

## **Pornography's Assault on the Family**

A while ago, I received a startling phone call from a friend. She asked me if we could shelter her and her children. She feared for her life. She explained that her husband had been addicted to pornography for many years, but that his addiction had escalated to viewing violent pornography. He had just told his wife that he had drawn a picture of her being violently killed.

We took her in and helped her obtain a restraining order against her husband. Outwardly, this man appeared to be a great husband and dad. It would have been difficult for anyone who knew him (other than his wife) to see that he had a serious sexual addiction. His pornography addiction tore apart his family, creating catastrophic consequences for his wife and children. He lost everything.

Another woman did not learn of her husband's pornography addiction until he left her and their child for another woman. She then found out that he had been involved in pornography since he was 14. There had been no pornography in his home growing up; he had accessed it at a friend's house.

One woman recounted that her father-in-law sent her husband pornography before they married, telling him it would help him be faithful to her. Her husband then developed a pornography addiction that became so severe that she had to leave him.

Finally, another friend of ours, after 30 years of marriage, confessed to his wife in tears that he had a pornography addiction, which had escalated to the point that he was compulsively promiscuous. His wife wondered if he had infected her with the HIV/AIDS virus since he confessed he had had sex with numerous prostitutes over the years. Fortunately he sought treatment and the marriage was saved, but not until after much pain and hard work.

It is virtually certain that some of your friends or family members also have been impacted by pornography. Many claim that viewing pornography is a harmless activity that carries no negative consequences to anyone. Victims know differently, and the data show otherwise.

Pornography destroys lives, dreams, marriages and families. It does not discriminate based on race, culture, age, gender, political affiliation, religion or financial status. It is a leading cause of marital and family breakdown today and generates serious problems for individuals, families and societies.

### **Pornography is Big Business**

Virtually every country in the world has been inundated by a steady increase in the availability of pornographic materials in the form of magazines, films and electronic images on the Internet.

By one estimate, worldwide pornography revenues in 2006 alone exceeded \$97 billion—more than the revenues of many of the top technology companies combined (e.g., Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo! and Apple) and more than the combined revenues of ABC, CBS and NBC.<sup>266</sup> Obviously the sex industry has an enormous interest in legally protecting pornography.<sup>267</sup>

### **Could there be an undetected pornography problem in your home?**

#### **Consider these compelling statistics:**

- There are 4.2 million pornographic sites on the Internet (about 12 percent of the total number of existing websites).<sup>268</sup>
- There are 68 million daily search engine requests for pornography (25 percent of total search engine requests).<sup>269</sup>
- Thirty-one percent of men surveyed said they had visited sex sites. Eighteen percent of the married men surveyed and 17.8 percent of those who claimed to be Christians had visited sex sites.<sup>270</sup>

<sup>266</sup> Pornography statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved June 15, 2009, from Family Safe Media website: [http://familysafemedia.com/pornography\\_statistics.html#anchor1](http://familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html#anchor1)

<sup>267</sup> "Forbes Magazine breaks down the global profits this way: adult videos, \$20 billion; sex clubs, \$5 billion; magazines, \$7.5 billion; phone sex, \$4.5 billion; escort services, \$11 billion; cable, satellite and pay-per-view TV, \$2.5 billion; CD-ROMs and DVD ROMs, \$1.5 billion; Internet (sales and memberships), \$1.5 billion; novelties, \$1 billion; and others, \$1.5 billion." LaRue, J. (2002). Concerned Women for America. Retrieved June 15, 2009, from <http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=2909&department=LEGAL&categoryid=pornography>; With regard to U.S. profits, Internet sales account for a much higher percentage (second only behind adult videos) probably due to the wider availability of computers. See Pornography statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved June 15, 2009, from Family Safe Media website: [http://familysafemedia.com/pornography\\_statistics.html#anchor2](http://familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html#anchor2)

<sup>268</sup> Pornography statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved June 15, 2009, from Family Safe Media website: [http://familysafemedia.com/pornography\\_statistics.html#anchor4](http://familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html#anchor4)

<sup>269</sup> Pornography statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved June 15, 2009, from Family Safe website: [http://familysafemedia.com/pornography\\_statistics.html#anchor4](http://familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html#anchor4)

<sup>270</sup> *Zogby/Focus Survey Reveals Shocking Internet Sex Statistics*, (2000, March 30). Legal Facts: Family Research Council Vol. 2, No. 20.

