

Introduction



Introduction As depicted in Salvador Dali's "The Great Masturbator", masturbation is a fascinating and complex topic that affects each of us differently. Despite almost universal agreement by medical doctors that masturbation is a normal, safe, and common practice, masturbation continues to be associated with embarrassment, shame, and guilt, primarily due to societal perceptions of the act. Yet masturbation is a common and natural function that is practiced by individuals of all sexual orientations, genders, and ages. Masturbation is defined as sexual self-pleasuring that involves self-stimulation. According to recent studies, 97% of men and 83% of women have masturbated at some point in their lives. That is an increase from the 1950s Kinsey Report, which reported that 92% of men and 58% of women have masturbated. Although masturbation is statistically quite prevalent, it is still viewed by society as a taboo subject.

Historical Background While there are no direct references to masturbation in cave paintings or other prehistoric artifacts, the practice of masturbation by Bonobo chimpanzees, which share 98.4% percent of our DNA, provides some confirmation that masturbation has likely been practiced since the dawn of mankind.

The Ancient World In the ancient world, depictions of male masturbation are relatively common. The Egyptians, for example, celebrated masturbation as the process by which the sun god, Atum, created the first Adam and Eve equivalents, Shu and Tefnut. "With the hand of God, Atum masturbated and brought forth the first pair of souls." The Sumerians, who invented the first written Western language, make reference to the Mesopotamian god Enki masturbating, his ejaculation filling the Tigris River with flowing water. Condemnation of masturbation is as old as fertility-worship and is probably based on early man's realization that there is safety

in numbers. A bigger tribe is more likely to gain new territory and expand its power base. In theory, this is the reason that any form of sexual pleasure unlikely to result in a population increase (e. g. masturbation, homosexuality, oral/anal sex) has routinely been denounced as wrong. While in today's overpopulated world this rationale no longer makes logical sense, this belief structure continues to drive the moral attitudes of many people. In the Judeo-Christian tradition prevalent throughout Western society, the main Scripture quoted by Christians to denounce masturbation is Genesis 38. In biblical times, under Jewish law, a brother was required to procreate with his brother's widow. Onan of Judah refused, and "spilled his seed" (i. e. ejaculate), on the ground instead. This is the origin of the term Onanism (The Sin of Onan) which is incorrectly used in place of masturbation – in fact, what really happened was premature withdrawal (i. e. coitus interruptus).

18th & 19th Centuries It was primarily during the 1700s and 1800s when masturbation was first associated with mental and physical deficiencies. Some prominent physicians, scientists, philosophers, and religious leaders believed that illnesses such as insanity, vision and hearing problems, epilepsy, mental retardation, and general health problems were caused by self-stimulation. In fact, over 60% of medical and mental illnesses were blamed on masturbation. The fear of masturbation was so great that throughout the world, extreme preventative measures were instituted including the use of mechanical restraints, genital surgery, and physical discipline. By the 19th century the cereal magnate John Harvey Kellogg declared "sex for anything but reproduction" to be "sexual excess." Kellogg and others began advocating routine circumcision of males as a deterrent to masturbation.

20th Century In the 20th Century, individuals within the

medical community began questioning whether or not masturbation was independent from the various psychiatric and medical illnesses to which it was historically linked. During the 1950s and 1960s, with greater discussion of sex and sexuality and lessening conservative social attitudes along with greater medical research on the topic of masturbation, the thought that the act of self-stimulation is associated with medical and mental illnesses dissipated. Beginning with the Kinsey Report of 1948, masturbation was demystified and even discovered to be beneficial. In 1966, Masters & Johnson (see photo) revealed the practice to be virtually universal in North America, cutting across all boundaries of sex, age, race, and social class. In 1971 Goldstein, Haeberle & McBride determined masturbation to be the most common form of sexual activity among humans. Today It is clear that masturbation has had a dynamic and varied history. It now almost universally accepted by the medical community that masturbation is a common, safe, and normal practice which occurs in infants, teenagers, and adults. Despite this new attitude, the actual practice and discussion of masturbation continues to be a social taboo within most societies. Former Surgeon General Jocelyn Elder was immediately dismissed by President Clinton in 1994 after she stated that masturbation " is something that is part of human sexuality and its part of something that perhaps should be taught. "

