

Online porn: A new abstinence movement

"Masturbation has become the latest frontier in the school of self-improvement," said Emily Witt in *NYMag.com*. Believe it or not, there's a burgeoning movement of young men who've sworn off both Internet porn and masturbation. These men have created a forum on the social media website Reddit, where they contend that online porn "conditions men to want constant variety—an endless set of images and fantasies—and requires them to experience increasingly heightened stimuli to feel aroused." Men who engage in too much masturbation, or "fapping" as the site calls it, can't perform when they find themselves with real women. Practicing "fapstinance," however, enables them to conserve their vital energies, and thus makes them more confident with real women, and more masculine in general. It's an increasingly popular message: About 400,000 men now visit the "NoFap" site each month. "I feel like a man again" is the common refrain.

"Color me skeptical," said Adam Weinstein in *Gawker.com*. Repressive religious authorities have been telling people that onanism causes enfeeblement—not to mention blindness—for centuries. As for the "NoFappers," their main rationale for giving up their Internet fantasy world of wild,

willing women is that they think it helps them meet and bed real wild, willing women. It doesn't seem to occur to them that their actual problem is that they view women—real and ersatz—as sex objects, not as human beings. This is enlightenment? No, it's not, and neither is demonizing masturbation, said Andrew Sullivan in *Dish AndrewSullivan.com*. In fact, this entirely natural act can serve as an act of personal liberation, and for learning about your own body in defiance of 15th century dogma about human sexuality.

The "NoFap" movement isn't about restoring religious taboos, said Josephine Ledger in *The Frisky.com*. It's about young men getting control over Internet porn, which is "like a drug." Several men I've dated have confessed that online porn is messing with their heads, and interfering with their ability to relate to women. When my own boyfriend decided to quit online porn, it made him a better partner in every way, and "I felt more connected to him." Look: This is the first time in human history that men have had access to unlimited, highly sexualized images of women every minute of every day. What's wrong with men engaging in some thoughtful reflection about how that's affecting them?