In 2007, researchers at Brigham Young University surveyed 813 college students and their parents from six schools across the country. Of those surveyed:

- An astounding 86.2 percent reported viewing pornographic material in the past 12 months.
- Of the men surveyed, 48.4 percent reported viewing pornography at least weekly.
- One in five young adult men reported viewing pornography every day or nearly every day.
- Two-thirds of male students said pornography use is acceptable.
- Surprisingly, nearly half of the female students surveyed said viewing pornography is an acceptable way to express one's sexuality.<sup>271</sup>

Dr. Patrick Carnes, a renowned psychologist and expert on sex addiction, estimates that 3 percent to 6 percent of Americans (up to 18 million people) have sex addictions.<sup>272</sup> Other researchers estimate that the total is even higher. Many of these sex addictions are fueled by pornography. It also is becoming more common for girls and women to develop pornography problems.<sup>273</sup> For some, a single exposure can lead to an addiction. For others, it may take repeated exposure.

It is difficult to uncover pornography problems because, as with other addictions, pornography users will go to great lengths to keep their addiction a secret. Denial is common. Facing the truth can be devastating and can cause pain to close family members, especially spouses. Ironically, many involved in pornography do so against their own personal convictions and religious beliefs. This causes serious self-worth and shame issues. Other addicts rationalize that viewing pornography is not harmful.

<sup>271</sup> Carroll, J. S., et al. (2008). Generation XXX: Pornography acceptance and use among emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 23(1), 6-30.

<sup>272</sup> *Frequently asked questions*. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2005, from SexHelp.com website: [http://www.sexhelp.com/addiction\\_faq.cfm](http://www.sexhelp.com/addiction_faq.cfm)

<sup>273</sup> According to a survey by Zogby International, women represent one out of every three visitors to adult websites; 41 percent of women surveyed said they have deliberately viewed or downloaded pornographic pictures and movies; and one out of every six women (including Christians) struggles with an addiction to pornography. Prince, T. (2007, August 9). *Though pornography use skyrockets among lay leaders, pastors in United States, gospel offers hope*. Retrieved June 15, 2009, from the Alabama Baptist website: [http://www.thealabamabaptist.org//print-edition-article-detail.php?id\\_art=3316](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org//print-edition-article-detail.php?id_art=3316)

Family members can become pornography enablers by ignoring signs of addiction and denying a problem exists. To remain in denial is to risk pornography's intrusion in your home and allow its destructive forces to take root.

### **Pornography Changes its Victims**

In a paper published in the *Journal of Family Issues*, researchers reported that after six weeks of viewing pornography, their subjects:

- Developed a “greater acceptance of premarital and extramarital sex.”
- Developed “greater tolerance” for multiple sexual partners.
- Enhanced their “belief that male and female promiscuity are natural and that the repression of sexual inclinations poses a health risk.”
- Devalued the institution of marriage which appeared “less significant and less viable in the future.”
- Had a reduced “desire to have children and promoted the acceptance of male dominance and female servitude.”<sup>274</sup>

Even more concerning, other studies by the same researchers indicated that subjects exposed to prolonged pornography usage developed more tolerance for perverse sexual behavior and became desensitized to rape.<sup>275</sup>

### **Pornography Destroys Marriages**

Contrary to popular belief, sexually explicit materials do not enhance marriage or a couple's intimacy—they *destroy* them. Pornography establishes false expectations for looks, intimacy and sex.

Some wives reported that their husbands became angry and disinterested in them when they refused to perform sexual acts depicted in pornography. One woman reported:

*Although I was careful with my clothes and figure, I found that my husband was increasingly critical of the way I looked. Even when*

<sup>274</sup> Zillmann, D., & Bryant, J. (1988). Effects of prolonged consumption of pornography on family values. *Journal of Family Issues*, 9(4), 518-544.

<sup>275</sup> Zillmann, D., & Bryant, J. (1982). Pornography, sexual callousness, and the trivialization of rape. *Journal of Communication*, 32(4), 10-21. Zillmann, D., & Bryant, J. (1984). Effects of massive exposure to pornography. In Malamuth, N. M., & Donnerstein, E. I. (Eds.), *Pornography and sexual aggression*. Orlando: Academic Press.