Facts and Figures

1. Masturbation is not evil, dirty or harmful - it will not make you go blind, drive you insane, turn you in to a pervert, stunt your growth, give you an STD, make you sterile or get you pregnant.
2. Both guys and girls masturbate, it is a normal and healthy part of sexual development.
3. Masturbation is a very personal thing and should not be done in public places or around people who are not willing partners (think safer sex

activity). 4. You are normal if you masturbate, normal if you wonder about it but don't do it, and normal if you never give it a second thought and don't do it - it is one of the few things in life that is "normal if you do and normal if you don't". 5. Masturbation may make sexual intercourse more enjoyable because you will already know what it takes to "please you". 6. Masturbation alleviates stress and releases endorphins (the pleasure hormones) into your system making you more relaxed. 7. Masturbation as exploration of the body is common in children between the ages of 3 and 6, in teens masturbation becomes more sophisticated and sexually motivated. 8. Surveys have shown that 80% of males and 59% of females have masturbated by age 18. 9. Many experts believe that masturbation is more prevalent in the teen years due to a strong fluctuation of hormones; masturbation alleviates the strain of this build up and is a necessary part of development. 10. The only real problems that come with masturbation are psychological and are the result of unhealthy or weary attitudes toward doing it (if you do it but are ashamed) or abnormal practices (for example, public masturbation). Biblical View. One of the most prevalent rationalizations that people use is that the Bible never mentions masturbation and that it must therefore be alright. Is that logical? Is child molestation alright then? It's not specifically forbidden in the Bible. How about shooting heroin? Or how about torturing someone? Not mentioned! You see how illogical the argument quickly becomes. The most obvious biblical principle that is applicable to masturbation is found in Mt 5: 28 where Jesus indicates that lusting after someone in the heart is the same as actually doing it. I am violating whomever I am picturing in my mind during the act of masturbation. It really doesn't matter whether it is a picture from a magazine, (Those are real people!), or someone I've met or a memory

of some act committed in the past. And if I can discipline my mind to think of no one, what of that? Attainment of such focus only serves to make obvious the desperation and obsession that drives us to such lengths. The principles found in 1 Cor 6: 12; and Rom 6: 14 clearly emerge as foundational to our plight - that we are slaves to whatever masters us. When we get truly honest about the habit of masturbation, it is clear that it is a behavior that controls us - one that we use to medicate pain, to alleviate stress or to forget rejection. In that way, it is similar to a drug habit - just one more vehicle to avoid turning to God. Why won't we turn to God? We may be ashamed. We may believe that He's going to judge and punish us. We may not trust Him. Or, it simply may never occur to us. We don't normally see God as being involved in the fulfillment of our sexual lives. He's a Spirit after all and we are physical creatures. And yet, He is in fact the answer to every problem. He can quench our unholy desire and He can teach us to respond to problems by working through them rather than from running from them. Masturbating cultivates yearnings for sensations that differ from those generated by intercourse. Just how destructive to heterosexual relations this becomes will vary from person to person. Even in the mildest case, however, it would seem inevitable that masturbating when single will detract from one's future enjoyment of, and appreciation of, the uniqueness of heterosexual relations. It is not uncommon for people to find themselves so addicted to solitary sex that they actually prefer it to heterosexual relations and it is even more common for people feel they at least occasionally "need" the unique sensations that solitary sex offers, despite having an eager sex partner readily available. Nevertheless, suppose your marriage partner somehow manages to fluke giving you sensations so like what masturbation

has trained you to crave and expect that you do not actually find yourself preferring solo sex. Even then, your mind has been trained to connect those feelings not with intimacy with your marriage partner but with having sex with yourself. Want it or not, masturbation programs your mind to think of sexual feelings not as a precious gift from your partner, but as something you have generated yourself. So what will come flooding into your mind when your partner lovingly gives you those feelings will tend to be not thoughts of how wonderful your partner is, but of how much pleasure you used to give yourself. Despite what is actually happening, your mind will tend to register the sensations not as coming from your life partner but as if they were produced by yourself. Feelings that should be binding you to your marriage partner have already been locked in your mind as being associated with having sex with yourself. When making love, your mind will consciously and unconsciously flit from what is currently happening between you and your partner to what used to happen when you had solitary sex. For example, if your past history of masturbation had trained your mind to associate sexual feelings with fantasizing about an imaginary partner, that is what your mind will drift to, even though you now have a real partner who does not correspond exactly to your imaginary partner. Even if your partner somehow manages to exceed the heights of what you used to experience in solitary sex, masturbation will have cheapened the most precious sensual gift your partner could ever give you, to being something only ten or so percent more pleasurable than what you used to give yourself. Past masturbation will have robbed you of so much of the “ magic” and bonding power of marital relations, thus weakening your marriage. Church View Roman Catholic The Catholic Church teaches that “ Masturbation constitutes

a grave moral disorder" and that " both the Magisterium of the Church—in the course of a constant tradition—and the moral sense of the faithful have declared without hesitation that masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act." Although " it is said that psychology and sociology show that masturbation is a normal phenomenon of sexual development, especially among the young," this does not change the fact that it " is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act" and " that, whatever the motive for acting this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty. For it lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely the relationship which realizes 'the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love.'" This is because the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside of marriage is, according to the teaching of the Church, contrary to its primary purpose of procreation and unification of the husband and wife within the sacrament of marriage. In addition, the Church teaches that all other sexual activity—including masturbation, homosexual acts, acts of sodomy, all sex outside of or before marriage, and the use of any form of contraception or birth control—is gravely disordered, as it frustrates the natural order, purpose, and ends of sexuality. To form an equitable judgment about the subjects' moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety or other psychological or social factors that lessen, if not even reduce to a minimum, moral culpability. The traditional view of masturbation has been consistent for almost all of the Catholic Church's 2,000-year history. Early Catholic theologians universally condemned both masturbation and contraception as sinful. One such example is Clement of

