



EDUCATEEMPOWERKIDS

WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY?

AGES 12+



BACKGROUND

Parents, your children are constantly surrounded by sexualized messages and images. Many of them are teaching your child lessons about sexuality and interactions between people that are misleading, incomplete and unhealthy. Real emotional intimacy is rarely portrayed. It is so important for you to talk to your children about the messages they see every day so that you can be their first, best source of information. Set aside time to talk with your child and make it a priority. It is vital that you share your personal or family standards about pornography in the course of this lesson. This is just one of many, many discussions you should have with your child, and you may even feel the need to break this lesson into several to make sure you cover everything. (See related discussions below.)

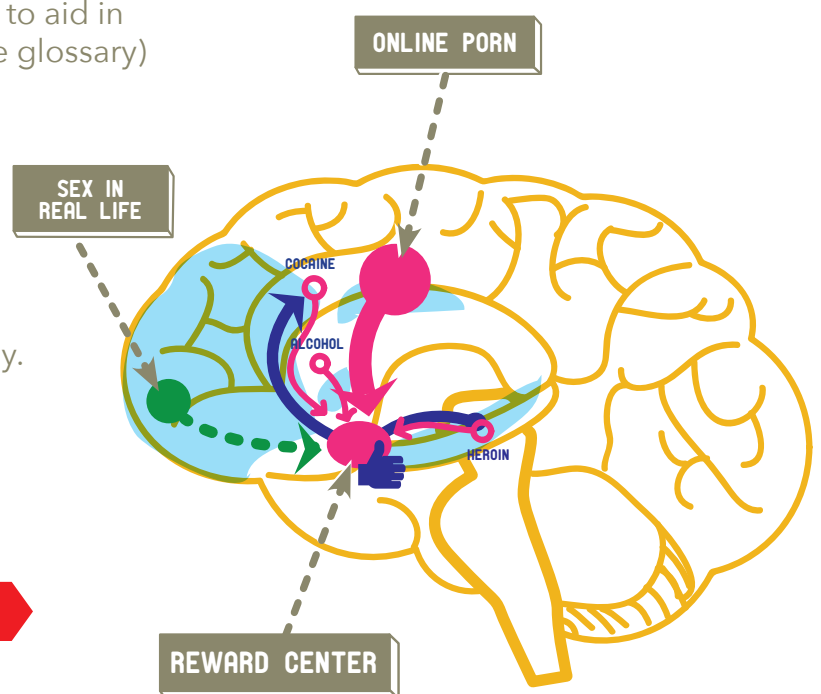
Online porn is vastly different than anything parents grew up with. Children are exposed to pornography younger and younger, and people are forming attitudes about sex through porn. It's a huge influence as it trickles into and hypersexualizes all aspects of popular culture, including media, toys, games, language, and attitudes.

PREPARATION

- Review the objective of the lesson and understand why it is important to talk to your child about it.
- Read over the lesson first and try to anticipate what your child is ready for and what questions your child might have.
- Familiarize yourself with the glossary terms.

OBJECTIVE

- Define pornography and its uses.
- Explain that it is sometimes used to aid in the sexual abuse of children. (see glossary)
- Clarify that it is not romantic or about love.
- Teach that porn damages relationships and society.
- Formulate a strategy for what to do if your child sees pornography.
- Remember to never shame your child during these discussions.
- Describe how it is addictive.



THE REWARD CIRCUIT

WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY?

The portrayal of explicit sexual content for the purpose or intent of causing sexual arousal. In it, sex and bodies are commodified for the purpose of making a financial profit. Its most lucrative means of distribution is through the Internet.

WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Porn is available anytime, anywhere to anyone via mobile devices and public computers. Don't assume that your child not having a device means he or she won't be exposed. The use of porn is associated with an increased callousness toward sex, a decreased satisfaction with the person's real-life sexual partner, and acceptance of the rape myth (that women like to and want to be raped). Extended pornography use affects the brain chemistry and can lead to addiction (see glossary). Porn damages relationships by putting the focus on your own pleasure without regard to your partner's. Porn damages society. Millions of people viewing porn leads to rape culture (see glossary) and a focus on women in positions of powerlessness.