*friends and acquaintances told me I was an attractive woman, I wasn't attractive enough to compete with eternally young, surgically altered models. Jack also expressed irritation when I was uncomfortable with some of the sexual practices he'd seen in pornographic magazines. In the end, he lost all interest in me as a sexual partner. This had a devastating impact on my view of my worth as a woman. It created such despair in me that I began to let my appearance go. At last, I looked the way his rejection made me feel—totally unlovely.<sup>276</sup>*

Psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover, MS, MD, who has treated many patients for pornography addictions, explained during a Senate hearing:

*The pornography addict soon forgets about everything and everyone else in favor of an ever more elusive sexual jolt. He will eventually be able to find it only among other 'junkies' like himself, and he will place at risk his career, his friends, his family, everything of value. He will indulge his habit anywhere and everywhere, at any time. No one, no matter how highly placed, is immune. And like all other addicts, the pornography addict will lie to cover it up, heedless of risk or cost to himself or to others.<sup>277</sup>*

Clearly, pornography is an enemy to marriage and, thus, an enemy to the family!

### **Pornography Desensitizes the User to Deviant Sexual Behavior**

When a person regularly downloads sexually explicit images or depictions of sexual acts into their brain through pictures, videos or movies, the chances that he or she will think about those images and then eventually act on some of them is high. It can be a short trip from viewing pornography to later acting it out with a consenting person or even by force.

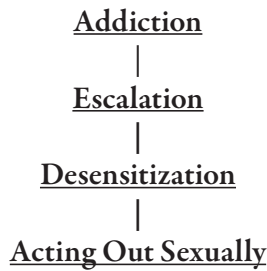
Like drug users, addicts need harder and harder pornography in order to be aroused. Material initially perceived as revolting, shocking,

<sup>276</sup> Hall, L. (1996). *An affair of the mind*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>277</sup> Satinover, J. (2004, November 18). *The science behind pornography addiction*. Testimony given at a hearing of the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from [http://commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Testimony&Hearing\\_ID=e8088f9f-d8d2-4e82-b012-46337c6f9456&Witness\\_ID=f9da1f44-63e9-4288-966c-9cae2242977a](http://commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Testimony&Hearing_ID=e8088f9f-d8d2-4e82-b012-46337c6f9456&Witness_ID=f9da1f44-63e9-4288-966c-9cae2242977a)

taboo-breaking, immoral or illegal can eventually become acceptable. In search of a new “high,” the addict often turns to pornography depicting sexual aggression or violence. Once an addict has reached the “acting out” stage, individuals nearly always experience a serious erosion of personal relationships and values.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Victor Cline explains that there are four progressive levels that can develop after being exposed to pornography: addiction, escalation, desensitization, and then acting out sexually.<sup>278</sup>



Dr. Cline further explains that pornography addictions can escalate into many types of unwanted sexual illnesses:

*As a clinical psychologist, I have treated, over the years, approximately 350 sex addicts, sex offenders, or other individuals (96% male) with sexual illnesses. This includes many types of unwanted compulsive sexual acting-out, plus such things as child molestation, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadomasochism, fetishism, and rape. With several exceptions, pornography has been a major or minor contributor or facilitator in the acquisition of their deviation or sexual addiction.*<sup>279</sup>

Dr. Mary Anne Layden, director of education at the University of Pennsylvania Health System, pointed out, “I have been treating sexual

<sup>278</sup> Cline, V. (n.d.). *The effects of porn addiction*. Retrieved February 17, 2009, from AskMaple.com website: <http://www.askmaple.com/porn-addiction.html>.

<sup>279</sup> Cline, V. *Pornography's effects on adults and children*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 16, 2009, from Morality in Media website: <http://www.obscuritycrimes.org/clineart.cfm>

violence victims and perpetrators for 13 years. I have not treated a single case of sexual violence that did not involve pornography.”<sup>280</sup>

One study showed that “males who are exposed to a great deal of erotica before the age of 14 are more sexually active and engage in more varied sexual behaviors as adults than is true for males not so exposed.”<sup>281</sup> Another study revealed that of 932 sex addicts, 90 percent of the males and 77 percent of the females studied reported that pornography played a significant role in their addiction.<sup>282</sup>

Yet another study found that rapists are 15 times more likely than non-offenders to have had exposure to hardcore pornography during childhood.<sup>283</sup>



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More than two decades ago, a number of women, men and children testified before an Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography. The following are disturbing excerpts from these testimonies that contain numerous accounts of sexual molestation, rape, torture and more—all fueled by pornography. I do not recommend reading the report. I became physically ill reading just parts of it. Here are a few of the milder excerpts. (Skip past the next three bullet points if you prefer not to read these even milder firsthand experiences):

- *The incest started at the age of eight. I did not understand any of it and did not feel that it was right. My dad would try to convince me that it was o.k. He would find magazines with articles and/or pictures that would show fathers and daughters and/or mothers, brothers and sisters having sexual intercourse. (Mostly fathers and daughters.) He would say that if it was published in magazines that it had to be all right because magazines could not publish lies.*

<sup>280</sup> *The effects of pornography and sexual messages.* (n.d.). Retrieved June 16, 2009, from National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families website: <http://www.nationalcoalition.org/effects.asp>

<sup>281</sup> Davis, K. E., & Braucht, G. N. (1970). Exposure to pornography, character and sexual deviance. *Technical Reports of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*, 7.

