

Is Pornography Harmless?

Many young people believe that pornography, or cybersex, is a good alternative to actual sex. After all, they can't get pregnant with cybersex, nor can they catch a sexually transmitted disease or have their hearts broken. It's just harmless images on a screen, right?

Pornography is not harmless.

Why? Pornography does harm you, and it harms others. You might “wonder, *why* since” it's not “real” sex. I mean, nobody gets hurt, right? Let's take a moment to look at that.

Pornography is not harmless. It's not one of those things where no one's getting hurt because it's not “real.” quote on quote, real. It has real victims and does real damage to countless people for some of the following reasons¹:

- It devalues and dehumanizes people. Men and women, especially women, are seen as objects to be used for someone's sexual gratification. This is important because it is the process of dehumanizing a person that makes violence against them much more acceptable.²
- It is often violent. Eighty-seven percent involves violence against women.
- It's easily accessible to children. For a lot of them, it is the only information about sex they ever get. They often don't have anyone speaking truth into their lives, giving them the opposite view of what sex should be.
- It teaches that women enjoy pain and violence during sex.
- For the young girls who are consuming it—it gives such a horrible message to them as well. It teaches them to accept violence, pain, and being used and abused. It also teaches them that they're supposed to perform.
- It teaches young consumers who carry it into adulthood that sex is devoid of relationship and intimacy.
- Finally, it teaches that porn is just something you can consume for recreation.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Most all studies show that young people, especially boys, exposed to violent porn take that violence into their relationships.

Porn Addiction

Studies now show that porn is addictive. Pornography works on the dopamine in the brain the same way drugs do. It's an extremely powerful addiction because you're not just getting the dopamine that you get when you experience porn, but typically there's also masturbation involved.³ There is also a higher rate of erectile dysfunction in men who use porn heavily. The more porn they utilize, the more they have to get. And all of these habits and addictions are dragged into marriage.

What about Sexting and Dating Apps?

Sexting

What Is It?

Sexting is the sending or receiving of sexually explicit pictures, videos, or text messages via a smartphone or any digital device.⁵ Sexting can violate child pornography laws if it involves a minor (under the age of 18), and many states have laws regarding sexting and minors as well.

Sexting is an unsafe practice. Remember, there is the risk of sexually explicit digital pictures being saved and resent to others. Even Snapchat sexts can be grabbed by third-party apps and saved as a permanent record. There is a high risk of cyber-bullying, body shaming, and non-consensual redistribution of your pics.⁴

Dating Apps

Dating apps promise intimacy but generally only deliver hookups. Using a dating app can be unsafe for you both physically and emotionally.

There are a lot of reasons why dating apps can be unsafe and emotionally unhealthy. Let's look at a few:

Why?

- You really don't know the person you're interacting with online and if they're really who they say they are.
- You generally choose the person based on how they look, not who they are. Many important qualities and values in a person can be overlooked.
- You generally only post pics and details that make yourself more desirable in order to "sell" yourself. It is a very superficial depiction of who you are.
- There are studies done that show an increase in levels of depression and anxiety in persons using dating apps.

*If you do use dating apps, make sure:*⁶

1. Use a Google number instead of your own. It's free.
2. You never go alone to meet up with someone you don't know or are just meeting in person for the first time.
3. Meet in very public areas until you get to know the person really well.
4. Never give out personal information about yourself or where you live until you know the person really well.
5. Stay sober!
6. Do not engage in sending any sexually explicit photos of yourself.

Sources:

1. Foubert, John D. "Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and ... - Digitalcommons@Uri." Digitalcommons.uri.edu, Digital Commons, July 2017, digitalcommons.uri.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1077&context=dignity.
2. Haslam, Nick, and Steve Loughnan. "Dehumanization and Inhumanization." Annual Review of Psychology, vol. 65, no. 1, 2014, pp. 399–423, doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115045.
3. Loosemore, Paul. "What Effects Does Porn Have on My Brain?" Www.addictionhope.com, Addiction Hope, 20 Apr. 2021, www.addictionhope.com/blog/effects-porn-brain/#:~:text=When%20we%20experience%20highly%20arousing,this%20new%20and%20exciting%20experience.
4. Strasburger, Victor C., et al. "Teenagers, Sexting, and the Law." Pediatrics.aappublications.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 May 2019, pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/143/5/e20183183.
5. Rifkenbark, Kathryn. "Sexting: What You Should Know, How You Should Respond." Www.missingkids.org, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 17 Oct. 2019, www.missingkids.org/blog/2019/post-update/sexting-what-you-should-know-how-you-should-respond.
6. Carson, Erin. "Tips for Making the Most of Dating Sunday, the Busiest Day of the Year for Online Dating." Cnet.com, CNET, 4 Jan. 2020, www.safety.com/10-online-dating-safety-tips/.