

5 Ways Porn Slowly Damages Your Connection With Your Children

When the only thing they hear from adults about sex is that it is bad and you shouldn't do it, they know they aren't hearing the full story. When parents fail to give the full picture of sex kids will go looking for answers somewhere else.

The "somewhere else" is porn.

I was recently speaking to a father who caught his 12-year-old daughter watching porn. He remarked, "I've seen plenty of porn during my life, but the stuff she was watching was disturbing." His experience is the new normal. The average age a child encounters porn for the first time is between the ages of 9 and 11, and mainstream porn continues to get more extreme, violent and degrading.

The internet and smartphones have opened the door to an invading army of porn into the minds and hearts of our kids. The consequences are devastating.

Here are five ways porn hurts our sons and daughters:

1. Sexualizing our kids. The term "teen" has been in the top three highest-searched words on porn sites for the past three years. One year, 2014, it was No. 1. That should make us all sick. We are talking about kids. This means a majority of people looking at porn on the internet want to watch kids. When porn site visits outnumber Amazon, Netflix and Twitter combined, think about how many people are looking to watch kids having sex. Think about how many child predators are being fueled and emboldened. What is all of this communicating to our sons and daughters?

2. Losing innocence. The culture surrounding porn is reinforcing the idea that kids can be sex objects. This was evident in 2010, when 8-year-old girls danced, while wearing lingerie, in a competition to the song "Single Ladies," with highly sexualized moves. The crowd on hand, which included the girls' parents, wasn't horrified. Instead, they hooted, hollered and cheered. We are teaching our sons and daughters at a young age that if they want to be noticed, they need to be sexy. It all starts with our pornified culture. And kids have gotten the message loud and clear.

3. Feelings of shame, guilt and depression. What happens next is tweens and teens play at being sexy. They quickly believe the lie that the best place to learn how to be sexual is through internet porn, which is easily accessible and affordable in large quantities. The images of mainstream pornography they encounter within one minute of searching are violent and graphic. The images are burned into their brains forever. The pornographers are telling them this is the sexual experience. Deep down, they know they have seen something they shouldn't have seen, but their brains can't make sense of it. They are excited and embarrassed, but they don't know why. They feel ashamed and guilty, but too scared to talk to anyone for fear of being in trouble.

4. Addiction. Little do they know what their developing brains have been doing while viewing porn. The brain releases large amounts of dopamine, which gives the feeling of pleasure in its rewards center. This gives them the urge to come back again and forms a connection with the image (a connection meant for a person). This causes an addiction, which is more powerfully ingrained the younger their ages when they're introduced. Since the feeling of euphoria helps them forget about their problems momentarily, porn becomes an unhealthy coping mechanism to distract them from the feelings of shame, guilt and stress. Unfortunately, it only leaves them feeling emptier, so they watch more, and the cycle continues.

5. It fuels disconnection and disrespect. Ultimately, porn leads to relational disconnection and degradation. They draw expectations of what sex will be like. Rather than sex being about connecting intimately with someone in the safety of commitment, it becomes a selfish pursuit of achieving sexual climax. Sex gets cheapened to a physical act, and people are reduced to objects of fantasy. A good and rich life is found in relationships. Sadly, this porn culture is leading our sons and daughters far from them.

The best thing you can do is educate your kids about the lies and the dangers of pornography. Start early rather than later. At some point, they are going to encounter it and will need you to help them make sense of it. Keep the line of communication open and engage them in conversation so they don't go it alone. {eoa}

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