



The increase of pornography use and addiction among adults is a growing concern around the world. Sadly, it is far worse for today's children who are growing up in a fully connected world. Porn is devastating an entire generation of young people.

According to ChildLine founder Dame Esther Rantzen,

“Young people are turning to the internet to learn about sex and relationships. We know they are frequently stumbling across porn, often unintentionally, and they are telling us very clearly that this is having a damaging and upsetting effect on them.”

How bad is the problem?

Many studies report that the average age of a child's first exposure to pornography is at 11 years old. But security technology company Bitdefender's research states that children under the age of 10 now comprise 22%

of online porn viewing for youth under 18 years old. The under 10 years-old group now accounts for one in 10 visitors to porn video sites.

As licensed clinical social worker Donald P. Huerta explains, “Many kids I have seen in my private practice who are struggling with an addiction to pornography were initially exposed to it through a friend, by newspaper underwear or swimsuit ads, on an ad that popped up while searching the internet or by an accidental click on the internet while doing homework. After the unintentional viewing and subsequently wrestling with guilt and shame, they secretly continued looking for the pictures or movies that held similar images and became more intentional in their searches for it.”

Over a quarter (26%) of 13-to-17-years-old teenagers admit to viewing pornography at least once a week. And if you think the problem doesn't exist within the church, seventy percent of Christian youth pastors say they have had at least one teenager come to them in the last 12 months for help in dealing with pornography.

“Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent and obscene material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.” –U.S. Department of Justice

Google Analytics data shows that pornography-related searches increase by 4,700% when children are out of school.

In view of such staggering statistics, how does porn harm children?

1. Viewing pornography affects their attitudes and values

Consider how easy it is for advertisers to influence our behavior to buy a product with just a short television commercial. Similarly, a very brief viewing of pornography can influence a child's attitudes about sex, women, and other values.

The American Bar Association reports,

“Excessive media use, particularly where the content is violent, gender-stereotyped, and/or sexually explicit, skews children's world view, increases high-risk behaviors, and alters their capacity for successful and sustained human relationships.”

Gail Dines, CEO of Culture Reframed, said,

“If you're socializing a whole generation into porn sex, which is what we're doing because porn is the major form of sex education today, then what kinds of fathers, partners, lawyers, judges, policemen are they going to be when they've had their capacity for intimacy, connections and relationships hijacked by the porn culture?”

2. Porn interferes with their development and self-identity

There is a significant relationship between teens who use porn frequently and feelings of loneliness and major depression. They also have lower levels of self-esteem.

Pornography alters a child's normal personality development process related to their sexuality, their body, and sense of self.

“During certain critical periods of childhood, a child's brain is being programmed for sexual orientation”, reports ProtectKids. “During this period, the mind appears to be developing a “hardwire” for what the person will be aroused by or attracted to. Exposure to healthy sexual norms and attitudes during this critical period can result in the child developing a healthy sexual orientation. In contrast, if there is exposure to pornography during this period, sexual deviance may become imprinted on the child's “hard drive” and become a permanent part of his or her sexual orientation. “

Children learn a considerable amount by imitating what they see other people do.

We have mirror neurons in our brain that help us to learn – when we learn to tie our shoe laces by watching someone else, that is those mirror neurons at work.

Neuroscientist, Dr William Struthers, who wrote *Wired For Intimacy; How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*, says,

“These mirror neurons are involved when someone views pornography because what they view, they vicariously experience and learn from.”

By viewing pornography, the child's brain is being programmed to what they are seeing which forms their understanding of sex and intimacy.

3. Children are not emotionally or physically able to handle pornography

When children view unfamiliar people in sex acts, it becomes an overwhelming and frightening experience that they cannot comprehend.

According to the Association for Natural Psychology,

“Pornography, as well as exposure to sexual innuendo, in movies for pre-teens, can evoke emotions of worry and confusion. More often than not, children have no one, with the exception of equally confused peers, with whom to discuss what they've seen.”

“Pornography, as something that children and teens do not necessarily understand, becomes overwhelming and confusing for most children and teens. This can surface in ways difficult for parents or teachers to decode, such as oppositional behavior, preoccupation with sex, and inability to concentrate.

“Exposure or over-exposure can also lead to some symptoms associated with depression and ADHD, symptoms associated with bipolar disorder, or suicidal ideation.”

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According to Dr. Ted Roberts, the host of the *Conquer Series*, the prefrontal cortex of the brain is where reasoning, decision making and judgement take place and isn't fully formed until the age of 25. This means children are being exposed to pornography long before they can comprehend the dangers associated with it or make judgments on what they are seeing.

4. Porn may cause children to act out sexually

Since children often imitate what they've seen, some studies show that pornography may lead them to act out sexually among smaller and more vulnerable children.

ProtectKids explains,

“Over 66 percent of the males and 40 percent of the females reported wanting to try out some of the sexual behaviors they had witnessed. And among high schoolers, 31 percent of the males and 18 percent of the females admitted actually doing some of the things they had seen in the pornography within a few days after exposure.”

Young people are also more likely to engage in 'sexting' photos or messages on their mobile phones, which can leave them exposed to cyber-bullying.

Studies have also shown that boys exposed to a large amount of pornography before the age of 14 tend to be more sexually active as adults. Additionally, new research has found a link between exposure to pornography and sexual violence.

The challenge is clear

Pornography presents a major harmful assault on today's young people. They will have to deal with the negative impacts porn has on them into adulthood unless we take action now to help them avoid a lifelong porn addiction.

Thankfully there is a growing movement of parents and teenagers who are fighting for this generation and helping them break free from pornography. Churches are beginning to run the *Conquer Series* not only for adults, but also for father-son groups.

The *Conquer Series*, a 12-DVD cinematic production, will help you understand how the mind processes pornography and how you can learn to fight back and find freedom for your own sexual addiction, and also how to lead your children to grow in integrity amidst a porn saturated culture.

As the fathers go through the *Conquer Series* with their sons, they are not only dealing with pornography in their home, but seeing a transformation of the depth in their relationship with each other.

Teenagers as young as 15 and 16 who have seen the devastating effects of pornography in their lives and the students around them, are taking a stand and leading their peers through the series.

Today's children face a world saturated with sexual content, but the *Conquer Series* is a powerful resource helping them fight the battle.