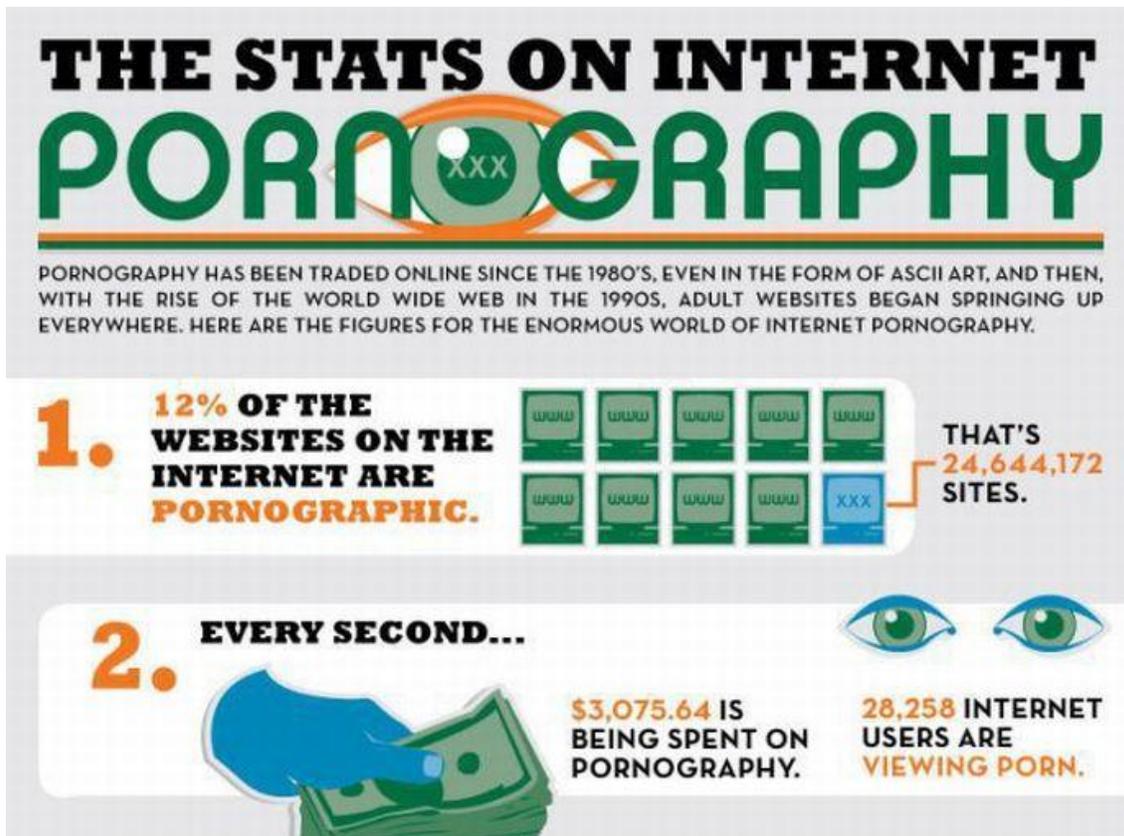


Internet Pornography: Addiction, Social Epidemic, or Something More?

by PARENT on APRIL 28, 2012

Perhaps nothing in the mental health world has been more hotly contested than the extent of pornography's addictiveness. Addiction is a term often bandied about rather carelessly, as we often label too much of anything an addiction. Medically, a substance is addictive if and only if an addict experiences both physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms when the substance is no longer available. Another component of addiction is the desire for more and more of the substance to achieve the same "high." While many users of pornography have experienced symptoms that would classify pornography as an addiction, there's still no substantiated proof that porn addiction actual exists.



Porn Addiction...or Desensitization?

This does not mean, however, that the proliferation of Internet pornography isn't dangerous. For parents, Internet pornography can be especially troubling, as we worry that our children will be exposed to the sometimes violent and often unsavory world of porn, or that our children may inadvertently fall into the hands of sexual predators.

As someone who has studied the psychological and sociological facets of Internet pornography as a growing phenomenon, I can say that it is not really helpful to view pornography as an addiction. While there are extreme cases of individuals whose lives are severely compromised by watching pornography excessively, these are few and far between. A more common concern of pornography is the way that it often desensitizes viewers to the "real" act. A healthy sexuality, one that includes an emotionally supportive relationship at its center, is part and parcel of every adult's overall wellbeing.