<sup>282</sup> Carnes, P. (1991). *Don't call it love: Recovery from sexual addictions.* New York: Bantam.

<sup>283</sup> Goldstein, M. J., Kant, H. S., & Harman, J. J. (1974). *Pornography and sexual deviance.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

- *I have had my hands tied, my feet tied, my mouth taped to teach me big girls don't cry. He would tell me I was very fortunate to have a father that would teach me the facts of life. Many of the pictures he had were of women in bondage, with their hands tied, feet tied and their mouth taped.*
- *I understand pornography to be a force in creating violence in the gay community. I was battered by my ex-lover who used pornography. The pornography, straight and gay, I had been exposed to, helped convince me that I had to accept his violence and helped keep me in that destructive relationship. Then one time, he branded me. I still have a scar.<sup>284</sup>*

There also were reports from those who had been kidnapped or held captive during the production of pornographic materials.<sup>285</sup>

There is an undeniable correlation between pornography addiction and the commission of sexual crimes and violence. A number of serial killers, including the notorious Ted Bundy who confessed to 30 brutal murders, have stated that pornography fueled their crimes.

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Moreover, Freda Briggs, a former professor at the University of South Australia, indicated that her “research showed a 100 percent correlation between those who sought out child pornography and those who abuse children.”<sup>286</sup>

Yet, for all its demonstrated harm, pornography is sold freely and legally throughout America, poisoning minds and encouraging adultery, incest and rape.

<sup>284</sup> *Victimization*. (1986) Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, Part 4, Chapter 1. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from <http://www.porn-report.com/401-victimization.htm>

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>286</sup> Secor, S. (2004, October). *A growing trend: teen pornography*. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from Morality in Media website: <http://www.obscuritycrimes.org/espforparents/espforparents2004-10.cfm> (citing Doherty, B. (2004, October). No such thing as “just looking,” psychologically. *Canberra Times*. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from Stop Demand Foundation website: <http://www.stopdemand.org/afawcs0112878/ID=25/newsdetails.html>).



## Pornography Can Be as Addictive as Drugs

In response to erotic stimuli, addictive chemicals called “erototoxins” are produced by the body and released in the brain. Scientific research is now confirming what therapists have recognized for many years:

*The repeated viewing of pornographic images creates a chemical addiction in the viewer. That addiction becomes so powerful that it overrides the cognitive functions of the brain that enable a human being to make judgments, to inhibit impulsive action, or to resist engaging in conduct that will bring harm to themselves or others. Pornography addicts can become enslaved to the chemical cocktail of endogenous drugs that are produced by the body and released by the brain when it stores pornographic images.*<sup>287</sup>

The repeated viewing of pornographic images creates a chemical addiction in the viewer.

The pornography addict seeks the flood of “feel good” chemicals similar to those created by cocaine, heroin and other drugs. So pornography addiction is not just a moral or self-control issue, but a true physiological addiction. Like other addictions, if left untreated it will escalate.

Judith Reisman, Ph.D., President of The Institute for Media Education and a specialist in the addictive properties of sexually explicit images, gave the following testimony at a Senate hearing on pornography:

*Thanks to the latest advances in neuroscience, we now know that emotionally arousing images imprint and alter the brain, triggering an instant, involuntary, but lasting, biochemical memory trail. ... Once our neurochemical pathways are established they are difficult or impossible to delete. ... Brain scientists tell us that in 3/10 of a second a visual image passes from the eye through the brain, and*

<sup>287</sup> Harmer, J. L. (2007). *The sex industrial complex*. Salt Lake City: The Lighted Candle Society.

*whether or not one wants to, the brain is structurally changed and memories are created.*<sup>288</sup>

In the same Senate hearing, psychiatrist Dr. Jeffrey Satinover described the similarities between pornography and drugs. He noted: “The underlying nature of an addiction to pornography is chemically nearly identical to a heroin addiction: Only the delivery system is different. ...”<sup>289</sup>

Upon viewing pornography, the mind records the graphic images which can be replayed over and over again at will—or against your will.

