

Why Weiner Did it Again and Again and Again

Written by Bill Perkins

What would prompt an ex-congressman to do the same stupid thing over and over and over again? You would think after stories and pictures about his not-so-secret sexting of women he met on his Twitter account drove him from office in 2011, he would have cleaned up his act. You know, gotten help.

Enrolled in a Sex Addicts group or something like that. Instead, he laid low for a year or so and then decided to run for the Mayor of New York City. This decision he made while aware he had had multiple sexting and phone exchanges with women since he resigned as a congressman.

Such behavior raises a question: Why? Why would an intelligent man with a beautiful wife and a promising political career return to his own vomit and lick it off his telephone monitor? Not once . . . but multiple times.

When Bill Clinton's White House escapades with Monica Lewinsky erupted onto the public scene, I appeared on *The O'Reilly Factor* with host Bill O'Reilly to answer the question: Why would a sitting president risk everything for the sexual favors of an intern? The answer I gave then applies to Congressman Weiner today. It also applies to every man who plays with sexual temptation.

The Law of Diminishing Returns

As a man experiments with illicit sex he learns that what's exciting in the beginning quickly becomes routine. That's because secretive and taboo sexual behavior involves the law of diminishing returns: It takes more and more stimulation to get the same degree of pleasure. Remember your first kiss and how quickly you wanted to move from the lips to the breasts. Sexual sins are progressive because each experience seems less exciting than what comes next--or what a man hopes will come next.

As a man pursues sex with a woman who's not his wife, he experiences what I call, "the rush of young love." Adrenaline, dopamine and endorphins race through the man's circulatory system creating a wonderful feeling. It's the same thing he felt the first time he fell in love. His excitement is turbo-charged by a boring marital sex life.

Men in such situations face a grave danger. In order to get the same rush, he has to progress. The thrill of young love could be his, but he has to view more explicit images, send more explicit Tweets, or actually talk on the phone with a woman of interest. In a very real sense, he must increase the risk to get the rush.

Today I'm going to talk about three reasons this cycle is repeated.

First — I Think I'm a Bad Person

First, I think I'm a bad person.

Such behavior alters how a man views himself. And it's as harmful to his soul as swallowing acid would be to his body. His self-image changes--if he's a believer it reverts back to how he saw himself before he became a Christian. Once he begins to masturbate in front of his computer monitor or smart phone, visit strip clubs, or cheat on his wife with other women, he unleashes appetites that will define his person. These appetites and actions create tremendous shame which prompt him to valiantly shield his secret life from public view.

This sense of self-hatred and shame produces an increased level of emotional pain which the man then has to work harder to deaden. One thing is certain: after a believer gives in to his sexual compulsions long enough, he loses sight of the new man he's become in Christ and sees himself, not as a son of God, but as a lustful man.

Once this happens acting out is easier since he may say to himself, "That's just the way I am." His sexual behavior is consistent with his current low self-worth which is based on the cravings of his lower sinful thoughts and behaviors.

These feelings of unworthiness may be fed by childhood experiences and memories. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly warned the Israelites that he would visit the sins of the fathers upon their children (Ex. 20:5; Num. 14:18). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of sexual compulsions.

I don't take the Old Testament warning to mean that there is an inherited generational tendency that, like an unbroken chain, must link a man's behavior to his father. Rather, I think the dad models sexual behavior that a son will tend to follow. I've had numerous men who struggle with porn tell me they first saw it while reading a magazine belonging to their father, grandfather, uncle, or other family member.

Often they would masturbate while looking at the erotic images. Later, they would feel guilty and ashamed and tell themselves they were bad. Not only does the attraction to pornography carry over into adult life, so does the shame.

Some men suffered sexual abuse as children. Even though they did nothing wrong, they may have a deep sense of emotional dirtiness and shame that triggers a fear that those they love will abandon them. One reason they fear abandonment is because parents who abused them may have threatened to leave if they told their secret.

Researchers Eist and Mandel note that within families in which incest has occurred, "Tremendous parental threats of abandonment were a most frequent technique employed by the parent to control or immobilize their children." [i]

Boys who fear desertion feel unwanted. It's easy for them to think if they're unwanted they must be bad. And bad men do bad things . . . bad sexual things.

Second — No One Would Love Me If They Knew

Second, the belief that no one would love me if they really knew me.

Because men feel safe with me, they frequently tell me things they're ashamed of. After listening to a painful confession, I'll frequently ask, "Have you told anyone else?" Usually they'll answer with a simple, "No."

When I ask why, I'm told they don't have a friend, including their wife, who could handle it. They keep it to themselves to avoid rejection. They can't imagine someone loving a person so impure, defiled and perverted. Such feelings may cause a man to conclude:

- * Real people can't be trusted.
- * Real people won't meet their needs.
- * Real people bring rejection and pain.

Since such men feel unworthy of love by real people, it makes sense they would settle for an illusion of love. In contrast to the suffering caused by real people, pornography, sexting and masturbation provide pleasure without the risk of rejection. The image on the Internet never lets them down. It always gives a mood swing. It always brings pleasure. It always gives the illusion of intimacy. And once trapped in the illusion's web, men remain there rather than fighting their way out where they can find real intimacy.

Third — Sex Is My Most Important Need

Third, sex is my most important need.

Men who grew up in abusive families sometimes turned to masturbation as a means of nurturing themselves. In a world of pain, they found something that made them feel better. Often the compulsive or habitual nature of their masturbation would reflect the emotional pain they were suffering. The greater the emotional pain, the stronger the drive to masturbate.

As boys, they equated sexual pleasure with love, care, and safety. As adults, whenever they experience pain they immediately turn to sexual pleasure as a means of coping and proving to themselves that they're OK.

For such men, nothing in life is more important than sex. They didn't bond with their parents when growing up, they bonded with sexual pleasure. Such guys put their need for sex above the needs, wishes, or desires of their wife. Sex comes before God, work, reputation and family.

Such a drive will compel a man to sacrifice a congressional seat along with his reputation and family for the rush of sexting with a young and beautiful woman. Nothing is more important than sex because sex drives away pain and replaces it with pleasure. And replacing pain with pleasure will drive a president, a congressman or any of us, to do the same stupid thing over and over and over again.

Next I'll talk about how to break this destructive cycle.

[i] H. Eist and A. Mandel, "Family Treatment of On-going Incest Behavior," *Family Process* (1967), 7:216.