

Why Talk About Porn?



"My kid knows about safe sex."

"My kid wouldn't watch porn."

"My kid is a good kid."

As a parent, it may be difficult to think about what your child does or does not know about sex or pornography. While you may think you have done a great job protecting your child, a 2022 study from Common Sense Media revealed some eye-opening statistics:

- **73% of teens surveyed reported having seen porn by the time they were 17 years old.**
- **On average, teens reported first seeing pornography at the age of 12.**
- **58% of teens reported seeing pornography accidentally.**
- **Only one in three (33%) teens have seen pornographic content where someone asked for consent prior to engaging in sexually explicit acts.**

Porn is out there. Not all teens who see porn are intentionally looking for it, which is why it is vital that trusted adults talk about porn, what it is, and how to protect yourself online. Teens also need to understand what happens behind the scenes when pornographic content is produced and see the links between pornography, violence and human trafficking.

At the end of the day, pornography can be extremely harmful, both to the individuals featured in it and to those exposed to it. By diving deeper to understand how pornography can be linked to sexual exploitation, we can work together to end the demand for and negative impact of it.

Pornography

The depiction of nudity or erotic behavior, in writing, pictures, video, or otherwise, with the intent to cause sexual excitement₂.

Child Pornography

A form of child sexual exploitation. Federal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor (persons less than 18 years old). Images of child pornography are also referred to as child sexual abuse images. Federal law prohibits the production, distribution, importation, reception, or possession of any image of child pornography₃.

Online Grooming

The process that traffickers use to win their victims' love and trust in order to control and sexually exploit them while using the Internet. While in-person grooming can take weeks, months, or even years, traffickers have been found to groom children online in a matter of minutes₃.

"It's just paid actors."

"Watching porn is a right of passage."

"It's all fantasy."

What is so bad about porn?

The pornography industry has effectively made it seem like watching pornography is harmless entertainment. In reality, pornography is intertwined with violence and human trafficking.

- 52% of teens who have watched pornography report having seen violent acts, including depictions of rape, choking or someone in pain₁.
- The consumption of porn has been linked to higher levels of rape myth acceptance, negative attitudes toward women, and self-reported willingness to rape – all of which are factors that contribute to sexual assault and sexual violence against women₄.
- Out of a sample of 260 survivors of domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), 42% reported being engaged in online prostitution. The average age for those who were forced into pornography production was 12.8 years olds.
- Sex buyers want prostituted people to conduct the sexual acts they have viewed in pornographic content, thus showing that the actions displayed in pornographic "fantasies" have a carry-over effect on those involved in prostitution₆.

MindGeek Lawsuit: The Intersection of Porn, Rape and Human Trafficking

MindGeek, a Montreal-based business, is the parent company of several dominating pornography websites, such as Pornhub, RedTube, and YouPorn.⁷ In February 2021, a class action lawsuit was filed against Pornhub/MindGeek by survivors of child sex trafficking and child sexual abuse material (CSAM).⁸ Images and/or videos of the plaintiffs' sexual exploitation were disseminated throughout sites operated by MindGeek, which put no effort into identifying the survivors' ages or statuses as sex trafficking victims before advertising their victimization on Pornhub — and subsequently profiting from that victimization. The judge ruled in favor of the survivors, ascertaining that MindGeek both hosted CSAM and facilitated the production and dissemination of the exploitative content throughout its hosted website(s).⁸ The ruling of this lawsuit was a win for individuals whose victimization has been a source of profit for hosts of pornography sites. The implication of this ruling is also a significant step forward for survivors of sexual exploitation, as the judge held that MindGeek, an Internet service provider, is not immune to responsibility for CSAM posted by third parties.

Common Online Practices and Techniques Used by Traffickers

Catfishing: The creation of a false online identity to deceive a victim into developing a relationship, often romantic. Exploiters hope to gain trust, so that a child eventually produces sexually explicit photos and videos for them.³

Sexting: The transmission of sexually explicit images through any digital device. It is a crime for anyone to create, distribute or view child sexual abuse material, even if the person is a minor.³

Sextortion: A form of online blackmail that occurs when a predator threatens to spread sexually explicit images of a youth, unless that youth sends additional or more explicit sexual images.³

Revenge Porn: Occurs when an individual shares sexually explicit videos or images that were meant only for them ... typically after a breakup.³

Tips for Discussing Pornography

- 1) **Be proactive. Do not assume your child understands what porn is and what is happening behind the scenes. Initiate the conversation rather than waiting for your child to come to you with questions about porn.**⁹
- 2) **Implement parental controls and establish rules for online safety. Ensure that your child understands the house rules for using the Internet.**⁹
- 3) **Be mindful of delivery. Discussing sex and pornography can be uncomfortable. Be aware that making jokes or being too lighthearted may undermine any information you are sharing regarding sex, pornography or consent.**⁹
- 4) **Iterate that your child will not get into trouble by talking with a trusted adult about pornographic images he or she has seen.**⁹
- 5) **Foster critical thinking. Take time to watch movies and advertisements with your child. Discuss the underlying relationship dynamics or messages about body image in what your child is seeing.**¹⁰

Only 43% of teens report having talked to adults about pornography versus 82% who have talked to a trusted adult about relationships and 75% who have talked to adults about sex.¹ As parents, we must include pornography in our discussions about sex and relationships with our children.

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