### **Pornography is Damaging to Children**

It is estimated that at least 95 percent of all teens in the United States have been exposed to pornography (intentionally or unintentionally), and 9 out of 10 children between the ages of 8 and 16 have been exposed to pornography on the Internet.<sup>290</sup> One survey indicated that 47 percent of school-age children receive e-mails with links to X-rated websites daily.<sup>291</sup>

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Early exposure to pornography can have disastrous results for children. A 2001 report revealed that over half of all sex offenders in a particular state were adolescents, and some felony sexual assaults were being perpetrated by children as young as 8 years old.<sup>292</sup> Many young sex offenders say they were acting out what they had seen depicted in pornography.

<sup>288</sup> Reisman, J. (2004, November 18). *The science behind pornography addiction and the effects of addiction on families and communities*. Testimony given at a hearing of the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from [http://commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Testimony&Hearing\\_ID=e8088f9f-d8d2-4e82-b012-46337c6f9456&Witness\\_ID=29ddac76-ab1c-4fcc-8fdb-94ac0061546c](http://commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Testimony&Hearing_ID=e8088f9f-d8d2-4e82-b012-46337c6f9456&Witness_ID=29ddac76-ab1c-4fcc-8fdb-94ac0061546c)

<sup>289</sup> *Supra* note 29.

<sup>290</sup> Ashcroft, J. (2002, June 6). Prepared statement at National Prosecutors’ Symposium on Obscenity, Columbia, SC.

<sup>291</sup> *Symantec survey reveals more than 80 percent of children using email receive inappropriate spam daily*. (2003, June 9). Symantec News Release. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from <http://www.symantec.com/press/2003/n030609a.html>

<sup>292</sup> Child on Child. Transcript of Special Report. (2001, May 7). KSL TV. Retrieved June 16, 2009, from <http://web.ksl.com/TV/series2001/child.htm>

Where do children get pornography? They get it from various sources, many of which are readily available to them: the Internet/computers, magazines, iPods, cell phones, movies, videos, entertainment in hotel rooms and their TV at home.

A friend recently bought a prepaid phone for her 12 year old. She was dismayed to learn that she had supplied her son with a pornography delivery mechanism. Unbeknownst to her, the phone also had *unfiltered* Internet access and easily could send and receive inappropriate photos. She had never thought of a cell phone that way before. Unfortunately, we have to understand and guard against the negative uses of technology. "Sexting," which is a new term used to describe sending nude or suggestive pictures by cell phone, is increasingly becoming a problem among teens. Many children access pornography through their friends. Other children and teenagers are exposed to pornography after stumbling across pornographic magazines hidden in their home by another family member with a secret addiction.

Sadly, as pointed out earlier, your child is not safe from pornography even in the public schools. Some schools show graphic sexual videos under the banner of sex education, art, or under the guise of studying human sexuality.<sup>293</sup>

### Gateway Pornography

One of the catalysts for sexual addictions is what can be called "gateway pornography." Most young children and even teenagers are naturally repulsed by hard-core, sexually explicit images.

The individuals involved in the pornography industry are clever. In order to get their customers hooked at an early age, which will maximize revenues over a person's lifetime, the pornography industry starts with "soft



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<sup>293</sup> A class at Arizona State University, "Sexuality in the Media," examined issues related to explicit sexual representations in pornography, art and cinema. Topics included the representation of the male and female body and gay and lesbian sexuality. Movies shown in class depicted sexual acts, including anal sex. One of the required books was *Hard core: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible*. The warning in the class description read, "This class includes sexually explicit materials and anyone offended or disturbed by viewing, reading, or discussing such materials should not enroll in the class."

core” or “gateway” pornography. These images are not legally classified as pornography, but they can serve as a catalyst to gently lead children into harder pornography.

Parents should be aware that some pornography addicts report that their addiction started as a child after viewing seemingly innocuous lingerie ads in magazines and newspapers, suggestive pictures in sports magazines (like the swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated*), or nude pictures in magazines like *National Geographic*.

Adults, and especially women, might not consider such things to be

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sexually arousing. However, a 13-year-old boy with raging hormones may have a completely different perspective. Some families remove suggestive ads from the newspaper before bringing them into the house because, to their children, those ads can have the same effect as explicit pornography.

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In addition, love scenes in PG, PG-13 and R-rated movies that may not be sexually stimulating to parents might have a powerful impact on a maturing adolescent. Likewise, TV sitcoms and shows with sexual themes and sexually suggestive commercials can create improper thoughts and lodge images in a child's mind that may stay with them into adulthood. Video games also should be screened, as many contain pornography as well.

