

PORNOGRAPHY FACT FILE: MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION

CAUSES, SYMPTOMS, AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

From more than forty years of research, we know that pornography harms children and young people in numerous ways. The key areas of research include:

- Poor mental health
- Sexism and objectification
- Sexual aggression and violence
- Child-on-child sexual abuse
- Shaping sexual behaviors

This fact sheet focuses on what the research tells us about pornography's impact on mental health, identifying the symptoms of addiction, and the importance of seeking support.

PORNOGRAPHY AND THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN

Throughout adolescence, young people go through enormous social, cognitive, biological, and psychological changes. Anything that interrupts healthy development can result in young people being more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems.

Studies show that youthful porn consumers experience:

- higher incidence of depressive symptoms
- reduced ability to interact in social situations
- trouble in bonding with emotional caregivers
- increases in behavioral problems
- higher levels of delinquent behavior
- increased levels of sexual aggression
- low self-esteem and poor body image
- increased likelihood of emotional, social, and sexual problems in adult life

Problematic or compulsive porn use also has been shown to impact academic performance, diminish working memory, interfere with decision-making, and increase addictive behaviors. The adolescent brain is highly impressionable and vulnerable to forming patterns of behavior. Adolescents' developmental vulnerabilities, combined with rushes of neurochemicals during arousal and orgasm to pornography, results in a rewiring of the brain. While addiction is more common in young men than young women, studies show it can impact both.

One-third of frequent users admit that they watch pornography more than they want to. Access the research at culturereframed.org/journal-articles



IDENTIFYING WARNING SIGNS

Is your teen:

- Withdrawing from activities?
- Shutting down devices suddenly?
- Exhibiting changes in language, demeanor, or behaviors?
- Spending long periods of time in the bathroom?
- Exhibiting signs of depression and/or anxiety?

Warning signs may look different for your child, depending on their age and stage. Learning that your child or young person may be negatively impacted by pornography can be disturbing and upsetting. Culture Reframed has developed a model to help parents respond thoughtfully and with a calm demeanor when they discover their young person has viewed pornography.

Access the COMPOSE Yourself model at culturereframed.org/compose-yourself

Looking for more info right now?

culturereframed.org/parents-program

It is important for parents and caregivers to let young people know that pornography harms mental health, and that they will respond in supportive and helpful ways.

SUPPORT LINKS AND VIDEOS

- NoFap
- Fortify Program
- Reboot Nation
- International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals
- The Science of Porn Addiction

Access these support links and videos, and much more, at culturereframed.org/resource-library

PARENTS PROGRAM

The Culture Reframed Parents Program is a complete best-practice toolkit to build knowledge and skills in parents so they can raise porn-resilient kids.

Access this cutting-edge resource here: culturereframed.org/parents-program