

Powerful Parenting for May 24, 2023

We hope you find this information useful, inspiring, challenging, helpful, sobering, insightful, etc. If you want to be added or taken off this list, just let us know. If you know someone who could benefit from it, pass it along. If you have any comments, concerns, want to be added or deleted from this list, e-mail david@claytonbaptistchurch.com.

Editor's Note: Porn has become an epidemic. 75% of men and nearly 50% of women have consumed porn. It's considered part of dating now. But the evidence is stacking up on the damage it does. Please read the following and do all you can to protect your children, our children. If you're addicted, please get help. If you know of someone who is addicted, urge them to get help.

5 Proven Way Porn Harms Kids

So what's the big deal about pornography? It harms kids.

#1 Porn is used to normalize the idea of "sexy" kids!

The authors of *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids* explain that "the model in the popular culture of desirable female sexuality today comes straight from pornography...Porn stars and call girls write bestsellers. From a young age, girls are encouraged to dress and act like hookers and strippers..." But you may not have realized that the early sexualization of kids has a profit motive. Porn is the ultimate example of body objectification. Porn's influence in pop culture primes young girls to want to be "hot." How does a young girl become hot? Well, she's got to dress in a certain way and buy certain "sexy" clothes. She's got to wear make-up and purchase (or get her parents to purchase) a lot of products to help her fit in, to be sexy, to be hot, to be popular with the boys.

What you CAN DO:

Examine the clothes your kids wear and leave the highly sexualized clothes on the racks! Look at the toys your kids play with and jettison any that are sexualized. Finally, be careful about using the word "hot" or "sexy" as a compliment for anyone. Stress effort, accomplishments, kindness or cleverness over how physically attractive someone is. And start with yourself. Let your kids hear you say positive things about your inner qualities instead of commenting on your body, good or bad. For example, instead of saying, "Don't I look great in these skinny jeans since I lost 10 lbs?" say this: "I'm grateful I've been able to achieve my exercise and weight loss goals—I feel stronger, more in control and healthier!"

#2 Porn disrupts normal childhood development. Here are three ways:

Sexual Dysfunction: Research shows that over-exposure to pornography during the latent years (between 6 and 12--the period of time when they should be channeling their energy to non-sexual development) were at higher risk of developing dysfunctional sexual health attitudes and behaviors.

Sexual Abuse: For a long time we've known that adult predators use porn to groom kids for sexual abuse. Dr. Sharon Cooper of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children explains: "It's a well-known practice for adults to use porn to groom children for sexual abuse. Perpetrators use porn to normalize that children having sex with adults is normal. They use porn to educate kids on the mechanics of sex, encourage kids to be comfortable enacting these behaviors, sexually excite kids and ultimately to have kids enter into sex with other adults or kids."

Sexual Addiction: Finally, kids who use porn can become addicted to it. The hard data on this is limited, but we do have a lot of anecdotal data from parents, therapists, addiction coaches and groups such as Fight the New Drug who receive emails from kids as young as eight years old asking for help to stop looking at porn.

What you CAN DO:

Proactively teach kids a simple definition of pornography. Coach your kids on what to do when they see porn--many parents use the CAN DO plan from Good Pictures Bad Pictures. Make sure your kids understand that no one should ever show them pornography. Help kids understand

that pornography can negatively affect their developing brain and become an addiction. Teach your kids the proper names of the genitals of both sexes to help protect them from sexual abuse.

Good Pictures Bad Pictures-Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids. "I really like the no-shame approach the author takes. It's so much more than just 'don't watch or look at porn.' It gave my children a real understanding about the brain and its natural response to pornography, how it can affect you if you look at it, and how to be prepared when you do come across it (since, let's face it... it's gonna happen at some point)." -Amazon Review by D.O.

#3 Porn warps kids' attitudes about sex. Many children use porn as a source of readily available sex ed. Sadly, as kids watch some of the most common and pervasive internet porn, they are taught that sex is about degrading and violent acts instead of love, trust and intimacy. Gail Dines, PhD, author of *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked our Sexuality*, says:

In porn, sex is not about making love. The feelings and emotions we normally associate with such an act—connection, empathy, tenderness, caring, affection—are missing. In their place are those emotions we normally associate with hate—fear, disgust, anger, loathing and contempt. In porn, the man "makes hate" to the woman, as each sex act is designed to deliver the maximum amount of degradation. Yet, the women are still portrayed as enjoying these scenes. Now commonplace and pervasive throughout the Internet, these images are shaping the way a whole generation of boys thinks about and relates to sex, relationships, and intimacy.

A UK report on the effects of porn on children includes this grim statement in the introduction:

"It cannot be right that so many children may be stumbling across and learning about sex from degrading and violent depictions of it." We couldn't agree more!

What you CAN DO:

Teach your kids your values about sex--that you hope they can enjoy a loving sexual relationship with their future spouse someday. Help them understand that porn leads viewers away from the ability to develop healthy intimacy. Point out that popular fiction like *50 Shades of Grey* presents an abusive type of love. Love is never abusive.