### **Immunizing Your Children**

So how do we immunize our children against ever-present pornography and help them avoid its destructive effects? Parents, talk to your children about their sexuality. Don't ignore the fact that your children are maturing. Explain the changes they are experiencing and teach them how to manage them.

Teach children that sex in and of itself is not wrong, sinful or bad—that sex in the right context, in a faithful married relationship, can be beautiful and wonderful. Teach children that youth develop sexual feelings as they mature and those feelings are normal and healthy. Teach them how to

control and channel these urges appropriately so that they can be saved for marriage.

Children need to be forewarned that they will experience body changes, hormone rushes, wet dreams (boys), etc. and that this is perfectly normal. At the same time, parents can instill in their children confidence that they have the power to control these urges that someday will enable them to have children and build their own stable families. Fill your children's minds with good literature and music, and keep them busy with constructive activities.

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*Studies show that teens from families where sex is not discussed openly are more likely to experiment with sex at an earlier age, engage in unprotected sex, and have higher rates of teenage pregnancy.*

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If parents do not teach their children about sex, their children may seek less worthy sources to learn from. Studies show that teens from families where sex is not discussed openly are more likely to experiment with sex at an earlier age, engage in unprotected sex, and have higher rates of teenage pregnancy.<sup>294</sup>

It is never too late to begin helping your children understand their sexuality and to teach them to save sex for someone they really love and respect, and thus fully commit themselves to the sacred vows of marriage.

### **Family Entertainment?**

“But it has great morals!” Has anyone ever used that argument to try to convince you to watch an inappropriate movie or TV show? Don't fall into that trap. And don't buy the “It will initiate a great discussion with your kids” argument. I had a school administrator try to use that one on me when I complained about some highly inappropriate literature in an English class (it had references to bestiality). Since there is plenty of wonderful literature and wholesome entertainment available, there simply is

<sup>294</sup> Regnerus, M. D., & Luchies, L. B. (2006). The parent-child relationship and opportunities for adolescents' first sex. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(2), 159-183; Dittus, P. J., & Jaccard, J. (2000). Adolescents' perceptions of maternal disapproval of sex: Relationship to sexual outcomes. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 26(4), 268-278; Whitaker, D. J., & Miller, K. S. (2000). Parent-adolescent discussions about sex and condoms: Impact on peer influences of sexual risk behavior. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 15(2), 251-273; Aspy, C. B., et al. (2007). Parental communication and youth sexual behaviour. *Journal of Adolescence*, 30(3), 449-466.

no need to drag ourselves or our families through a filthy gutter to find moral messages.

My husband and I do not allow our children to watch a PG-13 movie

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*Since there is plenty of wonderful literature and wholesome entertainment available, there simply is no need to drag ourselves or our families through a filthy gutter to find moral messages.*

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unless we first review its content. Every time we have broken that rule we have regretted it. Before viewing any movies with your family, I highly recommend reviewing them on [www.kids-in-mind.com](http://www.kids-in-mind.com). This is a free site that describes in detail any scenes in popular movies that contain sex, nudity, violence, or profanity. We have become much more vigilant as, too often, we have watched

a movie at someone else's suggestion and have been unpleasantly surprised to find that it had highly inappropriate scenes.

When my daughter was 13 she begged me one evening to let her see a movie with her friends. I said, "Not until we look it up on [screenit.com](http://screenit.com)." She was not happy. The movie was about to start and her friends were on their way.

After reading the review, I told her I could not approve it. She became very upset and gave me the usual tirade about how "everyone else's" parents were letting them see it, and "so and so's parents approved it." We were getting nowhere.

Suddenly I had an idea. I said, "You are 13, and this is a PG-13 movie. I am going to let you make this decision, but not until you have read the review on [screenit.com](http://screenit.com)." Excited that I had given her the lead, she rushed to the computer and pulled up the review.

A few minutes later, she humbly approached me and said she was not going to the movie. She was surprised at all the bad things that the review revealed, and she agreed it would be a bad idea to support the movie by buying a ticket.

## **We Can't Protect Children from Everything**

Despite our best efforts, our children will be exposed to inappropriate things in their schools, on the beaches, in their friends' homes, and even driving along the road. As parents, we need to prepare our children for

this reality and help them process the inappropriate content they will see and hear within a framework of values they understand.

