

Porn Exposure Is Harming Kids. What Can Parents Do About It?

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SUMMARY

The discussion highlights the alarming state of children's exposure to pornography, with many first encountering it as young as eight years old. This early exposure can lead to significant psychological issues, including anxiety and depression, as children struggle to reconcile their natural curiosities with the unrealistic portrayals of sex they see online.

- The average age of first exposure to pornography is eight, with chronic viewing starting around age 11.*
- Many young adults present with erectile dysfunction due to excessive pornography consumption from a young age.*
- The U.S. is the largest consumer of pornography, with "teen" being the most searched term.*
- Exposure to pornography can lead to anxiety, depression, and PTSD in children who lack context for what they see.*
- Children often share their discoveries with peers, leading to wider exposure and normalization of pornography among young kids.*
- Parents are encouraged to have open conversations about pornography before granting internet access to their children.*
- Early discussions about body exploration and sexuality can help destigmatize these topics and promote healthy understanding.*
- Presenting sex education in a non-judgmental way is crucial for helping children navigate their feelings and experiences.*

- Paint a picture for

me of the current state of our kids' relationship

with pornography. - It's a lot to unpack, because, you know, the average age is, we talked about in the last time, is eight, right? Chronic viewing begins at 11. There's multiple cases that

I've had in my practice where I have 20-something-year-olds that present with erectile dysfunction. Like, they can't even have an erection because they've had so much exposure to pornography, and porn is not all equal.

To me, I was terrified. I'm like, are we raising a

generation of pedophiles? Because you've got a bunch of kids that are like in these

elementary, middle school years having their first sexual experience, and now as they age out into their 30s, their connection with sex really started when they were young. So do we have a bunch of people

that are no longer enticed, because their first sexual like connection is at that young age? - Oh, that's really a

weird and horrible thing to think about.

- So there's that. - But off the, okay, we're in the dark. - Okay. I know, I'm sorry.

- Okay. - No, no-

- I'm sorry. - No, I took us here. Let's stay here.

- Yeah. - All right.

- So, and there's, and again, like, I think that

if you look at the industry, we, in the United States by far are the number one consumers, and you can go on-

- Of pornography? - Of pornography.

If you go on PornHub, they

actually do the stats for you. It's kind of exciting. And they show you, we're

like, we're winning. We're number one. - Yeah.

- I don't know if that's winning.

- Great. - Yeah.

- Great. - And you've got, teen is the number one searched

term in pornography, which is terrifying. So you have to look through and say like, okay, where's the injury?

Where's the harm in that? If you are introducing sex in a way that is so obviously not real and that they think

that that might be real, there's no real life

experience that will make up for what they're watching,

a scripted nature of like how porn is

presented to these kids.

- Help me understand like the nature of your experience in

dealing with families and kids where porn has become a problem. - So a lot of my cases involve this because I

think it's naturally, it's the one thing that

gets really unsettled and parents-

- And for people who are just jumping in to this for the first time with us together. What do you mean by case? -

So if a family comes to me and like, I'm a psychologist, so if they come to me and it's

a patient, they're coming in and there's like some sort

of issue psychologically, a large majority of them have been exposed and are struggling with the psychological ramifications of that.

It's hard as a kid, if you think about it, it's hard if you are exposed to something that is a natural drive, right?

Food, water, and sex. And so it's a natural drive. You get exposed to something

you're not used to, you're not really sure

about it, you're curious, but then you feel bad about it because you know you're not

supposed to be doing it. - Right.

- So, and you can't really talk to your adults about it.

So now you live in this life of, my parents are looking at me, my mom's trying to give me a hug, and now I don't

really

know how to handle that. And so it causes a lot of anxiety, it causes depression, it causes a lot of PTSD sometimes in kids because they don't really know how to shut down some of those graphic images that are coming into their brains. - You said that eight years old is the average age in which our kids today are being exposed to pornography for the first time.

- Yes.

