

Teens and Pornography

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Profits from Pornography

Have you ever heard the phrase “sex sells”? The pornography industry has grown into a multi-billion dollar business. In the U.S., pornography generates between \$8-12 billion per year and over \$57 billion worldwide. Pornography generates more revenue than the combined revenues from professional football, basketball and baseball; more money than CBS, NBC and ABC combined; more money than all the revenues generated by rock and country music; more money than Americans spent on Broadway productions, theater, ballet, jazz and classical music combined.

Growth of Pornography

In the year 2000, there were 11,000 porn titles produced and 70,000 porn sites vs. 400 Hollywood movies. In 2004, there were 4.2 million porn sites and 372 million porn pages. As they say in business, supply is driven by demand. Obviously, there is a market. Teenagers are a segment of this market.

Teenage exposure to pornography is usually on the Internet. Consider that 70 percent of 15 to 17 year olds say they have had multiple exposures to hard-core pornography. The average age at which a child is first exposed to pornography on the internet is 11 years old. Sixty four percent of teens say that they do things on line that they wouldn't want their parents to know about. And 20 percent of children (10 to 17 years old) receive unwanted sexual solicitation on line.

Why the attraction?

- Curiosity. Teens are at a natural developmental stage where they want to know how to act sexually and learn what sex is all about.
- Seeking Knowledge. They want to see what the human body looks like and are attracted to the forbidden. Unfortunately, pornography does not give an accurate education about sex or the human body.
- Feels good. The human body is wired to enjoy arousal. When we are aroused, chemicals are released in the brain that help us feel good.
- Cover up pain or stress. Rather than deal with the realities of emotional distress and conflict, people will escape to the fantasy of pornography as a means of avoidance. Although temporary, it is a guaranteed escape from reality. But reality will always be waiting. Postponing conflict usually serves to increase stress and emotional pain.
- Feels Intimate. Intimacy is a basic need. It is to know and to be known deeply. With pornography, there is not a real person involved. It provides pleasure without the beauty and responsibility of maintaining a healthy relationship with an actual person. Pornography is a self-pursuit of pleasure which leads to isolation.

Illusions of Pornography

One of the biggest illusions of pornography is that “sex”, “love” and “intimacy” have the same meaning and that they are healthy or normal when they are separated from each other. For teenagers who learn to disassociate sex from intimacy, it may be difficult

to combine later. Pornography objectifies women. It makes them out to be just a body or body parts. Other illusions of pornography are that children should have sex, illegal sex is fun and prostitution is glamorous.

Pornography as a Progression

A precursor to becoming addicted usually involves an early exposure to pornography. Because of the chemicals and the natural reaction to arousal, teens can become hooked and often lack impulse control to set healthy limits. Addicts may experience the following phases or stages:

- **Addiction:** The first stage is addiction. Using pornography as a sexual stimulant, followed by sexual release, most often through masturbation.
- **Desensitization:** This is the beginning of the tolerance stage. What was first perceived as gross, shocking, disturbing and wrong begins to be acceptable.
- **Escalation:** Over time, addicts may require more explicit and deviant material to meet their sexual “needs”.
- **Acting out sexually:** A person begins to act out the behaviors they are viewing. Different levels of acting out may include peeping at others, stealing undergarments, compiling a collection, becoming a sexual predator, molesting, and raping others.

Take Control

If you see these problems in yourself, it is important to take control before you have damaged your ability to choose and it becomes more difficult to stop.

- Make a commitment to abstain from pornography.
- Value yourself and your decision. You are valuable because you exist and this healthy decision is valuable.
- Ask for help from someone you trust. Pornography is like quicksand – it’s hard to get out on your own. Talk to your parent, a counselor, teacher or spiritual leader.
- Be accountable to someone. Have someone you trust support you in making this positive change.
- Monitor your viewing. There are web sites and Internet accountability tools. Some have faith language on them. Some examples are X3watch, Net accountability, Covenant Eyes, Bsafeonline and Cybersitter.

Find Alternatives

To give young people a chance at preserving their purity and developing healthy relationships, they need to know the truth about pornography. The fact is, porn is addictive and destructive. It contributes to earlier sexual activity.

Engage in life and life’s activities, relationships and love will become fulfilling. Set personal goals, develop healthy interests and consider worthwhile hobbies.



“Illusions: Uncovering the Truth About Pornography”, Aware, Vancouver, WA (2006)