When they are exposed to entertainment with themes that discuss and even glorify adultery, promiscuous sex, or other inappropriate sexual activities, point out how right is being portrayed as wrong and vice-versa. Use these opportunities as “teaching moments” to discuss the “why” behind your family’s standards and values.

### **“For Adults Only”**

One day I picked up a PG-13 movie at a video store. It looked decent, based on its cover and description, but the owner warned me that the movie was “rough.” When I asked what she meant, she replied it contained sexual scenes and warned me not to watch it around children. I told her that, in our family, if it wasn’t safe enough for my kids, then parents probably shouldn’t be watching it either. She paused and then replied, “I never thought about it that way before.”

This principle applies not only to PG-13 movies but to anything with sexually graphic content. There is a widely held view that sexually explicit materials are only harmful for children because they are not mature enough to “handle” them, and since married adults already engage in sex, supposedly there is no harm in adults watching explicit movies.

However, the harmful effects and the addictive nature of pornography do not distinguish between the young and the old, the married or the unmarried. Remember, studies show that many of the adults who have been convicted of rape, sexual assault or molestation report heavy pornography use, and many are acting out the pornography they have seen. Pornography is dangerous to everyone.

### **Don’t Put Your Head in the Sand!**

Years ago, my then 7-year-old daughter came home from school one day with a notice informing us that lice had been discovered among some students. We were asked to check our children’s heads. My first thought was, “Only dirty people get lice. I’m glad we don’t have to worry about that.” And I promptly threw the notice away.

Several weeks later, I noticed yellow spots clinging to my hair, and sure enough, my hair was filled with lice eggs. I literally panicked. When I checked my children, to my horror my daughter's long blonde hair was filled with lice eggs, and I found a live one in my son's hair!

How could I have been so stupid? Why had I ignored the warning, thinking our family was too good to get lice? I was humbled to say the least. How could this be happening to me and my family? After all, we showered regularly.

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*Because of its secrecy, lice infestations are much more pervasive than people think. And, so it is with pornography!*

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I didn't want to let anyone know. I knew what I would think of someone who had lice. However, I soon learned that lice is a widespread problem in the United States and, in fact, I read on a website that lice is one of the most common childhood ailments next to the common cold.

So why didn't I know this? Because having lice is kept a big secret. When families get infected, they don't want anyone to know for fear of being shunned. Because of its secrecy, lice infestations are much more pervasive than people think. And, so it is with pornography!

After a massive decontamination of clothes, bed sheets, and so forth, I found myself afraid to check my family's heads again because I didn't want to find that the problem had reoccurred. I wanted to think it just went away with one hair treatment. But it didn't. It came back. So it is with pornography treatment. Though it is clearly possible to be cured of such an addiction, the road to recovery can be long and difficult and almost always requires professional and/or spiritual counseling and family support.

Pornography problems, like lice, are widespread and usually kept secret. One may not discover the problem until it is very serious. Please do not ignore this warning to "check" your children and your spouse for any pornography problems! You may fear the outcome, but just like a lice infestation, the impact will be worse the longer you wait to find out.

### **Determine if there is a Pornography Problem in Your Home**

Sometimes the only way to detect the problem is to ask probing questions of your spouse and your children. I have created a list of



interview questions that can be found on our website (Go to [family-watchinternational.org](http://family-watchinternational.org) and click on “Family Policy Resource Center,” then “Pornography,” and then “Interview Questions.”) These are sensitive questions and should be considered as guidelines only. They should be adjusted according to the maturity of the individual so that seeds are not planted prematurely.

It may take several interviews before a family member with a problem discloses anything to you. It is best to hold periodic interviews where pornography is only one of the issues discussed. Your family members may have avoided this dreaded disease for many years, but you need to make sure that remains the case.

### **What to Do if You Discover a Pornography Problem**

If you discover that a family member has a pornography problem:

1. ***Reach out with love and support.*** They probably are living with feelings of guilt and shame, and will be devastated that you know about their problem. You may feel angry, hurt and disappointed, which is natural, but those feelings will not help your loved one overcome his or her problem.
2. ***Get help.*** If the family member has tried unsuccessfully to stop on his own, he will probably need outside intervention—professional counseling and, where possible, spiritual counseling.
3. ***Understand.*** Overcoming a pornography addiction is usually a long process that can include relapses. Realize that your loved one may have lost control and will need all the emotional support he can get to regain self-mastery, self-worth, etc.

