

Ethical Porn for Dicks: A Man's Guide to Responsible Viewing Pleasure

David J. Ley, Ph.D.
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Review submitted by David S. Prescott, LICSW

In 2016, the Internet web site Pornhub was responsible for [3,110,400,000 gigabytes](#) of bandwidth on the Internet. The site streamed an average of 99 gigabytes a second, or six terabytes a minute. There were 23 billion visits to the site last year, or 64 million per day. In putting this into context, it is important to remember that Pornhub is only one of many such “tube sites”. Porn is ubiquitous.

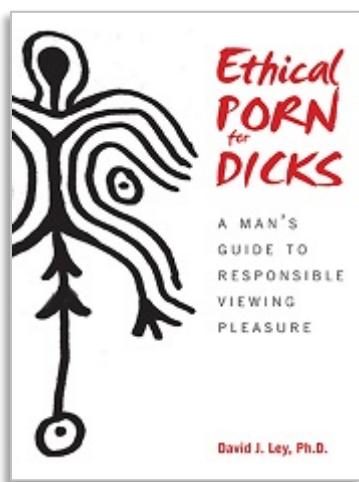
Obviously, much has been written about pornography and its changing role in society; raising consciousness about the many controversies is beyond the scope of both this book and this review. What is relevant, however, is the sheer volume of disagreement – and disagreeableness – that follows in

porn’s wake. Whether there is such a thing as porn addiction; and if so is it a “primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry” as the American Society of Addiction Medicine espouses might be better questions to ask if they didn’t appear so often next to moral outrage and pseudoscience. Certainly, there are strong concerns about pornography replacing sex education for far too many young people.

Still, porn is undeniably ubiquitous. Studies of its role in sexual violence seem to converge on the idea that porn use by those at high risk to abuse others can be a risk factor, although this is hardly surprising. Although correlation is not causation, it has been interesting to see that rates of sexual violence go down in times and places where



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porn is more plentiful.

David Ley is a clinical psychologist and sex therapist in Albuquerque, NM, who has become an outspoken opponent of the concept of sex addiction^[1]. His motivations are primarily twofold. First, until the state of our science is more conclusive, there are good reasons sex addiction is not formally recognized as an actual form of mental illness. Second, the concept of sex addiction has not only been used as an excuse in some circumstances, but as a means of shaming and social control in others. In an era when society is becoming more open about many aspects of sexuality, we have a long way to go in terms of openly discussing pornography and its place in sexual expression. In this regard, Ley is the proverbial voice in the wilderness.

Ethical porn for dicks, as its title suggests, is at low risk for appearing to be an academic text. Indeed, Ley describes it as written as though he and you (the reader) are sitting next to each other having a beer. In this way, the simple, direct language belies the fact that Ley speaks from decades of hard-earned experience and expertise. Indeed, when discussing a complicated topic like sexuality, elevated and breezy texts are the norm. My primary concern with the writings of many in the field of human sexuality is that all too often their areas of interest outpace their understanding of the humans they are describing, and the context in which they live. This is where Ley shines: he is a practitioner with a deep understanding of the available science who knows how to talk with his clients. In fact, this contributes to my only criticism of the book: He refers to many studies, but does not cite them in the way an academic text would. He does, however, provide excellent references and resources, including the studies to which he refers, but the direct linkage is absent by design.

The structure of the book is designed to be informative and engaging. While one might anticipate a propensity to overstatement given the title, this does not happen. Instead, the book speaks plainly and directly about relevant areas in the following table of contents:

- Foreword: Notes from a feminist pornographer
- Watching porn while having, not being, a dick
- Should you worry about porn's effects?
- Porn and your relationship
- Porn, fantasy, and “real sex”
- Dealing with porn-related problems
- When porn really *can* ruin your life
- Guilt, religion, and porn
- Children, teens, and porn
- Reshaping the porn industry
- Afterword: Notes from an ethical porn performer

If it is not obvious, Ley is not advocating wild, freeform abandon, although he certainly believes that we should all enjoy our bodies and sexualities in the ways that are right for us. Rather, he is advocating thoughtful and responsible porn use, all the while maintaining a sex-positive attitude. This is important, given the current state of sex education and discussion of sexuality in most societies at present.

For professionals working with adults who have sexually abused, this book will be an important resource, both for more clearly formulating our own beliefs and helping clients to establish theirs.

[1] See: Ley, D.J (2012). *The myth of sex addiction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ley, D.J. (2016). The use of “sex addiction” in US legal proceedings. In D.S. Prescott & R.J. Wilson (Eds.), *Very different voices: perspectives and case studies in treating sexual aggression* (pp. 145-158). Holyoke, MA: NEARI Press.

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