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Weird texts might be a red flag.

On my weekly podcast, [The Crunch](#), we have a segment where listeners send in questions about their relationships. A few weeks ago, a young woman wrote in to ask us about a man she was dating long-distance. They met online and were planning to meet in person, but as the date approached, the tone of his messages shifted.

Instead of his usual cute texts, he started saying things like, "We won't be able to keep our hands off each other," and "Who knows what'll happen if we're alone for too long."

His messages confused her. She was clear she was [not planning on having sex until after marriage](#), and he said he was fine with that. On the show, we told her to talk to him, express her concern, and hopefully that would change things for the better.

Later, I received a follow up from her. When [they met up for their in-person date](#), she talked to him about his texts and how that kind of flirting made her uncomfortable. He said he understood and that he would stop. However, after he left and their relationship went back to texting, the flirting didn't change. She told me [she ended the relationship](#) because she couldn't be with someone who didn't respect her boundaries.

In the end, it's a good thing the relationship ended.

It's clear their values didn't match up or if they did, he was not sticking to them. Not only that, she did the right thing in [communicating her thoughts and feelings](#). Even though he responded with understanding, that understanding didn't set in.

What interested me was the shift from his actions in person to his actions over text. She told me he seemed like a different person over text than when they met in person. I think this is common. Sometimes, we act like different people on the internet than we do in person. One of the reasons is that even if you know who you're talking to, [it still feels anonymous](#).

In person, [there's an element of risk](#). The young man in her story didn't flirt the way he did in person because she would reject him right away. Over text, the risk of rejection is lower. Since there are no verbal cues or body language, you can just say, "lol I was kidding." Then you aren't blamed for any awkward or forward texts.

But the lowered risk of texting doesn't explain why someone would cross a clear boundary over text. Most of the time, we recognize the person behind the screen and their boundaries. If we aren't as respectful of people over text, one reason could be something I call "Porn Brain."

Bonding with porn.

"Porn Brain" simply means the effects pornography has on the way we think. [Sexual images release dopamine in the brain](#) along with other powerful chemicals that reinforce sexual experiences. These chemicals can bond us with our spouse, but they can also bond us with pornography. [When you frequently use pornography](#), you bond with it and Porn Brain follows.

Since sexuality is used to market everything from hamburgers to hospitals, everyone is susceptible to Porn Brain. In the past those dopamine hits were hard to get. There was an element of social risk if you wanted to engage in sexual activity with someone who wasn't your spouse. It was also more difficult to form that bond with porn, so Porn Brain was less common.

Today, that social risk has all but disappeared and it's easier to bond with porn. Not only is sexual imagery used on ads at bus stations, it's readily available in your pocket. You can access it with no risk of anyone finding out.

Easy access to a powerful chemical reward is bad news for your brain.

It changes the way you view the reality of sex.

The philosopher C.S. Lewis once wrote about this exact phenomenon. He said men who frequently fantasize about sex invent a "harem of shadow brides" for themselves.

"The harem is always accessible, always subservient, [and] calls for no sacrifice. Among those brides he is always adored, always the perfect lover: no demand is made on [him.]"

C.S. Lewis died before universal access to the internet, but had he lived to see it, he would say the exact same thing about the effects of pornography. Even if someone wants to believe porn is morally neutral, he [can't also believe its psychologically neutral](#).

Porn Brain believes it can get what it wants when it wants it. It may even [get angry and lash out at someone for not giving it what it wants](#). But this isn't how relationships work. Love demands sacrifice and sacrifice demands giving up what you want. If we repeatedly go to porn, we're going to forget how to sacrifice.

God built our brains like this on purpose. [Sex was designed by God for marriage](#), anything else is a moral corruption. When we choose a corruption, we corrupt our souls. The moral side of pornography is something for another post, but it is important to state here: if you struggle with pornography, [bring that to confession](#).

The physical side effects of pornography should prove to us that porn is a sin. We weren't made to sin, and there are negative physical side effects when we choose it.

As men, we have to admit the reality we create for ourselves when we watch pornography or even engage in sexual fantasy. We have to admit that what we are doing is creating a world that looks like the real one, but with us at the center.

The lasting effects of Porn Brain.

It is indisputable that the availability of porn changes the attitudes of the people who view it frequently. For those who do, phones become a source of risk-free sexual stimulation. That has an effect [when we try online dating](#).

The reward center of your brain can't tell the difference between a porn website and a dating website if you use both frequently. You get a dopamine hit when someone messages you back and when you view pornography. Eventually, one is going to spill over into the other and you're going to want a more powerful, more immediate dopamine hit from the chat. That has [immediate consequences for the person on the other end of the chat](#).

(Pornography has consequences for the people on the other side of the screen as well, but that's a topic for a different post.)

Porn Brain explains why people like the man in the story behave one way over text and another way in person. They let porn hijack the way they think about human relationships and they expect [immediate dopamine hits in low-risk situations like text](#).

If someone keeps Porn Brain around for a while, they can eventually let it govern their day-to-day interactions with others, which can lead to very bad things. We need to cut off Porn Brain before that happens or [it can kill a relationship before it even starts](#).

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