- That's prepubescent, that's like-

- Second grade. - You're only beginning to be like a person. Like, you know, the age of reason is seven. So what happens to an eight-year-old who sees these images and doesn't have context for what that even is? Like, what is going on? What are these people doing with each other? - Usually one of two ways. Either they get scared and they turn it off and you don't really hear much about it until maybe they're asked later, like, hey, like has this happened?

Like, how old were you? And they're like, oh yeah, like, I remember that one time. And they don't really jump into it. The other thing that happens is that they're exposed to it and then they're like, hey, I wanna show my friend because I don't wanna do this alone. And so now we start to have like incidental exposures that are happening to other classmates. And then it becomes a bigger thing because typically, I mean, elementary school, middle school kids, not great at secrets.

So the more you bring into that, the more it gets public. And then some parent will find out, and then there's like a conversation that happens. - Is this mostly boys? - They get exposed at equal rates because of how it works. And if you look at what happens is in second grade when at that age of eight, that's when they're searching terms online for school work. And so because we ad bundle and we were trying to get more eyes on things, that's how they get exposed typically.

- So you're saying that the pornography industry is effectively buying search terms against- - Correct.

- Second grade social studies curriculum?

- Correct. In order to get exposure because they have 10 years. That's really heinous.

- Even more. - Yeah. The business model has worked. - My kid, my little eight-year-old baby. - Yeah. - Comes to me and describes something that I am instantly horrified. She's describing that she's seen. What's your advice?

What should I do as a parent? - I would say, first of all, take a deep breath. Like let's talk through like how is it that this happened? Like how are you feeling about it? Let's talk about what is okay and what's not okay. But very similar to the way that you might watch a TV show on TV where you have actors and you have people that like put on wigs and put on makeup and they do all the things.

Like there's also this other thing that we have actors and they do these things, right? Like I think that you explain to them at their age, right? If I have an eight-year-old, I'm like, and ask them what it is that they would like to know about it. How is it making you feel? Like, are you okay? Like, I'm here to answer those questions, right? Like, I just think that if we don't work on de-stigmatizing it and we don't get ahead of it and talk to our kids first about it and they kind of silently go through it without us, we've lost, right?

And they're going to make their own assumptions and they're not going to probably put the best context on and they'll probably overuse and do things with that and end up in places that I've seen that, you know, escalate in dangerous ways. - Do you feel as a psychologist that works with families that you know what, they're gonna get exposed? So you should have this conversation at seven or eight years old and what should that conversation even be?

How much of a birds and the bees do you get into at that age? - My recommendation is always like, if you're deciding to hand over access to the internet with your child, have the conversation before that. The minute you hand them access online is the minute that you lose control and the potential could happen. If you're not okay taking your eight-year-old and dropping them off at a stadium of 80,000 people that are there to watch a game and pick them up four hours later, then why are you letting 'em go online with 5 billion people?

Why are you letting them go and explore the dark recesses of the online world without holding their hand and explaining it to them? I just think we have to be more realistic in that sense. And I think it starts even earlier than that. I think children, even in that toddler phase and elementary school age before the age of eight, there's a lot of self-exploration of body parts and like, and baths and like, you know, things happen, right?

I remember my son, you know,

like, he was in the bathtub and he was like, what's this, mommy? And I was like, sometimes that happens. And I went and got my husband, I was like, you should probably talk about this. Like, you know, like, I didn't make it weird. I was just like, sometimes that happens, right? Those are the conversations of like, okay, this does happen. This is a natural reaction in your body and you should have these conversations.

Same thing with young girls of understanding that you can't, it's okay to love your body and love who you are and that this is a part of us being human. If we talk about it in those ways then it doesn't make it seem like it's bad and it shouldn't be bad, right? How we present it is really the fundamental issue here. - If you liked that clip, we've got a lot more where that came from. Be sure to check out our full conversations by subscribing to the channel so you won't miss our new videos as they come out each week.

(bright upbeat music)