For more information, read our article [8 Harmful Effects of Pornography on Individuals](http://educateempowerkids.org/8-harmful-effects-of-pornography-on-individuals/).
<http://educateempowerkids.org/8-harmful-effects-of-pornography-on-individuals/>

POINTS TO MAKE

- The porn industry is actively making it more accessible and more acceptable.
- The growing rate of erectile dysfunction in the male population is linked to prolonged exposure to and use of pornography (Voon, et. al., 2014).
- Pornography is sometimes used by predators to groom children (see glossary).

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD

- Is curiosity about sex normal? (It is important to assure your child that curiosity about bodies and sex is completely normal.)
- What pornographic images have you seen? (Remember not to shame them when they answer.)
- When was the first time you saw one?
- When was the last time you saw one?
- What can you do next time you see porn? (Form a plan that includes: look away, find and tell a trusted adult, tell a parent)
- What are porn's effects?
- What are the crucial elements of healthy sex that porn destroys?

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS EXPOSED TO PORN?

Despite your best efforts, your child may have been or will eventually be exposed to pornography. If this is the case:

- Don't overreact or shame your child.
- Determine the severity and nature of what was seen. More explicit or violent material may be traumatic for children.
- Ask your child: How did it make you feel when you saw it?
- Explain that mixed reactions and feelings - being simultaneously repulsed, excited, disgusted, and stimulated - are normal because of intense chemical reactions in the brain and body when viewing porn.
- Have a discussion about how the flood of intense pleasure chemicals can lead to addiction.
- Deconstruct what your child saw. Help your child understand that such images are altered and they do not reflect reality

ACTIVITY

Try role-playing using a friend with a mobile device as an example and talk about how your child should react to seeing a pornographic image. It's helpful for our kids to practice ready-to-go responses. When they are in the dangerous situation, it's hard to formulate a response quickly, and sometimes they end up just participating because it's easier to stay silent. If they are prepared with what to say ahead of time, it will be easier for them.

FOLLOWING UP

- Each time your child is not in your care and could be exposed, it is a good idea to remind them of ways to protect and prepare themselves.
- Ensure that appropriate filters are in place on all internet-enabled devices and that all adult content is appropriately contained both on your home devices and in homes they regularly frequent.
- This will not be a one-time discussion; you'll want to reiterate these principles continuously.

RELATED DISCUSSIONS

(Which can be found in ***30 Days of Sex Talks, Empowering Your Child with Knowledge of Sexual Intimacy***, available on Amazon.com)

- Physical Response to Sex
- Respecting Others
- Creating a Healthy Relationship
- Relationship Boundaries
- Positive Aspects of Sex
- Shame and Guilt (see glossary)

GLOSSARY TERMS

Addiction: The state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or to something that is psychologically or physically habit-forming to such an extent that its cessation causes severe trauma.

Explicit: Content that contains sexual material that may be considered offensive or overtly graphic.

Groom: To prepare or train someone for a particular purpose or activity. In the case of sexual predators, it is any willful action made by the offender to prepare the victim and/or victim's support network that allows for easier sex offending.

Predator: A predator is technically an organism or being that hunts and then feeds on their prey. A sexual predator is someone who seeks to obtain sexual contact through "hunting." The term is often used to describe the deceptive and coercive methods used by people who commit sex crimes where there is a victim, such as rape or child abuse.

Rape Culture: A culture in which rape is pervasive and to an extent normalized due to the cultural and societal attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Behaviors that facilitate rape culture include victim blaming, sexual objectification, and denial regarding sexual violence.

Respect: A feeling or understanding that someone or something is important and should be treated in an appropriate way.

Sexual Abuse: The improper sexual usage or treatment of another person or entity, often to unfairly gain power or another benefit in the relationship.

Shame: The painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another.

Citations

Voon, V et. al. Neural Correlates of Sexual Cue Reactivity in Individuals with and without Compulsive Sexual Behaviours. (2014, July 11). Retrieved September 24, 2015, from <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0102419>