

Masturbating Ourselves to Death: Gooners, Influencers, and Suburbia (2025) by Marc Sims



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Gooners, Influencers, and Suburbia



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DEC 03, 2025

Substack Article: https://pastormarc.substack.com/p/masturbating-ourselves-to-death?utm_source=multiple-personal-recommendations-email&utm_medium=email&triedRedirect=true

About Marc Sims

Sims is a Christian pastor serving at Quinault Baptist Church in Kennewick, WA. He received his B.S. in Biblical Studies from Moody Bible Institute, and his M.Div. from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Article Quotes & Comments

"Gooners are a group of young men who have made masturbation the still small point around which everything else rotates. Believing that prolonged masturbation—and I mean, *prolonged*, like 6, 10, 14 hour sessions—leads to a kind of transcendent state, gooners swap the ordinary life of jobs and girlfriends and sunshine for a basement life premised on the auto-erotic."



An untitled work painted by Tetsuya Ishida in 1998 depicting Japan's "hikikomori" — young men who became socially reclusive.

"Masturbation takes an impulse that is inherently relational (sex), and makes it solitary."

In a letter to a friend, C.S. Lewis once wrote:

For me the real evil of masturbation would be that it takes an appetite which, in lawful use, leads the individual out of himself to complete (and correct) his own personality in that of another (and finally in children and even grandchildren) and turns it back; sends the man back into the prison of himself, there to keep a harem of imaginary brides. And this harem, once admitted, works against his ever getting out and really uniting with a real woman. For the harem is always accessible, always subservient, calls for no sacrifices or adjustments, and can be endowed with erotic and psychological attractions which no woman can rival.

Lewis goes on to describe that the problem is more complex than horny men who are too scared to talk to a girl:

Among those shadowy brides he is always adored, always the perfect lover; no demand is made on his unselfishness, no mortification ever imposed on his vanity.

In the end, they become merely the medium through which he increasingly adores himself. ¹

"The fundamental root of masturbation [...] is a kind of narcissism."

Not a bad argument. When you think of it like this you will see how we have become more self-focused not just on this regard but with societal 'endeavours' as a whole. Me, me, me.

This reminds me of the Note I put together when reviewing Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*: "He tried to say, 'Humbug! but stopped at the first syllable."

That was Scrooge when encountering another Spirit. That which the cynic rests on (*Humbug!*) to make themselves feel better stops in its tracks. Cynicism is lazy. The kind of lazy that doesn't require you to think because you've already made up your misanthropic mind. I can respect skepticism—there's at least a curiosity and willingness to measure claims—but cynicism shows people how high an opinion you have of yourself in the utterance. Of course, a cynic would never agree to being a narcissist—that, too, they'd

spit at ... and yet, if honest enough, one would accept that narcissism is that which drives the mood. *I know better. Life sucks. There's always something that will go wrong. That's not right. Yeah, but.* All these put you at the centre of the knowing. Even those who hurt and are (almost) justified in their moods about the world—even they fall into this trap. *Why me? Why does everybody take me the wrong way? Why are they looking at me like that? What should I say?* Me, me, me—it's the epitome of narcissism. One does not need to think highly of oneself to be a narcissist (I've counselled many a narcissist who has terrible self-esteem) but only think disproportionately ... *of themselves.*

But stop yourself, if you will, and you'll begin the road towards humility...

"Not only is it solitary, but in the fantasy, **the man doesn't have to do the hard work of becoming selfless or brave or an adept lover.** There are no vows he must keep or children he must provide for. **He can just imagine that he is the kind of man a woman would desire."**

A good argument can be made that this is reminiscent of today's culture by-and-large. Recently I was having dinner with the family and we thought about how today those teens serving us have a detached, uncaring, lazy look about them, as if the work didn't matter, as if they were just 'showing up'. Hope unfortunate that this malady is a product of how technology gives and gives and gives only to take and take and take—our selves...

"Influencers don't merely want to "look good" (I mean, who doesn't?)—**they want to be noticed looking good.** And while that may sound like the same thing, it really isn't. [...] **They are looking at themselves through the eyes of others looking at them."**

"And while gooners may be almost the polar opposite of gym Influencers, their life is not running on a fundamentally different vector. **They both have taken a natural impulse that *should* result in human connection** (beauty, attraction, sexuality), **and have turned it inward and chosen to adore themselves instead."**

"If we take all the normal pushes and pulls of human life—that have historically knit communities together—and can swirl them inward on ourselves, alone, like solitary ball-bearings, then **what are we if not a bunch of habitual masturbators?"**

Final notes:

To live a life dedicated, suffocated, inwards is the epitome of narcissism. And yet we cannot understand that each time we pull away from others we tow the road towards 'hell'—the inward road towards solitary loneliness in the guise of connecting with the image we project onto a screen.

I once counselled a young man who, addicted to pornography, saw the women on the screen how he wanted to see them: attracted to him. He had yet had no success with women in 'real life' so felt a sense of closeness to the women who bared all before him. And he was often disappointed. A short 'high' led to guilt and shame—something no true relationship would lead to when feeling genuine connection. I think this is what the author is getting at: pornography substitutes for genuine connection. Find that which you can connect with and draw away from the image you project onto the screen.

You'll find yourself blessed.

These notes were collected by psychotherapist and author Emil Barna in January 2026 in his efforts to assist with professional development and further education for himself and those who read them. But remember, they are but a glimpse of what the article is actually about—for more context, read it at length and make up your own mind. You can find out more about Emil by visiting www.barnacc.com

"A text without a context is a pretext to a proof text."
—Dr. Don Carson