The pornography cycle

Pornography use can become a familiar response to pressure or difficult feelings. Mapping what happens before, during and after can help you see the bigger picture and identify where you might make a different choice. Use a recent example if you're comfortable doing so.

A useful starting point
Try to describe what happened without judging yourself. This is about noticing a pattern, not proving you've done something wrong.

1. Before: what was building up?

Think about the hours or minutes before the urge appeared.

What was happening around me?

What was I feeling or thinking?

What pressure, need or situation might have contributed?

2. During: what happened when the urge arrived?

What did I notice in my body, thoughts or emotions?

What did I hope pornography would give me in that moment?

Mapping the cycle

Continue by looking at what happened next, including any short-term relief and any later consequences. Different experiences are possible; there is no single correct pattern.

3. After: what was the impact?

How did I feel immediately afterwards?

How did I feel later? Did anything change in my mood, energy, relationships or plans?

4. See the bigger picture

Complete the sequence below using a few words in each box. Your cycle may look different from the example.

PRESSURE / TRIGGER	URGE	BEHAVIOUR	AFTERWARDS
What was building up?	What did I notice?	What did I do?	What followed?

5. Where might I interrupt the cycle?

You don't have to change everything at once. Look for one point where a small action could give you more time or choice.

An early warning sign I could notice is…

One thing I could try before acting on the urge is…

Someone or something that could support me is…

Takeaway
The aim isn't to judge yourself for having an urge. It's to understand the sequence around it. Once you can see more of the cycle, you can begin to identify where a different response may be possible.