Alexandria, considered a saint and a Church Father, who said of masturbation, " Because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted." St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most prominent Doctors of the Roman Catholic Church, wrote in the 13th century that masturbation was an " unnatural vice" which is a species of lust as bad as bestiality, sodomy, and pederasty, and that it " by procuring pollution , without any copulation, for the sake of venereal pleasure pertains to the sin of 'uncleanness' which some call 'effeminacy' However, after a study commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America in 1972, a number of dissident Catholic theologians have come to hold that an act of masturbation should not be judged as an objective moral evil, but assessed within the life context of the person involved. Protestant Theologians toward the middle of the 20th century began revising previous teachings, and some today even take pro-masturbation viewpoints. Some view it as an act of self-indulgence and even a sin of the flesh, and believe that the practice is principally considered a sin because of its invitation to lust. Those who view it within the range of allowable sexual behavior encourage it as guard against adultery, pre-marital sex, or other forms of non-allowable sexual behavior, and as a method of balancing differing libidos between spouses. Arguments

Masturbation decreases rather than increases vice. Objection 1: Masturbation is a squandering of human time and physical energy that could otherwise be used for Godly worship, self-improvement, or good works.

Objection 2: Masturbation inflames carnal lusts, leading to worse sexual vices. Objection 3: As an indulgence of physical appetite, masturbation encourages indulgence of other appetites, such as gluttony. Reply to

Objection 1: It is said that idle hands are the devil's workshop. Insofar as masturbation occupies the onanist, it prevents him from engaging in vicious or destructive acts. Reply to Objection 2: Rather than inflaming carnal lust, masturbation dissipates it by a harmless release of sexual tensions. In doing so, it removes, rather than proliferates, the driving force that motivates acts of sexual vice. Reply to Objection 3: Pent up libido will seek relief through other channels, and without the relief of masturbation, might well find its expression through the satiation of other appetites such as gluttony, gambling, and other material vices. Masturbation is a salutary use of the reproductive organs and does not conflict with reproductive sex. Objection 1: Masturbation enervates the sexual organs. Objection 2: In the male, masturbation wastes sperm that would otherwise be used for conception. Objection 3: By providing an alternative release of sexual energies, masturbation cheapens and may even diminish the physical gratification to be found in reproductive intercourse. Reply to Objection 1: Masturbation exercises the sexual organs and assures that they are in good working order. It prevents stagnation of fluids and atrophy of tissues, and in the male, increases the quality of sperm by stimulating the production of fresh gametes. Reply to Objection 2: Science has shown that regular and frequent ejaculations increase the quality of a male's sperm by stimulating the production of fresh and healthy gametes. Therefore men who masturbate regularly are more likely to father a child. Thusly, the spilt semen is but a sacrifice toward a more favorable chance of achieving conception. Reply to Objection 3: Especially in the case of women, by demonstrating the range of possible sexual pleasure that one is capable of experiencing, masturbation encourages one to enter into a sexual relationship with confidence in one's

own sexuality, and with the expectation of a positive experience.

Masturbation makes a positive contribution to human society. Objection 1:

Masturbation is most often a solitary, private and antisocial act, and is

therefore contrary to human interaction and community. Objection 2: As a

act of self-gratification and self-indulgence, masturbation encourages

selfishness and promotes the tendency to put one's own needs first above

others'. Objection 3: As a form of self-love, masturbation engenders

narcissism, pride, and self-regard, which are detrimental to forming human

relationships. Reply to Objection 1: Masturbation is an activity in which all

sexually mature humans may engage, therefore it can serve as a

commonality upon which to build understanding amongst those of differing

nationalities, viewpoints, etc. Reply to Objection 2: After engaging in

masturbation, an individual will be in a relaxed, fulfilled, and pleasant mood,

and therefore more apt to extend charity and good will toward others. Reply

to Objection 3: The act of masturbation can give a sense of mastery, self-

confidence, and ownership of one's body. Healthy self-esteem and a clear

sense of self are necessary for healthy emotional bonds. Bibliography *

<http://www.afraidtoask.com/masturbate/Introduction.htm> * <http://www.afraidtoask.com/masturbate/History.htm> * <http://teenadvice.about.com/library/bl10thingsmasturbation.htm> * <http://www.net-burst.net/christian-help/christian-masturbation.htm> * http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_views_on_masturbation *