#4 Porn changes sexual BEHAVIOR and increases sexual violence in users. Even non-explicit, sexualized media predicts earlier sexual activity among teens: Dr. Michael Flood from the University of Wollongong in Australia created a report for the Australian government earlier this spring. He reports: "three recent large-scale longitudinal studies document that exposure to non-explicit sexual content on television and in other media frequently used by adolescents predicts earlier initiation of sexual behaviors, including intercourse." A UK report of research shows that kids emulate what they see done in porn. "If I didn't watch porn, I wouldn't know what to do," commented a boy, aged 15-16. In this report out of the UK, these percentages of young porn users said yes to this statement: "Online pornography has given me ideas about types of sex to try out."

21% of 11-12 year olds

39% of 13-14 year olds

42% of 15-16 year olds

Given that pornography is primarily violent and extreme, this finding is concerning. Kids also imitate sexual practices portrayed in porn like oral and anal sex. Again from Michael Flood's report:

"The impact of pornography on young people's sexual behavior has been most well documented with regard to anal intercourse. Anal intercourse is routine in representations of heterosexual sex in contemporary pornography, with various studies finding its inclusion in 15-42% of scenes."

Five studies among Swedish young people find that young men who are regular consumers of pornography are more likely to have had anal intercourse with a girl, and to have tried to perform acts they have seen in pornography, and that girls who have seen pornography also are more likely to have anal intercourse. (Anal intercourse leads to increased risk of STDs, tissue damage, and fecal incontinence.) Studies show that pornography can serve as rape training. Again from Dr. Flood's report:

"There is consistent evidence that exposure to pornography is related to male sexual aggression against girls and women. In a recent longitudinal study of U.S. youth aged 10 to 15, with three waves of data over three years, individuals who intentionally consumed violent X-rated materials were over six times as likely as others to engage in sexually aggressive behavior."

What you CAN DO:

Tell your tweens and teens that sex before kissing is not a healthy progression of physical intimacy (it's warped, but it's happening all the time!). Teach kids that science proves that porn changes behavior. Get informed with our free Quick Start Guide for Proactive Parents. This guide will help you get the conversation started with your kids.

#5 Porn use by children spreads to and harms other children. Children who are exposed to porn often expose other children to porn. In an unpublished study done by Lacy Bentley, a recovery coach and author, 238 women and 132 men were surveyed about their initial exposure to pornography. She found some surprising results. 32% of girls and 40% of boys were exposed to pornography by someone else, almost always another child. 48% of girls and 49% of boys reported one or more other children were involved in their initial exposure. (We have many reports of kids being exposed by other kids at school or on a school bus.). Children rarely disclose to their parents their initial exposure to pornography. This is harmful because shame and secrecy are known to increase the risk of addiction. Bentley's survey found that only 9% of girls and 7% of boys disclosed their exposure to pornography on the same day as the initial exposure occurred.

If children did not disclose on the same day, the chance of ever talking to anyone before adulthood went down substantially. Overall, 31% of participants have NEVER talked about their childhood exposure to pornography. Kids go back for more. Children who are accidentally exposed to porn go back in high numbers to look for more. In Bentley's study, nearly 80% of those exposed went back to look for more pornography.

Porn is connected with an increase in child on child sexual abuse or deviance. Porn becomes the perpetrator that teaches kids to become perpetrators themselves. Dr. Sharon Cooper warns: "Another huge risk of harm for children is when teens view adult images, become sexually excited and disinhibited, and then act out abusive sexual acts on younger children. The easy access of adult pornography in the digital world has dramatically increased this dynamic in youth with problematic sexual behaviors."

Check out these troubling statistics:

- In the U.S. nearly 40% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by minors according to a Justice Department research on crimes in America.
- The UK Parliamentary report says "up to 65% of sexual abuse experienced by children under 18 is perpetrated by someone under the age of 18."
- Another UK Report says that reports of Harmful Sexual Behavior (HSB) among children are increasing. "One study found that the average age for children beginning to demonstrate concerning sexual behaviors is 8 ½ years old. 65% of such children were found to be boys and 35% girls. A majority of them live at home with their biological parents and more than half direct their concerning behavior towards a sibling."
- Children are more likely to be abused by their siblings than their parents. More than 1 in 3 cases of sexual assault against children in the U.S. is committed by other minors and siblings are often the perpetrators. Sibling sexual abuse is far more common than parent-child abuse.

What you CAN DO:

Start early to inoculate your kids against pornography. We've heard countless stories of kids who used the CAN DO Plan from Good Pictures Bad Pictures to protect themselves. Be the first credible expert--not Google--on sexual info for your kids. Prevent exposure as much as possible by using filtering and accountability software. Talk to your kids' friends' parents and find out if they are protecting their kids' devices as well. Keep yourself informed about the pressures kids face. Consider reading *American Girls: Social Media and the Secret Lives of Teenagers* by Nancy Jo

Sales. What an eye-opener! (Some strong language included in quoting teens.) Don't stop talking--our pornified culture isn't going away anytime soon and we can't leave kids to face it alone! Read this article for proof that talking with our kids works! Help kids get their emotional needs met in healthy ways. Find out what's happening at school and click here to learn about 5 ways to keep students safe.

No parent wants to talk about porn, but our kids are worth a bit of discomfort or even embarrassment. We can serve as important mentors for our kids if we stay connected with them and informed about the world they must grow up in. And if we give them the tools they need to reject porn from an early age.

www.defendyoungminds.com