to pornography

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# Class #8 Outline: Healthy Adolescent Sexual Development (Part 1 of 2)

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1. Introduction of a healthy paradigm around sexuality and spirituality
2. Overview of the multiple types of intimacy and the importance of developing these in ascending order and with adequate maturity
3. Consequences of developing sexual intimacy premature to other types of intimacy
4. Gaining a deeper and richer understanding of sexuality: “The 5 Circles of Sexuality”. Helping parents and caregivers find language around the topic of sexuality
  - a. Sensuality
  - b. Sexual Intimacy
  - c. Sexual Identity
  - d. Reproduction and Sexual Health
  - e. Sexualization
5. Triangle of Healthy Sexuality: A Theological Conceptualization

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# Class #9 Outline: Healthy Adolescent Sexual Development (Part 2 of 2)

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1. Hopeful Outcomes of Helping Teens Develop Healthy Attitudes around Emerging Sexuality
2. Possible consequences of Instilling in our Youth High Anxiety around Emerging Sexuality
3. Struggles with Pornography a Possible Outcome of High Anxiety around Sexuality
4. How Parents Play Key Role in Shaping their Teens' Attitudes
5. Instructor's Protocol for Working Closely with Parents and Teens when Teens Struggle with Sexual Acting out (Pornography and/or Masturbation)
  - a. Emphasis on parent/child attachment bond as the most important component of adolescent's strength
  - b. History/development: timeline
  - c. Sexual addiction defined (as many who struggle are not "addicted")
  - d. Normalization of emerging sexual desire
  - e. Understanding of the disabling power of shame
  - f. Explanation of the sexual addiction cycle
  - g. Education around porn/masturbations' impact on the brain with emphasis on the power of dopamine (with brief explanatory slides—please refer to class #5 for a much deeper understanding of addiction on the brain)
6. Feedback from current/former clients on the impact that these conversations have had for their struggling adolescents.