

Quick Fix or Slow Cure?

Individuals who are stuck in compulsive and destructive patterns are often highly motivated to change, especially after they have a relapse or slip-up that creates pain and discouragement.

It's often in these moments of pain that they are forced to make a decision about how they will approach the process of change. Many individuals feel the urgent need to make deep changes and are sincere in their efforts to begin changing. Others end up on the opposite end of the spectrum and tell themselves that they can't change.

I'd like to recommend a different way of looking at how to view this process of change. Mark Chamberlain, a noted author, therapist, and presenter on the topic of sexual addiction and impulse control problems wrote the following: "Imagine that you want to straighten your teeth, and two different experts are competing for your business. The first says he can accomplish the whole thing in just a few minutes of your time and he'll only charge you a few bucks. He takes a good look at your teeth, pulls out a hammer, and says that he can begin his work any time you're ready. His competitor, on the other hand, says her method will cost you over a thousand dollars. The process will take months, maybe even years. She will have to take x-rays and make molds of your mouth in order to really assess what needs to be done. She will use bands and wires and pliers. You will have to come back again and again in order to have the wires tightened and adjusted. Both practitioners admit that their method will be painful. Which teeth straightening approach would you choose?"

He continues: "As absurd as this illustration may sound, I've seen many people who try to take the first approach in their efforts to change deeply ingrained habits and life patterns. They go to an expensive weekend seminar but don't show up to free weekly self-help meetings. They meet with an ecclesiastical leader for a spiritually intense three-hour marathon session but don't see the value in a ten-minute weekly check-in to report on how they're doing and ask for a bit or two of guidance. They attend an inspiring conference but then they don't make it past week one of the workbook they purchased there."

Lasting change comes from the recognition that compulsive patterns are often deeply ingrained ways of viewing the world and managing stress and emotions. These change slowly over time as individuals commit to make steady and incremental progress toward "unlearning" years of unhealthy strategies for managing stress and emotions.

When seeking help, be cautious of "quick fix" or "instant change" philosophies. The programs and resources that help individuals overcome pornography addiction value slow and gentle methods of changing. Although some behaviors may change quickly and never re-appear, the belief systems and patterns of thinking that created and maintained those behaviors often take more time to change. Either way, time will be the test of lasting recovery, and having support and resources that will stick around for the long-haul can help you see the progress you're making.