

teens and pornography



/ RECOGNIZE

- On average, kids are first exposed to porn online between the ages of 10-11.
- 93% of boys & 62% of girls see pornography online before their 18th birthday; 24% of those teens see it unwillingly.
- Boys ages 12-17 are the largest consumers of porn online.
- 87% of teens have their phones within *arms reach* day or night--which means pornography is overwhelmingly accessible all the time and easily hidden by all the other online activity.
- 90% of kids who view online porn have done so while doing homework.
- Most pornographic images viewed are far beyond simple nudity. Images are hardcore, violent and severely harmful to the formation of teens attitudes, expectations, and behaviour. More than 1/2 of boys watching porn believe it represents a normal sexual relationship.
- Girls often seek comfort in porn; boys seek stimulation. Those involved with porn often start because of basic curiosity. Studies have shown that frequent porn use can result in depression, anxiety, stress & social alienation.

/// RESPOND

- Expect that most teens will be exposed to porn at some point. Talk about it. Teens need to know what they're up against - need to know about the presence and power of pornography before it becomes an issue. Help them create a plan of how to respond when they are exposed to unwanted porn.
- In an incredibly lonely generation, pornography creates an illusion of intimacy without risk or effort. Create places where teens experience authentic intimacy, giving them something to measure the counterfeit against.
- If they are watching porn, ask them if they'd be willing to research together about how porn affects a person's brain & what science is saying about the impact of porn on healthy sexuality & relationships (check out www.fightthenewdrug.org).
- If they recognize that porn is dominating their life, help them identify the triggers including time of day, place, and situations that lead to porn use.
- Invite them to create a list of their personal reasons to stop using porn, including ways they have changed since their involvement with porn.
- Brainstorm the things they can do to address their triggers and change their environment so that porn use becomes more difficult to access on their phone and computer. This probably involves an accountability app. If the student is resistant to this ask why - and keep suggesting it.
- If a teen talks to you about porn use, follow up the conversation! Be conscious of the weight of shame and make your check-ins non-judgmental and open. Shame often makes it harder to change a behaviour and keeps a person from seeking help.
- Get them to track progress on a calendar or with a nightly text and celebrate wins with them!
- Demonstrate and remind them of God's unconditional love. It isn't a response to them "behaving", but a gift God gives because he wants to.

// REMEMBER

- Porn is a human issue that harms us all, not just Christians. Through talking about porn you can help teens realize that God's heart is for us to flourish, and His ways aren't about holding us back but about releasing us. His way is a better way for all people - whether they know him or not yet. Porn provides an example of that.
- Pornographic images rewire how our brains view women; women are seen as objects to be used, not humans to be loved. This affects males and females. Porn can lead to a distorted perception of reality, a devaluation of human life, & a trivializing of violent behaviour.
- Hebrews 4:15 shows us that Jesus understands our struggles & is there with us in the midst; Romans 5:6 tells us that Christ died for us "when we were still sinners". He knows we're messy - and loves us anyway.

//// RESOURCES

- www.covenanteyes.com: great information & accountability app
- www.joinfortify.com/legacy: an accountability/screen monitoring app that is free for teens. Helps to develop a resistance plan and focuses on encouragement rather than shame.
- www.fightthenewdrug.org: research and info on porn's effect on the brain and body
- www.doingfamilyright.com: search "recovery" for an entire podcast series to help understand/respond to porn /sexual addiction
- <http://truthmatters.ca/resources/purity>: free discipleship guide to walk through with teens who know Jesus

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