### **Five Steps to Safeguard Your Family Against Pornography**

***1. Teach your children what pornography is and why they need to avoid it.*** Talk to your children regularly about pornography (including gateway pornography) and teach your family values with regard to sexuality. Remember to take into account the sexual maturity of your

children. You may want to talk to them about it annually and adjust your discussion to their age level.

**2. Discuss how to handle accidental viewing.** Discuss with family members what to do when accidental exposure happens and help them establish a plan. For example, if pornography pops up on the computer screen despite any filtering systems you may use, teach them to immediately turn off the monitor and call a parent for help. Teach them to report to you immediately if a teacher, a friend, a neighbor or a family member asks them to view any type of pornography.

I have been surprised by the number of inappropriate things my children have encountered by chance in school and at social functions that I would have never known about had they not told me. Keep an open channel of communication on sex and sexuality. Explain that they will never be punished for telling you about an incident with exposure to pornography because you only want to help.

**3. Conduct regular “head checks.”** Interview family members regularly to find out what is in their minds and hearts. Do not assume that just because someone is a “good” person with high moral standards that they do not have temptations or a pornography problem. Churches around the world are finding that more of their “good” members are increasingly becoming exposed, and too often addicted, to pornography.

**4. Clean up your home!** Realize that at least gateway pornography likely is lurking in your home somewhere. Remove it. You can enlist your children and your spouse in the process. Some of these steps may seem extreme, but the alternative may be a potential pornography addiction that your child could struggle with for years to come. The axiom “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” certainly applies here.

- Go through your videos, DVDs, music, magazines, computer games, video games, newspaper ads and so forth and throw away anything that can be sexually arousing.
- Ask your children to show you anything inappropriate on the computer and delete it. You might be surprised by what they find and consider inappropriate. Have you ever reviewed MySpace.com? Our teenage children made a decision not to use that social

networking site based on the content and images some of their acquaintances posted.

- Sort through your books (including romance novels) and throw away any that portray sex outside of marriage as good or that are sexually explicit in any way.
- Block inappropriate TV channels or shows and get rid of services that offer them. MTV, for example, clearly is a gateway to pornography.

**5. Safeguard your computers.** If you have not done so already, install effective filters on all of your computers immediately. Do not allow computers with Internet access in the bedroom, and make sure computers are kept in a public place where the screen can be easily seen when you walk in the room. I recommend an excellent free filter which can be downloaded from [www.k9webprotection.com](http://www.k9webprotection.com). But please realize that kids are geniuses when it comes to getting around filters, so do not rely entirely on them.

Establish computer safety rules. (For a list of computer rules that we use in our home, go to the “Family Policy Resource Center” on our website, click on “Pornography,” and then click on “Family Computer Rules.”) You may want to establish a rule of no Internet use when a parent is not home.

Check the Internet history on your computer regularly to see where members of your family have visited, and make sure they are not erasing the history in the browser of your computer to hide intentional exposure.

Make sure that as a parent you know the passwords to your children's computers and e-mail accounts so that you can check to make sure the computer is being used properly. Establish the concept early on in your home that Internet use is a privilege, not a private activity nor a right.

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## Stand for the Family—What You Can Do

“To be silent is to approve.”<sup>295</sup> Once we have protected our homes, we need to do what we can to protect our communities. There are many good people and organizations that have worked effectively to clean up their neighborhoods and the stores in their communities.

Sometimes all it takes is for one person to object to inappropriate material, and the store owners will remove it. Pornography expert Joan Hibbert Hamilton suggests that once you find something inappropriate in the community, do not call it pornography as there is too much controversy surrounding its definition. Instead, identify it as “inappropriate for children” and request that it be removed.<sup>296</sup> At a minimum, request that the materials be covered up or relocated out of the view of children. There is power in numbers, so reach out to neighbors and friends, and invite them to join you in the effort to safeguard your community.

Patronize businesses that refuse to sell pornography and let them know why you are supporting them. Inform businesses that refuse to remove pornography that you will no longer support them and tell them why. Encourage others to do the same. Finally, when traveling, choose to stay in pornography-free hotels. These are just a few things each of us can do to eliminate pornography in our homes and our communities.

To read our Family Policy Brief on pornography, which contains a summary of the important facts outlined in this chapter, go to the Family Policy Resource Center on our website at [www.familywatchinternational.org](http://www.familywatchinternational.org). Remember, in the Family Policy Resource Center, you can find “Family Computer Rules,” which will help you establish safe guidelines for your family’s computer usage and the pornography “Interview Questions.”

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<sup>295</sup> Hamilton, J. (2002). *To strengthen the family*. Bountiful, UT: Positive Values Publishing.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*