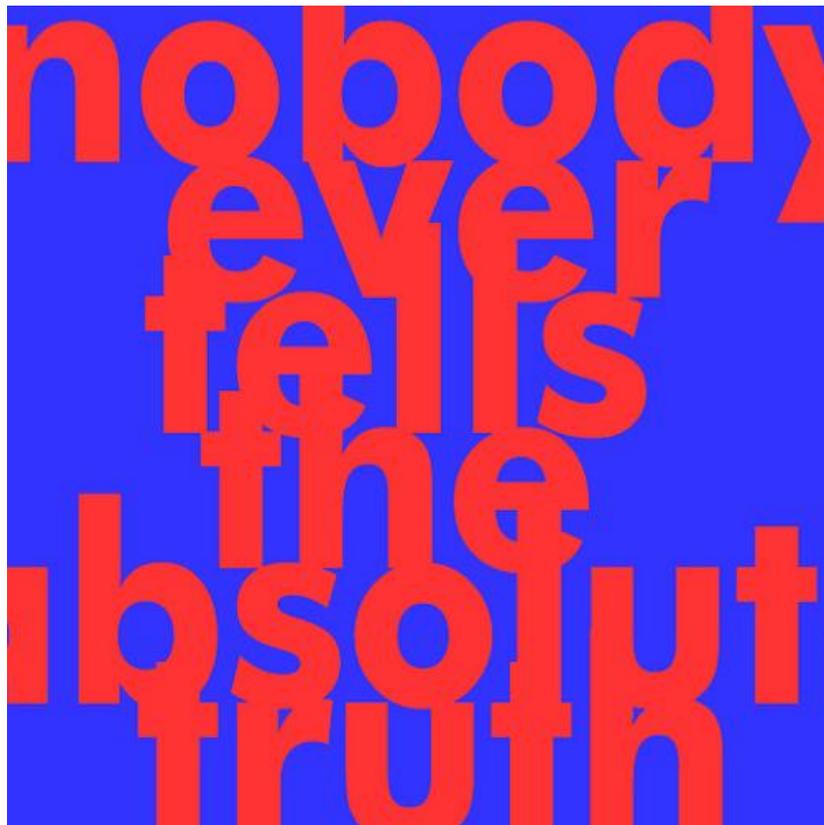
When pornography is consumed to the point of desensitization, to the point that actual intercourse with a partner is no longer enough to arouse an otherwise healthy individual, pornography becomes a dead-end escape and an ultimately far less rewarding substitution for interpersonal relationships. As the Last Psychiatrist put it in his blog post about pornography addiction:

"...online porn isn't a drug, it isn't an addiction, it isn't a sign of deviancy or a trigger for disease: porn is junk food. It is a bag of potato chips you eat when you aren't even hungry, and once you start and the initial "mmmm!" passes you're all in, may as well finish the bag, you've ruined your diet/night already, start over clean tomorrow...Junk food is stripped of the essentials of real food, leaving just the vulgar, the simple, the obvious of taste: sugar, salt, fat, repeat...The mistake people make is that they think it is delicious, but it's really just easy, comforting, reliable, satisfying."

What about teens and pornography?

Statistics show that of children between the ages of 8 and 16, 90% have been exposed to Internet pornography. The average age at which a child first views porn is an alarming 11 years old. Although this may come as a shock to many parents, the likelihood that your child has viewed porn is quite high. For adults, occasional viewing of pornography may in most cases be largely innocuous. For children, however, exposure is without exception dangerous for various reasons, some obvious and some not so obvious.

Perhaps the greatest risk for young children having free roam of all Internet porn has to offer is that much of what's out there is very extreme and very violent. It would not be an exaggeration to say that nearly all pornographic videos depict sex in a very exploitative way. When young children's first exposure to the world of sexual imagery is one that is violent and demeaning, impressionable kids take fantastical Internet pornography to be a sexual norm.



nobody
ever
tells
the
absolute
truth

The desensitization process noted earlier in this post can be fairly easily overcome by older men simply abstaining for a few days or weeks. However, for those who came of age when Internet porn was widely available (those in their teens to mid-twenties), sexual dysfunction as a result of overstimulation with Internet pornography is a much graver problem. *Thus, for teens in particular, Internet pornography can severally hamper their sexual and interpersonal health in the future.*

Another serious danger that Internet pornography poses is one of a security risk. As much as we hate to even think about it, child predators and pedophiles often flock to pornographic websites to lure in young children, simply because they know that young people, especially young boys, frequent pornographic sites and forums.

How do I protect my teen from Internet pornography?

As a parent, it's difficult to protect your children from all of life's harms, but there are definitely ways in which you can prevent your child from becoming a victim of the Internet porn industry. One of the best preventative steps is simply not allowing your child access to a computer or Internet-enabled device in a private setting. Computers in their bedrooms should be a definite no-no. Any Internet that your child accesses at home should be in a very public room, like the family living room.

Of course, you can't look over your child's shoulder at all times isn't feasible, and it's likely that at some point or another, whether at a friend's house or elsewhere, your child will access pornography. The best way to ensure that pornography doesn't become an issue at all is if you talk to your child, as uncomfortable as it may seem. Present him or her the facts about healthy sex and Internet pornography. Explain to them that Internet pornography is not real sex; rather, it can destroy the enjoyment of healthy sex later in life.

I think another important thing to note, for both young children and adults alike, is that pornography, though we know its all fantasy, actually involves real men and women who are horrifically abused and exploited.

Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality and Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity are two great books that I encourage all parents and older teens to read, in order to get a further glimpse into the industry itself, and industry that destroys both the producers and the consumers.

By-line: This guest post is contributed by **Angelita Williams**, who writes on the topics of online courses. She welcomes your comments at her email Id: angelita.williams7 @gmail.com.

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Other Resources & Links:

1. "The Best 30 Of The Top 10's Ways" Online Security Articles!
2. The Top 10 List 4 The Top 10 Security Issues Four 2010, 11, 12...
3. Free Browser Add-ons That Can Block Pornography
4. Teen Sexting in 2012: Possible Consequences Parents Can Expect With the Advent of Smartphones

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